

## **COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS... MAKE THEM WORK FOR YOU**

### **WHAT ARE THEY?**

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Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards.

Community partnership ... is composed of two or more legally separate units, which may include individuals as well as organizations, agencies, or entities; shares a commonly defined mission and goals; develops a nonhierarchical structure that makes decisions and policy and has well defined channels of communication; shares responsibility and resources and rewards and risks; and includes citizens of the local community and representatives of local community groups and organizations[1].

### **The Basics**

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1. A partnership must have clear benefits for everyone who is involved in it.
2. In developing relationships with potential partners, focus first on their interests. Identify how your program can help potential partners fulfill their goals.
3. Put the agreement in writing. Informal, oral understandings can be misunderstood when they are made, or can later be re-interpreted by one partner or the other.
4. Regular, ongoing communication is the key to maintaining partnerships.

### **Common Mistakes**

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1. Not having a signed partnership agreement.
2. Not having an attorney assist with drawing up the agreement.
3. Not including a way out.
4. Not using your individual strengths.
5. Not forming a limited partnership.
6. Not considering the liability issues.
7. Rushing in.
8. Not adhering to state requirements and regulations.
9. Choosing the wrong partner.
10. Not adequately capitalizing the partnership.

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### **Primary Functions of Partnerships or Collaborations**

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1. Broaden the mission of member organizations and develop more-comprehensive strategies
2. Develop wider public support for issues
3. Increase the influence that individual community institutions have over community policies and practices
4. Minimize duplication of services
5. Develop more financial and human resources
6. Increase participation from diverse sectors and constituencies
7. Exploit new resources in a changing environment
8. Increase accountability
9. Improve capacity to plan and evaluate
10. Strengthen local organizations and local institutions respond better to the needs and aspirations of their constituents.

### **WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS??**

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#### **Environmental**

- Experience with collaboration or cooperation in the community
- Collaborative group is seen as a legitimate leader in the community
- Favorable political and social climate

#### **Membership Characteristics**

- Mutual respect, understanding, and trust
- Appropriate cross-section of members [stake holders are adequately represented]
- Members see collaboration as in their self-interest
- Ability to compromise

#### **Process and Structure Factors**

- Members share a stake in the process and outcome
- Multiple layers of participation [members include both line staff, middle, and upper management of the participating organizations]
- Flexibility
- Development of clear roles and policy guidelines
- Adaptability
- Appropriate pace of development

#### **Communication Factors**

- Open and frequent communication
- Established informal relationships and communication links

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**WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS??** *(continued)*

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**Purpose Factors**

- Concrete, attainable goals and objectives
- Shared vision
- Unique purpose [different from that of the individual participating groups]

**Resource Factors**

- Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time
- Skilled leadership