



Facilitator Guide

Common Ground: Stories of the Land

Conservation of our natural resources thrives when people feel deep, personal connections to the natural world. Those connections are most powerfully explored and illustrated not through the recitation of facts, figures, and stats, but through communal sharing of stories and memories of our experiences in nature.

Common Ground allows participants to conduct and record short interviews with people they love, care about, and respect, interviews focused on concrete experiences and memories that help participants explain their love for and connection to the natural world.

Common Ground brings together people of all generations, ages, backgrounds, knowledge bases, places of residence, and political persuasions to give voice in their own words to the important role that the natural world plays in their lives. The project aims to help people not only acknowledge their own connections to the natural world, but also build relationships with others who feel the same. We hope to show that—despite perceived differences—our common (though unique) experiences in nature are fertile ground for building relationships and coming together to work toward a collective goal: the protection of our natural resources.

Common Ground is a project of the Iowa Association of Naturalists and is inspired by the StoryCorps project of National Public Radio. Much of this guide is based on resource materials provided by StoryCorps.



Questions or Concerns?

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The Community Facilitator's Role

Being a community facilitator does not mean you are to go out and conduct a series of interviews. Your role is to create opportunities for others to participate. Interviews will be most authentic and meaningful when they happen between people that know and care about each other. You are there to make them aware of the opportunity, guide them through the process, and serve as a liaison to *Common Ground* and the project team.

More specifically, as facilitator you will:

- Spread the word and recruit participants.
- Prepare participants for the interview process.
- Collect participant information and release forms.
- Receive interview and artwork submissions from participants and submit them to the *Common Ground* project coordinator.
- Update participants on the program and its events and happenings.

Though there are things that must happen (like release forms), how you choose to approach most of the program is flexible. Host a "pop-up" recording session day at a local rest home, do everything via email with participants you never see, or work with your local radio station. Do what is right for you and your community, and have fun with it.

Program Timeframe

The program will officially open Spring 2019 and you may begin inviting your community to participate at any time. *Common Ground* will continue to accept and archive interviews as long as there is interest, but we aim to have enough interviews and photos collected by **November 15, 2019** to begin development of an online archive, traveling exhibit of photos and interview excerpts, possible radio distribution, and whatever other exciting avenues for sharing and celebrating our stories we come up with.

Recruiting Participants

Common Ground depends on robust participation from volunteers with diverse voices and from diverse backgrounds. Spread the word in the best ways that work for your community. Some ideas include:

- Submit news releases (a sample is available on the *Common Ground* website) to local media; be willing to sit for interviews or question sessions
- Include notices in your newsletters, email blasts, and social media outreach
- Invite your friends groups and board members
- Send personal emails to friends, teachers, volunteers, colleagues, or community members
- Outreach with specific populations: rest and nursing facilities, multicultural centers, schools/preschools, hunter/angler groups, etc.
- Host public programs introducing the program and "enrolling" participants
- Host "recording days" with scheduled time slots for participants to record their interviews using higher quality equipment (check with a local radio station, high school, or college for assistance)

Preparing Participants

As facilitator, your most important role will be helping to make your participants feel comfortable. This will likely be a new experience for most. Try to ease their concerns over not having anything important to say. Remember: All stories and all voices are valuable and deserve to be shared. One of the best things you can do in this role is participate yourself, showing your own passion for the outdoors and enthusiasm for this project.

- Explain the overall project, making sure they are aware that they can choose not to submit any thing to *Common Ground* if they don't want to once they have finished their interviews.
- Provide participants with the Interview Guide. As their local contact, you should fill in your contact information on the last page of their guide.
- Provide the participant information and release sheets and **make sure participants submit their completed forms** with their interviews and photos.
- Troubleshoot tech problems.

Submitting Interviews to the Project Coordinator

As you receive interview submissions from your local participants, you will check them over and package them up to send them to the *Common Ground* project coordinator.

1. Ensure all forms and materials are submitted.

- Participant information forms
- Participant releases, completed and **signed by BOTH participants** in every interview. You should collect the originals but may provide copies to participants if they wish.
- Interview recording (.mp3, .mp4, or .wav files preferred)
- Photo/artwork submissions

2. Catalog interview materials.

- Record your name as facilitator on the submitted participant information and release forms and assign the interview a number. If your site has multiple facilitators, decide what will work best for you on how to track them and let the project coordinator know.
- Each distinct interview should have a unique number, even if the interview features the same partners.
- Include the facilitator name and interview number in all communication with the *Common Ground* project coordinator regarding a particular interview.

3. Submit materials to the project coordinator.

- Email or use the Uploader on the website to submit all files to Lilly Jensen.
- Include the facilitator name and interview number in all communication regarding a particular interview.
- If you are submitting materials for multiple interviews at once, be sure to differentiate interview files carefully with their interview numbers. We don't want to attribute an interview to the wrong participants.

4. Follow Up with Participants

- Keep your own records of your participant contact information for future updates.
- Keep participants aware of the progress of the overall program. The project coordinator will send facilitator updates for you to pass on to your community.
- **Celebrate!** Feel free to celebrate and share the experiences with your participants and community in the way that is right for you.