

Getting started with...

Engaging and Sustaining Partnerships

There are many different ways to define partnership. The common thread amongst these many definitions is “organizations/agencies coming together to work towards a shared goal or vision”. Partnerships involve building relationships between more than one individual, group or organization. Often, each partner has different objectives, activities, resources and expectations about working in partnership¹.

Community partnerships can be defined by the level of interaction between partnering individuals and organizations. The level or intensity of the partnership depends on the need, goal and purpose of the partnership. You may be **linking** with your partners, so that you understand what’s available in your community and can refer clients to them. You may be **collaborating** with partners, by partnering on event or short-term initiatives. You may even be **working to achieve change** on a larger scale, such as joint planning or policy work².

There are many benefits to working in partnership. Working with partners can help us to deepen our understanding of issues, bridge gaps, share resources, and increase our reach. There are also common challenges, for example: clarifying your common purpose, bridging organizational cultures, maintaining good communications and making time to reflect together.

To support your success, it’s important clearly define:

- Why you want/need to work with partners. What will working in partnership bring to you and your organization?
- What is it that you will need from your partners? What will you expect them to do?
- What will you partners get out of partnering with you? What’s in it for them?

It might be helpful to “get into the shoes” of your prospective partners by working through a series of questions³. This way, you can tailor your messages to them so that they hear what is important to them.

Building partnerships is complex and not always predictable. There are several types of activities that are important in developing successful partnerships²:

Connect → Foster Shared Understanding → Create a Shared Vision →

Plan Collaboratively → Work Together for Change → Celebrate, Evaluate and Renew

Working with community partners allows us to accomplish more than we can by working on our own. Tending to each of these activities will support success in your partnerships.



[Partnership Webinar Series Recap](#)

This blog post recaps a series of three webinars held in 2015 on the subject of Collaborative Partnerships. The blog recounts the main messages of the webinar series and includes links to the recording and power point slides from each of the webinars.



¹[inDEPTH :Partnership Development, HC Link 2009 \(revised 2015\)](#)

This resource covers several concepts related to community partnerships - including various levels of partnerships, conditions for success - and explores measures that can be taken to maximize the efforts of your partnership.



²[Community Partnerships Resource Guide, Quality Improvement & Innovation Partnerships, 2009 \(amended 2010\)](#)

This resource was developed to help Family Health Teams to establish effective partnerships with other organizations. The guide was developed for QIIP by Health Nexus – Nexus Santé. This resource contains the 6 Activities for Forming and Maintaining Partnerships (page 11).



³[Seven questions to Knowing Your Audience, Nancy Duarte 2008](#)

These questions were developed to help understand who you are communicating to, so that you can communicate what your audience wants to hear (rather than what you want to tell them). The handout can be found online at http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/Audience_Needs_Map.pdf

For additional resources on this topic, please visit the [Partnership Development](#) page on HC Link's website.

HC Link can support your partnership efforts!

HC Link supports community groups, organizations and partnerships working to develop and sustain community partnerships through:

- [Resources and webinar recordings](#) on the topic
- [Consulting services](#) (free of charge) to meet your specific needs
- [Tailored workshops](#) on many aspects of Partnership Development

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This handout was created by Andrea Bodkin and Gillian Kranias for the participants of the Best Start Resource Centre pre-conference workshop **From Talk to Action: Energizing and Sustaining HBHC Partnerships**, February 17 2016.