

Identifying Community Partners

Here are some examples of possible community partners, depending on the issue you are addressing.

- Groups that are working on the same issue (e.g., other organizations serving the homeless, other volunteer mentoring efforts, etc.)
- Groups that may be competing with you for the same resources (including groups that may be working on the same issue)
- People who are most directly affected by the issue you are addressing
- Elected officials, such as the mayor or county administrator
- Government professionals, such as the community development staff of your city or county
- Young people
- Chamber of Commerce representatives and local business leaders
- Arts organizations and artists
- Neighborhood associations
- Religious organizations
- Parks and recreation department
- Universities and colleges
- Community foundations
- Hospitals

Community Partnership Roster

INDIVIDUAL, GROUP, OR ORGANIZATION <i>(Name)</i>	SELF-INTERESTS <i>(How the group would benefit from participating in the partnership)</i>	POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS <i>(Assets they bring)</i>

Adapted from Michael Winer and Karen Ray, *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey* (Saint Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1994), p. 148.

Managing Risks of Community Partnerships

RISK	MANAGING THE RISK
Demands on time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate benefits of partnership to other members of your organization. • Make sure there is “buy-in” from your group before making commitments. • Make a case for the importance of the work. • Run well-managed meetings. • Inform people about time commitments. • Define roles and responsibilities.
Making decisions without enough information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the issue you are addressing. • Learn about the mission and work of potential partners. • Focus on identifying and collecting the information you need to make good decisions. • Develop a decision-making process.
Not succeeding in the effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop realistic expectations. • Define interim goals. • Discuss “failure” as an integral part of learning more about what works.
Possible loss of momentum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan “quick” successes to boost morale. • Celebrate interim accomplishments, such as more volunteers having been recruited or a new partner having come on board. • Keep people focused on important work that brought the partnership together.

Phases of Organizing A Collaboration

PROBLEM-SETTING PHASE

- Prenegotiation in which the initial members put their cards on the table and arrive at a shared definition of the issue.
- Commitment to the process of collaboration.
- Honest, open conversation about what each partner can contribute in resources.
- Decisions about who else is needed at the table (including other stakeholders, leaders, and those who control necessary resources).

DIRECTION-SETTING PHASE

- Set agenda, including how it can be changed or amended.
- Organize the work for maximum effectiveness.
- Create ways to collect information.
- Decide on course of action.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

- Get agreement and support from organizations, groups, or individuals not directly participating in the process.
- Formally develop procedures to get the job done.
- Agree with all involved about what success should look like and how the process can be evaluated and assessed.