



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 



February 2009

## Dear Jennifer,

Welcome to **eVOLve: technical assistance for leveraging volunteers**. In this electronic technical assistance (eTA) brief, you will find tips and tools to help you leverage volunteers in your community. It is sponsored by HandsOn Network, a training and technical assistance provider for the Corporation for National and Community Service.

## This Month's Quote

If we are together nothing is impossible. If we are divided all will fail.

Winston Churchill

## Dear HandsOn,

How do I develop partnerships that maximize community impact?

## Quick Links

The Resource Center  
CNCS  
HandsOn Network  
Points of Light Institute

**[Join Our Mailing List!](#)**

## Ask Us

Do you have a question about working with volunteers or a suggestion for a future issue of eVOLve? Send it to HandsOn Network:

[training@handsonnetwork.org](mailto:training@handsonnetwork.org)

## The Answer Corner

Partnerships are an important mechanism for building and sustaining capacities in communities. When partnerships come together, communities succeed and people realize their potential. Communities change, grow, and thrive due to community partnerships. Partnerships can:

- Provide and identify resources
- Leverage community assets
- Prevent duplication of services
- Serve in an advisory capacity
- Open doors in the community
- Expand your program's capacity
- Support program sustainability

Here are five ways to develop positive partnerships for your organization that maximize community impact.

### **Identifying the Right Partnerships**

Identify existing organizations whose mission overlaps with your organization's mission. Seek

out partnerships that compliment your organization and determine if your program goals and values are compatible with potential partners. As you review your program design, determine how these potential partners would help you better develop your goals and objectives. For example, if your agency does not offer technical assistance as part of its services, the new partnership may be able to offer technical assistance. As you think about partnerships, be open to new ideas, growth, and change. In order for partnerships to work, they must mesh together. You may not have to start from scratch to create partnerships. However, you must decide to what extent do the perceived benefits of a new partnership outweigh the perceived cost.

### **Assessing your Organization for Potential Partnerships**

As you conduct an assessment of your organization, your potential for partnerships will become more apparent. Here are a few helpful ways to assist with assessing your organization:

- Think about your strategic plan and how you will incorporate partnerships in to your long-term plan.
- Assess your program's readiness to engage in a new partnership without damaging the quality of your current organizational commitments or relationships.
- Determine what you learned from previous partnerships that should be considered or applied to new partnerships.
- Decide if you want to explore a possible purpose or mission statement for a new partnership.
- Work with staff to determine specific outcomes or products that your program seeks to achieve and determine how the new partnership will help you achieve outcomes.
- Conduct meetings to discuss how partnerships provide additional expertise versus duplicate expertise in your program.

### **Conducting Partnership Interviews**

Once you have identified potential partnerships and assessed your program, you should begin to conduct partnership interviews. In the interview, you should work collectively to develop your work strategy. Determine the type of possible strategies and select the one the best suits your partnership.

- **Networking:** Exchanging for mutual benefit
- **Coordinating:** Exchanging information and altering activities for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose
- **Cooperating:** Exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose.
- **Collaborating:** Exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources (e.g., staff, financial, technical), and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose

The partnership interview should also include a site visit with the potential partner. Some tips for conducting a site visit include: touring the organization's facility, meeting the organization's staff, meeting the organization's client, meeting volunteers, observing program operations.

### **Formalizing the Partnership**

Once you have decided that you want to work with a potential partner, both organizations

should meet to discuss their assessments and agree to partnership. Both parties must discuss roles, expectations, and responsibilities of the partnership. Once this is done, both organizations should work together to prepare an official partnership agreement, such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU.) This document should contain key elements such as roles and responsibilities of each partner, expectations, match requirements, monitoring and reporting.

### **Partnership Support**

You have worked hard on the preliminary objectives. But the real work begins once partnership agreement is signed. Both organizations must adhere to the guidelines stated in the agreement to ensure success. Strong partnerships are vital to achieving program success. Like growing a garden, partnerships require attention, nourishment, and maintenance. Here are five ways to effectively support partnerships:

- Maintain open and honest communication.
- Evaluate quarterly.
- Create and maintain ownership among partners
- Build trusting relationships by sharing monthly updates and reports
- Establish and maintain boundaries

**Visit the Resource Center for tools on developing and supporting Partnerships.**

## **Resources**

The National Service Resource Center offers tools and resources such as the resources listed below. Go directly to the [Resource Center](#), click on the search icon, and enter partnerships in the search box.

[Leveraging Partnerships for Community Impact](#) online course

[Collaboration for Change: Definitions, Decision-Making Models, Roles, and Collaboration Process Guide](#)

To review past eVOLve briefs, please visit the the Resource Center to review [archive eVOLve briefs](#). The Resource will feature eVOLve in their monthly Resource Alert.

## **HandsOn Network Training Opportunities**

month. All sessions will begin at 3:00 p.m. Eastern. Webinar topics will coincide with our monthly eVOLve topics. We will continue to notify you when of these and other training opportunities..

If you have any questions, please [contact us](#).



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