



Partnering *for* Stronger Programming

A TOOLKIT FOR LIBRARIES

2024

TOOL

1

WHY DO WE WORK TOGETHER?

Determining goals

Why work with a partner? Because together, we make a greater impact. With this tool, we consider the big-picture goals of our library programming—helping to create communities that are connected, knowledgeable, creative, civically engaged, healthy, economically vital, welcoming, joyful, and caring (or all of the above!)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

After using this tool, you should be able to identify:

A

Your library's
current impact
areas

B

Your library's
impact area
goals

C

Your library's programming
or partnership objectives
for meeting these goals

IMPACT AREAS: DEFINITIONS AND NOTES

Below are the definitions of nine “impact areas,” with space to add notes on your work in each area and their importance to your library.



CONNECTED communities promote “social capital” by helping their members establish the kinds of social connections, relationships, and networks that facilitate communal trust, cooperation, and reciprocity, along with collective action. *Keywords: neighborliness, bonding, solidarity, shared values, social integration*



WELCOMING communities promote the inclusion of newcomers, value cultural diversity, and take actions that help all of their members feel a sense of belonging. *Keywords: inclusive, nondiscriminatory, accessible, respectful, accepting, diverse*



KNOWLEDGEABLE communities prioritize learning for its own sake, provide access to reliable information on a wide range of topics, and help their members develop the critical thinking capacities needed to make factual, evidence-based decisions. *Keywords: thoughtful, deliberate, reasoning, understanding, informed*



HEALTHY communities promote equitable access to healthcare, the attainment of healthy living and working conditions, and other actions that improve health outcomes and help all of their members lead physically and mentally healthy lives. *Keywords: active, equitable, robust, safe, secure*



JOYFUL communities create spaces where people can come together to have fun, be entertained, enjoy each other’s company, celebrate one another’s lives, and affirm both their histories and the futures they are making together. *Keywords: entertainment, pleasure, community spirit, pride*



CREATIVE communities provide opportunities and resources for artistic self-expression, enable the pursuit of creative livelihoods, and help their members participate in all manner of cultural productions. *Keywords: artistic, nurturing, inventive, imaginative, productive*



CARING communities promote prosocial values and behaviors, encourage their members to treat others with compassion and empathy, and help individuals develop a sense of social responsibility. *Keywords: kind, just, tolerant, considerate, sharing, charitable*



CIVICALLY ENGAGED communities promote a vibrant public sphere, and encourage their members to play an active role in civic life and community governance—whether through participation in political processes, group and association membership, or community service. *Keywords: democratic, participatory, transparent, responsible, dutiful*



ECONOMICALLY VITAL communities seek to create the conditions that can lead to economic development, increased individual and collective financial wellbeing, and the equitable use of community goods, services, and natural and human resources. *Keywords: fair, equitable, lively, prosperous, growing*

9 Impact Areas

“Library programming can make communities more . . .”

INSTRUCTIONS: Following are nine “impact areas” in which your library’s programming may already be making a difference in your community. Either alone or with your team, reflect on which of these areas your existing programs fall into. You may wish to list specific programs under the icons; note that some programs may fall into multiple impact areas.



Connected



Civically engaged



Welcoming



Knowledgeable



Healthy



Joyful



Creative



Economically vital



Caring



CREATING A NEW PARTNERSHIP?

Consider the following:

in what areas have community members expressed a desire to have more support for from the library?

What partnerships with organizations, groups, or individuals do we already have established that might help us begin addressing these community desires?

What organizations, groups, or individuals could we work with to begin addressing our community's needs?



ASSESSING OR STRENGTHENING AN EXISTING PARTNERSHIP?

Ask yourself:

In which of these nine areas does our partner work? Note that many partners will work in multiple areas.

How successful is our work with this partner in those impact area(s)?

Are we contributing to our partner's impacts? How?



PLANNING FOR YOUR LIBRARY'S FUTURE?

These questions may help:

Thinking about the sum of our partnerships, how many of these areas do we tackle?

Which areas remain uncharted terrain? Should we become active in these areas? If so, how?

What community impacts are we striving for, and how can our programs or partnerships be tweaked to reach those goals?

TOOL

2

WHAT WORK CAN WE DO TOGETHER?

Determining partnership focus areas

What kinds of programs can you create with a partner? Lots, because community organizations are active in many different sectors and provide many different services. This tool lists the wide range of focus areas these organizations have expertise in. With it, you can make decisions about what you want your partnerships to focus on.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

After using this tool, you should be able to identify:

A

The topical focus of your programs and partnerships

B

Any gaps between desired areas of community impact and current programs / partnerships

C

Any areas where the library should seek to expand or grow partnerships

Partnership Focus Areas

“Together, we focus on . . .”

INSTRUCTIONS: Check the boxes corresponding to your priorities. Remember that these areas overlap and you may not check all the boxes in each grouping.

Inclusion

Equity / Diversity / Access /

Belonging: Includes partners who work to promote inclusivity. Many partners integrate this focus into their work on other topics, but for some it may be their primary focus.



Bilingual / Multilingual Outreach: Includes partners serving bilingual or multilingual populations. Many partners integrate this focus into their work on other topics, but for some it may be their primary focus.

Engaged Communities

Information Literacy: Includes partners whose work aims to increase people’s skills in locating, evaluating and effectively using information, both digitally and non-digitally.

Civic Participation / Governance: Includes partners who work to increase community participation in decision-making processes, such as engaged citizenry and community justice organizations.



Financial Topics and Training

Workforce Readiness: Includes partners that provide programs, training, and other services to individuals and groups attempting to enter or re-enter the workforce.

Financial Capability: Includes partners who provide instruction and/or training in personal finance, business development, tax preparation, and other financial services.



Academic Success

Education: Includes partners who work in both classroom-based or out-of-school-time education, which may include education nonprofits, school districts, colleges/universities, and local or state Departments of Education.

STEM: Includes partners who focus on or work in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and/or mathematics.

Reading Skills: Includes partners who focus on improving literacy and developing reading capabilities.



Access to Services



- **Legal Services:** Includes partners with specialized expertise in law and legal services, including law firms, legal nonprofits, and providers of free legal services.
- **Health Services / Wellness:** Includes partners with formal expertise in health and health services, including hospitals, health care systems, and local or state health agencies, or other community-level health promoters. Also includes partners whose work seeks to improve community wellbeing, such as nutrition organizations or wellness education nonprofits.
- **Housing Services:** Includes partners that provide programs and services to combat or prevent the interrelated issues of poverty and homelessness. These may include public agencies and nonprofits who provide stable housing to unhoused or precariously housed individuals or offer services to help low-income individuals and families navigate the housing market.

Personal Enrichment & Lifelong Learning



- **Media/Entertainment:** Includes partners who work in any type of media industries, such as local TV stations, radio stations, film studios, publishers, news/social media outlets, etc., as well as those who work to improve media literacy, build digital skills or combat mis- or disinformation.
- **Culture / Arts / History / Humanities:** Includes partners doing work related to culture, arts, history, or humanities, such as museums, historical societies, and artist collectives.
- **Religion / Spirituality:** Includes partners whose work is geared toward religious groups or who provide programs and/or services in religion or spirituality.

Capacity-Building



- **Public Works:** Includes partners who work to build physical infrastructure like highways and parks or non-physical infrastructure like systems and protocols for disaster preparedness and recovery. Partners who work in this area may include local, state, or federal government agencies, fire departments, police departments, Parks & Recreation, the Red Cross or FEMA.
- **Environment / Sustainability:** Includes partners working toward increased sustainability and environmental protection, such as local parks, environmental agencies, or nonprofits.
- **Library Services:** Includes partners working in the library and information science fields, primarily other libraries or library systems.



CREATING A NEW PARTNERSHIP?

Some questions to consider:

What topics best reflect our community's needs, and are our current programs and partnerships addressing these?

What topics does the partner focus on, and are these reflective of community needs?

How might a partnership focusing on any of these topics help us deepen or expand the community impacts we're aiming for?



ASSESSING OR STRENGTHENING AN EXISTING PARTNERSHIP?

Think about the following questions.

You can discuss these questions in the context of your overall partnership strategy, or you can review individual partnerships. If you find that the topics your partners focus on are not very closely aligned with the impacts you're trying to have, this could also be a time for brainstorming around other community organizations you might more effectively collaborate with in order to achieve your goals.

Which of these topics does the partnership focus on?

Do these topics correspond with our community's needs? With programming strengths or gaps?

How are we making use of the partner's expertise in ways that align with our goals and desired community impacts?



PLANNING FOR YOUR LIBRARY'S FUTURE?

Ask yourself:

What topics does the partnership focus on?

What topics are community members most interested in?

If there are gaps between our current programs and what our community members want or need, how could a partnership help us fill these gaps?

TOOL

3

WHAT DO WE EACH BRING TO THE TABLE?

Determining contributions

How can partnerships add value to your work? Among other things, they can make your programming goals more achievable, leading to deeper community impacts and expanded organizational capacities. With this tool, we break partnership value down into five broad categories, listing the key benefits you should strive for in your collaborative programming efforts.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

After using this tool, you should be able to identify:

A

What value your library seeks from potential or new library partners

B

How an existing partnership benefits the library and the partner organization, and how each party is able to contribute with respect to new or existing programming

C

What support your library needs in order to carry out programs

Partnership Value

“This partner is valuable for . . .”

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate one of your partners on a scale of 1 to 5. This tool can offer you ideas about what you and your partners are doing best, and what you most need to work on.

Partner Name _____

ALSO TRY THIS: Partnership is a two-way street. As a thought experiment, use this tool to consider what your library brings to the table in its partnerships.

Program Design

- Mission alignment
- Variety of offerings
- Expanded program frequency
- Informing on community trends
- New angles & perspectives



PROGRAM DESIGN: The partner adds value by increasing the variety of content expertise, program formats (e.g., workshops, concerts, conferences, tours, webinars) and enabling more options for timing, such as supporting program series or increasing program frequency. The partner keeps the library informed of community needs, trends, and issues; ensures alignment on a shared mission; and offers different perspectives on community needs or fresh insight.

This partner brings value to our library by:

Program Planning

- Vetted experts
- Event promotion
- Partner resources

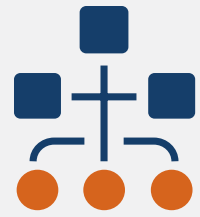


PROGRAM PLANNING: The partner adds value by offering access to vetted experts, performers, facilitators, or speakers; contributing to program promotion (including marketing and outreach); and offering the library access to its resources and/or collections.

This partner brings value to our library by:

Program Implementation

- Shared workload
- Supplies, equipment
- Additional programming spaces



PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION: The partner adds value by sharing the work involved in running programs; attending to supplies and equipment needs; and offering or gaining access to additional programming spaces that may be newer, more cost effective, or better suited to the needs of the program and audience.

This partner brings value to our library by:

Program Achievements

- Broader reach & inclusivity
- Overall quality
- Progress on evaluation metrics
- Enjoyment
- Community building & resilience
- Changed perception of library



PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS: The partner adds value by contributing to the program's impact. Partners do this by helping library programs achieve a broader and more inclusive audience; by enhancing their overall quality; by increasing audiences' enjoyment of them; by contributing to community building and the strengthening of community resilience; by making progress on evaluation metrics; and by helping produce changed perceptions of the library.

This partner brings value to our library by:

Capacity Building

- More robust programming
- More effective fundraising
- Beneficial training & personal development



CAPACITY BUILDING: The partner adds value by contributing benefits to the library that may outlast the tenure of the partnership itself. Partners do this by helping the library learn how to develop more robust programming and engage in more effective fundraising as well as by contributing to beneficial training opportunities and library professional development.

This partner brings value to our library by:



CREATING A NEW PARTNERSHIP?

Some questions to consider:

Which of the five categories of partnership values (Program Design, Program Planning, Program Implementation, Program Achievements, Capacity Building) are we already strong in?

In which do we most need support, and how could a partner provide this?

What would we need from the partner to make the collaboration successful?



ASSESSING OR STRENGTHENING AN EXISTING PARTNERSHIP?

Think about the following questions—both individually and with your partner.

Is the partnership giving us the kinds of programming support we need? If so, what kinds of support have been especially helpful? If not, what's missing?

Is the partnership producing the kinds of community impacts we want to see? If so, what are the particular program achievements and capacity build ups it resulted in? If not, what's not working, and how can we improve things?

How can we advocate for each other, and raise awareness of / advance each other's work?



PLANNING FOR YOUR LIBRARY'S FUTURE?

Ask yourself:

In which of the five categories do we need the most programming support?

Which community organizations can best support these needs, and how might they do so?

What roles and responsibilities will the partner need to assume in order to make the collaboration successful?

TOOL

4

HOW DO WE WORK TOGETHER?

Determining partner interactions

How can you successfully engage with partners and audiences? As it turns out, there is no “one size fits all” recipe for success. With this tool, we can see partner and audience interactions on a continuum, getting a full picture of the many different ways partners can divide the programming workload. Using this can help you understand how you are interacting with partners and audiences, and decide upon the proper breakdown of resource and labor contributions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

After using this tool, you should be able to identify:

A

What resources the library contributes to partner programming

B

What resources the library relies upon partners to supply for joint programming

C

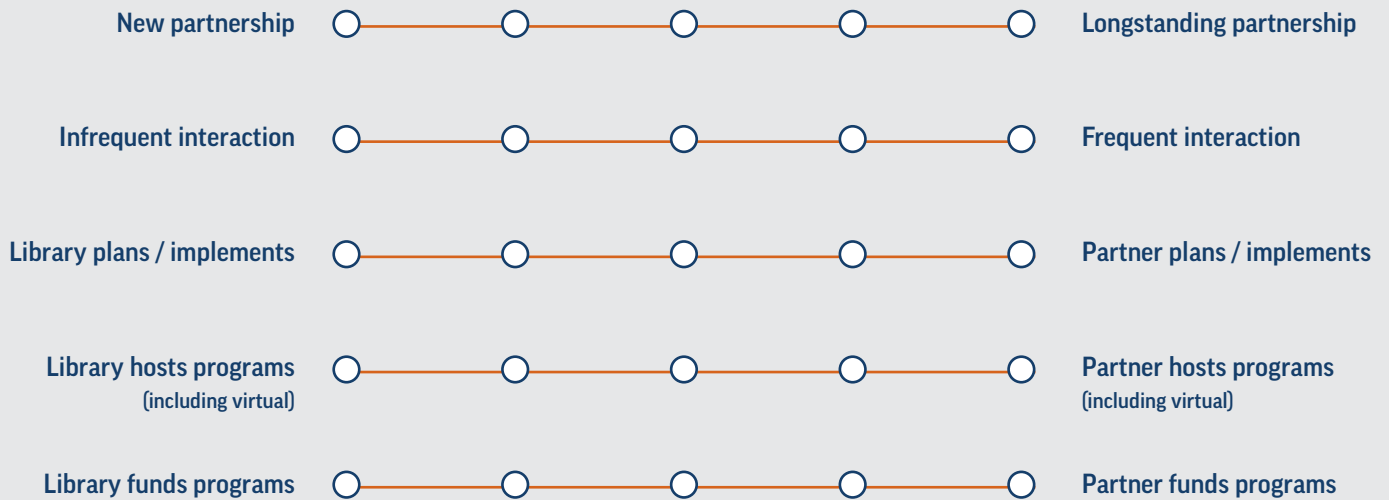
Any gaps or opportunities for re-alignment in resource allocation

Partner–Audience Interaction Scale

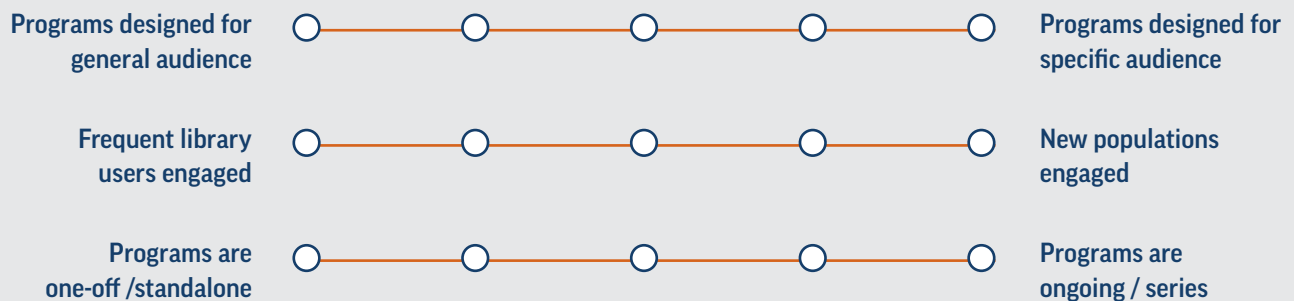
INSTRUCTIONS: For group discussion, each participant can shade the appropriate spot on each continuum. Once everyone has used the tool individually, compare responses, and discuss to achieve consensus and shared understanding.

Partner Name _____

How partners interact to create programs



How partnerships engage library populations





CREATING A NEW PARTNERSHIP?

Some questions to consider:

What distribution of tasks and responsibilities would make the partnership most effective?

How does this division of labor accommodate each partner's needs and play to each partner's strengths?

Is our proposed division achievable? If not, can adjustments be made, or would it be better to partner with someone else?



ASSESSING OR STRENGTHENING AN EXISTING PARTNERSHIP?

It might help to ask:

Is the distribution of tasks and responsibilities working well for us, and for our partner? If not, what adjustments need to be made?

Who is our intended program audience, and are we attracting them? If we're not reaching the right audiences, how can we adjust to ensure progress toward our desired community impacts?



PLANNING FOR YOUR LIBRARY'S FUTURE?

Ask yourself:

What kinds of contributions have we typically made in our partnerships? What contributions have our partners made? Have these worked for us? If not, what could we do to improve things?

How is the current division of labor working for our audiences? Are we sharing the workload with our partners in a way that helps us best meet our community's needs?

What's the ideal division of labor for our future partnerships? What strengths and resources can we bring to our partnerships? What kinds of contributions do we need from partners?

TOOL

5

WHAT DOES A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP LOOK LIKE?

Determining strengths and weaknesses

What makes a partnership work? In many ways, it comes down to teamwork. With this tool, we list some of the key attributes of an effective partnership, separated into four categories. You can think about this tool as your “recipe for relationship success”—one that will help you figure out what to look for in a partner and how to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in your partnerships.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

After using this tool, you should be able to identify:

A

What teamwork qualities are not effective in a particular partnership

B

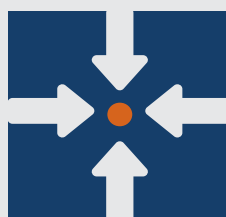
What teamwork qualities are effective in a particular partnership, or need to be prioritized in a new relationship

C

Action steps towards better teamwork

Factors Contributing to Successful Partnerships

INSTRUCTIONS: Consider the following before proceeding to the questions on the following pages.



Strategic Alignment

The partnership is successful because the partner organizations have shared vision, mission, goals, or objectives; serve the same population; and/or the partner organizations demonstrate a shared dedication to service and a shared understanding of community needs.



Communication and Expectations

The partnership is successful because it lends itself to communication and expectations that are clear and specific as well as transparent and realistic. A clear division of labor is established that promotes a shared understanding of the partner's and the library's roles and responsibilities and plays to both parties' strengths.



Interpersonal and Relationship Qualities

Both parties demonstrate that they are trustworthy by working as dependable partners who respect the other's needs and concerns. The partner and library both work to remain innovative and adaptable as well as flexible and willing to cooperate. Both parties are enthusiastic, positive, demonstrate strong leadership skills, and ask for help when needed.



Tackling Operational Concerns

The partnership successfully demonstrates value to both parties' leadership as well as to their funders and service populations. This often includes financial value, such as improving resource efficiency or jointly obtaining funding.



CREATING A NEW PARTNERSHIP?

Think about the following:

What specific abilities, qualities, and resources could this partner bring to the table, and how can these be leveraged to advance our goals and support community needs?

What is the partner looking to us for, and how can we meet their needs?

What's the key to effective teamwork with the partner? If we encounter difficulties, how will we make adjustments to improve the partnership?



ASSESSING OR STRENGTHENING AN EXISTING PARTNERSHIP?

It might help to ask:

Within each category of effective partnership (Strategic Alignment, Communication and Expectations, Interpersonal and Relationship Qualities, Tackling Operational Concerns), which elements are included in our partnership, and which do not? What strengths can we build on?

Where are our weak spots? What's the source of these, and how can we make things better?

How can we communicate areas of concern with our partner, and work together to come up with a solution?



PLANNING FOR YOUR LIBRARY'S FUTURE?

Here are some things to consider:

Which of these categories do we excel in, and which do we need to work on?

What does effective teamwork look like for us? Which of the tool's "ingredients" do we need the partner to bring into the relationship, and which would we bring into it?

How strategically aligned are we with other community organizations? Which of our potential partners is best suited to helping us meet our goals and successfully address community needs?