Module 3:

Connectors at a glance

Who are connectors?

Connectors are those people in our communities who discover people, assets and weave them together to perform functions in their community.
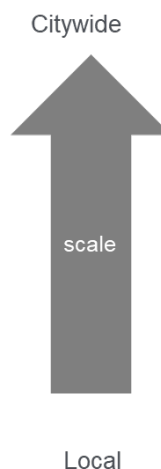
To support and grow the functions of community, we use all of our assets: people, their gifts, community groups and stories. Just because you have these assets does not mean that anything will get done. Imagine ingredients but no meal.

We need connectors who actively set the table and suggest recipes to help the community work together. Something must happen to activate people and their gifts. Connectors' main purpose is to:

1. Identify what gifts people have to contribute.
2. Identify community groups and connect them to each other to explore how to work together.

Role of a connector

- Being able to build relationships and make connections between people from different backgrounds. Being a relationship connector.
- Being able to find and bring together people and resources in communities and groups.
- Being a good team player, extending trust, being mature, and handling situations with sensitivity.
- Asking who is missing and how can we connect with them
- Being creative, curious, and a good listener.
- Having a deep dedication to building communities, fostering relationships, and includes everyone. Helping to bring in voices of those who don't normally participate in the community.

Who are the community connectors?

Natural connectors: Connectors come from within the community. These connectors know the community and are trusted. They are the ones you see in the park, the local businesses and who knock on doors.

Paid connectors: Hiring a full- or part-time connector can greatly activate local resources and leadership. It's important to invest time in finding the right person who is committed to knowing the community well. It is important to trust and support them in their role alongside you or other staff. While ensuring their independence, integrate their efforts and achievements into the overall work and culture of your organization, group or project.

Community groups and clubs: Volunteers are at the heart of community groups. Connecting a person's gift and assets to the right activity will lead to volunteers being happy and participating. Community groups and clubs are also able to connect what is happening in the community to programs and activities (e.g., form a group of people who walk their dog who then work together to build a dog park).

Organizations: Staff are key connectors to programs and services. Staff can support all the levels of connectors to resources and supports.

How do you find connectors?

- Look for networking groups that are already formed and meeting, such as coffee groups, cultural or interest groups, as well as different age groups.
- Ensure that connectors are representative of their community and have varied life experiences.
- Participate in community activities and volunteer so that you get to know the people and observe the connectors.
- Snowball: Ask people in the community who they know is a connector, then ask those people who they recommend. Once you hear the same one to two names, that could be your person.
- Organize a networking gathering. People who like to connect and meet people will show up. It might just take a few events to get traction or momentum.
- Go to where people are talking, and sharing ideas and opinions, such as community group meetings or council meetings. See who likes to speak their minds. Talk to those who organize community meetings. They may not be the ones who speak but are great connectors.
- Observe people at events – who keeps coming out to your events? Who brings people with them?
- Finding someone's "why" – create different points of entry so people can come in (i.e., create senior cards for holidays, then try to get them more connected).

Examples of Block Connector Programs
- City of St. Albert's Neighbourhood connector program
- City of Calgary's Highland Park Block Connector Program
- City of Leduc's Block Connector Initiative
- City of Spruce Grove's Connect the Block
- Town of Devon's Neighbourhood Connector program

Read The City of Calgary – Community Connector Model success tips to learn more.