

PART 2

GETTING STARTED – BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP AND DEVELOPING A PLAN

This manual is based on a **Campus-Community Partnership Model** that was developed with the support of Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) funds mentioned in the introduction. It comes out of the experiences of a three-year dynamic partnership between community programs in Holyoke and local colleges and universities. This approach recognizes the value that diverse viewpoints and resources offer, and emphasizes how program staff and youth, college staff and students can all work together to strengthen communities and to enhance the learning experience of the students.

Most importantly, this model is based on a **participatory and adaptable approach** rather than a top down and rigid “one size fits all” approach. It is based on the principle that a successful approach to addressing community challenges must be adapted to the specific partnership configuration and characteristics of the community. It should include input and participation from the youth, college students, program staff and others directly involved. This is essential to achieve “buy in” by the participants and key players, and to assure that the project responds to the particular needs of those it serves and those who are directly involved. An important by-product of this approach is that the college students and youth peer leaders are “empowered” to take leadership roles and in the process they build self esteem and learn important skills such as planning, and decision making.

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GETTING STARTED

Typically, a project such as this is initiated by a particular program or institution, and it is up to that program to make some basic preliminary decisions on the type of partnership that is best and to take the initial steps to identifying partners and building the team.

These first steps are:

- deciding on the purpose and goals of the partnership,
- what you are going to do together,
- the type of partnership, and roles/responsibilities
- who should be in the partnership.

You will then need to recruit and bring together the whole team and go through a similar process with the goals, type of partnership, and how you are going to work together.

Action:

Go over the parts of the following Forming the Partnership section that relate to the above steps and make some preliminary decisions on the purpose and goals, functions, type of partnership, and who should be in the partnership. You will go through a more comprehensive process of agreeing upon the goals, structure, roles and responsibilities, and other aspects of the partnership that is described in the Forming the Partnership section when you bring the partners together.

PRELIMINARY PLAN:

Basic Description and Goals:

Type of Partnership and Roles and Responsibilities:

Potential Partners:

ENLISTING PARTNERS

Outreach to the partners you identified or, if you are considering a larger and broader partnership, you may want to start out with a more manageable core group and build the partnership by stages. Use the plan you developed above to explain to the potential partners what the goals are, what type of partnership you are considering, what the roles and responsibilities would be, and what the potential benefits and requirements of the partners may be. You may want to write up a short description that describes these things.

Action:

Create a clear written statement of the preliminary partnership goals, type of partnership, basic requirements. Contact the partners and determine their willingness to partner together on the project, and agree on date to come together to discuss the project and to form the partnership.

Statement:

FORMING THE PARTNERSHIP – DECIDING ON THE GOALS, TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP AND WHO THE PARTNERS ARE

After you have contacted potential partners, bring them all together for a preliminary meeting to discuss and agree on the purpose, functions, and type of partnership as described in the following sections. Make sure all the partners have an opportunity to participate, ask questions and offer their opinions and feedback. You may need one long meeting or break into two meetings to cover all these areas.

Purpose and goals of the partnership. Generally speaking, the purpose of a partnership is to work collectively to solve a problem and/or deliver a service. Usually partnerships are formed because the collective knowledge and capacity of the partners are necessary or better for addressing the goals. For the purpose of this workbook, we have defined the goal of the partnership as: creating the capacity to design and effectively deliver a series of college-career workshops and to provide follow-up support to the participants.

Action:

Discuss and agree on the purpose and goal(s) of the partnership. Write your own purpose and goal statement. Make sure that all the partners are willing to commit to the project.

Purpose and goal statement:

FORMING THE PARTNERSHIP – DECIDING ON THE GOALS, TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP AND WHO THE PARTNERS ARE CONTINUED

What type of partnership? Generally speaking, a partnership is comprised of two or more entities and/or individuals who agree to work together around common interests. Often a distinction is made between partnerships and collaborations. Partnerships are considered to be less formal, structured and hierarchical than collaborations, and to include a broader spectrum of the community. We find that it is often difficult to define a clear separation of the two and thus use the term “partnership” more generally to include what may be considered collaboration. It is important to be clear early on what type of partnership will work best for you and your project – where on the spectrum of informal non-hierarchical to more formal and structured it will fall. Particularly in situations in which one of the partners is the recipient of funds for the project and subsequently is the one ultimately responsible for realizing and documenting the outcomes, that organization will generally take the role of lead agency and want more oversight and control over how the project is carried out. In these situations, the partners may be sub-contracted and there may be memorandums of agreement to define the roles and responsibilities of the partners. Even in partnerships that are non-hierarchical, have a flat structure and decision making based on consensus, it is important that there are clear lines of communication, effective coordination and agreement on roles and responsibilities and ways to assure accountability. Partnerships may also consist of some partners who have the more formally defined responsibilities and others who may participate on a volunteer basis or independently from the main source of funding. In both cases, it is important to allow for input and participation from all the partners.

The less formal model works best between organizations that already have working relationships or where the consistent participation of all partners is not critical to the success of the project. This approach tends to require fewer resources and to encourage spontaneity and creativity, but can also result in lack of direction, disorganization and inconsistent outcomes. The highly structured approach tends to stifle creativity and to be a “top down” system which often takes away from the ability of the staff and college students to have real input and to take ownership of the project. This approach also will require the approval of program directors and is best suited when the resources of the partners are critical for the success or outweigh the coordination and administration costs of a more formal collaboration.

Action:

Discuss the kind of partnership that the partners want and that will be appropriate for the project. Will there be a lead agency and if so, what kind of oversight and control will it have? Will the partnership be informal and loosely organized or have more formal structures and decision-making processes? What do you think are the pros and cons of the different types? How will you assure that there are clear lines of communication and efficient coordination? How will you assure accountability?

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FORMING THE PARTNERSHIP – DECIDING ON THE GOALS, TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP AND WHO THE PARTNERS ARE CONTINUED

Functions and tasks of the partnership – who can contribute. As stated above, partnerships are formed because of the greater collective capacity they offer. In order to decide what type of partnership will work best and who should be in the partnership, it is helpful to have an idea of what kinds of functions and tasks you will need to be able to carry out to fulfill the goal. In this case, the basic functions are: planning and designing the workshops, preparing for and implementing the workshops, and creating a network of support for the youth. You should also consider other secondary functions such as: conducting research and surveys of the community and the youth; outreach and publicity; connections and liaison with the community; mentoring and other support of the youth; orientation, training and oversight of youth peers and college students; documenting and evaluating the workshops; reporting that may be required by funders; and on-going fundraising to be able to sustain the workshops. Defining the key functions and requirements of the project will help you identify what kind of resources, staff capacity and additional support you might need, and will also help to determine what kind of partners will best help your project to be successful.

Action:

Discuss the functions and tasks of the project, and which partners will participate and can offer time and resources. You can also add notes and comments. Some of the functions and tasks mentioned above are included, but you should add others that may relate to your project and partnership. Are there any gaps that you do not have the resources to address?

| FUNCTIONS AND TASKS | TIME AND RESOURCES PARTNERS ARE WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE | NOTES |
|---|---|-------|
| Research, surveys and project design | | |
| Planning the workshops | | |
| Preparing and implementing the workshops | | |
| Outreach and publicity | | |
| Connecting and liaison with community, city, other programs | | |
| Mentoring and other support for youth | | |
| Training and oversight of youth and college students | | |
| Documentation, evaluation and reporting | | |
| Sustainability–fundraising, grant writing, other support | | |

FORMING THE PARTNERSHIP – DECIDING ON THE GOALS, TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP AND WHO THE PARTNERS ARE CONTINUED

Benefits, costs and commitment: Campus-community partnerships ultimately are intended to create benefits to the community while also furthering the mission of the institutions of higher learning. Each partner should also benefit from the partnership. Benefits could be measurable, such as additional funds or staffing capacity; or they may be harder to measure, such as increased ability to fulfill the organization's mission or simply greater satisfaction. It is also important to consider what the costs are for the partners, such as committing time and resources. Partners should be clear that the benefits outweigh the costs and that they are willing to commit time and resources to the partnership. We have come up with some ideas for the benefits to the community, the community programs, and to the institutions of higher learning.

Benefits and costs to the community. It is typically assumed that campus-community partnerships will bring great benefits to the community and they certainly have the potential to do so. These partnerships offer a powerful combination of the community organizations' connection and knowledge of the community with the research and technical capacity of the colleges. The college students also offer tremendous human capital. Ideally, these partnerships will be able to identify and define community challenges and bring the community and campus assets together to address those challenges. The possible costs to the community are often not considered. In some instances, communities are used as research subjects and can expend considerable time and energy to accommodate the needs of the researchers only to find that they do not benefit from the results of the research. They can end up feeling used. Also, simply being considered "subjects" of "poor, problem-ridden communities" could negatively impact their sense of self and community. There needs to be great sensitivity when working in communities and a plan in place so the results of research can be effectively used by the community for their benefit.

Benefits and costs to community programs: This partnership model is intended to benefit community programs by providing them with the capacity and resources they typically would not have. Colleges can provide faculty and students who can offer research and technical assistance, and help plan and implement projects. It is beneficial to the youth of the community because college students are particularly able to relate to the youth and closer to the challenges and experience of following a college path that the youth are encountering. College students who come from backgrounds similar to those of the youth they are working with are especially effective because they act as role models the youth can relate to.

Benefits and costs to the institutions of higher education. This model is also intended to be beneficial to college faculty and students, and to further the mission of the institutions of higher learning to conduct research and provide their students with valuable learning experiences. Testing the theory and concepts they learn in class in "real world" situations can be invaluable in giving them deeper understanding. This model particularly aims to empower college students to take a lead role in planning and implementing the workshops and field trips and in acting as mentors for the youth.

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**FORMING THE PARTNERSHIP – DECIDING ON THE GOALS,
TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP AND WHO THE PARTNERS ARE** CONTINUED

Action:

Consider the benefits and costs of the partnership to the community and the partnering organizations. List the ways that the community will benefit and consider what the community will have to contribute and what costs there may be to the community. Who are the “stake-holders” in the community and how may they benefit? Have each partner come up with ideas for the benefits and possible costs to their organizations. You can respond to the examples above and/or create your own list. Check in to make sure that all the partners are willing to commit to the project.

| | BENEFITS | COSTS |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Community and stakeholders | | |
| Community Organization | | |
| Institution of Higher Learning | | |
| Other partners... | | |

FORMING THE PARTNERSHIP – DECIDING ON THE GOALS, TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP AND WHO THE PARTNERS ARE CONTINUED

Who should be in the partnership? Who should be in the partnership should be determined by three essential requirements. First: skills and resources you need to achieve the goals and tasks; second: compatibility – how suited you are to work together; and third: commitment and reliability. The partnership could be a small number of staff/volunteers from a few organizations or a relatively large number of players from multiple organizations and representing multiple stakeholders. The model we are promoting includes, at its most basic, program staff and youth peer leaders from one program and college student volunteers from a single campus, or partners from several institutions of higher education, the public school system, and a number of community and/or faith-based programs. You should also consider who the stakeholders are – those who have an interest and/or are impacted by the project. Stakeholders may not take an active or ongoing role in planning and implementing the project, but may provide important advice, information and support.

Action:

Assess if the partnership will work for the partners and if they are willing to make the commitment necessary for the project to succeed. Assess if you have all the partners you need or should recruit additional ones. Make a list of stakeholders and how they should and can be included in the partnership efforts.

FORMING THE PARTNERSHIP – DECIDING ON THE GOALS, TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP AND WHO THE PARTNERS ARE CONTINUED

Partnership Agreement. The final step in creating the partnership is to create an agreement on the type of partnership, decision making process, and roles and responsibilities. This may be relatively informal or may be a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or possibly a contract if one or more of the partners are sub-contracted. Having some form of written agreement is important to make sure there is clear understanding and agreement and that all parties are fully committed and willing to sign on.

For type of partnership decide how formal and defined the structure will be. Will there be a hierarchical structure with a lead agency with ultimate say over the project, or will there be a “flat” structure with a group that collectively makes all decisions? Or there may be a combination, with the lead agency having limited control over certain things such as the budget and key elements of the project design, to comply with their responsibility to funders. You may also decide to have a smaller steering committee that makes major decisions and an advisory committee to help with designing the workshops, and you may decide to have sub-groups or committees responsible for specific parts of the project such as documentation and evaluation.

For decision making, decide what process you will use and who needs to be included in the decision making. As above, the lead agency may have the final word on certain parts of the project and/or you may decide to make decisions democratically by majority vote or by consensus. Another option is by consent in which a decision does not require that all fully agree, but that no one has a paramount objection to the decision.

For roles and responsibilities, make sure that these are clearly spelled out and that each partner is clear and willing to commit to them. It is important to have at least one person who is responsible for the overall coordination and communication.

Action:

Create an agreement together that clearly states the goals of the partnership, the roles and responsibilities and the partnership structure and decision making process.

WORKSHEET

PARTNERSHIP PURPOSE: (include how it will benefit the workshop participants, the community organizations and the institutions of higher learning)

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS:

Structure: (describe the key positions and entities and what authority and responsibilities they have)

Decision making process: (describe what process you will use to come to decisions)

Roles and responsibilities: (describe the specific roles you decide on and who will be responsible for carrying them out. You can use the outline below or make up your own.)

Project coordination:

Project planning and logistics:

Outreach and liaison with programs and stakeholders:

Documentation, evaluation and reporting:

Fundraising and sustainability: