

Define It



The Core Choose Respect group identifies the scope of their partnership and chooses their activities.

Why?

Partnerships work best when everyone takes part in deciding the extent and nature of the commitment. Planning together also builds ownership and strengthens the partnership.

Where and When?

Keep up your momentum by following up on your first meeting as soon as the group can meet to take the next step.

How?

Define the scope of the partnership.

The simplest form of partnership is networking. Networking allows you to share ideas and information through meetings, newsletters, and the Internet, but doesn't require a high level of trust. You have already begun networking at your first meeting.

Taking your partnership to higher levels requires more time, effort, and trust. At the next level, you and your partners exchange information, work together for a common purpose, and share resources. A certain amount of coordination and cooperation are required to sponsor joint events or plan community wide activities. At its highest level, a partnership enhances the capacity of all partners.

The core group will likely identify many opportunities in the community to promote healthy relationships. Look back to the goals and objectives you talked about in the initial meeting. Use this list to identify which objectives will benefit all the partners. Prioritize the objectives so that your group has a starting place.

Assign roles and responsibilities among the core team members.

Now that you've got an idea what you want the partnership to accomplish, set up the ground rules for how you will operate. To cover the necessary tasks, consider these questions:

- Who will convene and run meetings?
- When and where will you meet? How long will meetings last?
- Who will be responsible for minutes? What method will you use to communicate with team members and remind members of timelines and next steps?
- Do you need to recruit others to support your activities?
- Who will be responsible for collecting data that shows your activities are effective?
- Who will handle public relations and get information out to the public?
- Who will take charge of planning and implementing activities and events?
- Who will be in charge of fundraising?

Spread out these responsibilities so no one person or organization is too heavily burdened.

Define a decision-making plan.

Turf issues and conflicts sometimes arise in partnerships. Be prepared ahead of time by defining how the group will handle issues and who will make final decisions. Your decision-making plan should assure that all members of the core group feel free to voice their opinions and contribute solutions from their expertise.

Set up a communication protocol.

Set up a schedule and means for regular communication among the partners, such as conference calls, e-mail, or a listserve. Decide how you will make sure that the lines of communication stay open and all partners feel free to express their concerns.

Maintain the partnership.

A partnership will survive only as long as it meets the needs of the member organizations and the members feel their voice is heard. To keep the partnership moving, here are tried and true tips:

- Stick with the ground rules you established in the beginning.
- Evaluate your activities and be sure you can document what the partnership has accomplished.
- Stay in touch with partners and keep them informed. Celebrate successes and recognize contributions of individuals and organizations.
- Spotlight new information and share new materials with partners.
- Promote the partnership with partners and the public.
- Recruit additional partners and external resources.

Avoid pitfalls.

Partnership development can sometimes be a tricky business. We have provided useful information about how to build and maintain a partnership to help you avoid the pitfalls.

Some common pitfalls are:

- **Ignoring important differences.** Individual and group differences matter in partnerships. Ignoring tensions that may surface around gender, sexual orientation, race, class or ethnicity can impede the important work to be done. Address issues of concern in an open and honest manner.
- **Using a single strategy.** Strategies of the partnership should be appropriate for the situation and can change according to the situation. Try not to get stuck with one method of getting things done and consider multiple ways for the partnership to promote action.
- **Losing momentum.** Partnerships often wane after achieving a primary objective or failing to achieve a primary objective over time. Allow your partnership to reinvent itself over time and revisit your goals and objectives, as needed. Remember also to celebrate small wins. Celebrating your incremental successes early and often allows the partnership to retain the members it has and get others excited about participating.
- **Keeping the partnership closed.** The membership should be evaluated regularly to make sure the best people are at the table. Contacts and connections made in diverse, multi-sector groups lead to new partnerships. New partners can spark new ideas, bring more skills and resources, and garner broader community support.
- **Using the partnership to provide direct services.** There certainly may be gaps in the services available in a given community, but the community is best served by a collaborative that facilitates, rather than delivers, services. To address gaps, try developing the capacity of the partner members to implement direct services. Lasting partnerships that help ensure adequate community services are available through multiple providers increase the odds that these services are sustainable.

Evaluation:

Document what you accomplish using Choose Respect tracking tools:

- **Stand Up & Be Counted**

Keep track of play participants and audience members. The Zone 3 Evaluation Tools contain a sign-in sheet.

- **Cheers & Changes**

After the play is complete, note your successes, challenges, and opportunities for the future. The Zone 3 Evaluation Tools contain a worksheet to help you do this.

Choose Respect feedback tools are recommended if you implement multiple plays. Take time to reflect on how far you have come in implementing Choose Respect in your community after completing a series of Choose Respect activities using Choose Respect feedback tools:

- **Organizational Impact Survey**

After completing a series of activities, collect information for your evaluation. The Zone 3 Evaluation Tools contain a feedback form to help you do this.