Growing Your Peer Learning Network

Tools and Tips from the Women Owning Woodlands Network

Oregon State University

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Growing your Peer Learning Network

Chapter 1 helps you decide on your network's purpose, vision, and type of organization; how to build a leadership team; and how to engage the people you want to reach.

Chapter 2 offers icebreaker and team-building ideas for initial sessions.

Since the success of your group relies in part on folks knowing who you are and coming to your events, you'll need effective ways to promote your work. Chapter 3 gives ideas and samples for marketing your events and offers suggestions for how to create an identity for your group. If you are looking for ways to reach out to the local press, create a Web presence, and develop marketing tools for your group, this is the chapter for you!

Whether you are a seasoned educator or brand new to this, Chapter 4 will help you plan and conduct meetings and peer learning sessions that provide both structure and plenty of time for sharing. There are also tools to help you plan interesting and focused field tours, the most fun and useful part of woodland learning!

Depending on what your group hopes to accomplish, monetary resources may or may not be useful. Chapter 5 discusses the pros and cons of fees, where to find partners who can aid your group in accomplishing projects, and where (and how) to find funds for your project.

Chapter 6 provides tips for keeping your group going. What kind of time commitment are we talking about? How much money do you need?

Finally, it's important to find out what is important to your group, as well as whether you are accomplishing your goals. With this in mind, Chapter 7 discusses why and how to do evaluations and includes two sample evaluation tools.

Introduction

Why this toolkit?

Across the country, more women are taking the reins of forest management, as owners, as stewards, and as family members. These women are a historically underserved demographic who are making or influencing management decisions on millions of acres of working forests. At the same time, our culture is in transition from one of learning by receiving information to one of engagement and contribution. Observing these trends, a group of like-minded educators from around the United States came together to create simple and relevant tools to facilitate peer-learning education for women woodland owners.

This project is designed to engage women woodland owners with an empowering, peer-learning approach. Peer-learning alternatives supported by this project will be conducive to open, problem-based, learner-driven exploration. Through this method, the women's confidence, engagement in learning, development of mutually supportive personal relationships, and basic technical skills will all increase, leading to more informed land stewardship decisions.

This young woman learns to haul logs using a logging arch.

Photo by Amanda Subjin, © Oregon State University

Another of the project's goals is give forestry and natural resource educators a better understanding of the unique needs of women owners of working woodlands, so they can provide the kinds of learning options that this group perceives as relevant and valuable.

This toolkit focuses on the nuts and bolts of designing, forming, holding, and maintaining a peer-learning group, whether the group you want to reach is women woodland owners or any other group of people who have similar goals for learning. You'll find in this toolkit templates and worksheets for you to use, with samples to make clear how to use them.

If you are:

- an educator or association leader involved with forest and rangeland communities in the United States,
- a woman who owns forest or rangeland and who is not currently engaged in your respective forestry or range communities,
- a woman who owns forest or rangeland and who stands to serve as a mentor or facilitator of a peer network, or
- a woman who may not currently be managing but who stands to inherit or otherwise acquire forestland,

then this book is for you.

If you would like to learn more about women's ownership of woodlands, visit the Women Owning Woodlands website at:
http://www. womenowningwoodlands.net

WOMEN OWNING WOODLANDS

Photo by Jeff Hino, © Oregon State University

"It's a very nurturing environment to learn. Being surrounded by women we feel comfortable to ask the 'stupid' questions!"

Elizabeth Gale, forest owner, Broadbent, Oregon

Chapter 1

Getting Started

Before you dive in and begin organizing, a bit of planning can help ensure that you and your network get off to a good start. This chapter offers some thoughts on how to go about that, helping you to move forward quickly while the energy and opportunity are there, and in a way more likely to lead to short- and long-term success, however you define it.

You'll find here a framework that you and your team can use to develop your own unique model, wherever or whatever your community, for the network that's most likely to provide your group with a strong foundation. You may choose to adopt one of these models more or less as described, or you may combine elements of different models into a unique vision that best suits the goals, resources, and assets of your group.

If you're interested in more technical or academic detail on landowner typology research, please see the Appendix (page 71).

Choosing your network type

Your network's purpose and vision

Toolkit authors working together.

There are a variety of reasons to create a landowner network. Some networks exist mainly to offer learning opportunities to their members. Some exist to support advocacy efforts. Some support the work of volunteers who provide a valued service to their peers, local youth, a church group, or others. And, some networks exist primarily to build capacity to do on-the-ground conservation work such as invasive species control or tree inspection.

Only after you've articulated at least a general purpose can you begin to answer questions like:

- What would success look like for this group?
- Who needs to be involved? How many people are needed and with what kinds of skills, knowledge, connections, or resources?
- In five years, what do you want to be able to say that this network has achieved?
- How long does this network need to last? How will you know when it's no longer needed?
- What kinds of activities will be needed to sustain the group's energy and progress toward its goals?

Our "Getting Started" worksheet (pages 4–5) may be helpful at this stage. While you may not be prepared to fill in all the worksheet's boxes, they may help you to think through some key questions at this early stage. We encourage you to fill it in either individually or as a group exercise with the other members of your leadership group. If possible, consider having individuals fill it in on their own, then compare answers to develop a richer picture that includes each person's perspective.

GETTING STARTED WORKSHEET

Purpose —

Why create this group? What is its purpose?

Outcomes —

What measurable things do you want this group to accomplish? How will you know you've accomplished them?

Communication —

What are the three most important things you want the world to know about this group?

Collaborators —

Identify groups and organizations whose collaboration is important to your success.

Marketing —

How do you give and receive information?

Network methods —
How will you accomplish your goals? (e.g., offer tours, meetings, webinars, etc.)

Decision making —
Who makes decisions, and how are they made?

Background —
What events or conditions created the need for this group?

Opportunities —
What partners, events, or other ideas might help jump-start your group?

Constraints —
What are potential barriers to the group's success?

Minnesota Women's Woodland Network

The Minnesota Women's Woodland Network (MWWN) "is dedicated to building a community of women owners, their families and land managers to nurture a land ethic. The MWWN creates supportive, informal, small-group learning opportunities on topics that include trees, nature, and caring for the land."

The network consists of a 15-member steering committee composed of women representing a variety of forestry-related organizations and perspectives. Steering committee members were chosen based on their positions within their respective organizations (in some cases), to achieve geographic representation across the forested areas of Minnesota, and on personal factors such as leadership capacity and personal interest in the network.

The steering committee's task was to discern how an outreach program could be important and to conduct a review of similar programs in Maine and at Oregon State University. From that point of discovery, the steering committee cooperatively developed a mission statement, identified core topics, sought financial support for the new program, and chose how they would engage women in learning. The committee's vision included seven place-based networks, each with a leader who was also a member of the steering committee (though not all steering committee members created their own local networks). It took an entire year to get from organizing a steering committee to holding the first MWWN event.

The original steering committee doesn't meet anymore, but it served an essential role early in the network's development. This role included increasing recognition and knowledge of the group's existence among key players in the Minnesota forestry community; developing a well informed and broadly supported vision, mission, and goals; helping to identify a workable organizational structure; and engaging key players early on.

Finding collaborators and building a leadership team

Working through the "Getting Started" worksheet can help with another important task early in the network visioning and formation stage: building a leadership team. You are taking a leadership role by pulling your group together and helping to facilitate its foundation. Part of that facilitation is to identify and recruit others who can help share the load.

While having a single leader has its advantages, it leaves the network vulnerable to a change in that one individual's ability or desire to continue to lead. The most successful groups are those with several people in leadership positions sharing responsibilities. Fostering leadership qualities in others ensures the group's continuity when life tosses in unexpected changes.

Delegate. Ask for help. Let others offer their skills and resources to accomplish the group's objectives. If you can't or don't ask for help, or if you create an environment in which help cannot be offered, don't expect it to be forthcoming. Collaboration is the name of the game. Your network will be stronger, and the workload more manageable, if a small group of committed leaders can inform and influence its early development.

You'll need to be able to articulate your vision and purpose for the group as you recruit these leaders. While you don't want to make all the key decisions in advance, you do want to be able to explain clearly what the network will be about and why. It's easier for someone to commit time from a busy schedule to a well-defined, clear idea than a general concept.

What kind of leadership team do you need? Just as every group is unique, the composition and roles of a group's leadership team can be distinct as well. The composition of your leadership team should follow from the group's purpose and a general idea of a strategic plan:

- What skills, connections, and perspectives are needed to support the group's work?
- Do you need a large or small leadership team?
- Should the team's role be advisory or directive?

Some networks function best with a very small leadership group and a larger and more inclusive advisory group, which may be organized more or less formally and may or may not ever all meet together.

Who are the people I want to reach?

There are many ways to get to know about the people you want to engage. Of course, word of mouth and local knowledge are important sources of information. Chances are, you're already well connected with local contacts, and their values and perspectives should inform your work. But it's also important to look beyond those with whom you're already engaged and connected. It's wise to have a clear focus on a particular group rather than trying to serve everybody, and the more you know about that group, the better you'll be able to reach them and engage them in your work.

Sources of information

National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) table maker

The NWOS is a national database compiled from anonymous responses to a survey administered periodically to a random sample of the nation's family forest owners. The NWOS table maker allows custom searches at the state or multi-state level based on a variety of criteria, including owner demographics, forest holdings, and land management history. Unfortunately, NWOS data cannot be scaled down to the county or local level, but state-level data combined with local knowledge can be quite helpful and may reveal some unexpected results.
http://apps.fs.fed.us/fia/nwos/tablemaker.jsp

Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively (TELE)

Building on the NWOS database and integrating other social marketing research, the TELE website offers recommended tools and strategies to engage the people you want to reach. The TELE website can help bridge the gap between the heavy and somewhat technical data presented in the NWOS table maker and a real-world strategic planning process designed to support a local landowner group.
http://www.engaginglandowners.org/

Local training sessions

There are many programs out there for woodland owners. University Cooperative Extension and state forestry agencies offer many sources of aid for woodland owners across their states. Finding these programs and attending them with both a learning and networking goal can help you find other woodland owners of like mind who might like to create a peer network group to support their own education and activities.

Research articles

If you have access to academic literature, there is a tremendous amount of published research about family forest owners. You may need to figure out how to apply studies of landowner populations from different areas and scales that range from the county to the nation, but this research may still be helpful. If you don't have access to these articles, your local Extension forester may be able to help.

Finding each other

In 2004, at a Pennsylvania Forest Stewards basic training, two landowners who happened to live in the same county in southern Pennsylvania met for the first time. After two intensive weekends of forest stewardship training, these two decided that they wanted to continue their education and link it to their local community.

At that time, their county did not have a regional forest stewardship group; so, they decided to start one. They had been exposed to a broader swath of forest stewardship at the state level, and they wanted to create a place where landowners could come together, learn, and get practical advice on options for their woodland. Their initial exposure and learning through the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship program got them started on the vision and local development process, and finding a fellow woodland owner of like mind and interest created the start of a new community group. This group is still going strong today.

County tax records

County assessor and/or recorder's offices maintain records of land and landowners within their boundaries. These records are public information, and you should be able to access them. They may be useful as you develop mailing lists or seek to identify certain kinds of landowners within the county. Note that there is geographic variation: in some parts of the country, records may be kept at the town, parish, Indian reservation, or other level.

In many cases, staff at the appropriate office can help you identify different segments of the county landowner audience. For example, you might only want to know about landowners in one township within the county. Or, you may only want landowners who have land in a certain cover type (e.g., forest) or larger or smaller than a certain acreage. The availability of these data and the cost and time required to obtain them vary greatly based on the counties that you're interested in.

Local knowledge

Chances are, you're not the first to try to organize or assist your group of interest. Staff at natural resource agencies like your land-grant university's Extension Service, the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation District, state natural resource conservation agencies, or others may have valuable insight and experience to share. Private organizations like landowner associations, conservation groups, environmental organizations, land trusts, or others may also be interested in helping.

Knowledgeable and respected landowners like those with whom you're wishing to connect can provide a different—and valuable—perspective. A few contacts and interviews with representatives of these groups, even if you don't particularly expect to work closely with them, may be valuable early on, both to learn from their experience and to offer them the courtesy of keeping them informed of what your group is up to. You may be surprised how willing they are to help.

Gatekeepers

We all know those folks who are well-connected and respected within their communities. Think about the postmaster in a small town, the minister at a local church, the Extension agent who holds educational events on myriad topics. These folks are known as "gatekeepers" because they, as trusted individuals, can open doors to new groups or help establish connections based on common interest.

Ask those you trust and that you perceive as well-connected if they know other woodland owners who might be interested in becoming a member of your group. You don't have to know everyone; you just have to introduce yourself to people who can help you find those you don't know. And their knowing you and what you're trying to do

Photo by Amanda Subjin, © Oregon State University

Women and Their Woods, barberry torching.

can help you attract members. Gatekeepers can provide a "seal of approval" and support your efforts in building your group.

Broadening the circle: recruiting members

There's no single "right" way to recruit members to join your group. In fact, you may not even want to at first. Some network leaders want the organization to be on firm footing before they begin recruiting members or participants. Others decide to begin recruiting before the leadership and organizational structures are in place; they want to engage potential members early on to help set the direction. Or, they may view early recruiting strategies as a way to gauge local interest in the network or to identify potential leaders they didn't know before.

Once it's time to begin recruiting, a variety of tactics may be useful. Some are more of a "sell" than others; you can choose the method(s) that seems best aligned with your group's resources and preferred way of doing business.

- Use word of mouth and personal contacts to invite people who have an interest in the issues that the network will address.
- Place ads in local print or online media.
- Share press releases in local print or online media. (See Chapter 3 for how to create a press release.)
- Request time to speak at gatherings of like-minded individuals. These might include Extension workshops, local community group meetings, church groups, or others.
- Organize fun, community-building events designed to build relationships. Offer only a "soft sell" for your network.
- Partner with local organizations of like-minded people to offer events that are higher-profile than you might be able to pull off alone. This can raise the network's profile.
- Create online spaces for potential recruits to meet and learn a bit about the organization. These can be traditional web pages. They may also include social media and other interactive communications. (See Chapter 3 for more information on social media.)

Minnesota Phenology Network

The Minnesota Phenology Network (MPN) created a Facebook group to "recruit" Minnesotans who have an interest in observing nature. (Phenology is the study of the timing of seasonal plant and animal development, migrations, and so on.) The network was envisioned more as an affinity group than a formal membership organization, and the Facebook approach seemed a natural fit.

Not long after the MPN Facebook group was established, two other regional Facebook groups were formed: one in north-central Minnesota and one in northeastern Minnesota. All three groups grew quickly, allowing network organizers a way to identify interested people who might want to get more deeply involved in future network formation or support work. Creating and maintaining the Facebook groups was relatively quick and easy, and it offered a new way for interested people to share photos, ask questions, and get to know other locals with a shared interest.

Organizational models

Master volunteer program

With this model, a small group of learners completes a structured training program of between 20 and 80 hours. Some or all "graduates" of the training go on to complete volunteer activities consistent with the program's purpose and mission. Perhaps the best-known program offered under this model is Master Gardener. A more forestry-related example is Cornell University's New York Master Forest Owner (MFO) program. MFO volunteers are trained to conduct one-on-one

Photo by Lynn Ketchum, © Oregon State University

Oregon State University Extension Master Woodland Manager volunteers Vera Watson and Dave Hill extract tree core samples.

property visits with other landowners by landowner request.

Some master volunteer programs focus on preparing participants for leadership roles with conservation organizations. Others share their new knowledge with local networks of which they are a part. A key element of this model is building strong relationships among the cohort of trainees to support mutual assistance and contact after the training.

What it takes

This model, more structured and centrally managed than the others presented here, generally requires access to quality instructors and to paid staff who organize trainings, communicate with and support the work of volunteers, evaluate program outputs and impacts, and (in many cases) obtain funding necessary to support program activities. Many master volunteer programs receive significant in-kind support from Extension faculty and staff. While costs may vary widely for programs offered under this model, annual budgets tend to be in the range of $10,000 to $30,000, excluding salaries for paid staff. Major costs include instructional expenses, lodging for trainees (many of these trainings are offered over several days), volunteer communications, and evaluation expenses.

Examples of master volunteer programs

- New York Master Forest Owner
- Idaho Master Forest Stewards
- Pennsylvania Forest Stewards
- Oregon Master Woodland Manager
- Minnesota Master Naturalist

Individual local learning network

These networks exist mainly to offer minimally structured learning opportunities to local residents, not to create a cadre of volunteers or advocates. Local learning networks can be small and informal, and participants have a prominent role in designing and offering learning events. Meetings are often informal and can be held at regular intervals (i.e., monthly) with a big meeting once or twice a year.

Events can take many forms, from a book club or discussion-based home study model to a series of member-hosted property visits. They can include presentations from outside experts or simply a time for members to share their experiences and information. Events can and should be tailored to the preferences of group members.

While every group is different, research suggests that learners place a high value on the comfortable atmosphere created by repeated contact with their peers and resource people. Over time, the social value of this contact can become important for learning and for motivating continued participation. This is particularly true of women. Women learners also value hearing periodically from a variety of people, including academic researchers, conservation professionals, and both new

and long-time landowners. Many conservation-related networks especially value frequent field site visits, at least during certain seasons of the year.

What it takes

While these networks are quite diverse, a few things can make life much easier for their organizers and contribute to their stability. The simplest networks, which may operate much like book clubs, require only simple coordination and planning (e.g., email exchanges to keep each other informed). Some small groups may have the support of an Extension educator or other organization staff member who can help coordinate the group.

For larger or more complex networks, paid professional educators whose knowledge and personalities are well aligned with the group can offer invaluable and, potentially, long-term support to learning networks. They can also be important bridges between learners and professional and academic resource people.

Examples of local learning networks

- Book clubs or home study groups
- Woodland owner groups and associations committees

Centrally led, local learning networks

Local learning networks can be stand-alone or subgroups of larger regional networks. Of course, more centralized management has both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages include more streamlined operations, a reduced burden on local leaders, and coordinated planning. Disadvantages include less local control and, in some cases, a dependence on the central leader. This dependence can inhibit local leaders' initiative for creating new ventures due to perceived or real conflict with the centralized direction.

What it takes

Depending on network size and scope, this model may require both a central leader and local group leaders. The level of central and local control can vary widely among programs, and central leadership can reside either in an individual or a committee. In some cases, a committee of local leaders can serve as a leadership team, although a dedicated central leader can be a great asset to local groups.

The funding required to run a successful, centrally led local learning network depends on communication systems, the format and location of learning events, distance between local networks, how frequently a coordinator must travel among networks, and other factors. Learning networks that are able to use communication technology such as Skype, videoconferencing, and similar technologies, or that do not require frequent visits from distant experts, will have lower costs. But, in many cases, participants most value hands-on, field-based learning that cannot happen online. We discuss funding variables in more detail in Chapter 5.

Examples of centrally led, local learning networks

- Oregon Women Owning Woodlands Network (WOWnet)
- Minnesota Women's Woodland Network

Click to visit the Women Owning Woodlands website

Paid-membership association

Whatever your group's purpose, a paid-membership model may be appropriate. Participants make some sort of annual payment for the benefits of membership. Benefits may include access to member-only communications, reduced registration fees at events, greater access to network staff, or votes on organizational decisions, to name a few.

The membership model has both advantages and disadvantages. Membership fees provide relatively stable revenue to fund paid staff, to support communications like mailed newsletters or Internet hosting fees, and to offset the many other costs of running an organization. Fees can also create a sense of investment in members, which may affect both their commitment to the organization and the strength with which they identify with the group.

Of course, there are also drawbacks. Membership records must be maintained and members cajoled to renew every year. Membership fees can be a barrier to those who cannot or do not wish to pay for an educational service. This is especially true for Extension programs, which historically have been well-funded and free. Most people are reluctant to pay to join a network or group unless they see a clear value (although some will join just because they like the group or support its mission). In other words, if they don't have a reason to expect membership benefits at least equal to the annual cost of joining, people may simply not join the group. This creates a continuing challenge to network organizers and leaders not only to provide, but also to communicate, the network's value to potential members.

An alternative method is to invite or encourage donations in lieu of a requirement to pay every year.

What it takes

Running a paid-membership organization is more complex in some ways than running a free network. At a minimum, the organization will need a person who is responsible for tracking the status of members, soliciting new members, and inviting existing members to renew (and then reminding them, often many times); and, that person will likely need software and a communications system. The organization will also have to develop policies to manage lapsed memberships.

Examples of membership associations

- Local conservation groups
- Minnesota Seasonal and Recreational Property Owners (MSRPO)
- State forest landowners associations

Action- or project-based conservation network

Some networks exist mainly to mobilize volunteers to work on conservation activities. Simple but labor-intensive activities like invasive species eradication or ecological restoration are well-suited to this model. The work can be done either as a series of work parties on members' properties or on public lands.

What it takes

Depending on the scale, this model can use more- or less-centralized leadership or coordination. A key consideration: For any activity that involves using hazardous

equipment or chemicals (e.g., chainsaws or herbicides), liability must be an important concern.

Examples of action-oriented conservation groups

- Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands (an Australian Landcare group)
- Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters

Choosing the right model: some thoughts

While nothing is set in stone, it is important to make an informed decision about the organizational model your network should use. Changing the group's structure can be difficult after the group has formed. The people you hope will take part in the network should have a role in choosing the network's form and structure, because the alignment of their preferences with what they experience through the network will be crucial to their continued involvement.

Consider the thoughts that follow as you weigh the pros and cons of the organizational model you might choose.

• Your network's purpose and goals

Remember that a group's main purpose, whether it is to foster learning, advocacy, or conservation action, determines its needs and guides the choice of organizational model.

• Costs and a financial plan

While revenue may not seem a major concern early on, that can change as the group grows and evolves. Funds may be required to cover travel expenses for a distant instructor, printing and postage (or other communication) costs, equipment, and other expenses. Networks that may have a greater need for funds should organize in a way that supports those expenses through membership fees, grants, or other strategies.

• Leadership capacity

A single, motivated leader can get a lot done. But a single-leader model leaves the group vulnerable over the long term. Having more than one leader, or rotating leadership, can provide a more stable foundation. Groups that have a number of committed leaders or the financial wherewithal to hire staff may support more ambitious growth with less risk than a group that has leadership concentrated in a single individual.

• Scale

Your vision of the scale on which you hope the group might eventually operate should guide the choice of an organizational model. For example, as happened in Oregon: If you have a network that is free to join, funded through grants with the idea of serving 100 women in 3 counties, what will you do if the group grows to 500 women in 9 counties who want to get together on a regular basis?

Some models scale up or down more readily than others. For instance, models that offer the kinds of services that justify membership fees (such as postage, renting porta-potties at field events, or facility rental) will still be able to support these services as the group grows, because membership income will grow as well.

• **Liability and legal considerations**

The last thing you want to do is expose volunteer leaders or yourself (paid or unpaid) to liability risk. Incorporation and development of standard procedures (e.g., bylaws) can provide some measure of protection (but only if you follow them!). Careful selection of activities that the group may organize can increase or reduce risk; chainsaw work by untrained volunteers, for example, may not only expose the volunteers to personal risk, but the group and its leaders to liability risk.

• **Social capital**

A broad base of support within the community can be invaluable. As we discuss in Chapter 5, developing relationships with local conservation organizations such as the Extension Service, Soil and Water Conservation District, state and local conservation agencies, nonprofits, and others can connect you to potential instructors and provide information about funding opportunities and emerging issues. These organizations are often eager to support self-sustaining networks of learners or conservation advocates and can be important connections for your group.

Photo by Amanda Subjin, © Oregon State University

Women and Their Woods members staying warm during a field tour.

Chapter 2

Bringing People Together
The First Meeting

S o, you've invited a group of folks to your first meeting. The coffee is on. The cookies are out. Now what? How do you break the ice and start getting to know each other?

Icebreaker games

Icebreaker games help set the stage for a positive meeting by getting people to relax and helping them get to know each other. An icebreaker should be brief and light-hearted, and establish a feeling of shared space. It can be as simple as having people say their name and where they live to having people share a personal story about their property.

The key is to plan enough time in the meeting for icebreakers. Depending on the size of the group and the icebreaker's purpose, plan for about 15 to 30 minutes.

Examples of icebreakers

People Bingo

This icebreaker helps people learn interesting facts about each other. People walk around the room and talk to each other to find out who matches the facts listed on a bingo-style sheet. Materials required are printed bingo sheets and pens. There is an example of a People Bingo card (called "WOWnet Bingo") and instructions on page 18.

Two Truths and a Lie

This is a get-acquainted icebreaker. Each person tells two truths and one lie about themselves. The group then votes on which statement they believe to be false. No materials are required.

Forest Story Cards

Forest Story Cards are a tool developed by Penn State University to initiate dialogue with people about their forests. The card set has


Photo by Nicole Strong, © Oregon State University

An easy and fun way to get folks to know each other is to get a county map and ask participants to label where they live. These Oregon WOWnet members had a great time meeting neighbors they never knew they had!

Photo by Nicole Strong, © Oregon State University

Another great icebreaker is Logger Lingo. Fill out index cards, one with a forestry term and another with a definition. Pass out cards to the group, and have participants find their corresponding definition or term. Here, two Oregon WOWnet women are displaying their pair, "Board Foot" and "Increment used to measure lumber, logs, and timber = 1" x 12" x 12" "
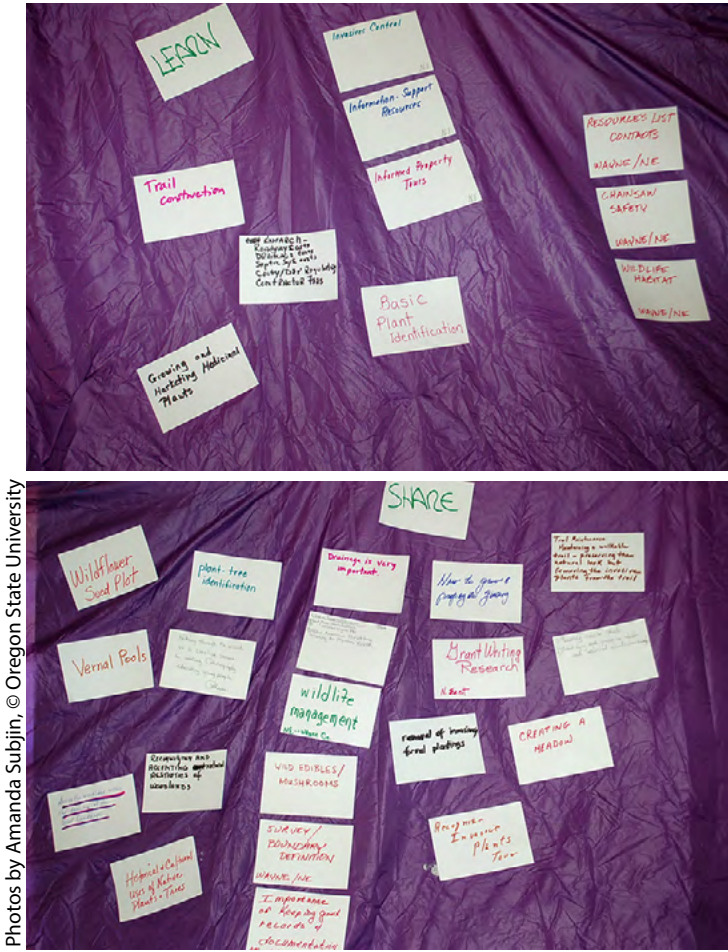
During this session, Pennsylvania WOW members filled out index cards and put them on a "sticky wall" to identify topics they would like to learn and topics they could share. (This could be done with sticky notes if you don't have a "sticky wall.")

54 different images related to forests. The set includes simple questions you can ask to help people tell their own story about their forest including concerns, interests, plans, or general information. See page 17 for details.

Icebreakers that set the stage for a forest network meeting

Participants draw a map of their forestland or share their favorite photos of their forestland with one or two other participants. Then, each person could share the other's story with the large group. Be prepared: this exercise could take up to an hour.

Or, landowners bring a map or management plan or photos or video of their woodland to the first meeting to share with the group. This could take quite a bit of time, and if there are several participants, you might have to divide into smaller groups.

Keys to success

Be enthusiastic.

Be flexible. If your group does not seem to be enjoying or responding to the icebreaker, do something else.

Make sure that any questions asked as part of an icebreaker activity are not threatening. For example, asking people if they have ever been arrested might not be the best get-to-know-you question.

Be sure that the meeting facilitator allows people the opportunity to share but also keeps the activity moving to stay on the meeting schedule.

If the group is large enough to require breaking into smaller groups, appoint someone in each small group to serve as timekeeper and facilitator. Small-group facilitators then make sure that each member has an opportunity to share a story.

A good way to help include people who are either shy or reluctant to participate is to simply have folks talk to each other one-to-one and then have one report to the larger group.

Potential pitfalls

- People think that icebreakers are a waste of time and are reluctant to participate.
- Some people are reluctant to share personal information.
- Some people will want to talk more than others.
- Some people will have a difficult time thinking of a response on the spot.

Your first meeting is critical for creating your network. The key is to create an open, friendly, and inclusive atmosphere that makes people want to participate and join your network.

Resources

Moving Beyond Icebreakers. A great book that provides tools, tips, and lesson plans on group facilitation, effective meetings, and more. Available in hard copy and as a PDF. http://www.movingbeyondicebreakers.org/

Several different organizations provide icebreaker and team-building ideas on the Internet:

http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/Toolbox/fac_icebreakers.htm

http://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf

http://www.volunteerflorida.org/americorps/docs/2011/AmeriCorps_Director_Resources/CityYearNotreDameIcebreakerGuide.pdf

http://icebreakerideas.wordpress.com/

Forest Story Cards (Heritage Series Set)

What are they?
Forest Story Cards are a pack of photographs that serve as a starting point for conversations about things people love about their land, things they're concerned about, and things they hope will happen in the future on their land. If a picture is worth a thousand words, these Forest Story Cards serve as a point to bring out those thousand words about a person's forestland or interest in land.

How can I use them?
If you have an upcoming woods walk, woodland owners' association meeting, or other event, these cards foster conversation about forestland. The Forest Story Card set includes some heritage images that hopefully will evoke conversation around what people love and are concerned about, and really get them thinking about the future of the land. Instructions on how to use the cards and some sample questions to ask are included in each pack. The basic way to use them is to have people look at the photos to launch a discussion about what is important to them.

How were they developed?
The cards were created by Dr. Sanford "Sandy" Smith at Penn State University as a visual tool for generating conversations about forests and their stewardship. Drs. Jim Finley and Allyson Muth, also of Penn State University, provided important contributions and advice in developing this Heritage Series set. By telling stories about one's forestland, both the storyteller and the story-listener can gain a better understanding of how the forestland is experienced and what is important. The stories also can lead to a better understanding of who landowners are, what they value, and how best to connect them with information resources.

How can I get them?
Penn State Renewable Natural Resources (RNR) Extension has a set of Forest Story Cards that are available for loan. We'll ship them out to you and provide the shipping labels to have the cards returned at no cost to you. You may choose to purchase your own set of cards by contacting Penn State RNR Extension, or make your own. Please contact Allyson if you're interested in borrowing the Forest Story Cards to use at your next event: 814-863-0401 or abm173@psu.edu

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WOWNET BINGO

The Rules

- People must sign their name by the statement that applies to them on the answer card.
- Only one person may sign a statement.
- Each statement must be signed by a different person.
- You may sign your own sheet once.
- Once you have a complete row (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal) shout BINGO! and collect your prize!

> Feel free to change the statements in the Bingo boxes to better reflect local relevance and your group's interests.

FIND SOMEONE WHO:

Has lived outside the U.S. for more than 1 year—in what country (ies)?	**Has never traveled outside of the U.S.**	**Likes gin and tonic**	**Can name your State Tree— what is it?**	**Traveled more than 3 hours to get here**
Has a Facebook Profile	**Has worked as a natural resource professional— what job?**	**Shares your birth month**	**Owns woodland that has been in the family for more than 3 generations**	**Can operate a chainsaw**
Can name three kinds of oak trees—what are they?	**Is a bird watcher and has a Life List**	FREE SPACE	**Has never sent a text message**	**Is a vegetarian**
Was raised on a farm or ranch— what kind?	**Has served in the Armed Forces—which branch?**	**Has harvested trees from their woodland**	**Has more than one tattoo**	**Has performed onstage—what was it?**
Has lived in the same town most of their life	**Has a current hunting license**	**Likes to forage for wild mushrooms**	**Has been hang gliding**	**Can speak more than one language— which ones?**

BINGO TEMPLATE

FIND SOMEONE WHO:

		FREE SPACE		

Photo by Jeff Hino, © Oregon State University

"I think our humanity is what we have in common, and our common goal of being good stewards to our land."

Marion Sweeney, forest owner, Eugene, Oregon

Chapter 3

Getting the Word Out

How do you reach people to let them know about your network and the events you are hosting? You'll want to develop ways to promote the network itself, including who you are, where and when you meet, and who to contact for more information. Key factors for success are to cultivate relationships with various types of mass media outlets (social media, newspaper, radio, other organizations), know how to structure an effective press release and public service announcement, and develop a variety of marketing tools (such as brochures, social media presence, and email listserv campaigns).

Women and Their Woods 2011 group.

Photo by Amanda Subjin, © Oregon State University

Working with The Media

Cultivating a successful relationship with "The Media" requires that you pitch to what they and their audiences are interested in. First, call your local papers and other media outlets (radio, newspaper, forest landowner organizations) or check their websites to find out in what format they like to receive information, who you should send it to, and what kinds of events they like to promote. Ask local journalists what kinds of events they might like to attend or cover in more detail (participate in and write a story).

Also, try to get the most mileage out of your efforts as possible; for example, publish an article in your own newsletter and also in your local American Tree Farm chapter's or local Extension Service office's newsletters. You and others can readily distribute digitally an event announcement you create online (for example, on a website). We will discuss online marketing and social media in further detail later in this chapter.

The Press

Before you send out your first event announcement, you'll want to think strategically about how and when you want the information to print.

Do you want folks to read about the event before it happens?

You want the newspaper to get the word out to people that your event is happening on a certain date and time. Are there regular supplements that list upcoming events (a harvest guide, a summer guide, an adult learning guide) in which your event could be announced?

Should you send a press packet in anticipation of reporters attending the event?

Send a press packet if you want reporters to be there to experience, learn, and write about the event. Think of activities that might be fun for them and interesting to their audience.

Would you like to promote your network after the event occurs?

For post-event coverage, typically you'd send the newspaper photos with captions (think of the "big check" photos you've seen in the paper, or "plaque" presentation photos). People love to look at photos of other people to see if they know them, and it's a great way to get people to know about your network.

Or, you might want to "pitch a story" to your local newspaper about your network that's not about a certain event but is interesting to their audience. Are there writers for local magazines, tabloids, newspapers, or TV stations who would like to cover your work in one of their regular columns or features? Are there local or regional newsletters that might run your story (Extension Service, homeowner association bulletins, Audubon, chamber of commerce, Wild Turkey Federation, etc.)?

Developing a press release for print media

Most local and regional newspapers will run critical information for an event in their "Calendar of Events" section. Contact the person in charge of press releases. Ask when he or she needs event information and if the paper requires a specific format. Usually, a press release is sent 4 or more weeks before the event, and the paper runs it 2 to 3 weeks prior.

If you are sending the press release by email, it's best to avoid mass messages. Instead, address each recipient directly. The subject line of your email should read "Press Release: Title of your Press Release." Be sure to attach the document **and** copy the press release into the body of the email.

Use the guide on page 23 to help structure a successful press release. Always remember to proofread for grammar and spelling, and keep the press release to one page in length. If you include photos, attach each individually to the email; and at the bottom of the press release, after the "###," add the words "Photos Following." Be sure to include a caption and photo credit for each photo.

You can also find tips online for writing successful press releases: http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Press-Release

STANDARD PRESS RELEASE STRUCTURE

Standard title:	PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date:	Date you send press release.
Contact information:	Group name and contact information including person to contact, phone number, and email.
Headline:	Attention-grabbing, with a brief summary of the event.
Subtitle:	Briefly summarizes the press release.
First paragraph:	Key information: what, when, where, and why someone would want to come. Should stand alone if the person reads no further.
Body:	This is where you present the most important information, including answers to who, what, when, where, and why. If your event requires registration, clearly state this and how people should register. If there is a fee, state that here.
Conclusion:	Include a brief summary about the network, your mission statement, and some key background information. You may also choose to repeat the contact information here.
###:	Centered in the middle below the last text, add "###" to signify the end of the press release.
Photos:	PhotoRetreat1. Caption: "From left to right: Jane Doe, John Smith." Photo credit: Joan Jones

See the sample press release on page 25.

STANDARD PRESS RELEASE

Standard title: _____

Date: _____

Contact information: _____

_____

_____

_____

Headline: _____

Subtitle: _____

First paragraph: _____

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Body: _____

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Conclusion: _____

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###: _____

Photos: _____

_____

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE   May 22, 2012

For Immediate Release

Contact: Virginia Kennedy

570-226-3164 or 845-583-1010

info@delawarehighlands.org

Delaware Highlands Conservancy announces Native Plants Walk, June 2

Hawley, PA and Bethel, NY - The Delaware Highlands Conservancy, the Pike County Scenic and Rural Character Preservation Program, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA-DCNR), and the U.S. Forest Service at Grey Towers are offering a free **Native Plants Walk from 9 am to noon, Saturday, June 2, 2012 at the Camp Speers-Eljabar YMCA in Dingmans Ferry, PA. Renowned author and botanist Dr. Ann Rhoads will lead the walk and answer questions about the plants found in a wetland community.**

The walk will be within the 450-acre portion of the Camp Speers-Eljabar YMCA property, recently protected with a conservation easement funded by the Pike County Scenic Rural Character Preservation Program and PA-DCNR.

Rhoads' books include "The Plants of Pennsylvania," "The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania," "Trees of Pennsylvania," and, most recently, "Aquatic Plants of Pennsylvania." Rhoads was the director of botany for Morris Arboretum and taught botany at the University of Pennsylvania.

This walk is open to the public, but prior registration is requested. To reserve your space and receive directions, call the Delaware Highlands Conservancy office at 570-226-3164 or email info@delawarehighlands.org.

###

PHOTO FOLLOWING:

Photo Description: Dr. Ann Rhoads (far right) with a group of interested participants on the 2011 Native Plants Walk. Photo by Barbara Yeaman.

Radio and television

Send your announcements to radio or television programs that fit with your mission. What regular local programs might be interested in covering your work? Is there a segment on conservation? A regular outdoor program? (By the way, you can reuse your video and radio spots on your website, on your computer at events, etc.)

Developing a public service announcement for radio

Contact the person in charge of public service announcements (PSA) at the radio or TV station. Ask when he or she needs event information from your group and if the station requires a specific format. Most often, a station won't charge to promote events that are free and are offered by a nonprofit group—but it's always best to ask. Again, if you can cultivate a relationship with local radio and TV stations before sending them your information, you'll know that you're sending what they want, when they want it.

The key to developing a PSA is to keep it **short** (less than 100 words), **easy to read** (use a larger font), and no more than **30 seconds** long. The announcer will read exactly what you write, so read it aloud before you send it and time yourself. Feel free to add more detail below the PSA or add photos, but keep the body of the PSA big, bold, clear, and short. Start with your main message in case they only have time to read half of what you include.

STANDARD PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT STRUCTURE

Standard title:	PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT
Date:	Date of public service announcement.
Contact information:	Group name and contact information including person to contact, phone number, and email.
Headline:	Attention-grabbing, with a brief summary of the event.
Body:	This is the part of the PSA that will be read on the air. Include the date and time of the event and any other information to help people find out more, such as a web address or telephone number. Include key information on what, when, where, and why someone would want to come. This key information should stand alone if the announcer reads no further. Remember: **short** and **easy to read** in **30 seconds** or less.
Conclusion:	Include a brief summary about the network, your mission statement, and some key background information. You may also choose to repeat the contact information here.

See the sample PSA on page 28.

STANDARD PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)

Standard title: _____

Date: _____

Contact information: _____

_____

_____

_____

Headline: _____

Body: _____

_____

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Conclusion: _____

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SAMPLE PSA

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT   October 2011

For Immediate Release

Contact: Jake Hendee 570-226-3164

WILDLIFE AND THE FOREST ECOSYSTEM FIELD DAY

Learn how you can manage your woodlot for songbirds, wild turkey, ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer and other wildlife. A "**Wildlife and the Forest Ecosystem**" field day will be held on **Friday, October 21 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** at the **Promised Land State Park Headquarters** at 100 Lower Lake Road, Greentown, PA.

The workshop is sponsored by the **Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Pike County Community Planning**, and the Pennsylvania **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**.

This event is open to the general public. Registration is required along with a $5 registration fee. **For information and registration** call the Delaware Highlands Conservancy at 570-226-3164 or e-mail info@ delawarehighlands.org.

Creating a sense of community

How do you bring people in so they feel like they belong to your community and can stay up to date even if they are not attending face-to-face sessions all the time? If everyone in the group wears the same T-shirt at an event, it shows you are united and helps people discover and recognize their connectivity. Social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) allow many people to follow activities, "monitor" what's going on, share their responses, and stay connected, even from home.

Newsletters give updates, but they are sent out less frequently than social media updates, and are limited in how they engage people: you can't hold a discussion with a newsletter, but you can with an article posted on Facebook! Consider what information your community needs as well as how comfortable community members are with online social media when you decide what communication tools you'll use.

Email

Compiling your list of email contacts and sending group emails announcing events and distributing relevant information is a powerful and efficient way to communicate within the group. Email has the added feature of allowing interaction and discussion threads. There is a great example of an email thread regarding chainsaw use on the Women Owning Woodlands national website:
http://womenowningwoodlands.net/content/oregon-wownet-email-chain-preferred-chainsaws

There is a risk that some members of the group might not appreciate receiving too many emails, so you will want to be selective, or wait and send several announcements in one email. For the Oregon WOWnet, for example, we aim to send one email every one to two weeks that lists several upcoming events and links to interesting news and other stories. You will want to use a listserv tool or service that prevents your emails from being put in the receiver's spam folder (and have the added bonus of providing analytics and crisp, attractive formatting.)

Social media

Social media, when used correctly, can be a helpful tool for cultivating community online. Consider where your participants are currently spending their time online to help you decide which social media tools (such as Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter) are right for your group. It is always best to meet people where they are already most comfortable.

You can use social media a number of ways to create an online center for information and resources for your group. Below, we explore two tools' features and capacity for cultivating community.

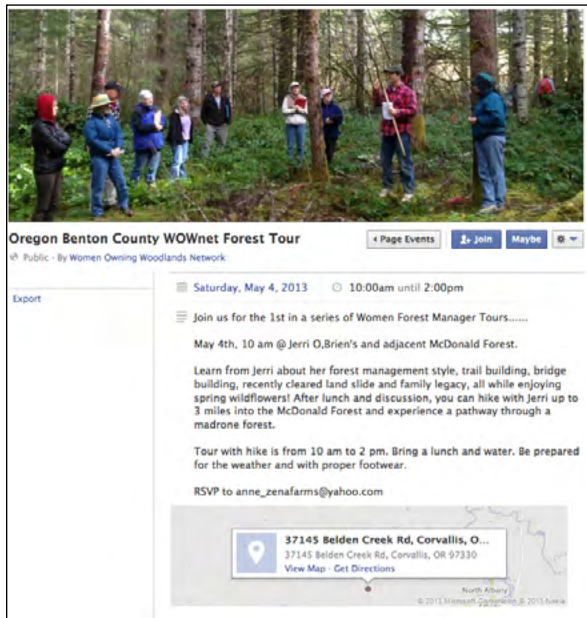### Facebook

What it is

Most individual Facebook connections are made based on existing relationships among family, friends, and professional networks. **Subscribers** are people who have opted to "like" a page.

What it can do

Business pages connect marketers and community organizers based on their shared interests. **Group pages** offer another way for woodland networks or

communities to keep in touch and share resources, such as links to interesting articles, photos, and upcoming events. Group pages can be set up with either public or private settings.

Oregon Benton County WOWnet Forest Tour

Delving deeper

"Facebook business pages" rely on page administrators to share content that subscribers may read and respond to in their news feed. The good news is that you can have several page administrators, which lessens the burden on any one person to post and monitor the page. For example, the Women Owning Woodlands Network Facebook page currently has five page administrators who take turns posting and sharing content, responding to comments, and keeping the page relevant.

It's important that page administrators pay attention to the timing and content of their posts. Facebook uses an algorithm (a fancy word for formula) that gives preference to certain types of content, and a post's visibility increases with user engagement. In other words, page subscribers are more likely to see a post that has been liked, commented on, and shared. And while you want users to comment, like, or share posts on your page, as an administrator you can customize settings to include more or less capacity for users to post content directly to the wall. (This might only be necessary if you get inappropriate postings. This has not been much of an issue for woodland network groups; it is more of an issue for large businesses.)

"Facebook Events" offers another way for business page administrators and individuals to alert their community of an upcoming occasion. Events may be field trips or in-person meetings, or "virtual meetings" held via the internet. To make "Events" visible, it helps to invite individuals who like your page.

"Facebook groups" enable a page administrator to invite members, who are then automatically subscribed to the group's discussion. Anyone can post content to the group, and all of that content is visible to group participants. Participants receive notification when someone adds content to the group. Users may easily request to join a group, opt out of a group, or both; approval to join is dependent upon the group page administrator.

Here are some tips and recommendations:

- With others in your network steering committee, determine whether a "page" or "group" is the best approach for your purpose.
- Commit to posting content regularly and moderating the conversation.
- Post questions to foster conversation.
- Invite people to events using Facebook, and encourage them to respond and invite others.
- Include many photos in your content mix. They perform best with Facebook's algorithm to gain visibility.
- Add a Facebook link to your email signature.

- Share the link in e-newsletters.
- Encourage people to "Like" you on Facebook.
- Business page administrators should "like" partner organizations and encourage the same from them for optimal visibility.

You can find much more "getting started" information from Facebook online at http://www.facebook.com/help.

Twitter

What it is

Twitter is a tool called a "microblog." It is for sending very short messages—posts (called "tweets") are limited to 140 characters. They also often include links to photos, stories on websites, blogs, and digital news services. Twitter users may follow any public account—they do not have to request a friendship or connection.

What it can do

Some people use Twitter to communicate with their friends or spread local news. Some who have many "followers" use it as a research tool to send out questions to their community. For example, let's say you are in the market for a new chainsaw. You could send out a tweet (and post this question to Facebook, for that matter) asking about favorite saws, experience with particular brands, and recommended bar length. This gathering of information from your community's knowledge and experience is called "crowdsourcing." Some people use Twitter to let their community know about products and events. Others choose not to send out information. Instead, they use Twitter just to listen to ("follow") tweets that are useful to them.

Delving deeper

What to tweet? Consider your community: What are they interested in? What tone do you all use when you talk to each other? It's important to put some personality into your tweets as well as factual, interesting content and links to more information. An optimal mix of tweets includes a variety of content, lots of links, and a consistent voice. Sending the same messages over and over does not perform well on Twitter. Connecting your purpose for using Twitter with the interests of the people in your network builds trust and a community of followers.

"Twitter Lists" offers a way to create a list of people who are interested in a specific topic. While there are public and private listing options, we recommend making them public so that more people can subscribe to the list. This is a great way for Twitter users to find information on their topic without having to follow many individual users. A good list can increase the visibility of your own account (as the creator) as well as provide a valuable resource to others.
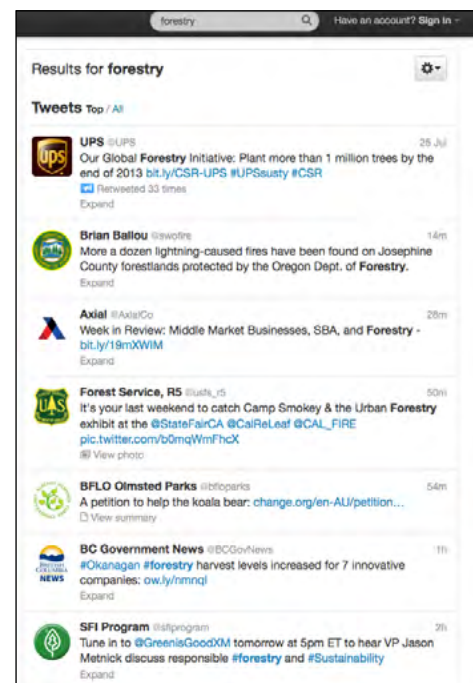
Here are some tips and recommendations:

- Set up your account using your full name, an easily recognizable account name, a photo, and a biography with a link to more information.
- Include links and photos in most of your tweets.
- Follow others who share your interests. Don't be shy.
- Consider building a "Twitter List" to connect those who share your passion.
- Add a Twitter link to your email signature.
- Share the link in e-newsletters.
- Encourage people to "follow" you on Twitter.

You can find many online and community courses to increase your comfort level and experience with the various social media tools.

Website

You can rely on a website to contain information about your group that doesn't need to be updated often, including your mission statement, when and where you typically meet, and how to contact the group. Websites are a fairly high-overhead endeavor and almost always rely on a technologically savvy and enthusiastic volunteer for a professional and well-maintained product. If you have neither funding nor a volunteer but would like a web presence, ask other local organizations if they would host a page for you.

Other materials

It's nice to have a toolkit of pieces you can use to describe your group and your work to potential new members, legislative officials, funders, the media, forestry and natural resources professionals, potential presenters, etc. Examples of these materials could include:

- Brochure and a separate "Events" list that can be updated regularly and inserted in the brochure. People can post the "Events" list on their fridge.
- Newsletters

Assess the need

As your group grows, you can monitor its needs and what makes sense from a marketing perspective. You may just start out by promoting programs through the press, other like-minded organizations, or other easy-to-find means and get a great turnout. To keep the momentum going, consider your time and technical and financial resources, and look into adding pieces to your marketing toolkit (for example, a brochure or a Facebook page). It all depends on how you and your group would like others to learn about you and participate in your activities.

The National Women Owning Woodlands Network website

As an alternative to investing a lot of time and money in developing your own website, you might consider becoming a contributor to the national WOWnet website, which has been established as a framework for existing networks.
http://womenowningwoodlands.net

WOMEN OWNING WOODLANDS

This website was developed with the coordinated support of the U.S. Forest Service, National Woodland Owner Association, and several university Extension services, including the authors of this toolkit. Structured like a blog, the website allows forestry professionals and knowledgeable landowners to share events, interviews, "how to" articles, and personal stories with women woodland owners seeking a better understanding of forest management and looking for educational workshops nearby.

As of the end of 2012, there are just over a dozen editors on the site, but we would like to expand the WomenOwningWoodlands.net editing team to include one editor from each state. If you would like to become an editor, author, or just post events on the website, please contact the national editor listed on the website.

WOMEN OWNING WOODLANDS

Interpreting your Timber Cruise
Hyla Woods, Timber, OR
January 21, 9 am - 12 pm

DETAILS

30151 NW Timber Rd, Timber, OR
Hyla Woods – owned by Pam and Peter Hayes
Directions: Hwy 26 to Timber Junction; turn South on Timber Rd. Go approx. 1.7 miles and turn into driveway on right (just past cedar fence).

RSVP:
(541) 766-6750 or
chrissy.lucas@oregonstate.edu
Info: womenowningwoodlands.com

AGENDA

We will gather in the cabin at Hyla Woods to learn how to understand what a cruise report tells you about your timber. We will go through what the various units, numbers and abbreviations on a timber cruise mean. If you have a cruise report from your own property, bring it with you to work with. We will also talk about when is the right time to have a timber cruise done, and options for updating an old one. Time and weather permitting, we will tour Hyla Woods and see some of the interesting projects that the Hayes family & friends have underway! If you have time, bring a lunch and we will continue the conversation after noon.

Consider Carpooling! Send an email to the WOWnet listserv or post on the WOWnet Facebook page and see who can join you!

https://www.facebook.com/orwownet

wownet@lists.oregonstate.edu

Women Owning Woodlands Network was formed by Oregon State University Extension Service and women woodland owners who wanted to:

- Recognize the growing number of women taking a wide array of active woodland management roles.

- Raise basic forestry and decision-making skills through hands-on activities.

- Support and increase women's access to forestry-related information and encouraging communication through state and local networks.

Photo by Amy Grotta, © Oregon State University

Oregon WOWnet session on cultivating shitake mushrooms.

Chapter 4

Getting to Peer Learning
Planning Meetings, Tours, and Workshops

"Tell me and I'll forget.
Show me and I may not remember.
Involve me and I'll understand."
    —Chinese Proverb

You're ready to pull your group together and have your first gathering. Meetings can be loosely organized and conducted or tightly held to a formal agenda. A mix of both ends of the spectrum might be best.

Research shows that most adults learn best in informal settings where they can query deeper into the presented information and figure out how that new knowledge relates to their own life experience and what they already know. Presenting the material for different learning styles is also highly effective. Mix lectures and speakers with hands-on activities, informal discussions (for example, around a lunch table), and time for questions.

WOWnet tour host shares her management plan.

Photo by Elissa Wells, © Oregon State University

This chapter presents some formal aspects of meeting management and facilitation. Think of these as suggestions and guidelines, not hard-and-fast rules. Use whatever works for your group and helps you all keep up your energy and momentum.

Characteristics of a good meeting

Varied meeting times

Vary the meeting day and time so that more members have a chance to attend. Doing this helps attract people whose schedules may conflict. Consider weekends and weekdays, morning, afternoon, and evening. Mix it up so that a wide variety of participants may attend.

To attract a younger generation of women landowners, take into consideration their roles as caregivers. Vary meeting or workshop times so that at least some days and times will work for a family woman's schedule.

Think about travel time to and from a meeting. Start later to give those who do not live on their forestland or close to the meeting place time to get there.

(For example, someone might want to attend a meeting in the county where their forest property is, but they live in a different county.) Also, consider ending before dark so that participants can get home safely.

Fellowship

Women are really good at talking to each other and establishing personal connections through sharing their stories. People must be comfortable with each other to be open and willing to try new ideas, and they must feel that others have their best interests at heart. Sharing helps create a safe environment where participants can learn together, build a feeling of fellowship, and create new understanding.

Researchers have noted that eating together allows people to make initial connections and build a feeling of fellowship[1]. (Food is integral, especially homemade; bring recipes for sharing.) Make sure there is time in the meeting schedule for introductions, laughing, sharing a meal, and friendly conversation.

GETTING TO YOUR STORY

All of us have a story to share. Whether you know it or not, your experiences will be as useful to someone else as others' stories and experiences have been to you.

Stumped on what your story is? Try answering some or all of these questions to hone in on it.

- **Tell a story from a time when you were on your land.**

- **How did you acquire your land?**

- **When was the first time you walked on your land? What went through your mind?**

- **What has been the most gratifying moment on your land? The most frustrating?**

- **Who has been the biggest influence on your management style? What lessons did they teach you?**

- **What are the most important lessons you've learned in land management?**

- **Are there any words of wisdom you'd like to pass along to others?**

- **How has your woodland experience been different from what you'd imagined?**

- **What are your dreams for your woodland? What will it look like in 50 years? Who will use it? What services will it provide (economic and non-economic)?**

- **Tell about a specific tree on your land that might be important or special to you.**

---

[1] Richardson, 2000, p. 223

Building a meeting agenda

Set objectives before every meeting. Before planning an agenda, write down a phrase (or several) to complete the sentence, "By the end of the meeting/field tour/demonstration, participants will be able to…" Objectives should be simple, clear, and measurable or observable.

Develop objectives with key participants (or all participants) before a meeting. This both gives a group leader a chance to make adjustments to the agenda before the meeting, and builds commitment from participants who plan to attend.

The agenda lets participants know what the objectives are and how they will be accomplished. In this way, the agenda also helps avoid misunderstandings arising from unfounded expectations.

When building an agenda, be sure to set starting and ending times, and stick to them. Include time for breaks, travel (on foot or via vehicle depending on the site), and questions. Women are really good at asking questions. There's no need to fill all the time with formal lecture and instruction; much of the learning occurs informally.

Other things to consider when creating your agenda:

- Who should be involved in developing objectives and building the agenda?
- What are the objectives of the meeting?
- List all tasks that you need to do in order to accomplish the objectives.
- Put tasks in order of sequence; what comes first, then second, etc.
- Decide how much time is needed for each task.
- How long should the meeting be? (How many items need to be addressed?)
- Decide how to handle each item on the agenda (for example, discussion, brainstorm, rank and order)
- Identify who is responsible for each agenda item.
- Identify any advance work that must be done.

Also see the Field Tour Planning template (pages 42–43). It can be a useful tool.

Photo by Tamara Walkingstick, © Oregon State University

It's always important to find ways to get participants up and moving. Here, group participants identify their goals for joining a WOW group.

Facilitating an engaging program (being a good "guide on the side")

Some of the most engaging events include a structured informational session (such as a lecture) and a hands-on learning opportunity (such as a demonstration). Each group is different and may be most successful if provided both formal and informal approaches to learning.

An engaging lecture

Sometimes you have to give a short lecture to effectively convey new information. You can present it in a way that intellectually engages and involves participants. Start

Women and Their Woods doing tree identification.

your lecture with some well-phrased questions that can help you learn about participants' experiences or problems they wish to solve. Right from the beginning this helps participants apply your presentation directly to their own management issues.

Break the lecture at least once per session for an activity that lets participants work directly with the material. One way to do this is to offer information and then provide an opportunity for discussion (see "Discussion," below). This can also help you determine whether the participants understand the information you provided.

Tips for an engaging lecture:

- Keep lectures to 30 minutes or less, with four or five major points. If you present more than that, you may lose people's interest and attention.
- You won't be able to teach everything about your topic in one lecture (and if you try, nobody will be able to remember it all!). Provide a list of books, articles, and Internet links that offer further explanation. Participants can continue learning when they get home and refresh the important topics they learned during your session.

Discussion

The key to a good peer-learning network is establishing meaningful ways for participants to interact. If you are a teacher, this doesn't mean that you have to give up your role; it might just mean tweaking your technique a bit. One of the ways to do this is to facilitate discussion. A facilitated discussion helps determine what participants already know and what they are curious about. It also engages participants, which will likely result in more interest throughout the meeting (or other event). By asking questions in response to questions, you can elicit thought and response from a group.

Some challenges with discussions are that they take some time, and some participants might want to participate more than others. It takes good facilitation skills to keep the discussion from "wandering in the weeds."

Tips for facilitating discussion:

- Make sure your questions are worded clearly and are open-ended. Avoid questions that elicit "yes" or "no" answers. Use words like "what," "when," "where," "how," and "why."
- Give people time to think after you ask a question.
- Be sure to allow adequate time on your meeting agenda for a potentially lengthy discussion. Or, set a time limit for each discussion, and come back to them later if time allows (see "Parking lot," page 40).
- Never let a discussion end until everyone has correct information.
- Encourage everyone to participate! Recognize and thank participants.
- At the end of a discussion, summarize what you heard.

Case studies

A case study uses a personal story (either true or invented) and a set of questions to identify or solve a problem. Questions that follow the story should make participants think about the situation and lead them to the right conclusions.

Case studies are practical ways to start a discussion, especially if your group doesn't know each other very well. They stimulate problem-solving thought and creative solutions. They also motivate participants to use personal experience to illustrate a point.

It can be hard sometimes to find or create appropriate case studies. Working with landowners or co-workers is a great way to create useful case studies. It can be equally challenging to ask the right questions. As always, it takes good facilitation skills to make sure that accurate information is provided and discussions don't get too far off topic.

Tips for case studies:

- Make sure you use a case study that illustrates the points you want to make.
- Choose or develop a case study that is relevant to your participants.
- Ask questions that stimulate discussion (see "Discussion," page 38).

Demonstrations

A well-planned, hands-on demonstration is the most effective educational tool ever developed.

It takes time to find a good location and acquire appropriate tools and safety gear for a demonstration that is relevant to local needs. Participants who get to observe and practice sound techniques and practices will be more confident and likely to apply these practices on their own land.

Tips for demonstrations:

- Effective demonstrations address problems in which people are already interested. Or, your demonstration must arouse their interest.
- Participants should understand what the demonstration is about, why it is being conducted, and what it intends to accomplish.
- A demonstration that teaches one practice at a time is likely to be more effective than a multiple-practice demonstration that involves a number of factors. Begin with the simple and gradually proceed to the more complex.
- A skill has neither been taught nor learned until a person can actually perform the task with his or her own hands.
- Psychologists tell us that habits are most easily formed when the performance of an act results in satisfaction. Therefore,

Women and Their Woods participants learn about proper chainsaw safety.

Photo by Amanda Subjin, © Oregon State University

we can assume that demonstrations are most effective when they deal with real problems and present a solution which is possible, practical, and easy to apply.

Group agreements

Group agreements (also called ground rules) establish standards by which the group agrees to participate and the group leader agrees to facilitate the meeting. They function the same as traffic rules do on the highway.

Group agreements are important for all meetings, regardless of how "easy" you expect the group to be. Establish and agree to follow them at the beginning of a meeting. It is difficult or impossible to create new ground rules after a meeting has already begun. Some sample group agreements are:

- Respect schedules.
    - Start and end on time.
    - Call if you are arriving late, leaving early, or not attending.
- Honor the process.
    - No side talking or excessive humor.
    - Keep comments focused, brief, and concise.
    - Turn cell phones off or set on vibrate.
- Treat each other with respect.
    - Practice positive feedback.
    - Support opinions with facts or examples.

"Parking lot"

Sometimes new ideas or topics for inquiry come out as part of a discussion. Sometimes a topic gets contentious or there is a need to re-focus the group. A "parking lot" is a place to record those topics so they are not lost. (They can be subjects for future events.) Post-it notes or flip charts work well in this function.

It is important when closing the meeting to review the "parking lot" list and make a group decision about the disposition of each entry. Doing this keeps the integrity of this technique intact. (If you ignore the list, you'll never be allowed to use this tool again.)

Evaluating your meeting

After each meeting (or other event), it serves the group well to understand what everyone got out of it, what they intend to put into practice, and what could be changed for the next time. To achieve this, plan to include an evaluation at the end of your meeting or event. (See Chapter 7 for more information on evaluations.)

If the next event has been planned, remind group members about when and where it will take place, and what will be covered. Encourage members to attend and bring someone else who might be interested. If no event has been planned, ask for volunteers who might be willing to host, or topics that participants are interested in, and set a date. Don't lose momentum. Don't be afraid to delegate, either. This will help more people take ownership of the group, and prevent you from burning out!

> "…invite community not by telling people what to do, but by looking for common ground and shared interests that encourage people to share a concern for themselves, each other, and the larger community."
>
> *(Arnett, 1986, page 22)*

After each meeting, it is a courtesy to send thank-you notes to your hosts, presenters, or both. Building goodwill is always a good idea. Let the host or presenter know what the participants learned, appreciated hearing, or enjoyed seeing. If possible, take comments directly from the evaluations.

Send participants and the larger group a summary or report of what happened. If you provide a newsletter or other method for connecting the group, make sure it includes a write-up. It not only reminds participants of what they learned (and maybe sends a belated "thank you"), but it lets those who missed out glean information they would have learned if they had been there. Share resources that were part of the event with the larger network. New knowledge and learning should belong to all.

Always summarize and report your evaluations to group leadership, hosts, and presenters. Make sure that the information you report is constructive. Constructive criticism gives the recipient an opportunity to grow. Mean-spirited comments do no one any good. It's best to remove them.

References

Arnett, R.C. 1986. *Communication and community: Implications of Martin Buber's dialogue.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Hiemstra, R. 1991. "Creating Environments for Effective Adult Learning." *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education,* no. 50. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Richardson, J. 2000. *Partnerships in communities: Reweaving the fabric of rural America.* Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Getting ready for a field tour

On the following pages, you'll find several checklists that can help you plan for a big event: a field tour. These comprehensive lists cover the advance work necessary to get ready for the tour, things to remember to bring or do, and what to do after the tour to ensure that momentum continues. They are:

- Field Tour Planning template (pages 42–43) and a filled-in sample (pages 44–45)
- Field Tour Planning Details checklist (pages 46–47)
- "Any Event" checklist (page 48)

Photo by Nicole Strong, © Oregon State University

Have your first-aid kit handy!

FIELD TOUR PLANNING

Program title: _____

Date: _____

Start/end times: _____

Location(s): _____

Audience(s): _____

Tour learning and skill objectives

At the end of this tour, participants will:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Tour agenda items

Stop #1 Title: _____

Location: _____

Major points: _____

Speakers: _____

Time allotted: _____

Stop #2 Title: _____

Location: _____

Major points: _____

Speakers: _____

Time allotted: _____

Stop #3 Title: _____

Location: _____

Major points: _____

Speakers: _____

Time allotted: _____

Stop #4 Title: _____

Location: _____

Major points: _____

Speakers: _____

Time allotted: _____

List key contacts for event

Name	Address	Phone	Email

Sample Field Tour Planning form (page 1)

Field Tour Planning

Program title: Art & Science of Forest Thinning

Date: April 01, 2013

Start/end times: 9 AM - 1 PM, optional brown bag lunch 12 PM - 1 PM

Location(s): Birds N Bees Tree Farm, 101 Tree Farm Lane, Fir, Oregon

Audience(s): WOWNET members & other landowners

Tour learning and skill objectives

At the end of this tour, participants will: be able to ~

1) "Read" a forest's history using site clues

2) Establish plots, measure tree height, DBH, trees/acre, density

3) Make thinning decisions based on #1 & 2, & landowner values, & know who to contact for help

Tour agenda items

Stop #1 Title: Introductions

Location: Barn

Major points: Introduce everyone, review agenda, property history

Speakers: Everyone, & property owners

Time allotted: 40 minutes

Stop #2 Title: Dense young stand - PCT

Location: Stand #1, down road from barn

Major points: Planting density, conducting a PCT

Speakers: Steve Fitzgerald

Time allotted: 35 minutes

Stop #3 Title: Thinning older stands

Location: Stand #2, 70-80 yrs old

Major points: Use clinometer, dtape, core, calculations

Speakers: Nicole Strong & Glenn Ahrens

Time allotted: 60 minutes

Stop #4 Title: Oak restoration site

Location: Oak woodland stand #3

Major points: Keeping oaks by thinning out conifer, management replaces fire

Speakers: Nicole Strong

Time allotted: 30 minutes

Final Q & A = 15 minutes

SAMPLE FIELD TOUR PLANNING FORM (PAGE 2)

List key contacts for event

Name	Address	Phone	Email
Heather Smith		SSS-SSS-SSSS	BIRDS@BIRDS.com
Nicole Strong		SSS-SS6-2469	Nicole.Strong@oregonstate.edu
Catering		N/A	
Vans		N/A	
Porta Potty		N/A	

FIELD TOUR PLANNING DETAILS

Transportation…

— Map and directions are available

— Parking designated

— Signage placed if necessary

— Vans or trucks if too far to walk

— Road and parking prep done if needed

Event marketing or advertising…

— Flyers made, email sent, website updated, media contacted (newspapers, radio, TV, etc.)

— Someone who will take photos at the event

— Someone who is in charge of taking RSVP and contact information

Creature comforts…

— Plan your tour stops to show relevant practices in action. Going all the way into the woods just to stand and listen to someone talk is a waste of everyone's time and the opportunity afforded by being out in the field. Set up a plot, have the group make a thinning plan, have participants try a piece of equipment. Make sure participants go home with new skills, experience, and knowledge.

— A portable PA system is often needed for groups larger than 20 to 25 and to accommodate hearing-challenged participants and certain event settings (for example, next to a stream or at an active logging site).

— Make sure you have plenty of water and snacks for a longer tour. If you do not plan to provide these, ask participants to bring their own.

— Some people might rather use a bathroom facility than Mother Nature. If there are no bathrooms at the field event, make sure you warn participants beforehand, at least before you leave the last place with a restroom; or, rent portable toilets for the event.

— Have a back-up plan in case of rain or other inconvenient weather. A barn or tool shed can sometimes be a great place to wrap up a conversation or carry out anything that doesn't have to be in the woods.

— Make sure participants know how they need to dress (for example, sturdy boots, long pants) and what they might want to bring along (for example, sunscreen, insect repellent).

Safety for field events…

— Make sure your roads and trails are safe for driving and walking.

— Gather necessary safety equipment, a first-aid kit, and safety instructions, and make sure they are close at hand, either in a rig or otherwise handy.

— Have a plan to evacuate people if there is a medical emergency.

Other elements for a successful event…

— If you give handouts, be sure they are relevant to the program.

— Make tours as hands-on and practice-oriented as possible.

— Tours should be fun! It is hard to learn when you are suffering from the weather, are bored, or can't hear or see.

The "Any Event" Checklist

2 to 3 months prior

- ☐ Set date
- ☐ Reserve facility
- ☐ Recruit speakers
- ☐ Secure field sites

2 months prior

- ☐ Prepare agenda
- ☐ Prepare marketing materials
- ☐ Start advertising
- ☐ Secure food
- ☐ Secure lodging
- ☐ Send out press materials

1 month prior

- ☐ Collect teaching materials and supplies
- ☐ Scout location
- ☐ Secure transportation
- ☐ Confirm speakers

1 week prior

- ☐ Confirm attendance
- ☐ Confirm audio-visual equipment
  - ○ Computer
  - ○ Projector
  - ○ Camera
- ☐ Confirm transportation
- ☐ Confirm facility
- ☐ Confirm field sites
- ☐ Confirm lodging

Make sure you take:

- ☐ Teaching materials and supplies
- ☐ Sign-up sheet
- ☐ Evaluation form
- ☐ AV equipment
- ☐ Name badges
- ☐ Camera

After the event

- ☐ Send thank-you notes to presenters.
- ☐ Share evaluation information with instructors and participants, if relevant.
- ☐ Deposit registration money, if collected.

Chapter 5

Funding Your Network

Many groups' goals are to do education and outreach that don't require extensive funding. But, should your group wish to pursue activities that involve measurable impact or concrete action, you may want to find funding. This chapter presents some possible ways to help your group achieve its funding goals.

Funding models

There are some basic funding models for community groups.

- **Fee-based** funding models include membership and event fees. Membership-based organizations assess people a fee to be members of the group. This model gives the group a lot of latitude to determine their goals and how they'd like to accomplish them. Some groups assess a fee (such as admission) to cover the costs of holding an event. Essentially, this is a cost-recovery strategy.

Oregon WOWnet members during a birding session.

Photo by Nicole Strong, © Oregon State University

- Many **grant-funding** agencies will support community groups for specific projects and desired outcomes, but few will provide funding for general support without a connection to a project. So, a grant is a possibility if a group has projects it would like to accomplish, but it probably is not a funding option for general events.

- **Sponsorships** engage organizations and agencies to contribute to the community group, usually in exchange for some kind of recognition, such as the opportunity to present their own programs or resources to the audience.

Fee-based

Whether to be a membership-based group or to hold fee-based events should be a group decision, but it warrants conversation early in each group's formation. There are always costs associated with meetings, from honorariums for speakers to covering the main dish and drinks at a potluck. Having monetary resources for group maintenance will alleviate some stress and burden placed on individuals.

Sometimes paying to attend an event encourages people to attend; they've made a monetary commitment, now they want to come and see what they've paid for. The counter argument to this is that if you're able to offer programming for little or no cost, more people can participate; and, there is the possibility that people will want

to contribute in other ways to "pay" for what they're getting—in other words, they're willing to volunteer to cover perceived obligation.

If charging for events becomes a standard practice, consider building a small fund so your group can offer scholarships to people who would not be able to participate otherwise. (Sponsors may also offer scholarships; see "Sponsorships," page 51.)

The idea of an annual membership fee has merit. Though many of the services the network provides might be of minimal dollar cost (such as online newsletters, email notifications of events and opportunities), the annual membership fee could cover costs associated with regular network events. A special event, such as an overnight retreat, would require an extra fee to cover the higher cost.

Grants

A grant can provide your group the opportunity to achieve projects or undertake other specific activities. Many funders have specific geographic regions or specific technical or conservation issues with which they work. It usually takes some research to match your group's desired activity to possible funders. There are many websites that aggregate grant opportunities. A simple Google search using key words tied to desired outcomes and "grant opportunities" can help you match your group's goals to funders. Each funder has specific steps and requirements for proposals, so be sure to read the request for proposals (RFP) closely. See the Grant Proposal Template on page 52.

General grant-writing tips

- Find out who has funded grants similar to your proposal. Talk to people who were funded, and ask for advice or a copy of their project proposal.

- Read the potential funder's guidelines carefully. Look for what kinds of projects they will fund and when proposals are due. Make sure the duration of the grant (1 year, 2 years) is long enough to accomplish your objectives.

- Use the same terms in your proposal that the funder uses to describe what they want to fund. Show how your project dovetails with their objectives.

- Be clear and concise. Your proposal abstract or executive summary is often the first decision-point for reviewers. Write so that your proposal is easy to read and presents your ideas well.

- Identify measurable outcomes. Once the work is finished, what will be produced? How will it be shared? How many people will benefit?

- Know your limitations. Don't get too ambitious and promise more than you can realistically attain.

- Have someone review and help you edit your proposal. Fresh eyes are always a great addition!

- Don't consider rejection a failure. Perhaps the idea didn't mesh closely enough with the funder's goals. The process of planning and writing has given you a product that you can resubmit elsewhere. Incorporate feedback, when given, to make your proposal better for the next submission.

- Make it fun! You want to enjoy what you're doing while working toward your goals.

Purdue Cooperative Extension has created a helpful resource, "Writing a Successful Grant Proposal." You can find it here: http://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/ec/ec-737.pdf

Perhaps your network is not formally organized enough (that is, incorporated, nonprofit status, etc.) to develop grant proposals for projects. There are many partners, such as your local university Extension Service, who are willing to work with less-formal networks and serve as the umbrella organization that makes application and handles the purse strings on your network's behalf.

Sponsorships

Sometimes organizations are willing to cover meals or sponsor an event or scholarship in exchange for a few minutes to present to your group. Some of these organizations are:

- Farm Credit
- Farm Service Agency
- State forestry associations
- Forest industry

Community organizations

No group should go it alone. Contact the many community organizations that have similar goals and missions to yours, and foster relationships with them. How can your network add value to the community or help other organizations reach their own goals? How can you work together to meet shared goals?

Some community partners to consider are:

- County conservation districts. They often can help with mailing costs, getting mailing lists from county assessor tax records, and printing.
- Local Extension Service office. The staff there can help with finding speakers, resources, topics for presentation, and printing.
- County service foresters. They help find speakers, resources, and topics for presentation.
- Land trusts and conservancies. These help with finding speakers, resources, topics for presentation, and can serve as grant partners or applicants for funding. Some may have small funds they can distribute within the community for outreach groups such as peer networks.
- Other nonprofit conservation organizations.

All of the above can serve advisory roles to networks.

Women and Their Woods (WATW)

Since October 2008, the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, with support from the U.S. Forest Service at Grey Towers, has offered a series of educational programs for women forest landowners. The effort has expanded beyond programs offering a friendly, peer-learning environment to a network of forest landowners and professionals working together to cultivate women's connections to and care of healthy forests. Participants include women from across the mid-Atlantic region who become mentors for other landowners. The Conservancy partners with Penn State Natural Resources Extension to offer the WATW Educational Retreat and Training each fall, with a follow-up retreat in the spring. Attendees gain information on forest management and learn about mentoring other women landowners in their regions.

Pennsylvania Women Forest Landowner group supported by the USDA Forest Service, Delaware Highlands Conservancy, and Penn State's Renewable Natural Resources Extension

GRANT PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

Most grant requests for proposals (RFPs) provide a detailed outline of what they want to see in the proposal. Commonly required components are listed below.

1) Executive summary or abstract

1) Summary of proposed project, including total amount requested

2) Outputs and outcomes

3) Why your organization should receive funding (experience and capacity)

2) Introduction

1) Reason proposed project is needed, supported with background data

2) How your organization will address those needs

3) Why your organization is uniquely poised or qualified to meet those needs

4) Bibliography or references if needed

3) Project approach

1) Goals and objectives

2) Methods

3) Impacts and outcomes (also called deliverables)

4) Project timetable

5) Project evaluation plan. (See Chapter 7 for more information on evaluations.)

6) Plan to continue after funds are gone

7) Key staff and outside partners involved in project

4) Organizational information

1) Mission and history

2) Summary of past and future projects

3) Past or similar accomplishments

5) Budget

1) Outline of costs and expenses: review guidelines and what they do not fund

6) Supplemental information (varies according to proposal)

Chapter 6

Maintaining Your Network
Lessons from Others' Experience

Frequently asked questions about the WOWnet experience

How much money do we need?

The most expensive investment in a peer-learning network is time. If you are a 100 percent volunteer organization with no paid staff, then you don't need a lot of money to get together. You might revisit Chapter 5 (Funding your Network) to pursue this further.

How much leadership do we need?

Nicole's story: When I first formed the Oregon WOWnet, I had a vision of a self-supporting system, akin to a book club. We don't need "leaders" for book clubs, we just get together, and then pick the next book, date, and place to meet. I've learned, however, that this doesn't seamlessly translate to woodland management. Someone has to lead, and that involves staying in touch and helping organize sessions. Depending on the size of your group, the time commitment could range from 4 hours a month to a full-time job!

Very few organizations can afford to hire people to do this kind of work, so in order to succeed we need everyone to pitch in. Some reasons to contribute might include:

- Strengthen my community
- Acquire experience that can help me professionally
- Improve my personal development and confidence
- Learn new skills
- Have fun with other people

Oregon retreat group.

Photo by Nicole Strong, © Oregon State University

Even if you just help someone else host a program at their property by showing up a little early, you will help keep the network going. In most cases, you will need one or more people to:

- Pick dates and topics
- Host a tour or class on their property
- Market the event
- Connect with potential instructors

- Maintain communication with the network (email, mailings, etc).
- Update the network mailing list or database
- Write articles or posts for the network
- Take pictures or video at events
- Help the coordinator

How much time does it take to coordinate a group?

This depends a little on the size of the group. A large group, like the Oregon Women Owning Woodlands Network, is actually comprised of nine small groups that total more than 350 members! It takes a part-time, paid person to keep all these small groups going. But thinking about each individual group, here is approximately the time it takes per month to keep one local group going.

1. Organizing and marketing a session. 4 hours/month

If you host one session per quarter, you will spend what adds up to 30 minutes per week talking to instructors and hosts getting all the logistics together. (You might not spend time on this every week, but this is what it will be on average.) You will also spend another 30 minutes per week crafting your marketing materials and getting them out there, taking RSVPs, sharing directions, and other tasks.

2. Maintaining communication with the network. 4-8 hours/month

Time spent doing this depends on your outlets. I probably spend a couple hours every week looking for interesting stories, compiling upcoming events, or writing blog posts and articles. I try to do this consistently so that WOWnet stays useful and on participants' minds. Hopefully, WOWnet members themselves will contribute more over time, which would enrich the content and reduce the need for me to write so often.

3. Attending sessions, teaching sessions, or both. Time/month varies.

I work statewide, so I have to travel to each site (usually the day before) to set up any field activities, be there for the session, then drive home. I usually plan for instructional preparation time equal to the time of the session (for example, 4 hours of instructional prep for a 4-hour session). Then add travel time, which in Oregon can be up to 5 hours each way!

4. Updating the database. 2 hours/month

WOWnet members are dynamic moving targets, so their mailing and email addresses change all the time, and they don't always remember to tell me.

What communication tools do we use?

Mailings

Mailing flyers or letters can be a useful way to grow as a group and introduce yourself to potential new network members. A benefit of mailings is that they allow you to reach people who have not adopted digital technologies yet. Drawbacks are that printing and postage can get expensive, and there is the risk that people who don't know you might just throw the flyer away.

Email listserv

An email listserv is an electronic mailing list that allows you to send a single email to a number of people without it registering as spam. It can also allow you to send nicely formatted emails and track how many people read them. There are several companies that offer this service fairly cheaply to nonprofits and associated educational groups.

The advantages of a listserv are the low cost and the ability to distribute information efficiently to a large group. The disadvantages lie in people not knowing how to use them well. Someone who doesn't know how to use a listserv might send an email intended for one person to the entire group, which quickly gets frustrating for other members.

Newsletter

Newsletters are useful for sending information to a member group that has mixed access to technology. For the Oregon Master Woodland Manager program, we create newsletters in both print and digital form. We send print copies only to those we know can't access the Web version, or to those who request one.

It takes a lot of time to gather content, format, and design a newsletter. Choose your iteration (monthly, quarterly, annually) wisely!

Website

Almost everyone is on the Internet these days, so a website is almost a necessary component of your marketing and communication plan. Websites take some money and time to design well, though there are several free services to create simple "blog" type websites. It is absolutely worth it to hire a web designer to help you solidify your vision for what a website will accomplish, how interactive it will be, and what kind of information it will house.

Blog

A blog is a simple, free way to share information with your network. It is not as interactive as a website; usually only one or a few people manage and put content on it. You can use a blog to help market upcoming programs, and you can add "widgets" such as a calendar or maps.

Social media

Facebook and other social media allow interactive sharing of information. A well-managed Facebook page or group is a free way for your network to share photos of work done on woodlands, advertise upcoming events, find assistance, and more. It usually helps to have an appointed administrator (or two) for the Facebook groups and pages to ensure regular posting and appropriate activity.

There are many social platforms; Facebook is just the most popular. Find the tool that works best for your group. (For example, if you just want to share photos, Flickr, Instagram, or Pinterest might better suit your needs.)

MN Women's Woodland Network
June 14

Fabulous and awesome are two words that come to mind when reflecting on yesterdays Caring for the Land program. We enjoyed perfect weather, meeting new people and learning!

The Block family farm and the hoop house was wonderful, the visit to the woods to learn about tree planting & monitoring your woods was great, seeing the shoreland restoration project was cool, and the Firewise program. A day full of sunny skies, forest tent caterpillars-----and a chance encounter with phenologist John Latimer delivering mail on Zims Lane. It just couldn't get any better!!!! Thanks everyone!

Case study: Arkansas Women in Agriculture

Arkansas Women in Agriculture (ARWIA) is a nonprofit organization comprised of approximately 100 women who are agricultural and livestock producers across the state. Agricultural producers include row crop farmers as well as organic and small vegetable farmers. ARWIA is a membership-based organization, although anyone can access information through its social network and website. The group emerged from a university-led effort to provide more education to women in agriculture and livestock production. Its history illustrates how groups emerge, grow, and change over time and offers some key lessons that might be helpful to others interested in forming organizations or networks.

History

The ARWIA conferences began in 2005, led by research and Extension professors at the University of Arkansas and a steering committee composed of women involved in agriculture around the state. The committee was made up of land-grant professionals, farmers, ranchers, Farm Bureau Women's Committee members and officers, representatives from the three Farm Credit offices in the state, and representatives from the nonprofit sector. The first conference was very successful, and over 200 women attended. However, a few university professionals expressed unease and resentment about the conference and the possible creation of an agriculture educational effort that purposely targeted women. The fact that the Farm Bureau already had a women's committee was used as an excuse to discourage efforts to create the ARWIA, despite the fact that leaders from the Farm Bureau committee were already on the ARWIA steering committee for the conferences.

At the 2006 meeting, conference participants unanimously decided to incorporate as an Arkansas nonprofit (Arkansas Women in Agriculture, Inc.) and seek 501(c)3 status, thereby placing direct control of fundraising, financial management, and outreach efforts in the hands of the new organization and not the university. An interim board of directors included women from all quadrants of the state, including farmers, ranchers, farm credit professionals, and women from other public and private agencies. Although Extension personnel helped create the organization, they were strongly discouraged from taking any leadership positions within the group. Extension personnel did continue to help in planning and facilitating the conferences, but they could only offer support from behind the scenes.

Following the 2007 ARWIA conference, the board appointed an interim CEO/project director to oversee its operations and administer its educational programs and outreach efforts. The group also added a membership component to its structure, with more than 100 members. During the 2008 conference, members elected a full board of directors and finalized the CEO position. It was a part-time, paid position.

Funding for the CEO position was solidified when ARWIA received funds to implement risk management workshops through Annie's Project. Workshops were held at various locations across the state from 2007 through 2011. The CEO, with the board's assistance, continued to hold ARWIA conferences during this time as well. Funding became increasingly scarce as the economic downturn worsened.

The CEO resigned in March 2011 to pursue other opportunities, but she stayed on the board at the board's request until September 2011. She was then elected treasurer. As a volunteer, she maintains communication with board members, manages the social media accounts, and communicates with members via social media.

ARWIA did not conduct a statewide conference in 2012 because of budget, personnel, and time constraints. It received funding from Southern Risk Management and instead used that funding to host four regional conferences in 2012 (one of those was cancelled due to low registration). ARWIA is working with a private donor to bring Annie's Project back to Arkansas in 2013. According to the ex-CEO, "Although ARWIA has made changes in order to adjust to funding concerns, etc., we are still alive and kicking." The organization is currently advertising the 2013 conference on its website and via social media.

Lessons

ARWIA was created to meet an expressed demand for education and networking among women working in agriculture and related fields. It is still "alive and kicking," but in a somewhat diminished state. Here are some key lessons:

- Trying to include all stakeholders in agriculture, livestock, and forestry can lead to an organization that tries to be too many things to too many people. The key is to focus! Start small and grow slowly over time. Set achievable and measurable goals.

- Time constraints for board members, leaders, or other volunteer staff will eventually exhaust their ability to maintain a high level of involvement and effort. A realistic assessment of volunteer skills and commitment should be conducted annually. Volunteers should also be rewarded and recognized for their contributions. Annual awards, special name badges or soft goods like hats, shirts, or travel mugs that identify them as volunteers are all effective ways of recognizing the effort your volunteers make.

- Although hiring staff can help alleviate the workload for volunteers, the expectations for paid staff need to be realistic. One part-time staff person cannot possibly run an entire organization including fund raising, conferences, workshops, board management, and membership service. Learn to delegate responsibility across board members and other volunteers. To be sustainable, an organization cannot entrust the entire workload to one individual, be she a volunteer leader or staff member.

- Needs change. Although an evaluation was conducted each year as part of the annual ARWIA conferences, the format, location, and often the topics remained the same. An in-depth needs assessment should be part of your network's yearly plan to determine if you are meeting the needs of your membership. It's very easy to get stuck in a rut and perform the same tasks, the same way, over and over.

- To be successful, you also need to be aware that not everyone will be supportive, including agencies and organizations. Be aware of hidden agendas and power plays within and between organizations. Competition for funds, recognition, and access to resources can be intense.

- Internal conflict can destroy an organization. Transparent operating procedures and communication can help alleviate conflict. If conflict cannot be resolved, seek assistance from an outside group that works with nonprofits. For example, the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations (OANO) is a statewide association of more than 500 nonprofit organizations representing Ohio's charitable nonprofit sector. OANO's mission is to provide leadership, education, and advocacy to enhance the ability of Ohio's nonprofit organizations to serve their communities.

Photo by Jeff Hino, © Oregon State University

"I think WOW will promote self-confidence because it allows a woman to learn at her own place… and talk about what she knows and what she loves."

Tamara Walkingstick, Little Rock, Arkansas — Associate Director, Arkansas Forest Resources Center at University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service

Chapter 7

Evaluating Your Peer Network
Are we accomplishing our goals?

Why do an evaluation?

An evaluation (in the context of a peer network) is the act of collecting information from your participants to discover the significance, worth, or quality to them of a meeting, an event, or the group experience on the whole. If you receive grant funding or want to ask for funding, if you want to know if your network is accomplishing its goal or could be improved in some way, you will want to do an evaluation.

Other reasons to evaluate your work include:

- Raise awareness and understanding
- Measure progress towards your goals
- Set direction for your program
- Fine-tune your program
- Support decision making
- Demonstrate accountability
- Show impact

Designing your evaluation

There are many useful guides for designing and planning evaluations. A great place to start is with your program goals. (See Chapter 1 for information on program goals).

Make your evaluation be:

- Quick and to the point
- Quantifiable
- Repeatable
- Easy to collect
- Specific to situation, context, and timing
- Cost-effective
- Able to tell the whole story
- Regionally applicable

Photo by Amanda Subjin, © Oregon State University

Flip charts, easels, and markers are critical tools for a good meeting wrap-up! Having one note taker and one group facilitator really helps the process flow smoothly.

What to measure

Demographics

This isn't always necessary, though some grantors require this kind of information to help characterize your participants. You can always let your survey participants know they are welcome to pass by any question they do not feel like answering.

- Acres stewarded
- Number of years the land has been owned by this landowner, in the family, or both
- Age
- Gender
- Income
- County of residence

Effectiveness of your network, subjective

- Perceived relevance to participants' goals
- Perceived extent to which the program has met its stated goals
- Perceived extent to which the program has increased knowledge
- Perceived likelihood that participants will implement what they've learned, or their intent to use what they've learned. For example: "As a result of this network, what will you do differently this year?"
- Perceived extent to which participants feel they can help other landowners
- Perceived extent to which participants feel they are helped by others
- Perceived monetary value of program

Effectiveness of your network, objective

- Number of participants who attend programs
- Number of landowners being reached by peers
- Hours dedicated to sharing what participants have learned with neighbors and other landowners
- How participants have shared what they've learned (e.g., staffed displays at farm shows or fairs, written articles in newspapers, talked to a group)

Forest stewardship

- Knowledge of forest stewardship practices and behavior
- Knowledge of where to go for more information
- Use of appropriate resources for more information
- Activities on own land

How do you collect information?

Informal assessments

One of the simplest and most efficient ways to collect information is in person, before your participants go home. One very simple method is to divide a flip chart into two columns headed with statements like:

Worked well	Could be improved

(or)

Plus	Minus

This simple method can provide very useful information and promote discussion among participants. It's important that participants feel safe to express their opinions.

Surveys

There are two surveys in this chapter: a sample **event evaluation** (the sample is for a retreat), used to measure the program's quality up to now and plan for future programs (pages 62–65); and a **program needs assessment**, used to plan and develop priorities for the next year's programs (pages 66–70).

Online surveys

If you work for a university or other organization, you most likely have access to a free online survey tool. If you don't have access through an employer, there are several basic tools you can use for free, including:

- Survey Monkey http://www.surveymonkey.com/
- Kwik Surveys http://kwiksurveys.com/
- Zoomerang http://www.zoomerang.com

Surveys by U.S. Mail

You may have a greater response rate from rural populations if you mail your survey. However, your costs will be much higher, from $2 to $5 for printing and postage (to both send and have survey returned) per survey. If you do a survey by mail, we suggest including an addressed return envelope that includes postage, and a cover letter explaining the purpose of the evaluation, how anonymity will be preserved, and how the results will be used.

Evaluation resources

The American Evaluation Association website contains a lot of tips as well as an evaluator locater to help you find local expertise. http://www.eval.org

Penn State Extension has several simple Evaluation Tip Sheets. http://extension.psu.edu/evaluation/titles.html

Oregon State University Extension evaluation specialist Molly Engle posts a regular blog covering all things evaluation. http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/programevaluation/

WOWnet Retreat Evaluation

Please help us improve our educational services by completing the following WOWnet Evaluation. Your responses will remain anonymous. If you have any question, please contact _____.

1. Please rate the following reasons for attending the WOWnet Retreat in terms of their importance to you.

	Not at all important	Very unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Very important	Extremely important
Learn new forest stewardship information					
Learn about forestry resources in my area					
Meet other women with similar interests					
Network with forestry professionals					
Learn how I can contribute to WOWnet					
See what others are doing on their land					
Learn new skills to use on my land					

2. Did you have other reasons for attending the retreat? Please enter them here.

3. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements, both before and after attending the retreat.

	Before the retreat					After the retreat				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel more confident about stewarding my land.										
I know who to contact with forestry-related questions.										
I better understand forestry-related terms.										
I am excited to be part of this community.										
I know what I want my forest to look like in 20 years.										
I am excited to share what I know.										
I want to take more forestry classes.										

4. What did you LIKE MOST about the retreat?

5. What would you like to SEE IMPROVED for the next retreat?

6. In the next 6 months, how likely are you to do the following?

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Undecided	Likely	Very likely
Write a Stewardship Plan					
Contact a WOWnet member I met at the retreat					
Attend a woodland owner event					
Join my local Small Woodland Owner Association					
Contact a forestry professional					
Host a WOWnet event					
Attend a WOWnet event					
Visit the WOWnet website					
Assess my property for management needs					
Conduct a harvesting operation					
Plant trees					

7. How do you think you will apply what you have learned from this retreat to your forest stewardship? If you think you will apply nothing at all, please include that as well.

8. How do you think you might participate in WOWnet in the future? If not at all, please include that as well.

Growing Your Peer Learning Network

9. How many acres of woodland do you own or serve as primary manager for? _____ acres

10. How many years have you owned or cared for your land? _____ years

11. What is your current age? (Please choose one.)

☐ 1–20
☐ 21–30
☐ 31–40
☐ 41–50
☐ 51–60
☐ 61–70
☐ 71–80
☐ 81+

Thank you for your input. Do you have any other comments? Please include them here.

WOWnet Needs Assessment

This survey is being conducted to help WOWnet better serve its members—you!

This survey is completely voluntary. Your responses will remain anonymous. If there is a question you do not want to answer, please skip forward to the next question.

1. How did you hear about WOWnet? Please check all that apply.

☐ Email

☐ Newsletter

☐ Newspaper

☐ Word of mouth

☐ Internet search

☐ Other _____

2. How many WOWnet gatherings have you attended?

☐ I have not yet attended

☐ 1

☐ 2–4

☐ 5+

3. How many WOWnet events have you helped host?

☐ 0

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4+

4. What motivated you to join WOWnet?

	Not at all important	Very unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Very important	Extremely important
Meet other women with similar interests					
Network with other women					
Addresses my interests more than other programs					
Feel more comfortable with women-only events					
Opportunity to share					

The following questions will help us figure out when and how best to offer programs.

5. How often would you like to meet with a local WOWnet group? (Please choose one).

☐ Never

☐ Every month, year round

☐ Monthly, fall and spring only

☐ Every other month

☐ Quarterly

☐ Annually

6. What is your best meeting day and time? (Choose as many as apply.)

- ☐ Weekday morning
- ☐ Weekday afternoon
- ☐ Weekday evening
- ☐ Saturday morning
- ☐ Saturday afternoon
- ☐ Sunday morning
- ☐ Sunday afternoon

7. What types of learning events would you most prefer?

	Very strongly avoid	Strongly avoid	Indifferent	Strongly prefer	Very strongly prefer
Lecture-style presentations from experts					
Field tour					
Hands-on practice					
Learn from other WOWnet members					
Online webinars					
Classes with some lecture, some field					
Multi-day retreat					

8. How useful do you find the following communication tools?

	Very useless	Useless	Neutral	Useful	Very useful
Website					
Email listserv					
Mailed flyers					
Newspaper announcements					
Forestry newsletters					
Facebook					
Phone call					

9. Are you willing to host a WOWnet program?

☐ Yes
☐ Maybe
☐ No

The following questions help us understand you better.

10. Are you the primary steward of your woodland?

☐ Yes
☐ No

11. How many years have you been caring for your land?

☐ Less than 1 year
☐ 1–5 years
☐ 6–10 years
☐ More than 10 years

12. How many acres of woodland do you own or steward? _____ acres

13. What is the ownership structure of your woodland?

☐ Family

☐ Single owner

☐ Cooperative

☐ Partnership

☐ Other _____

14. I could manage my land better if I knew about....

15. I could manage my land better if only I had....

16. If you would like to tell us more about your woodland and stewardship, please do so here:

Appendix

Lessons from Woodland Owner Research

The nation's 10 million or so woodland owners are a diverse group, and one that resists broad characterization. In fact, as some research has suggested, this audience really doesn't differ much from the general public. While some values like property rights and a preference for solitude are common among woodland owners, they hold few other values or motivations in common.

Recent woodland owner research has focused on developing landowner typologies that can be useful in reducing a massive and diverse group of people into smaller and more uniform subgroups. While imperfect, grouping people by type can help you focus limited resources on one or two of the groups you most want to reach. You might choose to offer events or develop communications that are more likely to resonate strongly with these groups. This approach may be more effective than trying to be everything to everybody, particularly given the highly diverse nature of landowner populations. For example, using the Butler et al. (2007) framework (see Table 1), you might decide that for your women's network, the Woodland Retreat group is most likely to come out and get involved. (For details and definitions, you will need to consult the research directly. Table 1 serves primarily as a guide to orient you to some available research.)

Many typologies are based on statistical analysis of landowner responses to self-administered surveys. They tend to produce three to four landowner segments. The results of a few such studies are presented in Table 1, along with references at the end of this Appendix for those interested in digging deeper into definitions of each of these landowner types and other details of the studies.

Table 1. Summary of recent landowner typology research

Source	Study area	Landowner types identified
Bieling (2004)	Germany	Economically interested Conceptually interested Uninterested
Boon et al. (2004)	Denmark	Classic Hobby Indifferent
Butler et al. (2007)	United States	Woodland retreat Working the land Supplemental income Ready to sell
Fischer (2012)	Oregon	Commodity managers Amenity managers Recreational managers Passive managers
Finley and Kittredge (2006)	Massachusetts	John Muir Henry David Thoreau Jane Doe

Table 1. Summary of recent landowner typology research, *continued*

Hujala et al. (2009)	Finland	Trusting realizers Active learners Independent managers (20%)
Kendra and Hull (2005)	New forest owners in Virginia	Absentee investors Professionals Preservationists Young families Forest planners Farmers
Kluender and Walkingstick (2000)	Arkansas	Timber managers Resident conservationists Affluent weekenders Poor rural residents
Korhonen et al. (2012)	Finland	Non-committed Forest Management Association (FMA) members Independent timber traders Relationship builders FMA partners
Kurtz and Lewis (1981)	Missouri	Timber agriculturalist Timber conservationist Forest environmentalist Range pragmatist
Majumdar et al. (2008)	Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina	Multiple-objective Nontimber Timber
Ross-Davis and Broussard (2007)	North-central Indiana	Forest managers New forest owners Passive forest owners
Salmon et al. (2006)	Utah	Amenity Multiple-benefit Passive
Surendra et al. (2009)	Arkansas	Amenity focused rural Amenity focused urban Passive rural Passive urban

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