

2023 Community Partner Action Plan

On June 12th, 2023, the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning hosted a Seeds and Soil community workday, which included open feedback sessions, a needs assessment, and prioritization of action steps. The session was attended by 30 community partners from diverse sectors. After the event, CCESL distributed a survey to all partners to gather feedback and capture information from those who could not attend the event. Of the respondents, 91% are interested in networking with WCU faculty and staff and 82% are interested in networking with other community organizations. Community partners also look forward to exploring shared resources to enhance community impact.

Desired Collaborations

Percentage of community partners who *AGREED* or *STRONGLY AGREED* with the following opportunities for partnership and collaboration with CCESL:



Community Partner Feedback

Top Benefits of Partnering with CCESL

- Shared resources with WCU and with other community organizations
- Access to student volunteer base
- Opportunities for professional learning
- Event advertising support
- Opportunities to secure funding for projects in partnership with WCU

“[Our shared purpose is to] engage students in the community in ways that help them grow and expand their knowledge while working together on projects that help move local organizations forward.”

Ways to Strengthen Partnership with CCESL

- Clearer communication of partnership opportunities with CCESL
- Knowing who to contact at CCESL

2023-2024 Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning Community Partner Action Plan

Executive Summary

A key component of Western Carolina University's mission is cultivating "a robust connectedness with surrounding communities in Southern Appalachia". The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning strives to live out this mission by fostering reciprocal, collaborative relationships with regional community partners. Towards this end, on June 12th, 2023, the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning hosted a *Seeds and Soil* community workday, which included open feedback sessions, a needs assessment, and prioritization of action steps. The session was open to all our partners, over 200 in number. It was attended by 30 community partners from diverse sectors. This action plan was developed using the feedback captured during that event.

Strategies

I. Cultivate Community Relationships

Provide meeting opportunities that foster and strengthen community partnerships.

- a. CCESL will host bi-monthly "Coffee and Conversations" events held at an off-campus community space, open to all community partners and stakeholders
- b. CCESL will provide open office hours weekly to give community partners the opportunity to meet one-on-one with our Associate Director

II. Facilitate Professional Learning

Provide training opportunities, including workshops, webinars, and resources, focused on capacity building and partnership development.

- a. CCESL will host monthly professional learning opportunities in collaboration with internal and external experts on topics including marketing and social media, grant writing and fundraising, leadership development, and sustainability
 - i. Per semester, 2 in-person, on-campus Lunch and Learn workshops
 - ii. Per semester, 2 virtual webinars

III. Strengthen Communication

Provide timely and transparent information about CCESL's offerings and ways to partner.

- a. CCESL will create and disseminate an accessible Community Partner Handbook
 - i. Glossary of community engagement terms
 - ii. Clearly outlined processes for seeking volunteers
 - iii. Clearly outlined processes for partnering with service-learning classes and community-engaged research opportunities
 - iv. Staff contact information and avenues to get in touch with CCESL
- b. CCESL will strengthen external communication methods, including our website, community partner newsletter, and social media channels