Identifying Potential Partners

Working with other organizations can be a cost-effective way to enhance the credibility and reach of your program's messages. Many public health institutions seek out partner organizations to reach particular intended audiences.

The benefits to your program of forming partnerships can include:
• Access to an intended audience
• More credibility for your message or program because the intended audiences consider the potential partner to be a trusted source
• An increase in the number of messages your program will be able to share with intended audiences
• Additional resources, either tangible or intangible (e.g., volunteers)
• Added expertise (e.g., training capabilities)
• Expanded support for your organization's priority activities
• Co-sponsorship of events and activities

You may partner with one or a few organizations to accomplish specific projects. Some communication initiatives may call for tapping into or assembling a coalition of organizations with a shared goal. In some cases, you may need to assemble many organizations that support particular recommendations or policies. At other times, you may want the organizations to play an active role in developing and implementing communication activities.

To encourage selected groups to partner with the Public Health Department, consider the benefits you can offer, such as:
• Added credibility
• Access to your organization's data
• Assurance of message accuracy
• Liaison with other partners

Decide Whether You Want Partners
Although working with partners can be essential to achieving communication objectives, there are also drawbacks that you should recognize and prepare to address.

Working with other organizations can:
• Be time consuming—Identifying potential partners, persuading them to work with your program, gaining internal approvals, and coordinating planning and training all take time.

• Require altering the program—Every organization has different priorities and perspectives, and partners may want to make minor or major program changes

• Result in loss of ownership and control of the program—Other organizations may change the time schedule, functions, or even the messages, and take credit for the program.

Decide how much flexibility you would be willing to allow a partner in the program

without violating the integrity of your program, its direction, and your own agency's procedures.

If you decide to partner with other organizations, consider which:
• Would best reach the intended audiences

• Might have the greatest influence and credibility with the intended audiences

• Will be easiest to persuade to work with you (e.g., organizations in which you know a contact person)

• Would require less support from you (e.g., fewer resources)

Develop Partnering Plans
Think about the roles potential partners might play in your program and use the suggestions below to help identify specific roles for partners:
• Supplemental printing, promotion, and distribution of materials
• Sponsorship of publicity and promotion
• Purchase of advertising space/time
• Creation of advertising about your organization's priority themes and messages
• Underwriting of communication materials or program development with your organization

Working With Partners
The staff person responsible for working with partners should be:

• A good manager who is able to balance all program components
• A team player who is able to work with other organizations
• Diplomatic and willing to negotiate
• Willing to share credit for success

Developing and Maintaining Coalitions
Community coalitions have become an important force in health promotion. Coalitions have all of the advantages of partnerships plus another benefit. Because they harness the resources and commitment of multiple organizations, the attention those organizations pay to an issue is institutionalized for long-term action. The strongest potential partners may be interested in joining coalitions.

Partnerships

Potential Partner Organizations (describe their roles):

Partnership Plan (see separate form provided):

Evaluation Plan (see separate form provided):

Partnership Plan

Program Title:

Communication Objective(s):

Intended audiences:

Potential Partner Organizations (in priority order):

Potential Partner Roles/Tasks:

Benefits to Partners of Participation in Program:

Other Considerations (such as Public Health Department's constraints or policies):

Steps Planned to Approach and Engage Potential Partners:

Negotiated Partners/Roles of Each:

Mechanisms for Communicating/Working Together:

Plans for Measuring Accomplishments:

Plans for Completing (Ending) Partnerships:

Evaluation Plan

Program name:

Communication objectives:

Intended audiences:

Identify each type of evaluation to be conducted (formative, process, and outcome):

For each type of evaluation, include:

Evaluation questions to be answered:

Data collection methods (e.g., telephone surveys, participant evaluation forms in the classroom):

Analysis plan (what you are going to do with the data gathered to answer the questions posed):

Evaluation products and use of evaluation data (e.g., final report to recommend program revisions, conference presentation to share lessons learned with others):

Also include how you are going to get the evaluation done (tasks, time schedule, resource requirements, persons responsible):