A partnership is a voluntary collaboration of two or more organizations to achieve clearly identified goals. Partnerships between public and private organizations help build strong communities. Not only do they help leverage and maximize limited dollars and resources, partnerships also build a power base from which to influence positive community change. Community partnerships bolster the reach and effectiveness of local private and public organizations, and the impact of programs such as the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).

Strategies outlined are for developing effective community partnerships in Indian country, focusing on low-income individuals and families who receive services through the CSBG program.

Introduction

Before building your partnership, decide which model is most appropriate for your community. Your model may be one or a combination of the following:

- **Networking partnership**: to exchange information to strengthen and improve all involved partners.
- **Coordinating partnership**: to enable two or more organizations to work together to avoid duplicating activities and efforts.
- **Cooperating partnerships**: to share resources to achieve a common goal.
- **Collaborative partnerships**: to allow two or more organizations to work together and share risks, responsibilities, and rewards.

Once you choose a model based on your goals, you can begin to build your effective partnership. Partnership building may take some time, requiring careful attention and planning. However, with perseverance and commitment, your efforts could yield strong, viable partnerships that produce lasting community change.

Choosing Partners

Your potential partners should reflect the focus and purpose of your partnership. They may include local government, large and small businesses, community and civic organizations, faith-based organizations, schools, Tribal colleges and universities, State and regional government organizations, and national companies and organizations.

Find out about an organization’s readiness to partner by talking with the executive director, board members, or program administrator. Start with people or organizations with whom you may have already worked. You can select the most promising partners by evaluating their mission, reputation, level of effort and success in the community, capacity to contribute to a partnership, and proximity to other partners. Then start reaching out to like-minded individuals and groups to promote the partnership.
Community Partnerships

**Working Together: Forming Lasting, Mutually Beneficial Partnerships**

Successful partnerships are based on trust, mutual respect, solidarity, and accountability. As your partnership takes shape, you want to be sure you are attracting participants to the partnering table who share these principles — and that they are effective once they get there.

Experienced partnerships are broad-based and represent a cross-section of the community; expand gradually over time; and formalize relationships and responsibilities in writing, such as through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Clear guidelines and procedures can help ensure effective communication, minimize misunderstanding, and enhance collaboration among partners and agencies. Guidelines are an important part of team building and working together. Your partnership’s guidelines should reflect your community’s uniqueness.

To help partnerships work effectively together, remember to seek input and recognize contributions from all partners and include community members in decision making.

**Staying Together: Sustaining a Partnership**

Partnerships take time and effort if they are going to last and thrive. To sustain your partnership:

- Make it worthwhile for all the partners to stay involved.
- Communicate frequently with partners to keep them connected and invested.
- Establish one-on-one relationships with partners’ staff.
- Involve community members by inviting them to attend partnership meetings or serve on a steering committee.
- Hold joint activities and events with all parties to create an overall sense of ownership.
- Be patient and appreciate participants’ efforts and progress, however incremental.
- Maintain momentum by ensuring that staff members honor their commitments to the partnership.
- Recognize and support partners both inside and outside the partnership relationship.

The stimulus for forming an effective partnership often comes from an individual or small group of community members seeking answers to a particular problem or set of problems - or from funding that is available for broad-based change. While developing and sustaining a community partnership takes work, the benefit to the community can be significant and long-lasting.

Through cooperation and coordination, groups that form partnerships can share plans and resources, solve problems together, and build coalitions that make a difference in the community. Partnerships bring together institutional capabilities and human resources in the form of skills, experiences, and ideas that are often beyond the capacity of a single organization or group.

**Contact Information**

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