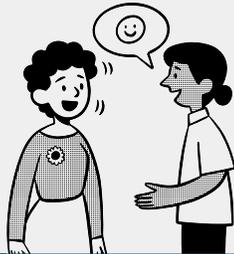


STRONGER TOGETHER: RECIPROCAL BENEFITS

Of COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Social Workers, Students, Organizations, & Community



SW CONFERENCE 2026



OBJECTIVE:

1. Recognize the importance of networking/ community engagement
2. Identify strategies to build relationships within the community
3. Discuss barriers for students and community members.
4. Explore existing volunteer, internship, and facility tour opportunities
5. Engage participants in identifying mutual needs and opportunities for partnership and collaboration.
6. Deliberate Practice



Ethical Principles-Core Values



Value: Importance of Human Relationships

Ethical Principle: Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.

Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change.

Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process.

Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities.

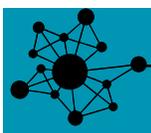


Ethical Standards

5.01 Integrity of the Profession

(c) **Social workers should contribute time and professional expertise to activities that promote respect for the value, integrity, and competence of the social work profession.** These activities may include **teaching**, research, **consultation**, **service**, legislative testimony, **presentations in the community**, and participation in their professional organizations.

(d) Social workers should **contribute to the knowledge base of social work and share with colleagues their knowledge related to practice, research, and ethics.** Social workers should seek to contribute to the profession’s literature and to share their knowledge at professional meetings and conferences.



What is...

Networking

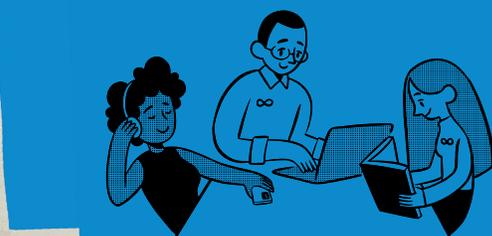
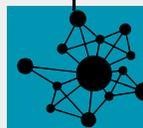
the action or process of interacting with others to **exchange information** and develop professional or social contacts.
First step towards collaboration.

Collaboration

the action of working with someone to produce or **create** something.
Collaboration is **working together** for a common goal.

Social Work!

[Oxford Languages](#)



IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING

Research Shows:

NASW 2024 Work force study shows:

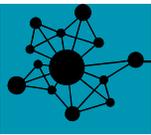
73% of social workers found their current position through professional networking

• **Professional Impact**

- Social workers practice across systems and disciplines
- Networking strengthens interdisciplinary collaboration
- Broader connections = better care to constituencies

• **Professional Sustainability**

- Expands career pathways
 - (field placements, conferences, seminars)
- Associated with higher levels of job satisfaction



Networking & Collaboration

Benefits 4 Students:



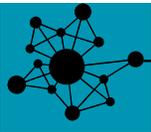
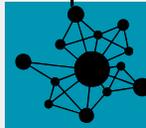
Professional Social Capital

- Expands networks through supervisors, agency staff, and community partners
- Creates pathways to mentorship, references, and early career opportunities
- Understanding of community needs

Discovery of Professional Identity

- Reveals strengths beyond the classroom
 - Advocacy
 - Rapport-building
 - Program coordination
- Clarifies professional values and practice style
 - Readiness for micro/macro practice

(Bourner & Millican, 2011)



Networking & Collaboration

Benefits 4 Students:



Communication & Collaboration

- Strengthens communication across disciplines
- Enhances interdisciplinary collaboration

Strategic Thinking & Reflection

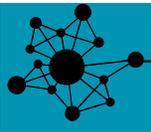
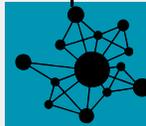
- Builds adaptability in complex environments
- Enhances reflective capacity and ethical decision-making

Confidence & Professional Purpose

- Reports of stronger direction and professional commitment
- Deepened dedication to social justice and community impact

All of these elements directly enhance employability and long-term professional effectiveness.

(Bourner & Millican, 2011)



Networking & Collaboration

Benefits 4 Organizations:



Expanded Capacity

- Agencies can create meaningful student roles aligned with real needs

Fresh Perspectives & Innovation

- Students bring current theory, research, and energy

Pipeline for Future Employees

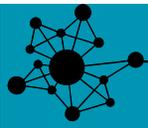
- Student placements often act as a “long interview” for future hires
- Organizations hosting engaged, well-networked social work students see increased capacity, better collaboration, and greater access to resources.

Strengthened Community–University Relationships

- Agencies gain visibility, legitimacy, and access to university resources, training, and consultation
- Universities can provide CEUs, supervision support, or resource sharing
- Both partners can collaborate on grants or joint projects

(Indeed Editorial Team, 2025)





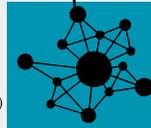
Networking & Collaboration

Benefits 4 Community:

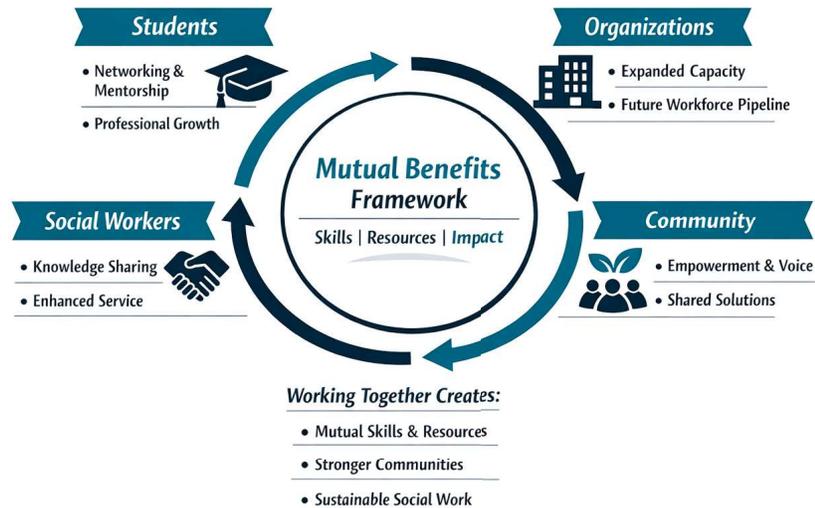


- **Sustainable, Reciprocal Partnerships**
- Builds long-term, mutually beneficial relationships
- Breaks the “ivory tower” stigma toward providers and academia
- **Access & Influence**
- Direct access to academic knowledge and resources
- Improves access to information, resources, and supportive services
- Community members influence decisions affecting their lives
- Input on services, resources, policy, and research
- Ensures cultural responsiveness of interventions and services
- **Trust & Empowerment**
- Fosters trust through respectful engagement
- Community members recognized as experts of their own lived experience
- Shared ownership of problems and solutions
- Greater receptivity to services

(Askheim et al., 2017)



Stronger Together: Reciprocal Benefits for All



BARRIERS

for students & community members.



Students

- Limited confidence or professional identity
- Unequal access to networks
- Time constraints and competing demands
- Unclear expectations

Organizations & Community

- Limited staff capacity
- Mismatched expectations
- High turnover
- Structural barriers

(Bourner & Millican, 2011)

IDENTIFY STRATEGIES TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

☛ Intentional Networking

- Attend community events, seminars, and conferences
- Seek out mentorship and collaborative opportunities
- Leverage interdisciplinary connections

🌱 Reciprocal Engagement

- Listen to community members as experts of their own experience
- Co-create programs, services, or research initiatives
- Share knowledge, resources, and decision-making power

💡 Skill & Capacity Building

- Provide training, supervision, and guidance for students and staff
- Encourage reflective practice and ethical decision-making
- Build strategic, sustainable partnerships



Collaboration Opportunities						
Organization	Volunteer	Internships	Attend Trainings/Me	Tour Facility	Join Committees	Other
Citizens Climate Lobby - Evansville	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local events
Congregation Acting for Justice and Empowerment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Evansville African American Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Membership
Evansville Recovery Alliance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Advocacy
Feed Evansville	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Greater Evansville Youth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
League of Women Voters of Southwestern Indiana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
NAACP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Students can start a local chapter, attend advocacy events
Right to Life of Southwest Indiana - Go Mobile Clinic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
River City Pride	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Community events
Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign	<input type="checkbox"/>	Advocacy				
Solar United Neighbors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Advocacy
YWCA Evansville	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Networking

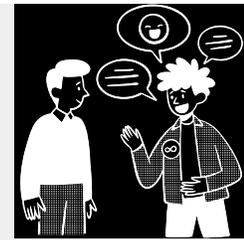
Everywhere is an opportunity

Are You Ready?

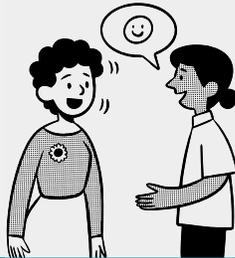


- Do your research
- Ask open-ended questions
- Business cards
- Elevator pitch
- Give recognition
- Use their name in conversation
- Be sure to follow-up the next day
- Ask for a meeting

- Shake hands
- Be genuine
- Speak positively
- Good eye contact
- Be confident
- Mingle



Network → Collaboration



THANK YOU.

References

Askheim, O. P., Beresford, P., & Heule, C. (2017). Mend the gap – strategies for user involvement in social work education. *Social Work Education, 36*(2), 128–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2016.1248930>

Bhagwan, R., Naidu, L., & Panwar, M. (2022). Transcending university boundaries: community engagement as a tool to enhance social work students preparedness for real world practice. *Social Work Education, 41*(6), 1123–1140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2021.1933931>

Boodram, C.-A. S., & Thomas, S. O. (2022). Social Work and Community Engagement: A Case Study of a University/Community Collaborative Project in Trinidad and Tobago. *The International Journal of Community and Social Development, 4*(4), 396–410. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25166026221125314>

Bourner, T., & Millican, J. (2011). Student-community engagement and graduate employability. *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning, 13*(2), 68–85. <https://doi.org/10.5456/WPLL.13.2.68>

Indeed Editorial Team. (2025, June 6). What Are the Benefits of Interns and Why Do Companies Hire Them? *Indeed Career Guide*. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/why-do-companies-hire-interns>

Kagotho, N., McClendon, J., & Lane, S. (2017). Student philanthropy: Connecting BSW students, schools of social work, and communities. *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work, 22*, 75–91. <https://doi.org/10.18084/1084-7219.22.1.75>

Koekkoek, A., Van Ham, M., & Kleinmans, R. (2021). Unraveling University-Community Engagement: A Literature Review. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 25*(1), 3–24.

Lo Presti, L., Maggiore, G., Marino, V., & Resciniti, R. (2024). Inclusion and social justice in sustainable higher education: An integrated perspective through the lens of public engagement. *Journal of Management & Governance, 28*(3), 771–809. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10997-023-09672-x>



Gap-Mending:

Turning Networking & Collaboration into Impact

⚠ Gap Creation

- Stigma, categorization, hierarchy
- Lack of contextual knowledge

🔄 Transformative Co-Production

- Service users and professionals share power
- Shape decisions together
- Create new collaborative structures

👤 Centers Empowerment

- Personal: confidence, skills, voice
- Political: collective action, structural change

👉 Strengthens Reciprocal Relationships

- Each partner contributes knowledge the other cannot provide
- Builds mutual learning and community-driven change