

Challenges and opportunity—our communities face both, usually at the same time.

The EVOLVE community leadership programs offered by UW Extension help develop and enhance the skills, knowledge and relationships needed to build and sustain healthy communities—ones that thrive in times of challenge and opportunity.

Mission

University of Wyoming Extension provides lifelong learning opportunities for the people of Wyoming and empowers them to make decisions that enhance their quality of life.



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EVOLVE
Extension Volunteer Organization for
Leadership, Vitality and Enterprise

A community-based leadership development program developed by the University of Wyoming Extension's Community Development Education Initiative Team



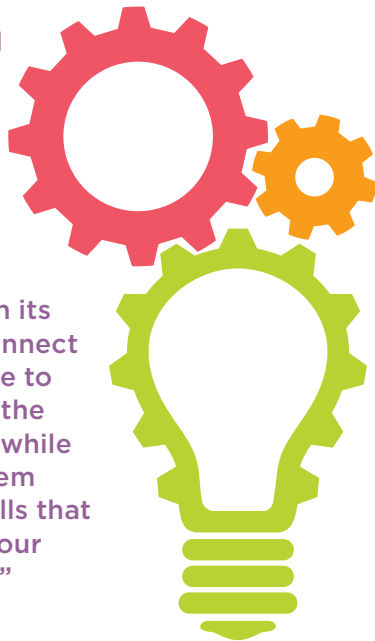
What participants are saying about the EVOLVE Program

“It was one of the best courses of study I’ve ever engaged in, and a lot of fun! Leadership skills that I learned with EVOLVE have proven to be invaluable in both my professional and public life.”

“Thank you EVOLVE for the many community based experiences which helped to broaden my understanding and opportunities. Many of these were contacts I could not have made without your assistance.

“This class was very informative and thought provoking. I appreciated the opportunity to learn the many facets of leadership and the numerous experiences we were offered. I would recommend the class to anyone wanting to grow as a leader.”

“EVOLVE is invaluable in its ability to connect these people to others with the same goals while teaching them valuable skills that strengthen our community.”



Why a community leadership development program?

Community leadership is different from organizational leadership. It is more complex, requiring different skill sets. How things get done in community is as important as what gets done. Energy builds as people see new possibilities in themselves, in one another and in their community. An EVOLVE program is centered on three core competencies:

Learning: Every citizen can function as a leader in some circumstance, and the roles of citizen and civic leaders can be learned.

Building Social Capital: A network of relationships for getting things done and an understanding of the community, its structures, history, conditions and issues help develop the human potential to assume responsibility.

Mobilizing: Engage enough people, resources, and power to get the job done. A group project helps classes practice what is learned.

How does the EVOLVE program work?

Each EVOLVE leadership institute is guided by a local steering committee composed of representative community residents. The program is adaptable to any community because the curriculum is created by community volunteers based on unique needs and resources. The committee also selects the participants.

Format?

A typical EVOLVE program has monthly day-long meetings over most of a year (typically eight sessions). A retreat held early in the program has proven to be a key ingredient in fostering an open climate for learning. The program strives to create interactive learning experiences and to avoid simple knowledge transfer. Typically there are sessions on local government, economic development, education and community resources, group process, action planning, issue identification, and analysis.

Who Participates?

Participants are selected to create a purposefully diverse program – one in which all kinds of citizens are represented. As far as leadership skill, students range from those with no experience in leadership roles (but who have potential), to those already in leadership positions. EVOLVE is an active experience in which participants are responsible for their own learning while sharing their knowledge with others. So each participant is both a teacher and student.

The role of UW Extension is primarily to provide a facilitator who work in conjunction with the steering committee. The educator might also teach specific elements of the curriculum the steering committee builds. However, the institute is used as a venue to develop skills, so past participants are expected to teach most of the classes.

How Much Does It Cost?

As in any true partnership, the cost is shared. Local funding is necessary to cover expenses such as travel, supplies and general administration of the program. Total costs vary depending on the program that is developed. Participants usually pay fees to cover about a third of the program. The rest of the organizational costs usually come from local firms, organizations, and government groups. University of Wyoming Extension provides the facilitator.

How to Get Started

A UW Extension educator can help form the local steering committee. The steering committee is the heart, soul, and manager of the community leadership program. The local UW Extension educator will provide ongoing support and assistance during the process in collaboration with interested parties.

For more information, contact your University of Wyoming Extension county office or call the State Extension Office at (307) 766-5124.