# Pitt CEC

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTERS**

# Tips for Professional and Respectful Communication

**Tips for Professional and Respectful Communication**

The University of Pittsburgh strives to be a strong partner with community collaborators to achieve long-term impact in communities while at the same time strengthening our core mission of teaching and research. As part of our place-based engagement strategy, we leverage the diversity of Pitt's community engagement assets and develop sustainable community-university partnerships in a focused number of neighborhoods. The material contained in this document helps us to advance, strengthen, and focus our place-based engagement efforts.

University of Pittsburgh
Community Engagement Centers
710 Alumni Hall
4227 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
www.cec.pitt.edu 412-624-7719

## Tips for Professional and Respectful Communication

*ABOUT CECS & WHY GOOD COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL:*
The Community Engagement Centers are grounded in the life of the community and create a front door to Pitt in the neighborhood. **In order build strong, mutually beneficial relationships with the community, we need to be deliberate and respectful about the ways in which we communicate.**

Members of our neighborhood advisory councils have identified professional and respectful communication between faculty, staff, students, and community members as something they feel is particularly important.

*GENERAL TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY:*

1. **Transparency & Mutual Benefits.** When communicating to arrange an interaction or project, it is important to be transparent about what the University hopes to gain from the interaction as well as the potential benefits for community members. Be open to working with the community to determine ways in which this project can further benefit them and incorporate their feedback and ideas. Be deliberate about explaining why you are reaching out and why it will be beneficial to them and follow up after you meet to share updates and how you acted upon the information they shared.

2. **Cultural Humility.** Respect the knowledge of the community and treat them as the experts they are. Listen to understand, not just to give input. Be aware of your body language and actively signal your interest and respect. Ask questions if you do not know the answer to something, do not make assumptions.

3. **Get to Know the Neighborhood.** Familiarize yourself with the community you are working with and attend events in the community. By doing this you will show that you are invested in the community and will build stronger relationships.

4. **Strengths Approach.** Approach communities knowing and honoring that they have many different kinds of strengths and assets.

5. **You = Pitt.** Even though you are an individual and your project may be unrelated to other work done by Pitt in the neighborhood, residents and community stakeholders often do not make distinctions between specific people and initiatives. How someone receives your outreach could depend on their past experiences with Pitt and your work will influence how community stakeholders perceive future Pitt outreach.

*EMAIL ETIQUETTE:*

1. **Be Formal.** It is important to communicate with community members in a professional manner. Do not use colloquialisms or emojis. Until otherwise told, address everyone with his or her formal title (i.e.- Dr., Director, Ms., Mr., etc…).

2. **Provide Clear Information.** Be sure your subject line is brief while still giving a general idea of what the email is about. Sign your email and include your affiliation, title, and contact information.

3. **Be Respectful & Express Gratitude.** Remember to express appreciation for the person's time and partnership. Without them, this work would not be possible.

*PHONE ETIQUETTE:*

1. **Introduce Yourself.** Let people know who they are talking to and why you are calling when they first pick up. This will help guide the conversation.

2. **Use the Person's Formal Title.** Until otherwise told, address the person you are speaking to with their formal title (i.e.- Dr., Director, Ms., Mr, etc…)

3. **Tone.** When you're on the phone, all someone can hear is your voice. Make sure to speak clearly, be positive, and use a respectful tone.

4. **Is this a good time?** Once you've briefly stated your purpose, it is respectful to ask, "Is this a good time to talk?" and if not, to schedule a time that is mutually convenient.