

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

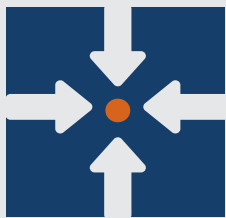
What teamwork qualities are effective in a particular partnership, or need to be prioritized in a new relationship

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?