

Community Partnerships: Working together – 5 steps to collaboration

Working together to achieve some result your organization cannot achieve alone, and to achieve that result in a complex environment.

— Karen Ray, *The Nimble Collaboration from the Wilder Foundation*

Identify Potential Partners & Get Together

- Strengthen partnerships you already have and create new ones – they are mutually beneficial.
 - Ready to Read at New York Libraries partner webpage (<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/earlylit/resource-partners.htm>) is a good resource for finding potential partners that operate on a statewide level and have a local presence.
- Identify both traditional and non-traditional partners and explore new ways to work together.
 - How could community life be better?
 - What types of partnerships will meet the library mission and long range plan?
 - Are there unserved groups in your community you would like to include in this year's program?
- Communication is the cornerstone of collaboration- without it you can't have successful partnership: TALK! EMAIL! VISIT! Send a smoke signal!
- Be sure to contact potential community partners early on in your planning process.
- Information gathered for an Early Literacy Community Asset Analysis will be helpful in identifying potential partners.

Develop a Shared Vision

- Both the library and the partner organization get the chance to share "What is in this for me? My organization? The people I represent?"
- Develop together a clear picture of what you hope to create.
- A partnership is a relationship where each party has something to contribute and something to gain.
 - Both the library and the partner organization have something to gain from participating: influence, money, prestige, contacts, goodwill...
 - Both the library and the partner organization have something to contribute to the partnership: talent, experiences, finances, infrastructure...
- Learn more about the priorities of the partner organization and learn to talk their language

Plan & Take Action

- Plan **together** with your community partner – do not plan in a vacuum!
- Collaboration is essential to program planning
 - It provides a shared agreement
 - Creates opportunity for discussing resources, assets and constraints
 - Allows for input, buy-in and transparency
 - Enables project continuation during staffing changes
- Discuss what the activities of the project are, including:
 - What is the role of the library?
 - What is the role of the community partner

Evaluation

- This information will be useful in talking to decision-makers in your library and as for any funding source reporting you might have to do. well
- What data does the library need to measure the success of the program?
- What data does the community partner need to measure the success of the program?
- How will you measure success of the collaboration with your community partner?
- What stories do you want to be able to tell?
 - The key to creating good questions is to think about the answers that the questions will generate, and then consider the stories that can be told using those answers.
 - If the answers can't be used to tell a compelling story, the questions should be changed.

Continuing the Collaboration

- Effective collaborations are sustained through a shared commitment to serving the ever-changing needs of the community.
- Don't take relationships for granted.
 - Just because you've established relationships with community organizations doesn't mean those partnerships are permanent.
 - Work to foster the relationship.

Adapted from Practicing the Collaborative Process from Head Start at https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/Disabilities/program%20planning/interagency%20collaboration/famcom_fts_00132_081905.html and Building Effective Community Partnerships from the Institute of Educational Leadership at http://www.ccitoolsforfeds.org/doc/building_effective_community_partnerships.pdf for use at the 2015 Ready to Read at New York Libraries: Early Childhood Public Library Staff Development Program.