



NEWIEE Peer Circles Program Guidance Document

2025-2026 Program Cycle

Introduction

The NEWIEE Peer Circles Program is intended to provide a platform for matching groups of individuals in the energy and environmental sectors, giving them the opportunity to learn from, connect with, and support each other through discussions and activities.

The Peer Circles Program is a 6-month commitment. You are expected to participate and drive the Peer Circle experience by scheduling in-person and/or virtual discussions and activities at least once a month. Each Peer Circle will be assigned a Peer Circle leader to help organize the group. At the end of the program, participants will be asked to provide feedback to share their thoughts and suggestions, which will be valuable in improving the program for future participants.

While NEWIEE provides the platform for grouping individuals into Peer Circles, it is the responsibility of the Peer Circles to come together, engage with one another, and drive the Peer Circle experience. Each Peer Circle will operate autonomously, allowing its members to shape the group's dynamics and determine its direction. Embrace and maintain collective ownership over logistics and organization, actively fostering shared decision-making and ensuring the inclusion of all voices, perspectives, experiences, genders, and backgrounds. We recommend that these principles be formally addressed and mutually agreed upon during the inaugural meeting to establish a solid foundation for the group's operations.

Your First Peer Circles Meeting

Here are some suggestions to ensure a successful and productive first meeting:

- Hold a virtual first meeting, with subsequent meetings based on group feedback
- Begin the meeting by allowing members to introduce themselves, sharing name, professional background, and expectations of the Peer Circle
- Discuss and agree upon the expectations for active participation and attendance during Peer Circle meetings and gatherings
- Share personal and professional objectives for joining the Peer Circle
- Define collaboratively the goals and objectives of the Peer Circle, ensuring they align with the interests and needs of the group (see the list of suggestions below)



- Address logistical matters, such as meeting frequency, preferred meeting days/times, and the platform to be used for virtual meetings
 - Seek consensus on these logistics to ensure they accommodate the availability and preferences of all members
- Determine the optimal group organization strategy for the Peer Circle

Program Principles

Throughout the duration of the program, it is expected that participants:

- Contribute constructively to discussions by sharing their experiences, challenges, and knowledge while being respectful of others' viewpoints
- Offer support to fellow members by providing constructive feedback, asking questions, and sharing resources when appropriate
 - Remember that Peer Circles are a collaborative effort, and everyone's contributions are valuable
- Are present and engaged during the meetings by avoiding distractions and actively listening to others

Peer Circles can create a dynamic and enriching environment that promotes professional growth, collaboration, and support among its members. Below are some recommendations to make this experience productive and beneficial.

Set Goals for the Peer Circle and for Yourself

- Set Peer Circle goals and hold yourself accountable
- Regularly review and update these goals, providing opportunities for members to share progress, challenges, and achievements
- Motivate each other to stay committed to their goals

Conduct Effective Meetings

- Meetings can be virtual, in-person, or hybrid; determine what is best for the group
- Balance the structure of the meeting to allow for both collaborative discussions and individual contributions
- Establish a clear communication channel or platform for the Peer Circle, such as a dedicated online group or email thread



Promote a Supportive Atmosphere

- Create a safe and supportive space where members can freely express themselves and engage with others of diverse backgrounds, experiences, genders, and viewpoints
- Value and appreciate diverse perspectives, actively encouraging their contribution
- Cultivate a non-judgmental attitude, allowing members to share thoughts, ideas, and concerns without fear of criticism or ridicule
- Facilitate equal participation among all members by actively inviting their input and creating space for their perspectives

Confidentiality

- Respect the trust and confidence of fellow members by keeping all sensitive information confidential
- All discussions and shared information remain private and should not be disclosed without explicit permission
 - Obtain explicit consent from the person involved before disclosing any confidential or personal details to external parties

Continuity

- Group members are encouraged to maintain regular communication and organize subsequent meetings based on the feedback and interests of the group
 - Discuss strategies to sustain engagement, such as periodic evaluations, guest speakers, or themed sessions
 - Explore opportunities to collaborate on projects or professional initiatives
- Peer Circles are encouraged to continue meeting beyond the initial 6-month timeframe, if so desired

Peer Circle Leaders

Peer Circle leaders have an essential role in facilitating Peer Circle meetings and ensuring effective communication. Their responsibilities include scheduling meetings and providing clear and timely information to group members. A Peer Circle prep call will be scheduled with all Peer Circle leaders in early December 2025 to provide guidance and answer any questions after the Peer Circles are formed and announced.



Peer Circle leaders should proactively reach out to newiee@newiee.org and NEWIEE Director and Peer Circle Program Chair, Weezie Nuara at MLNuara@gmail.com for support if they encounter any concerns or issues that may jeopardize the success of the group. Seeking assistance and guidance when needed ensures the leader can effectively address challenges and maintain a thriving and productive Peer Circle experience.

Here are some recommendations for effectively fulfilling this role.

Scheduling Meetings:

- Take ownership of scheduling meetings well in advance, considering the availability and preferences of group members
- Ensure participants have sufficient time to plan and adjust their schedules accordingly
- Aim for consistency in meeting times and frequency to establish a reliable and predictable meeting schedule
- Set expectations for responsiveness and timely communication

Communication:

- Communicate meeting details, such as the date, time, duration, and platform, in a clear and timely manner (send an agenda if applicable)
- Send reminders closer to the meeting date to maximize attendance and encourage active participation

List of Activities Peer Circles Could Consider Organizing –

- Site tours and field trips
- Policy discussions
- Problem-solving sessions
- Volunteer events
- After-work bites and beverages
- Roundtable discussions with NEWIEE Board Members or Advisory Board

By following these guidelines, we aim to create a supportive and collaborative environment that fosters professional growth and meaningful connections among members. Let's strive to build lasting relationships and help each other succeed in our respective fields!