

**BUILDING EFFECTIVE
COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS**

**NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH
RESOURCE CENTER**

PHONE CONFERENCE

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I. Make it Meaningful

Partnerships are not an end. They are a means. The first step in building an effective community partnership is to answer the question: “What will this partnership help us do better than if we simply did it alone?”

A. Clearly identify the benefits of the partnership.

1. What is the purpose of the partnership?

2. How will this partnership benefit your organization?
What will it help you do better?

3. Specifically, whom do you want to form partnerships with?

4. What do you see as the benefit for the other partners?

B. Address reluctance and resistance

When dealing with reluctance or resistance to forming a community partnership, the following steps may be helpful:

1. Four steps in dealing with reluctance and resistance
 - a. Surfacing
 - * Make it safe and easy
 - * Ask for it all
 - b. Acknowledging
 - c. Clarifying
 - * Direct reluctance/resistance
 - * Indirect reluctance/resistance
 - d. Moving on
 - * Rejection
 - * Disagreement
 - * Agreement
 - * Commitment
2. What will you do to help your potential partners identify how the partnership will benefit them?
3. If you are currently experiencing reluctance or resistance from a potential partner, what will you do to address it?

II. Make it Manageable

As individuals and organizations, we all have enough to do. Partnerships, no matter how noble their purpose, take time and effort. The “costs” of being in a partnership should not be experienced as greater than the “benefits”. Keeping the partnership manageable for all parties involved, keeps the “costs” down.

A. Be clear on what’s required for the partnership to achieve its purpose and provide its benefits.

1. What will your organization do as a partner?

2. What resources will it take (e.g. staff, volunteers, finances)

3. Is there a limit on how much time, energy or money your organization can commit to this partnership? If so, what is that limit? How will you communicate that to your partners?

4. What are the other partners expected to do? What are their limits?

B. Tips for Making it Manageable

- * Stay focused
- * “Eat the elephant one bite at a time”
- * Leverage activities

C. Managing Communication: The biggest danger in communication is the assumption that we've communicated.

1. In order for a partnership to be effective and manageable, you need to know ...

- a. Who needs
- b. What information
- c. By When
- d. For what Purpose

2. Communication Cultures

a. Bureaucracy – Community
- What are the differences in the way you communicate in your community and the way communication takes place in large agencies and organizations?

b. Questioners, Map Readers and Translators
- Who are they?

- How will you tap them?

III. Make it Productive

One of the keys to building effective and sustainable community partnerships is having the partners agree on and monitor the indicators of productivity. Clearly stated “indicators of success” enable the partners to make realistic judgments about what is and is not being accomplished, what needs to be changed and what needs to be celebrated.

A. Productivity involves:

1. **Product** = What gets done
= What gets done that achieves the purpose of the partnership
2. **Process** = How it gets done
= The partners feel valued, accepted and important to getting it done

B. Tips for Indicators of Productivity

1. Link to purpose and benefits
2. Lead and Lag Indicators
3. Monitor, communicate, learn, adjust, celebrate

C. For the partnerships you want to create or strengthen, what are the **Product** and **Process** Indicators of Productivity

1. For you?
2. For your partners?
3. How will you:
 - a. Monitor progress
 - b. Communicate results
 - c. Make adjustments when needed
 - d. Celebrate your success