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Initiating & Sustaining Partnerships

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Description
Strategies to develop self preparation, mapping the lay of the land, identifying potential partners, deepening the relationship, and sustaining the partnership.

Location
VCU ASPiRE (835 West Grace Street)

Disciplines
Civic and Community Engagement | Community-Based Learning | Community-Based Research | Higher Education
Initiating & Sustaining Partnerships

May 17, 2017

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Initiating & Sustaining Partnership

1. Self preparation
   - Map the lay of the land
2. Identify potential partners
3. Deepen the relationship
4. Sustain the partnership

In 5 Simple Steps
1 Self preparation

Academics should spend a considerable amount of time getting to know communities and organizations before they approach individuals about partnering in specific projects (Israel, et al. 2005)
Read the sample e-mail message from a service-learning instructor and discuss whether it is an effective way to engage a community partner.

YWCA Staff,
Thank you for agreeing to host the service-learning students in my class. They will begin coming next week and can help you with anything you need done. Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Professor X
1. Do I possess the patience needed to work with a diverse team?
2. Do I possess the patience needed to learn things I may not know and to teach others about my skills and experience?
3. Do I have a genuine curiosity about how others live and/or what their jobs entail?
4. Do I possess or am I willing to learn the interpersonal skills needed to build long-term partnerships?
Before you seek out a partner, ask yourself

1. Am I willing and able to respect and inspire others?
2. Do I have the ability to share control, to lead and be led?
3. Do I want to make others’ concerns the focus of my research?
4. As a researcher, am I able to supplement my scientific skills with humility?
5. Am I committed to self-evaluation, equal power distribution, and the development of mutually beneficial partnerships?
In 5 Simple Steps

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Initiating & Sustaining Partnership
Map the lay of the land

“Warm up” the community by participating (or having your staff participate) in community events and activities.

- Attend community and cultural events
- Attend business and commerce events
- Visit local schools, churches, community and recreational centers

Show genuine interest!
2 Map the lay of the land

Contacting local non-profits and volunteering at their events or facilities can provide a greater insights about your stakeholders.
Map the lay of the land

- Find local community events, groups, and volunteer opportunities on-line
  - Connect VA
  - HandsOn Greater Richmond
2. Map the lay of the land

It may be helpful to identify other university programs and previous research collaborations.

- Talk to other VCU researchers
- Utilize VCU’s Partnership Map
In 5 Simple Steps

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Initiating & Sustaining Partnership

Identify potential partners

Deepen the relationship

Sustain the partnership

Self preparation

Map the lay of the land

Identify potential partners
2 Identify potential partners

Getting to know your stakeholders can also help you identify individual collaborators

- Spend time understanding
  - Leaders (formal and informal)
  - Gatekeepers
  - Workhorses
  - Other key players
A word of caution, not all partnerships are created equal.

...partnership for a specific project may be easier if there have been previous positive connections between the potential partner and university (Israel, 2005)
Initiating & Sustaining Partnership

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In 5 Simple Steps
Developing **trust** among all players requires an initial investment but creates long-term efficiencies.
Deepen the relationship

I want to talk about us, Irving.

Me, too.

Look! We can compare our cardio risk factors... our blood pressure... our bone density... our gastrointestinal acid... our gingivitis status... our urinary tract health...

I meant talk about our feelings.

Ick, that's personal.
4 Deepen the relationship

Successful partners deliberately and expressly explore shared interests, recognize partner strengths and capacity, and establish standards of performance.
Deepen the relationship

Ask yourself & your partner,

“what is the mutual benefit?”

- Why do I want to work with this particular partner?
- What are the benefits to me, my research team, my research agenda?
- What are the benefits to my partner(s)?
- What is the mutual benefit?
4 Deepen the relationship

Ask yourself & your partner, “what is the feasibility?”

- Does my partner have the organizational capacity to this kind of research project?
  - staffing
  - infrastructure
  - technology
  - capabilities
Ask yourself & your partner, “how can we build trust?”

- What kind of trust-building activities should we first do before jumping into the work?
- What are the power dynamics?
- Practice cultural humility---define

“I don’t care how much you know until I know how much you care”
4 Deepen the relationship

Be prepared for give and take

• Partners are often most in need of interventions and evaluations, not research projects

Seriously, what is the benefit to your partner?
Initiating & Sustaining Partnership

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WE’VE BEEN GOING OUT FOR MONTHS, WE’VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR YEARS... THROUGH THICK AND THIN, WE’VE BEEN AND SURVIVED THROUGH IT ALL...

I THINK, I THINK WE’RE READY FOR THIS...

HEY, LET’S WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER TOGETHER
There is an assumption in the community engagement literature that sustained partnerships are the best. But different projects often have definitive start and stop times. **Why would sustaining a partnership be important?**
5 Sustain the Partnership

What if it’s time to break up?

• Were goals and expectations met?
• Were outputs shared with all partners?
• Might you ever want to work again with this partner?
So you say you want to work with your partner again . . .

• How do you keep the relationship warm?
• How do you ensure reciprocity?
• What are the future goals for this partnership?
In 5 Simple Steps

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Questions?