



Creating Partnerships

Description:

This tool provides questions and steps to follow in creating and maintaining partnerships.

How it can be used:

Within the health system, partnerships are the most effective method of building better programs and services for a community. No organization can offer enough services on their own, so it makes sense to establish partnerships with other organizations to leverage different strengths and expertise. This tool guides you through the consideration of how to identify effective partners and establish partnership agreements that work.

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1. **Describe the organizations that have a common purpose.** Who are you and why is a partnership needed to accomplish your purpose?
 - a. Name the goals that you are all seeking to achieve. (e.g., improved access to care, etc.)
 - b. Describe why creating a partnership is needed to accomplish your goal. Some possibilities include:
 - i. Your organization's efforts cannot effectively accomplish your goal on your own.
 - ii. Related agencies are duplicating efforts and thus resources are not being used to their potential.
 - iii. Your goal is significant improvement in community-level outcomes and multiple sectors of the community will need to be engaged for success.
 2. **Identify the potential partners.**
 - a. Identify those who need to be involved in order to accomplish your anticipated goals:
 - i. Who is already involved in the activities that would benefit your partnership?
 - ii. What resources would they bring to the table?
 - iii. How could they be involved in the partnership's planning and activities?
 - iv. What potential barriers exist to working with these partners, and what strategies can help overcome those barriers?
 - b. Indicate how you would connect with potential partners and approach them regarding formalizing an agreement such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
 3. **Outline your partnership's vision and mission.**





- a. Vision - summarize your dream for the future. The vision should be:
 - i. Easy to communicate to potential partners.
 - ii. Uplifting and inspiring, clearly communicating your hopes for your community.
 - iii. A reflection of the perspective of the community it represents.
- b. Mission - state your partnership's mission. It should include:
 - i. A statement of what it is going to do and why.
 - ii. Widely inclusive language to avoid limiting any potential new partners and strategies with which to bring about the vision.

4. State the objectives or goals, resources and relationships required to accomplish your objectives, and key agents of change in the partnership.

- a. Summarize the anticipated results of the group's activities.
- b. Demonstrate that the issues that the partnership will address are important to the community.
 - i. Describe community-level indicators you will use.
 - ii. Explain how often it occurs in the community, how many people are affected, and the severity.
 - iii. Describe other past or current attempts to bring about change.
 - iv. Explain the possible impact and/or consequences of achieving your goal.
- c. Identify available resources and relationships that will be needed to bring about change.
 - i. Predict what financial and personnel resources will be needed to accomplish the goal. What resources are already available, and which will need to be obtained?
- d. Determine who the target populations are that you most want to affect and those in your community whose actions can influence them, either directly or indirectly.

5. Describe potential barriers to your partnership's success and how you would overcome them. Some common barriers include:

- a. Competition or turf issues – How might you build greater trust and respect among partners? How might you ensure mutual benefit?
- b. Bad history between organizations or within the community – What has happened in the community previously that makes it harder for partners to work together successfully in a new effort? How can bad feelings and mistrust be resolved?





- c. Dominance by "professionals" within the partnership – How do you encourage "non-professional" partners, including those most affected by the issues, to see their unique contribution and agree to participate in planning and decision making?
- d. Minimal organizational capacity – How will the partnership's capacity be increased? What skills and time do members need to create a more efficient and effective partnership?
- e. Funding – What strategies are being used to financially sustain the effort and are there more effective ones?
- f. The perceived costs of working together outweigh the benefits – How can we reduce the costs or increase the benefits of participation by partners?

6. Identify what financial resources will be needed?

- a. Create a budget to determine the required resources. Include:
 - i. All projected expenses (e.g., salaries, office expenses, rent, utilities and phone expenses, equipment);
 - ii. All projected income;
- b. Use the anticipated budget to:
 - i. Evaluate the financial resources needed to sustain the partnership;
 - ii. Identify creative ways in which resources other than money could be generated;
 - iii. Prioritize the programs and services the partnership wishes to address.
- c. Identify potential sources of funding and support, including in-kind support.

7. Describe how the partnership will function and how responsibilities will be shared.

- a. Your partnership may include relationships ranging from networking to coordination to cooperation to collaboration.
- b. Prepare your organizations to successfully work together.
 - i. Clearly define the purpose and scope of the project.
 - ii. Clarify how working together will benefit each partner/organization and advance its own interests and constituents. What will each gain?
 - iii. Describe the roles and responsibilities of each participant and make sure mechanisms for communication and joint accountability are in place.
 - iv. Clearly outline anticipated roles and responsibilities
 - v. Describe mechanisms for communication and accountability
 - vi. Foster respect and trust among partners to support the level of risk and interdependence involved in the project and to promote a healthy working





relationship among partners.

8. Describe the structure the partnership will use to do its work. Structure will allow your partnership to function more efficiently and effectively.

- a. Three elements are necessary to define, regardless of the organizational structure.
 - i. A form of governing structure for decision-making;
 - ii. Rules by which the partnership will operate;
 - iii. A planned distribution of work.

9. Consider how the partnership will maintain momentum.

- a. Promote "regular maintenance" – regular evaluations of the partnership's vision and progress in addition to examining emerging issues or problems.
 - i. Develop the awareness among partners that maintenance is necessary.
 - ii. Make a decision to review on a regular basis – annually, or when problems arise.
 - iii. Create a maintenance plan.
 - iv. Conduct reviews of the partnership's progress and difficulties, using external consultants or an internal team of selected members.
 - v. Examine multiple aspects of the partnership, including:
 - Leadership
 - Operating rules and governance
 - Division of labor
 - Plans, short- and long-term
 - Funding, current and planned
 - vi. Increase opportunities for communication among partners about their accomplishments and concerns by:
 - Encouraging feedback at regularly scheduled meetings.
 - Conducting retreats of staff or teams.
 - Ensuring regular communication for personal difficulties or dissent.
 - Asking about performance or suggestions for improvement.

10. If your partnership is beginning to lose momentum in achieving its goals, review current barriers to your success.

- a. Describe potential barriers or opposition to your partnership's success and develop strategies to overcome them.

