

Unit 4: Trust and Communication in a CBPR Partnership – Spreading the “Glue” and Having it Stick

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This unit emphasizes the central role that trusting relationships play in successful CBPR partnerships. It includes practical strategies for establishing and maintaining trust, balancing power, communicating effectively and resolving conflicts.

Learning Objectives

- Articulate the importance of trust in CBPR partnerships
- Learn about processes for establishing and maintaining trust among partners
- Identify processes for making decisions and communicating effectively
- Understand how conflicts can arise and how to approach conflict resolution
- Learn strategies for motivating, recognizing and celebrating partners

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Unit 4 Section 4.1: Addressing Expectations of Different Partners

Exercise 4.1.1: Understanding Why People and Organizations Get Involved in CBPR

Go around the room and ask participants to state one or two reasons why people and/or organizations may choose to become involved with a CBPR partnership. List the reasons on a flip chart for reference throughout this section.

In the very early stages of establishing a CBPR partnership, the expectations of potential and committed partners regarding their roles and the activities and benefits of being involved need to be addressed. Below are examples of the motivations that may bring community partners and institutional partners to CBPR:

Community partners may be motivated by the potential to:

- Access resources
- Advocate for policy change
- Build bridges across socio-cultural/political barriers
- Create jobs
- Demonstrate/address inequities and injustices
- Demonstrate a program's impact
- Ensure cultural survival
- Identify contexts affecting quality of life
- Identify gaps through comparison
- Improve services
- Protect the community
- Solve a problem

Institutional partners may be motivated by the potential to:

- Attract and support students
- Advance careers
- Build partnerships
- Demonstrate/address inequities and injustices
- Formulate policy
- Generate knowledge
- Link personal and professional goals and values
- Meet funding agency expectations
- Obtain institutional funding

- Raise the visibility of the institution

The needs and expectations of all partners should be respected in CBPR projects and these will need to be negotiated. Institutional partners should pay heightened attention to the needs and expectations of community partners.

Exercise 4.1.2: Understanding Assumptions

Reflect on a partnership or coalition that you are working with now or have worked with in the past. By “partnership” we are referring to a formal or informal alliance among different organizations and institutions which have come together to address a common issue.

1. Going into the partnership or coalition, what were some of your assumptions about (a) how you would work together; (b) what you would be able to accomplish; and (c) why you are all at the table? Write down at least **two of these assumptions**.
2. Take 5 minutes to exchange stories with your neighbor about your partnership/coalition experiences and the assumptions you discovered **after you began working together**.
3. Give examples of assumptions you had that proved false; explain how you worked to make changes so that it did not become a significant barrier to the functioning of the partnership/coalition.

Exercise 4.1.3: Understanding Assumptions

Foundation Sustainability began a five-year AIDS prevention and care initiative in Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland and South Africa in 1999. In providing grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the region, the Foundation staff noted the lack of management and leadership skills in many of the AIDS NGOs applying for grants. To address this weakness in the NGO sector, an 18-month pilot “capacity building” initiative was funded to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs in each of the five countries in leadership, governance and management. The Foundation provided funding in each country to a newly formed coalition of 3 to 5 agencies made up primarily of training institutes, university departments and NGOs. During the 18-month pilot phase, each independent coalition was required to do a needs assessment of AIDS NGOs in their country (or a geographic region within their country), develop training materials, conduct trainings to NGO managers and provide follow up mentoring. At an evaluation summit hosted by the Foundation at the end of the 18-month pilot, coalition members from all five countries gathered together and conducted the “Assumptions Exercise” described in [Exercise 4.1.2](#).

Critical assumptions identified by participants included:

- Working together as a consortium would be easy and smooth.
- Once we committed ourselves to working as a consortium, I thought we would be a consortium; instead, everyone came to the table wearing their institutional 'hats.'
- As an institution of higher learning [university], I thought it would be easy to work with the NGO sector and that they would be "thirsting for knowledge" but many didn't take the time to attend the courses [which were offered at no cost].
- After prior consultation with the NGO managers regarding their needs/interests for the curriculum, we thought we had buy-in from them; but many did not attend the trainings.
- Given the high prevalence of AIDS in our country [40%], I thought all consortium members would see this project as an emergency and high priority, but it took a great deal of effort to get some of the consortium members to contribute time to the Institute.
- We assumed that after the 18-month pilot was over that the funding would continue for the full 5-year time frame discussed with the donor from the beginning.
- We assumed that organizations in the consortium had the appropriate skills and knowledge to deliver the program.
- We assumed that because there was a need for NGO capacity building that people [in NGOs] would participate.
- We assumed that the Ministry of Health would be supportive of this initiative...but it has been a struggle.
- We thought once we got to the implementation phase [training and mentoring] that it would be easy. But it took much more time than we had budgeted

Questions for Discussion:

1. Given your own familiarity with working in partnerships/coalitions, which assumptions here echo your own experiences?
2. How might some of these assumptions negatively affect the functioning of the partnership? Give specific examples.
3. What practices or policies might be instituted at the start of the partnership to avoid some of the potential negative outcomes that result from these assumptions? Do you have examples from your own partnership experience that have proved helpful?

Unit 4 Section 4.2: Working Towards Trust

Successful CBPR partnerships are characterized by trusting relationships among partners. There are many factors that can hinder trust-building in CBPR partnerships. It is critical for CBPR partnerships to examine these factors and commit to addressing them in a trust-building manner.

Exercise 4.2.1: What Hinders Trust in CBPR partnerships?

In small groups or individually, ask community-based participants to list 3 reasons they or their organizations might not trust a researcher or research institution. Similarly, ask institution-based participants to list 3 reasons why potential community partners might not trust them. List on flip chart and discuss briefly with the full group the reasons listed by the participants.

Below are some of the reasons that developing trusting relationships in CBPR partnerships can prove challenging:

The history that partners bring with them

- **Some communities feel over-researched.** For example, more marginalized communities including people of color, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender, new immigrants and refugees, people with HIV/AIDS, and native born people. The experience of the participants in the Tuskegee syphilis experiments and the subsequent fall-out when that became public news added greatly to the distrust among many marginalized community members and the organizations serving them towards researchers and research in general.
- When **researchers come in as outside experts, take data, and don't give back.** This is what Aboriginal people in Canada, for example, refer to as "helicopter research" and others have called "'parachute research" and drive-by research." Researchers "fly in" to reserve communities, administer surveys, and leave.
- **When researchers come in as outside experts and define research priorities and a research agenda** but don't give back and even cause harm.
- **Community-based partners may feel that researchers will "drain" their resources** and hamper the work of their mission (for example, taking staff away from their usual responsibilities to attend meetings and perform tasks related to the research).
- **"Turf issues" among community members** may also hinder trust. Community groups may be in direct competition for scarce funding dollars which may lead to feelings of "why do we need to spend money to research what we already know"?

The intimidation factor related to research

- **Community members may feel intimidated by the technical training of researchers** (PhD, MD, MA, etc.) and the jargon associated with research – e.g., multivariate analyses, prospective cohort studies, sampling frameworks.
- **Community members may also be suspicious of (and at the same time intimidated by) the "culture of expertise and mysticism"** surrounding the domain of research – after all, "science is science, isn't it and what do I have to contribute to it"?

The characteristics of the institutional researchers

- **Community members may be suspicious of the agenda of researchers.** For example, some may be cautious (especially if their communities are already vulnerable or stigmatized in some way) about how data should be collected or used and still others may question the manner in which resources are allocated. This is especially true if the research funding is solely administered through the university or health department and doesn't benefit the community partners in any tangible way.
- **When researchers are new to a community.** For example, when researchers are not community members themselves and have no pre-existing relationship with community, suspicions can be heightened and working to

build trust may be a longer process.

- **When researchers are only willing to commit to a partnership for the duration of a grant.** This is an on-going issue for communities. Institutional researchers should be willing and able to make a long-term commitment to the mission of the partnership beyond specific funding periods. This speaks to the need for the partnership to address the issue of sustainability early on, and to clarify in the early stages the levels of commitment of the partners involved.

Building trust

Now that we've discussed the factors that can *hinder* trust, it is important to understand how to *build* trust between CBPR partners to ensure the involvement of community representatives in all aspects of a research project.

For trusting relationships to develop over time, the individuals and organizations involved in partnerships need to consistently exhibit certain behaviors and characteristics. These include:

- Being open and honest
- Being able to listen well
- Using appropriate humor to add levity and build group cohesion
- Being able to directly address and speak frankly about contentious but important issues, such as power differentials, racism, and financial decisions

The following offers a simple model for thinking about community involvement in CBPR that also has significant influence on enhancing trust in partnerships:

At the International Inner City Health Conference in Toronto in 2002, a community-based researcher outlined a three-pronged strategy for how CBPR differs from more traditional forms of research in terms of community involvement (Paez-Victor):

- **Input** - Research is driven by community needs.
- **Process** - Community plays a role in gathering, analyzing and disseminating information.
- **Outcome** - Research is intended to be used by the community to enhance health and build on community assets.

Paez-Victor emphasized that this model encompasses the core principles of CBPR and designing projects around this model can significantly build trust among research team members, as demonstrated below:

1. Input from community representatives into the initiation and start-up phase of a CBPR project:

Ideally, a partnership is in place prior to a research question or project being determined. Many of us, however, come to develop partnerships when a project is already well into its development stages. Expecting the community to become involved enough to "take ownership" of the research process, interventions and results when the project is institutionally driven can undermine the possibility for an authentic partnership. Similarly, partnerships that are initiated by institutional partners under the constraints of a short timeline for responding to a funding agency request for proposals can undermine community trust and involvement.

The following strategies to address the "trust issue" should be considered during the early stages of a partnership:

- **Be inclusive at the start of the partnership** in terms of who is invited to initial planning meetings.
- **Value and take seriously community input.** A researcher validating a community member's input is crucial to community representatives finding and being able to claim their place in a research partnership.
- **Listening to and addressing needs identified by community partners.** Community partners are more likely to get involved and stay involved in a partnership when their issues are emphasized.

- **Elevate the importance of the community’s research priorities over those that are pre-determined by external interests.** If funding is available for asthma research, but the community is most concerned about domestic violence, a successful CBPR partnership focused on asthma will be difficult to develop and sustain.
- **Demonstrate positive regard for other ways of thinking, especially about research.** All partners bring knowledge, skills, and expertise to the table and challenging underlying assumptions about research methods and community issues are important steps in moving from rhetoric to reality.

2. Community engagement throughout the *Process* of doing CBPR:

- **Recognize and conduct ongoing analysis of the community’s strengths and resources.**
- **Examine the consistency and shifting of the relationships.** It helps to understand the dynamic nature of trust, and thus a process evaluation is an imperative exercise in CBPR projects.
- **Define roles and responsibilities** based on assets and strengths and capacity-building needs.
- **Identify capacity-building needs** and schedule them into the structure of the research project. For example, if community partners want to learn more about collection, analysis and interpretation of data, then tasks, community interns, student placements, volunteer opportunities, etc. can be structured around those needs.
- **Sharing power and control.** This can be achieved in terms of who facilitates or chairs the partnership’s board (community representative or rotating leadership among institutional and community members), how decisions are made, how funds are distributed (community-based organizations as lead organizations on grants, for example), and community representatives serving as Principal Investigators and/or Co-Investigators (with attendant responsibilities of those roles).
- **Work through discussions of potentially divisive issues (e.g. budget cuts, issues of racism, partners are not getting work done) before they arise.** Use role play exercises to prompt frank discussion and promote a better understanding between partners.

3. Community involvement in determining the *Outcome* of research:

- **Agree that research is intended to be used by the community** to achieve social justice, enhance health and build on community assets.
- **Determine the role that community representatives play in disseminating project outcomes,** including interpretation and translation of findings into policy and action.
- **Decide how dissemination strategies are defined and carried through.**
- **“Deliver on the promise”** and ensure that research findings are used in valuable and meaningful ways that enhance quality of life in communities.
- **Conduct dissemination strategies that are consistent with the original goals and objectives of the research** and not for simple, personal gain.
- **Disseminate results with community input regarding how and when all data are released and to whom.** “Sensitive” data (i.e., those that cast a community in a negative light or reinforce negative stereotypes) should not be disseminated or talked about publicly without significant community control and agreement to a process.

The following activity provides an example of one strategy for helping partners get to know one another and in the process, help to build cohesion and trust.

Example 4.2.2: Learning Exchanges as a Tool for Building Trust in CBPR Partnerships

Learning Exchanges are a valuable means of allowing partners opportunities to get to know each other in CBPR partnerships. This exercise was used by a Toronto CBPR project (O’Brien & Travers) as a process by which team members could get to know and understand the different worlds they come from.

The Learning Exchanges are structured so that the first half of every team

meeting is a presentation by one of the community partner agencies outlining

- Who their community is
- What challenges face the community broadly
- What challenges face the community in relation to the existing project concerns held by the community about research (steep learning curves, past experiences, etc.)
- Some initial discussion about how the community representative saw this project benefiting them (balanced by a follow-up question of “highest hope and worst fear”)
- Thoughts about the directions the project should take - i.e., given the broad research goals or objectives already agreed upon, what are the most important related issues/questions for that community
- Questions and answers from other team members

The researchers also take part in the Learning Exchange by talking about:

- Their backgrounds and what drew them to CBPR
- Their commitment to social justice in research
- Their commitment to CBPR and particularly collaboration
- Some reflection on how they currently view research as a community-development and advocacy tool
- Some reflection on why they think the current research topic is timely

For example, a research team based in Toronto spent the first 6 months of their project meetings simply ‘getting to know each other.’ This was an important and necessary step for the team to be able to understand each other’s worlds, know where each was coming from, broke down barriers. For example, community representatives were able to understand that the two principal investigators (PIs), despite both working in universities, were also community members who both cared deeply about the research questions and process. This particular team had two PIs, a community intern, a staff coordinator, and 9 ethno-specific community partner agencies.

Example 4.2.3: Spreading the “Glue”: Strategies for Building Trust

Examples from the Harlem Community & Academic Partnership

- “Keep It Real” – in all that you do and in who you are as a member of the partnership
- “Know The History” – acknowledge it when you know it and when you don’t know it
- “Sweat Equity” – Do something for nothing; participate/contribute in partnership members’ activities
- “Capacity Building” – HCAP’s Community Capacity Center aims to translate research/technical areas of expertise to CBOs and community members
- “Acknowledge Power & Influence” – particularly among community partners (the leaders and mavens)
- “Look Out” for members – know your partnership members, particularly the community members and what they are up to in their respective CBOs – share resources, information, offer consultation opportunities, funding

information, knowledge, etc.

- “Socialize” – go out for a meal or a drink

Exercise 4.2.4: Building Trust in CBPR Partnerships by Overcoming Obstacles

This exercise is designed to take 45-60 minutes. You will need one sheet of paper per person and a scarf or sash to use as a blindfold.

Provide these instructions to participants:

Please take a piece of paper and write down your answer to the question that applies to you

- *If you are a community partner:* What is one challenge or obstacle that you face in partnering with the university? [substitute “with institutions,” “with the health department” or other wording as appropriate for the group]
- *If you are faculty, staff or student:* What is one challenge or obstacle that you face in partnering with communities?

Then, instruct each participant to crumple up the piece of paper and throw it into the space at the front of the room. Ask for two volunteers – ideally a community and institutional partnership pair that have had some history of working together. Ask if either person would mind being blind-folded for the purpose of the exercise. Blind-fold one person and ask the other person to help the blind-folded person “navigate through the obstacles” posed by the crumpled pieces of paper only by talking to and not physically touching the blind-folded person. After the blind-folded person has successfully navigated the obstacles, take the blind-fold off and debrief on the exercise as a group: what did participants observe about the way the two people interacted with each other? What indicated whether there was trust or not?

After debriefing, open the pieces of crumpled paper and either:

- As a large group, talk through each challenge or obstacle one-by-one, or group them together in categories for discussion; or
- Divide participants in small groups and give each one or several challenges or obstacles to discuss and develop recommendations to report back to the large group.

Unit 4 Section 4.3: Addressing Power Inequities

Many partnerships face issues of power inequity between partners. To address these often institutionalized constructs, partners must actively discuss and seek to find methods for sharing power and control. Efforts to ensure equity and shared influence may be incorporated into principles, operating norms, policies, and procedures. For example, how will the partnership make decisions? Where will meetings be held? Will there be a shared distribution of resources? There are also other real inequities among partners that are more difficult to erase, especially in terms of race, gender, and class. If partners acknowledge and discuss these inequities up front, they may be better able to see how they affect the work of the partnership. It may be helpful for partners to experience a cultural competency or undoing racism workshop together.

Striving for equity should include processes for addressing:

- Power imbalances between community members and academics
- Acknowledging and valuing the expertise and skills of community organizations
- Lack of common language among partners
- Politics within and between partners
- Issues of ownership
- “Research fatigue” amongst certain communities

Example 4.3.1: Addressing Power Inequities in a CBPR Partnership

We depict our structure as a three-legged stool. Each leg of the stool represents a different type of partner – 1) universities, 2) local government and corporate institutions, such as the health department and health care providers, and 3) community-based organizations (CBOs). We recognized early on that our stool had unequal legs if measured by the power and resources of the different entities. The University and other institutions wield the most power and have the most resources when compared to the community. Therefore, much of the work of our partnership has involved “growing the community leg.”

Our structure and governance shows careful attention to building organizational equity and capacity where it didn’t exist before. Because of the nature of bureaucracies, representatives from institutions like the University and the Health Department all came with one voice. But representatives from community-based organizations each spoke with separate voices and diminished power. So our community-based organization partners formed an alliance—the Community-Based Organization Partners (CBOP), which meets separately to develop a common opinion. CBOP is the main structure that has strengthened the influence of the community partners in our partnership. CBOP also brought a “community consultant” to our deliberations. This person is grounded in methodology and theory and helps to translate the perspective of the university partners. Because the consultant is based in the community, he also understands the community’s position and has the ability to translate it to the university partners.

Adjusting to this increased influence of our CBOs has created tension between partners at times. It can be a challenge to work with a more

unified community when institutions are used to a divided voice. It has also been difficult for CBO partners to arrive at a single position when their organizations are so different. But CBOP also makes it easier to answer the question, "Who speaks for the community?" Now, if a request or an issue arises that needs a CBO response, institutional partners no longer need to decide which CBO will represent our group. We ask CBOP to decide.

Excerpted from Flint PRC proposal

Unit 4 Section 4.4: Making Decisions and Communicating Effectively

Successful CBPR partnerships are characterized by jointly developed processes and procedures that pay particular attention to issues of equity, shared influence and control over decision making. By choosing appropriate styles for decision-making, the partnership can achieve balance of ownership and productivity. Each and every partner in a CBPR partnership should have a voice in the process of determining, for example, problems to address, goals, research methods, intervention strategies, what and how to disseminate, hiring and financial decisions.

Give careful consideration to decision-making processes very early on in the development stages of your partnership. While the greatest ownership is achieved when everyone is aware of all the information and participates in all decisions, productivity may be enhanced when the partnership empowers individuals and small groups to act together to make decisions.

Consider such questions as:

- Does everyone always need to be at the table?
- Who gets the final say? On which issues? (e.g., budget, staff, dissemination, etc)
- Are there differing levels of responsibility? (e.g., among funders, institutions, community members)
- How will we balance process and action?
- Consensus? Democratic? Autocratic?
- Will decision-making responsibilities be rotated over time? How?
- How long should it take to make a decision that affects the whole partnership?

Give consideration to adopting informal democratic processes, shared leadership and consensus decision making. While the adoption of formal by-laws and the use of Roberts Rules of Order can be advantageous in terms of efficiency and structure, they can serve to stifle participation and influence over decision making. Informal processes can emphasize equity and shared power and control. The most common approaches partnerships use to make decisions are either a consensus or democratic process or some combination thereof. Your partnership should discuss, agree on, and then post guidelines for reaching decisions.

Example 4.4.1: Collaborative Approaches to Decision-Making

Consensus: The consensus process allows the entire group to be heard and to participate in decision-making. The goal of consensus decision-making is to find common ground, probing issues until everyone's opinions are voiced and understood by the group. Discussions leading to consensus aim to bring the group to mutual agreement by addressing all concerns. Consensus does not require unanimity. Rather, everyone must agree they can "live with" the decision. Though it can take longer than other decision-making methods, consensus fosters creativity, cooperation and commitment to final decisions. There are no "winners" and "losers" in this process, as discussion continues until consensus is achieved. Discussion is closed by restating agreements made and "next steps" in implementing decisions made.

Democratic: Options are discussed fully so that members are informed as to the decision's consequences. The important ground rule here is that the "losing" side agrees to support the decision, even though it was not their

choice. Decisions are made by majority vote.

Straw polling: Straw polling entails asking for a show of hands (e.g., thumbs up or down) to see how the group feels about a particular issue. It is a quick check that can save a great deal of time. Silent hand signals can be an invaluable source of feedback for a facilitator working with a large group.

Voting: Voting is a decision-making method that seems best suited to large groups. To avoid alienating large minorities, you might decide a motion will only succeed with a two-thirds (or more) majority. Some partnerships limit voting to people who have come to three or more consecutive meetings to prevent stacked meetings and to encourage familiarity with the issues being decided. Alternatively, voting can be combined with consensus. Some groups institute time limits on discussion and move to voting if consensus cannot be reached.

Delegation: The partnership may agree to delegate certain decisions to small groups, committees, or an individual. A small group may have the specialized knowledge, skills, or resources required to make certain decisions. When delegating decision-making, the group must clarify any constraints on the authority to act, and institute mechanisms for reporting back to the large group.

Source: Center for Collaborative Planning, www.connectccp.org

Example 4.4.2: Approaches to Decision-Making Adopted by CBPR Partnerships

The “70% Rule” for Consensus Decision-Making

Given the challenges associated with reaching absolute consensus, the use of the “70% rule” is recommended. A community partner in the Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center (URC) indicated one of the reasons why the Board was able to engage in meaningful discussions and make decisions was the “70/30 rule - if I can get behind this 70% then I would do so.” The application of such consensus decision making requires group facilitation that gives everyone an opportunity to continue to voice their opinions until issues are resolved, including a commitment on the part of all participants to share leadership actions to both accomplish tasks and maintain collaborative relationships.

From Detroit URC Proposal

“Consensus – Plus”

When we think about decision making, the image of the Salad People comes to mind. Unlike a soup where the ingredients are blended, the ingredients of a salad maintain their individual integrity. And yet together the individual parts create a whole new flavor. Our partnership has its tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, and even a few nuts thrown in, and we try not to blend or become dominated by one entity. Instead, we add our individual cultures and organizational perspectives to create something

that is new and different. We determined early on...that we did not want to do “business as usual.”

So, we make decisions almost exclusively by dialogue and consensus. Although the PRC Community Board has a formal process for voting, where each partner organization gets one vote, all of our discussions and formal votes have ended in consensus. “We call it consensus-plus” says one partner “because we will dialogue about an issue until each person can live with the decision.” Dialogue is when you try to put yourself in the other person’s place earnestly, and consensus-plus goes beyond a majority vote. We don’t introduce feelings of animosity by allowing any person to feel outvoted or unheard. If there is disagreement, we will talk until we are all comfortable and committed to working together on the issue. One partner recalls a discussion about money for a village health worker project where one partner who was in disagreement left the room angry. “Instead of letting her go, I followed her outside and asked her to come back in,” recalls the partner, “and we talked and talked until we all agreed.”

We also developed principles that struck a new course away from traditional paternalistic and exploitive practices and continue to use them to guide our decision-making. Our principles require that interventions work to solve problems of local relevance, involve community partners at every stage of the work, build capacity of community members in the process, and disseminate results in ways useful to the community.

Excerpted from Flint PRC proposal

Exercise 4.4.3: Navigating through Difficult Decisions – Transparency and Communication

The situation: The funding for the “Promoting Healthy Living” initiative has been cut by 20% (approximately \$100,000) in the second year of the grant. The partnership needs to make some decisions about what to reduce or eliminate in the budget. The health department, which serves as the lead organization for the grant, has 50% of the budget (including funds for project staff and other direct costs related to running the project); the university involved has a 25% share of the budget (partial salary support for 3 faculty, 2 graduate student research assistants, supplies and travel); and two community-based organizations each have 12.5% to support 2 full time staff people and for other project-related costs.

The task: Ask participants to role play a meeting of the partnership in which the budget cuts are discussed and decided upon. Decision-making and group process issues arising from this exercise should then be discussed by the full group. [Note: if there is not time for role playing, participants can discuss in small groups how this scenario could unfold, and identify potential strategies for navigating successfully through this difficult situation.]

Questions for discussion:

- What agreements or understandings could the partnership adopt which could help to guide the decision making in this situation?
- Who should have the “final say” on these decisions?
- What are the potential self-interests of the partners involved and how may these differ from the interests of the partnership?
- What other resources might the partnership have to support the initiative?

Balancing process and tasks

While it is recognized that a significant amount of time needs to be devoted to the processes involved in establishing a CBPR partnership (e.g., to build relationships and trust), other tasks and project-related activities designed to accomplish the goals and objectives of the partnership also need to be carried out simultaneously.

Striving for such a balance between the need to give attention to group and infrastructure process issues and working on program-related tasks is an ongoing issue, particularly in the beginning of a partnership. While the more “task oriented” partners may be impatient with all the attention to “process”, it is important for the facilitator (s) or convener(s) of the partnership to remind the board from time to time that these processes will, in the long run, help to establish a solid foundation on which the partnership can grow and accomplish tasks more effectively.

That said, it is also a good idea to be open to responding to opportunities in the early stages of partnership development that will lead to a sense of accomplishment of a task completed and help to build group cohesion.

For example:

- Holding a “kick-off” event to garner publicity and good will within the community
- Responding to a short-term funding opportunity (even if all the processes and structures discussed above are not fully in place) that is relatively easy to accomplish and will foster the sense of working together towards a common goal
- Responding to a specific request from a community-based partner for assistance with a new or ongoing project for which the partnership can then share the credit for helping to accomplish.

Example 4.4.4.: Spreading The “Glue”: Strategies for Effective Communication

Examples from the Harlem Community & Academic Partnership

- Create listserv
- Have open microphone during partnership meetings
- Do not just use e-mail! Use the phone! Do “drive-by” check-ins
- Establish a project manager position – a glue factor!
- Create Intervention Work Groups (IWGs) that develop and oversee each intervention. Aim for dual leadership between academic and community partners. Leadership is clear on expectations regarding the work efforts and is grounded in what is expected around communication
- Have members participate on each other’s groups and coalitions
- Conduct an annual review of goals and objectives. This drives the development of goals and objectives for the upcoming year

- Keep nothing hidden! Communicate with integrity! Set the tone from the start!

Unit 4 Section 4.5: Resolving Conflicts

Conflict is virtually inevitable in a collaborative endeavor. Disagreements are bound to happen when a diverse collection of voices and perspectives gathers. However, conflict does not always have to be negative. When handled appropriately, conflict can provide an opportunity for constructive change.

What topics are likely to produce conflict in CBPR partnerships?

- Discriminatory “isms” such as racism, sexism, ageism, etc.
- Contrasting goals, values, or priorities
- Conflicts between different members of the partnership
- Communication break-downs
- Power imbalances
- Commitment imbalances or unequal work loads
- Clashing organizational cultures
- Financial or budgetary losses or conflict about resource allocation

When conflict arises, consider the following:

- Always **assume there is a legitimate reason**. Do not seek out a “trouble-maker” or lay blame.
- If serious conflict occurs, **take the time to resolve it**. If conflicts are ignored or buried by the group, they are bound to grow larger and resurface again.
- If you are unsure about the cause of group conflict, **ask other thoughtful group members outside of the group setting**. It may be helpful to use an outside consultant or party to help facilitate discussion of conflicts and contentious issues. In making difficult decisions such as eliminating a program or position or working through a sticky political situation, it can be difficult to have someone from within the partnership facilitate this conversation. Contracting with a facilitator or recruiting someone skilled in this work may make the discussion or decision-making process easier and will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate. If an outsider is used, it is important to carefully consider who the appropriate candidate is and ensure that they do their homework to know the partnership and have a clear sense of what the partnership wants to get out of their assistance.
- **Conflict evokes emotion**. When the group members are hurt by conflict, it must be addressed or they will not feel safe. This could stop the group from making any further significant decisions.
- **Open, clear communication is the best prevention** to avoiding unnecessary conflicts and can help resolve misunderstandings before they become full-blown arguments. Be very open and deliberate about all decision-making processes. For difficult decisions, for example on budget cuts, ensure that all the information and discussion points are out on the table. There may be less conflict when everyone wrestles with the difficult decision together. This is also a way to share power.

Example 4.5.1 Steps for Resolving Conflict

1. Understand diversity of styles, background, perspective, assumptions, race, ethnicity, culture, language, training, and point of view. Be aware that cultural differences can affect our approach to communicating, disclosing, making decisions, and resolving conflict.
2. Discuss and resolve differences as they arise
3. Assume that everyone has the right to bring up their feelings and get them resolved to their satisfaction.

4. Identify the probable cause of the conflict:

- Are differences of opinion caused by lack of information?
- Is there a power struggle or competition? Are two individuals trying for leadership or control? Are institutional interests at stake?
- Is there a “personality conflict”? That is, are individuals personalizing differences of style, communication, or approach?
- Is the group tired? Feeling hopeless, discouraged, or unsuccessful?
- Is the group confused about its task?
- Are differences of power related to race or culture causing conflict?

5. Negotiate solutions using a problem-solving approach. You may consider asking a mediator or other neutral third party to facilitate. Hear both sides and focus on shared interests. What does each party want? Where is the common ground? What solution(s) would be most fair?

6. Develop a written or verbal agreement and a process for checking progress.

Adapted from the Center for Collaborative Planning, www.connectccp.org

Exercise 4.5.2: CBPR – “The REAL World”

This role-play can be a great way for a CBPR partnership to explore challenges and possible strategies, laugh, and relieve stress.

Place the following scenarios on strips of paper and mix in a hat (and/or develop your own scenarios). Ask for two volunteers to pick a strip out of the hat. After reviewing the scenario, the two people “act it out” in front of the rest of the group. Those in the audience can “mix it up” by doing the following:

- Joining in as a third/fourth party;
- Replacing one of the people in the situation; or
- Announcing “switch” to start a new scenario.

Sample scenarios:

- After two years of stable funding from the State Health Dept, you learn that you are “no longer a strategic priority”: *What do you wish you could say to your funder?*
- For the last 5 meetings, the same partner has arrived over a half hour late to every single meeting and makes you rehash everything you have already covered: *What do you wish you could say to your partner?*
- Your department chair never gets you letters of support on time and makes it difficult for you to get your proposals together in a timely fashion: *What do you wish you could say to your chair?*
- Your Mayor has agreed to be a keynote at a report launch. At the last minute (after the press has been notified and all the invites have gone out), s/he backs out. *What do you wish you could say to your mayor?*
- A reporter repeatedly misquotes you and misses the point of your harm reduction approach and regularly paints

your team as irresponsibly encouraging teen pregnancy. *What do you wish you could say to this reporter?*

- Your partner has made her twelfth thousandth grammatical revision to a paper you thought was great 15 drafts ago. *What do you wish you could say to your partner?*
- Someone suggests that the partnership starts their meetings at 7 am before they have to go to work. You are not a morning person. *What do you wish you could say to your partner?*
- You have been up until 3 am finishing a presentation. Your partner tells you they hate it. *What do you wish you could say to your partner?*
- You have been working with the same person at Agency Y for 3 years who was a total delight. Recently, that person quit and there is a new person on board who is impossible to work with. *What do you wish you could say to the Executive Director at Agency Y?*
- What are the top 10 things that drive you crazy about working with/in Universities?
- What are the top 10 things that drive you crazy about working with/in Community-Based Settings?
- You find out that one of your key survey administrators has been fabricating results for the last 3 months. *What do you wish you could say to him?*

Even though humorous interpretations of these scenarios can be a lot of fun, it is important that the exercise moderator is able to ensure that some useful and practical suggestions are suggested for each of these real-life experiences. For example, after each scenario is acted out in different ways, the moderator can ask the audience if they have successfully navigated the situation in the past and what strategies they would suggest for how to handle it in the future.

Unit 4 Section 4.6: Motivating, Recognizing and Celebrating Partners

It is important to check in regularly with partners and ask whether they are getting their needs met through their involvement in the partnership. Are they developing the skills they want to develop? Is the effort benefiting their organization? Do they feel comfortable with other partners?

In addition to celebrating individuals and partner organizations, it is important to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the partnership as a whole. Celebration of a partnership's accomplishments may help find and nurture advocates or champions of the partnership and/or programs.

Why partners keep coming to the table when funding is not an issue

- Having a shared set of priorities
- Having committed partners that see the value in the partnership and the research
- It's fun
- There is respect for each other
- Partners enjoy each other's friendship
- The partnership addresses individual partner's interests
- It's an opportunity to be involved with like-minded people
- The partnership has created community
- There are mutually beneficial outcomes
- There is open dialogue

Why partners keep coming to the table during a phase of no funding or transition to new funding

- They have proactively decided to stay and have made a long-term commitment
- The partnership is getting involved in the policy process
- The partnership is adapting and evolving
- The partnership has strong, well-developed infrastructure
- Some of the partnership's projects have been institutionalized

Reasons why a partner organization might decide to leave a partnership

- There has been a departure from the priorities
- There has been a change in leadership
- There is a lack of resources
- It's more beneficial for the partner to focus on their own organization
- There has been misuse or abuse of partners
- There are conflicting personalities or personal relationships
- They are unhappy with the lack of progress in the partnership
- They are unsatisfied with the style/process in which work was conducted
- There has been a breach of trust and honesty

Reasons to celebrate in a partnership

- When partnership goals are achieved
- When funding is obtained

- When a new project is developed, when a project achieves its goals, or at the completion of a project
- When new staff or partners join the partnership or when staff or partners move on from the partnership
- When staff or partners have a birthday or anniversary
- When the partnership is having an anniversary
- To partner, staff and/or volunteer contributions
- To celebrate annual holidays or at the end of the year
- To reconnect with or show appreciation for partners, staff and/or volunteers

Benefits of celebrating accomplishments

- It's an opportunity to reflect and renew
- It motivates people
- It can attract new partners, staff and/or volunteers
- It can attract new investors, supporters and champions
- It can generate publicity for the partnership

Ways partners can be recognized for their contributions

- Parties
- Awards or honors (given by the partnership or nominated for those outside of the partnership)
- Positive letters to a partner's colleagues or superiors
- Financial compensation
- Thank you letters
- Public recognition (in newsletter articles, local press or events)

Unit 4 Citations

Collaborative Decision-Making. Center for Collaborative Planning. www.connectccp.org

Carolo H & Travers R (2005). Challenges, complexities and solutions: A unique HIV research partnership in Toronto, Canada.

Journal of Urban Health, 82(2), ii42.

Paez-Victor M. (2002). Remarks at First International Conference on Inner City Health, Toronto Canada.

Unit 4 Other Recommended Resources

Dukes EF, Piscalish M, Stephens S. (2000) *Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution: Tools for Powerful Groups and Communities*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. To receive a 15% discount, order through the CCPH website [link to www.ccpb.info]

The People's Institute is recognized as one of the foremost anti-racism training and organizing institutions in the nation. Over the past 24 years, The People's Institute Undoing Racism™/Community Organizing process has impacted the lives of nearly 100,000 people both nationally and internationally. Through this process, it has built a national collective of anti-racist, multicultural community organizers who do their work with an understanding of history, culture, and the impact of racism on communities. <http://www.pisab.org/>

Reaching Higher Ground: A Guide for Preventing, Preparing for, and Transforming Conflict for Tobacco Control Coalitions provides practical advice for ways of working in coalitions and partnerships that resolve real problems while strengthening relationships. The tools and strategies described in this book can make any collaborative undertaking more successful by approaching problems and people in ways that impart dignity and respect. It is possible to grow in community, through conflict, by engaging one another in ways that reach not only common ground, but *higher ground*. http://www.ttac.org/products/pdfs/Higher_Ground.pdf