National Center for Health in Public Housing

Partnering

Key Qualities of Successful Partnerships

Joy Oguntimein

2017

Table of Contents

Introduction

The vulnerable populations health centers serve face numerous socioeconomic, cultural, and logistical barriers to health care. Health centers have to create strategic partnerships in order to efficiently address these barriers and provide comprehensive health care to patients. Because of the diverse and complex characteristics of their patients –such as being unemployed, being uninsured, having limited or no transportation, having limited financial resources, and having complex family situations-- health centers must do more than merely provide services or administer programs. They must find innovative ways of working with health systems, social service organizations, and community members to improve the well-being of their target population. Collaborative partnerships (people and organizations from multiple sectors working together to achieve a common vision) are a proven approach for improving community health. Health centers can develop partnerships with hospitals, community based organizations, and other entities that have an interest in creating healthy communities and improving health outcomes. These partnerships may help health centers address social and environmental conditions that impact community health. Strong community partnerships that are focused on improving access to care, quality of care, health outcomes, and reducing healthcare costs can help bring about environmental, social, and behavioral change.

Strategic partnerships with health care organizations and medical service providers can better position Public Housing Primary Care Health Center Grantees (PHPCs) to improve the health and delivery of health care to their special patient populations. Creating sustainable, effective linkages between the clinical and community settings can improve patients' access to preventive and chronic care services. PHPCs can work with area health systems to coordinate care and assist public housing and low-income populations in gaining access to the full range of safety net services and public benefits available in their community (e.g. substance abuse counseling, radiology, oncology services, Medicaid eligibility, and other services). Forming partnerships between clinical, community, and public health organizations can help to fill gaps in needed services. Partnerships may enhance the capacity of PHPCs to provide high quality and cost-effective health services for special populations. The collaboration of PHPC's, health systems, and social service organizations may make it easier for patients to access the health care system.

With the new Affordable Care Act (ACA) payment models aimed at rewarding value created over volume growth, health centers, hospitals, providers, and insurance companies have an incentive and opportunity to come together to provide comprehensive, patient-centered care. In a partnership, health centers may be able to expand their range of services and access points as part of an integrated network that provides a broad array of services to patients. Working with various partners, health centers have the reach, influence, access, and capabilities to provide stellar health care to special populations.
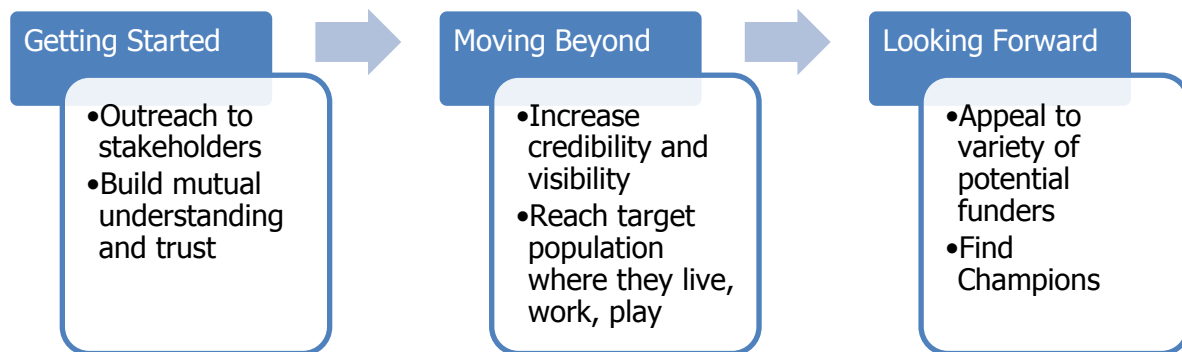
Who? What? Why? Partnership Formation

For most health centers, the ultimate purpose of partnering is to bring together multiple parties (e.g., community groups, all levels of government, industry, and academia) to develop solutions to address local environmental and/or public health issues. Depending on the specific desired outcome of the partnership, there are different entities involved:

- State and community organizations (e.g. primary care associations, public housing authorities, health departments)
- Support and intermediary organizations (e.g. community-based organizations, universities, churches, local non-profits)
- Grant makers, private foundations, and funders
- Healthcare delivery organizations, governmental public health departments, and other community stakeholders

Working together, these entities help to provide better care and greater value.

There are three phases of a partnership:

Getting Started
- Outreach to stakeholders
- Build mutual understanding and trust

Moving Beyond
- Increase credibility and visibility
- Reach target population where they live, work, play

Looking Forward
- Appeal to variety of potential funders
- Find Champions

With several inevitable challenges such as limited communication, lack of mutual understanding, and incongruent goals the question is often asked 'Why partner?'. When health centers partner with others, they are better able to deliver care that improves the health of the community. Engaging community organizations, residents, health systems, etc. in programs and activities helps to build a culture of health within the community and social capital. This publication highlights key qualities of successful partnerships involving hospitals, public health departments, and other stakeholders in improving the health of communities. These qualities include:

Identify partners with similar interest

Establish clear vision, mission, roles, and objectives

Develop a plan of action.

Leverage and maximize resources

Create feedback loop system

Offer Incentives

Partnerships are not easy to form or sustain; however, with regular, clear communication along with incentives and rewards, long-term partnerships that benefit the community, health center, and hospital are possible.

Identify Partners with similar interest

Partnerships begin with building relationships on the basis of common interests or needs. Identifying organizations with similar interests, goals, and purposes ----and who are willing to partner --- can be overwhelming. Start local. Look for partners who:
- have a stake in healthy communities,
- will contribute to the process, and
- will help achieve objectives.

Talk to representatives from various entities within the community who are already providing services and resources your patients need. Find individuals and organizations that look at problems and solutions differently so your partnership has broad perspective. The objective is to create a partnership that maximizes your resources.

In thinking about organizations that might make good partners, begin thinking broadly. Consider what organizations in the community are actively providing services that could be useful to residents. Do not limit the search to traditional health service providers, but expand it to services addressing social determinants of health (such as food pantries, parenting classes, housing assistance programs, etc.). Make a list of entities that influence community health—from government agencies to businesses to not-for-profit organizations to the general public. Here are some organizations to consider:
- Faith-based organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Employment and training agencies
- Public social service agencies at the local level, such as the TANF (public welfare), local Office of Child Support Enforcement, Employment Service
- Private agencies, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs and the YMCA
- Educational institutions, such as local Community Colleges or Universities that may sponsor special programs, local elementary and high schools and early childhood education programs

After listing potential partners, one of the first questions to answer before embarking on a partnership is, *'What is their attitude towards collaboration and do they share my level of commitment?'.* A potential partner needs to be willing and committed. In a successful collaboration, involved entities should be willing to get involved, understand and be committed to the long-term nature of the process.

The resources, skills, and assets of you and your partners should complement each other. Here are a few questions to help screen potential partners:
- Is their organizational mission related to the health center's mission?
- Is this organization reaching our target population?
    o If not, how can a partnership assist in reaching the target population?
- Does this organization have a history of engagement in the community?
- Does this organization have the ability to obtain resources?

- Will partnering with this organization increase our access to decision-makers within the community?
- Do their values and culture complement ours?
- What kind of reputation do they have within the community?

The above factors along with cultural competency should be considered. PHPCs serve a diverse clientele in terms of ethnicity/race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, age, etc., thus it's imperative to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services. In addition, partners should have some level of cultural competency. The right partnership, allows health centers to enhance and extend their ability to serve the community.

Successful partnerships will depend on each partner providing differing expertise and experience. Partnerships are all about relationships and the best begin with respect and a shared vision or goal.

Establish clear vision, mission, and goals

A key component of any partnership is sharing a common vision, mission, and set of goals. Clear discussion of, and agreement on the shared vision, mission and set of goals is essential and critical for success. Each partner should be able to see themselves as part of the common vision. The vision should be both clear and specific. To develop your vision, mission, and goals use your and your partners' understandings of the concerns, values, assets and activities within the communities. The vision, mission, and goals take into consideration the partnership's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) (source). Crafting a noteworthy vision will help your organization focus on what is really important. The shared vision and mission will guide the work of the partnership.

While the terms vision, mission, and goals are often used interchangeably they do each have distinctly different meanings.

- **Vision:** what your partnership hopes to see in the future, over the long-term.
- **Mission**: what your partnership plans on doing in the next one to five years to move toward its vision.
- **Goals**: specific, measurable priorities your partnership will address and the broad objectives it sets out to accomplish.
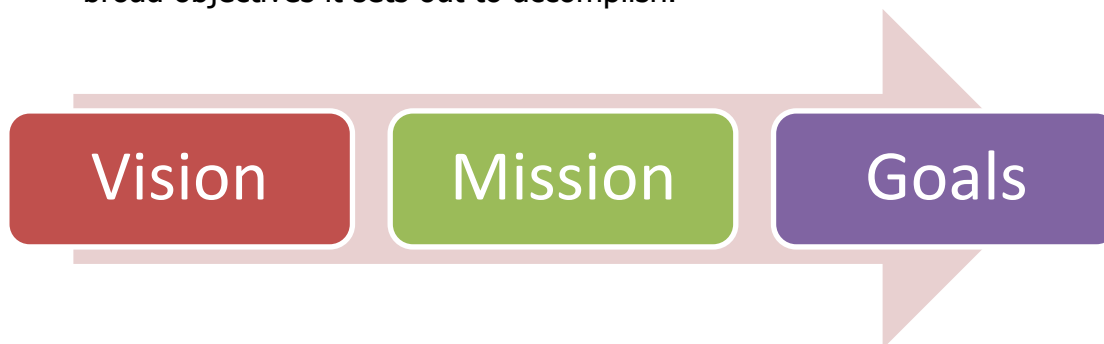
While individual partners may have varying motives, to be successful they should all have a collective understanding of why the partnership is being formed and the scope of work that will be undertaken. One of the reasons it is so difficult to reach consensus on a partnership's vision, mission, and goals is that doing so usually means each individual partner has to give something up. However, collectively creating the vision may help shift focus from what is lost to what is being gained. Preparing concrete goals can help partners better understand the unique role each participant has in improving the support and services offered to underserved populations. Taking time to clearly articulate the vision statement and establish the role of each stakeholder is a crucial step when developing partnerships with health care systems. Doing this may lead to greater partnership success, better utilization of resources, and the greater community impact. The communication of the mission statement to everyone involved in the partnership is also critical to its success. All partners should be committed to the established vision, mission, and set of goals.
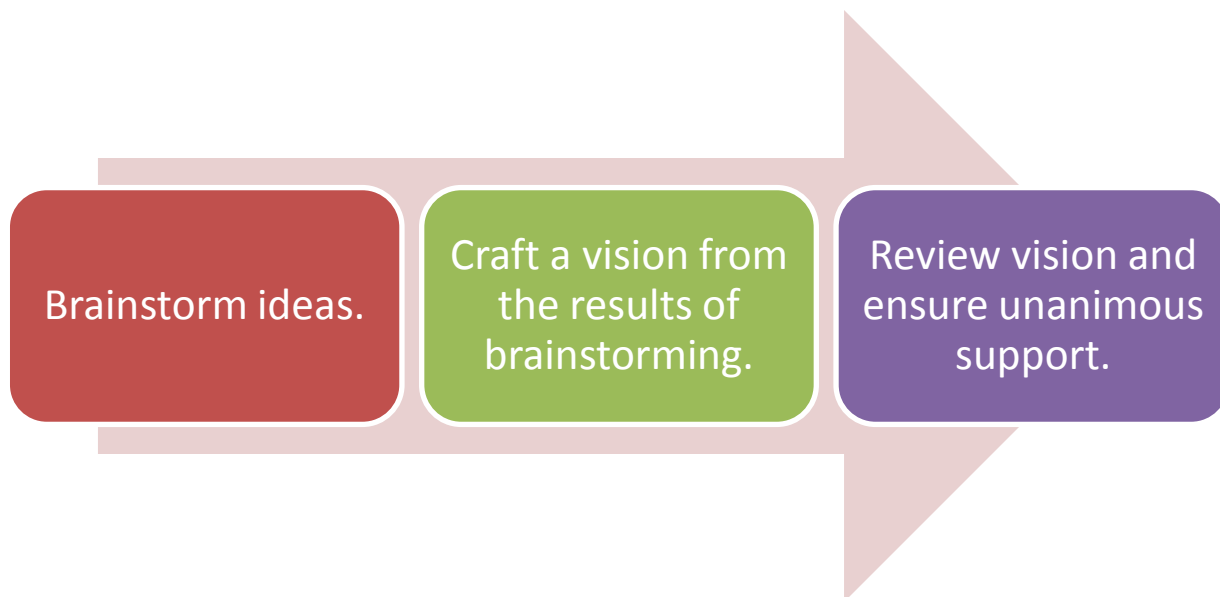
The partnership should have an agreed upon and clearly articulated vision, mission, and set of goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-sensitive (SMART).

| Specific | Measurable | Achievable | Realistic | Time Sensitive |
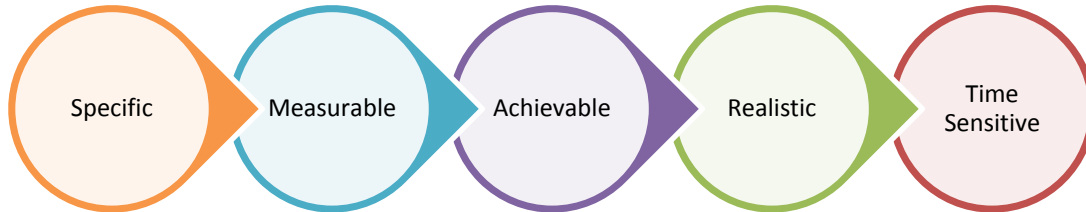
Vision Statement

Begin the discussion by gathering thoughts about the vision. In one of the early meetings, ask partners, "*What do you think should be the main purpose of this partnership?*" and "*What would you like to see this partnership change?*" Depending on past interactions, it may be useful to have a neutral facilitator present to help establish a vision, mission and set of goals. An outside facilitator can help partners address key differences in philosophies and goals, while easing the integration of ideas into a shared vision comprised of elements in which each partner finds value.

While there are several approaches, here is a basic process for creating a shared partnership vision.

| Brainstorm ideas. | Craft a vision from the results of brainstorming. | Review vision and ensure unanimous support. |

Mission

After you have a common vision, develop a mission. The mission statement explains the fundamental outcomes the partnership is working to achieve, but usually over a shorter time frame than that of the vision statement. An effective mission statement requires the input of all partners involved. The mission should broadly define the "who, what, how, and why" of the partnership in just a few words. The mission statement serves as both an anchor and roadmap for the partnership, ensuring everyone is on the same page and heading in the same direction. Similar to the vision, the mission should be clear, concise, and easily understood.

Goals

Goals allow a partnership to be more specific about how it will execute its mission and achieve its vision. They also help the partnership develop clear expectations and progress markers. Goals should have meaningful outcomes that are specific and significant to partners. When developing goals for the partnership think about how a partner's unique assets can fill gaps in resources. Develop shared goals for the partnership by taking time to:
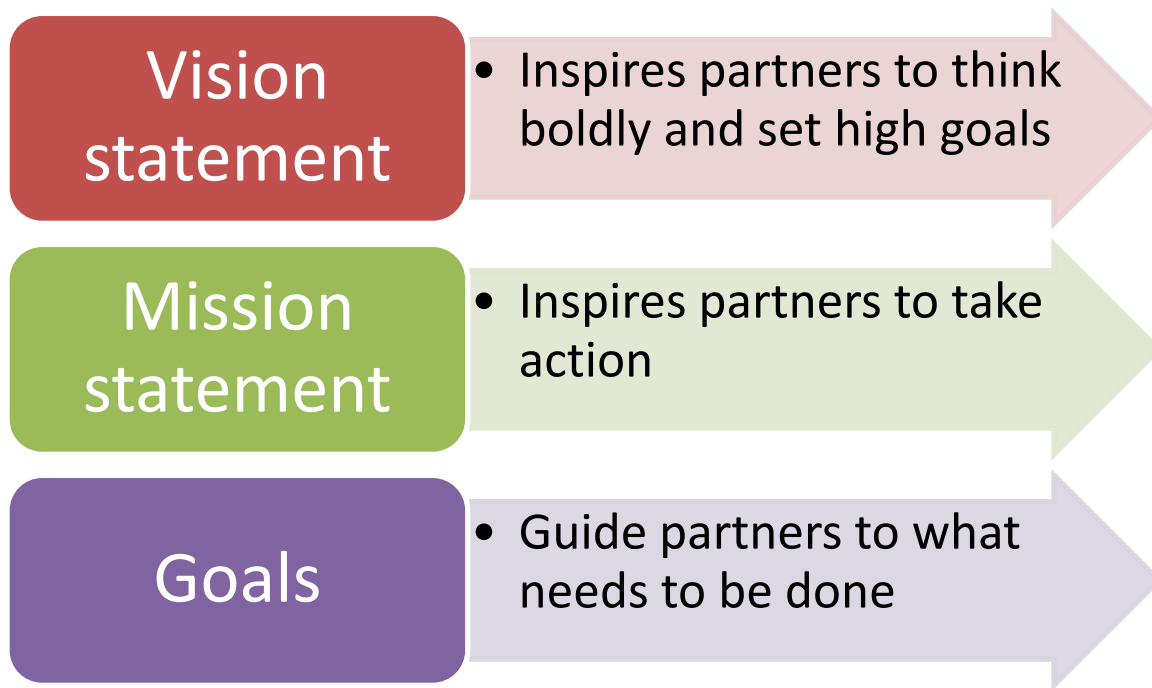
Identify	Issues
Propose	Responses
Determine	Resources at hand vs needed
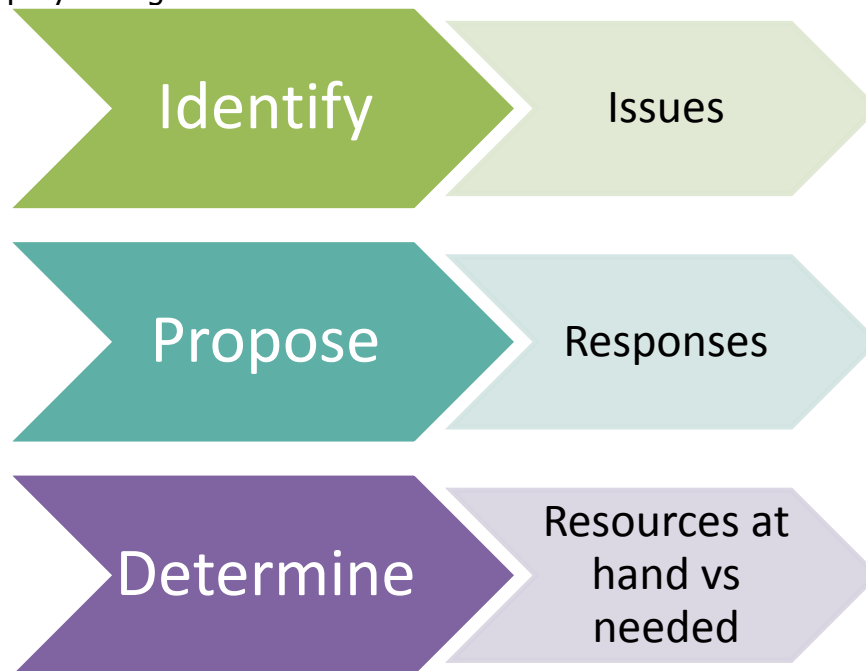
Objectives

The key to realistic objectives is learning what changes need to be made in order to fulfill your mission. Partnership goals help to provide focus and bind partners together in a common purpose. First define and discuss important issues affecting the partnership's community. Next, create focused statements that convey how the

partnership will address these issues. Objectives build on core strengths and expertise within the partnership, and contribute to the achievement of the mission.

Developing effective vision and mission statements are two of the most important tasks. This is because almost everything else the partnership does will be influenced by these statements. A shared vision and mission guide the work of the partnership.

Vision statement	• Inspires partners to think boldly and set high goals
Mission statement	• Inspires partners to take action
Goals	• Guide partners to what needs to be done

With a vision, mission, and set of goals in hand, it is now time to begin putting services and programs in place.
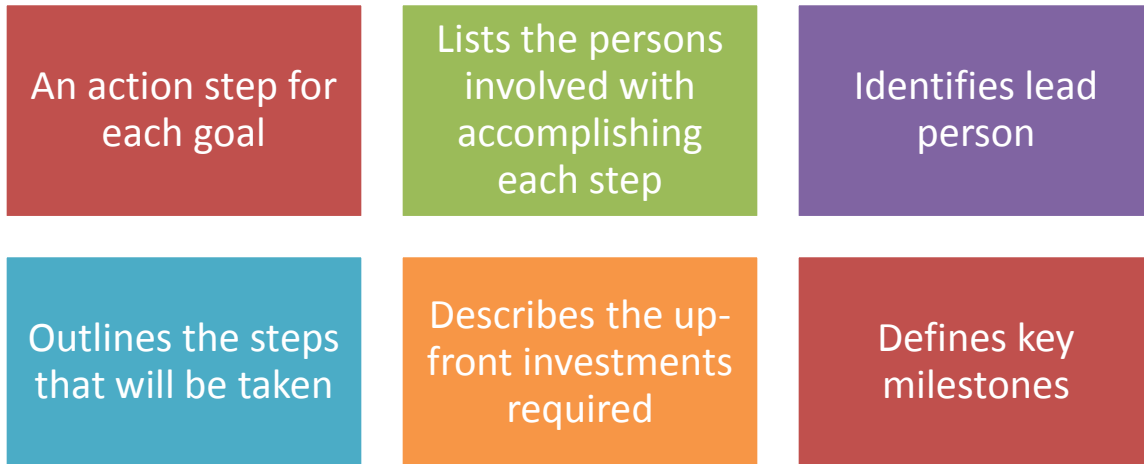
Develop a plan of action.

Now that the partnership has focus and priorities have been established, it is time to transition to implementation. The action plan is the bridge between vision and reality. It narrows down all of the possibilities into just those actions that are prioritized and feasible. With an action plan, the partnership is more efficient; saving time, energy, and resources. The action plan should be complete, clear, and current. This creates accountability among team members and increases productivity in the long run.

The purpose of the action plan is to depict how the mission will be implemented and what goals will be accomplished. It describes the unique roles and responsibilities of each partner during implementation and how the partnership's work will be sustained.

Discuss factors that contribute to the issue.	Identify factors that could perpetuate it.	Identify barriers to reducing each issue.

When creating the action plan, begin by illustrating a holistic view of how current initiatives support or inhibit the partnership's mission and goals. Think about existing barriers and resources. Take time to assess what current programs need to be revamped or phased out in order to engage in work that is more directly aligned with the partnership's vision. Once you have done this, develop specific actions or activities that will help to achieve this vision.

A comprehensive action plan includes:

| An action step for each goal	Lists the persons involved with accomplishing each step	Identifies lead person
Outlines the steps that will be taken	Describes the up-front investments required	Defines key milestones

In the action plan, be sure to detail each of the measurable steps involved in the partnership's activities, including a timeline for completion. Be specific about the work that needs to be done. Action steps need to be timely and definable segments to create a detailed roadmap that aligns the day-to-day activities of your organization with the vision. With a detailed action plan, it is easier to mobilize partners to take action and complete tasks on time.

Once you create an action plan you are ready to start working towards your mission. The action plan is a blueprint for implementing the partnership's initiative, so it is important to evaluate the action plan regularly, obtain feedback and comments from colleagues, and revise it again if necessary.

Create a feedback loop

Engagement and communication with partners is fundamental to the effective implementation of the action plan. The partnership must create feedback loops that collect opinions and critiques in order to assess how effectively the initiative is being carried out. Successful partnerships rely, in part, on using feedback to continuously improve their functioning. Opportunities to give feedback must be well established and known to all.

Feedback loops are a proven method for collecting and sharing knowledge. An effective feedback loop allows partners to:
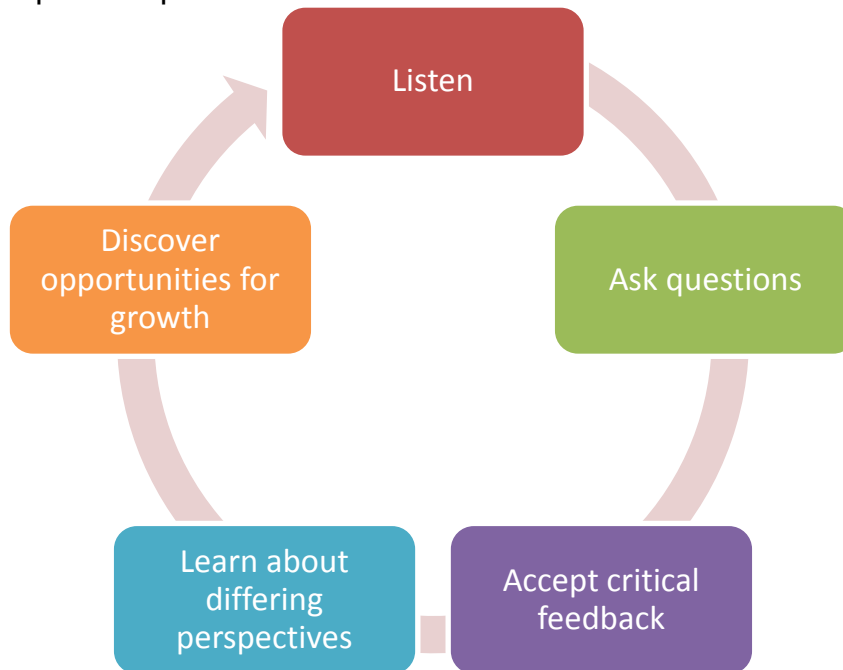
Partnership meetings should include time to discuss feedback from partners regarding how implementation is going. Regularly listening to feedback increases partner buy-in, as this allows for each partner's voice to be heard. Feedback loops also strengthen transparency and teamwork.

A feedback loop facilitates communication that integrates collaboration, adaptation and learning into the program planning and implementation process. Encourage feedback from all stakeholders in the partnership to continuously improve trust and develop positive outcomes.

When constant, feedback loops can support continuous communication. They can help improve community relations and project implementation, possibly leading to long lasting solutions. Here are tips for how to effectively use feedback loops:

Outline processes and plans that allow for mutual information sharing and ensure feedback is used to improve program effectiveness.

Actively seek feedback . Use information to consider new approaches to achieve the mission.

Create opportunities for participants to give and receive criticism.

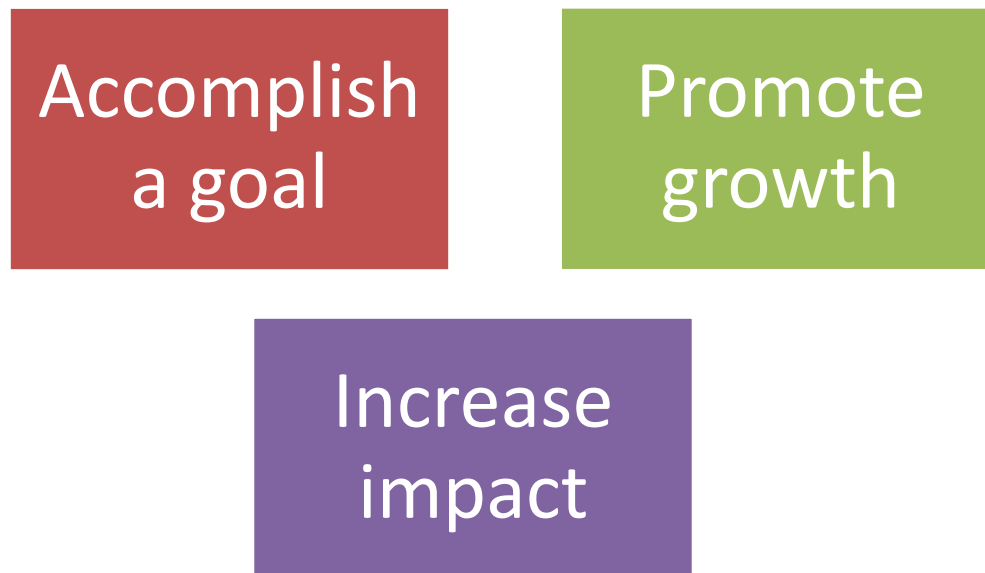Be open to using feedback to rethink operation or underlying assumptions.

Feedback from the community is essential, as it can provide valuable insight into what's working, what's not, what's needed, and what's not. Ongoing community input is essential in determining overall impact, community ownership and sustainability of initiatives.

Develop a communication system that shares initiative updates, communicates decisions, and reports successes and challenges. Partners build an understanding by fostering the exchange of information and ideas among agencies, organizations, and the public and providing a mechanism for resolving uncertainty. Evaluation helps partnerships make any necessary adjustments to stay on course, but will also help provide meaningful lessons when moving on to future activities.

A feedback loop is ultimately about building ongoing communication with those most valuable to your company. Neglecting to engage key stakeholders early and often is the most common point of failure in partnerships. Partners want to see how their feedback is leading to change. Be sure to cultivate a sense of program ownership among partners and receive and incorporate partners input.

Leverage and Maximize resources

With limited funding and dwindling resources for health services, it's important to find ways to leverage available resources in order to provide services patients need. Leveraging resources helps to sustain the efforts of an initiative. Leveraging resources combines existing and new resources to:

<div style="color:white; background:#c0504d; font-size:2em; text-align:center;">Accomplish a goal</div>

<div style="color:white; background:#9bbb59; font-size:2em; text-align:center;">Promote growth</div>

<div style="color:white; background:#8064a2; font-size:2em; text-align:center;">Increase impact</div>

In a successful partnership many different resources are brought to the table: physical (equipment, office supplies, space, etc.), financial, social, and intellectual (human knowledge and skills). All of these are needed to accomplish goals and fulfill the mission. Beyond accomplishing a shared goal, when leveraging resources, the aim is to promote growth and make the most out of what is available. It is important to leverage resources to build capacity, ensure effectiveness, and enhance efficiency.

Develop a comprehensive understanding of partners' intentions, interests, and resources that relate to the initiative. Leveraging resources requires assessing existing resources, identifying the need for additional resources, and creating new resources to address identified needs. When a partnership knows its skills gaps and weaknesses, it can better leverage its resources to work with others. Leveraging can help partners to use existing resources more strategically. If possible, leverage all types of resources to make your program most effective and stretch existing resources further. To leverage resources:

Involve stakeholders in a variety of ways.	Involve all relevant stakeholders.	Identify the goals of collaborative efforts.
Develop strong relationships with schools.	Develop a strategic plan.	Promote quality standards.
Leverage physical, financial, social, and intellectual resources.	Consider fundraising and grant writing.	Identify potential funders.

Leveraging allows partnerships to maximize resources, enabling partners to accomplish as a group what they could not accomplish individually. Using creative approaches, leveraging allows the partnership to do more, with fewer resources. Creatively engage stakeholders to facilitate equitable contribution, mitigate tension, and maintain focus on the initiative. Give partners a variety of ways to contribute, such as donating funds, donating services, or volunteering. Intentionally leveraging resources reduces the probability of partners developing a silo mentality and overlooking opportunities. Leveraging resources saves time, saves money and reduces stress.

Partnerships should leverage their unique capabilities to obtain additional resources and amplify the benefits of their initiatives. Leveraging not only allows for increased resources but also the pooling of ideas and knowledge which can lead to increased possibilities and opportunities. Partnerships can have a broader reach and greater effect on the target population than was originally planned, when existing resources are practically used to address the problem. Leverage each partner's resources and unique strengths, and the partnership's goals and visions may be attained in less time, at lower cost, and with greater sustainability than efforts by any single partner. With leveraging, partners can get more done with fewer resources while maintaining the overall goals and objectives of the project.

Most community health problems are difficult to resolve without the concerted effort and active participation of all partners. Partnership mobilize and combine resources to realize stronger, more enduring solutions. When partnerships leverage resources they develop solutions that are not only collaborative, but also sustainable.

Offer Incentives

Retaining key partners is central to the success of any partnership. When a partner leaves, knowledge and experience leave too. Keeping committed and engaged partners on board will result in higher quality outcomes. In a partnership, you can promote engagement through incentives. Offering incentives is among the most effective strategies for building partnership loyalty and motivating partners.

One key to offering incentives is to ensure the incentives align with the partnerships' goals, missions, and vision. Design an incentive plan tailored to the interests and needs of the partners. Incentives should be tied to the partnership's collaborative efforts and goals. A dynamic partnership environment can reduce attrition – a factor that can negatively affect the partnership's work. Aligning incentives may also help to optimize the partnership's performance.

Incentives do not necessarily have to be extravagant or expensive. An incentive or motive could include acquisition of valued skills, acknowledgement of accomplishments, continual support to carry out tasks, and witnessing visible change. Offer a variety of incentives to build up a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment among partners. Many successful programs use multiple incentives over time to keep partners engaged and motivated.

Incentives are powerful tools when used well and reviewed often. Praising good performance is much more effective than policing staff. Offering incentives may increase retention, productivity, and profitability.

Conclusion

Partnerships are indispensable to meeting the needs of health center patients. Most social and health problems prevalent among this special population are beyond the reach of any individual entity or sector. Meeting their needs requires bringing together diverse partners in creative ways to develop collaborative solutions and improve health care delivery. Partnerships create an environment for the integration of diverse perspectives which lead to the creation of a better appreciation and understanding of the target population and the challenge at hand. Health centers can be excellent partners because they offer a unique set of assets to health systems. Health centers possess specific knowledge of patients' unique needs and with the right partners can better improve patients' health care experience; improve their community's health; and reduce the cost of health care overall. Partnering allows diverse individuals to come together to enact systematic changes that improve the health of both individuals and communities.

In order to effectively plan for and respond to the needs of special populations, state and local health departments and health centers must work collaboratively. Partners must work together and use joint resources to accomplish their shared vision of creating healthier communities. Partnerships are not just helpful, but essential. Partnering can result in greater efficiency in operation, use of time and money, improved quality of programs, and elimination of redundancy. Partnering develops the capacity of health centers and other organizations, and communities to deal with the challenges of the future.

Bibliography

"3 - DEVELOP A SHARED VISION, MISSION, AND GOALS." *The Center for Construction Research and Training*. Web. 10 July 2015.
<http://www.cpwr.com/sites/default/files/3 Develop a Shared Vision Mission and Goals -2-9-15.pdf>.

"BUILDING EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS." *CciTools*. Web. 10 July 2015.
<http://www.ccitoolsforfeds.org/doc/building_effective_community_partnerships.pdf>.

"Chapter 3 Finding Partners: The Key to Building Strong Programs."*Meeting the Challenge: What The Federal Government Can Do To Support Responsible Fatherhood Efforts: Finding Partners: The Key to Building Strong Programs*. Web. 10 July 2015. <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/guidance01/ch3.htm>.

"Clinical-Community Linkages." *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*. Web. 10 July 2015. <http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/prevention-chronic-care/improve/community/>.

"Collaborative Problem-Solving." *United States Environmental Protection Agency*. Environmental Protection Agency. Web. 10 July 2015.
<http://www.epa.gov/sustainability/analytics/collps.htm>.

"Community Health Partnerships Tools and Information for Development and Support." *National Business Coalition on Health*. Web. 10 July 2015.
<http://www.nbch.org/nbch/files/cclibraryfiles/filename/000000000353/community_health_partnerships_tools.pdf>.

"MAPP Basics - Introduction to the MAPP Process." *National Association of County and City Health Officials*. Web. 10 July 2015.
<http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/mapp/framework/mappbasics.cfm>.

McCarthy, Douglas, Kimberly Mueller, and Ingrid Tillmann. "HealthPartners: Consumer-Focused Mission and Collaborative Approach Support Ambitious Performance Improvement Agenda." *The Commonwealth Fund*. Web. 10 July 2015.
<http://www.commonwealthfund.org/~/media/files/publications/case-study/2009/jun/1250_mccarthy_healthpartners_case_study_61_for-pf.pdf>.

"Partnership Perspectives." *University of Washington*. Web. 10 July 2015.
<https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/summer1-f.pdf>.

"Principle 7: There Is Feedback To, among and from All Stakeholders in the Partnership, with the Goal of Continuously Improving the Partnership and Its Outcomes." *University of Washington*. Web. 10 July 2015. <https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/summer7-f.pdf>.

Prybil, Lawrence, Paul Jarris, Rich Umbdenstock, and Rober Pestronk. "The Secret to Successful Health Partnerships." *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*. Web. 10 July 2015. <http://www.rwjf.org/en/culture-of-health/2015/02/the_secret_to_succes.html>.

"Public-private Partnerships: Mobilizing Resources to Achieve Public Health Goals." *Environmental Health*. Web. 10 July 2015. <http://www.ehproject.org/PDF/Joint_Publications/JP002CAHandPmphltEn.pdf>.

Roussos, Stergios, and Stephen Fawcett. "A Review of Collaborative Partnerships as a Strategy for Improving Community Health." *Annual Review of Public Health*. Web. 10 July 2015. <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.21.1.369>.

"Section 2. Proclaiming Your Dream: Developing Vision and Mission Statements." *Community Tool Box*. Web. 10 July 2015. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/strategic-planning/vision-mission-statements/main>.

Sharma, Raj. "The 6 Principles of Stakeholder Engagement." *Supply Chain Management Review*. Web. 10 July 2015. <http://www.censeoconsulting.com/media/pnc/2/media.12.pdf>.

"Unit 2 Section 2.1: Identifying and Selecting Partners." *Developing and Sustaining Community-Based Participatory Research Partnerships: A Skill Building Curriculum*. Web. 10 July 2015. <https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/cbpr/u2/u21.php>.

"Youthwork INFORMATION BRIEF." *Learning Work Connection*. Web. 10 July 2015. <http://jfs.ohio.gov/owd/WorkforceProf/Youth/Docs/infobrief4-leveraging.pdf>.

" Partnerships." *Identifying the Vision and Mission for the Partnership*. Web. 10 July 2015. <http://health.mo.gov/data/InterventionMICA/Partnerships_2.html>.