

Resources for Identifying Potential Partners

Tips and Strategies

- **Building on prior positive working relationships** among at least some of the potential partners is a step in the right direction when establishing a new community-institutional partnership to address a public health issue not previously addressed by this particular group of partners. Drawing upon the trust that is already present can lead to the initial willingness to get involved and the commitment to develop more long-term trusting relationships. When this is not possible, engage a core group of dedicated participants.
- **Organizational membership**, rather than individuals, helps to bring the entire resources of the organization to the partnership, and if an individual who participates on a given project leaves, then the organization is committed to identifying another person to be involved.
- **Starting with a small number of diverse partner organizations** may facilitate your success with drawing upon diverse ideas and resources while keeping the number of partners small enough to be able to adopt and adhere to a set of participating principles and operating norms.
- It is also essential to **have early, tangible successes**. These will help to sustain enthusiasm among partners, and will require that the goal setting process be very realistic, with milestones set at short, medium and long-term intervals.

Characteristics of Effective Partners

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ Willing and committed | ▪ Ability to adopt multiple roles |
| ▪ Organizational mission in alignment | ▪ Good negotiation, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills |
| ▪ CBO History of engagement in the community | ▪ Ability to obtain resources |
| ▪ CBO staff/volunteer capacity and willingness | ▪ High degree of political knowledge |
| ▪ Engaged, competent researchers | ▪ Ability to foster collaboration among members |
| ▪ Support and involvement from CBO's top leadership | ▪ Access to decision-makers within the community |

Example Partnership Policy on this Topic

“Criteria for Selecting New Partners for the Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center (URC)” (Revised and adopted January, 2002)

- Organizations with a health, human service and/or community development mission, operating in and working with one or more of the URC communities in southwest and eastside Detroit, that have a prior, positive working relationship with current URC partners.
- Organizations that are embedded in, well respected by, and/or involve staff from the communities in which they work.
- Organizations with a history of working on URC-affiliated projects and/or activities that emphasize prevention, family and community health issues, and/or enhancing community capacity building.
- Organizations that are interested in and willing to work within the overall goal (i.e., addressing social determinants of health) and specific priorities (i.e., access to quality health care, physical environment, violence prevention) established by the URC Board.
- Organizations that are willing to adapt and adhere to the operating norms and “Community-Based Participatory Research Principles” adopted by the URC Board.
- Organizations that are willing and have the capability to assign a representative and an alternate to be a member of the URC Board. The representative should have the authority in their organization to make decisions without having to go back to the leadership within the organization, or, at the least, have easy access to the leadership as well as their active and visible support of URC activities.
- Organizations that are willing to actively participate, through, for example, the involvement of one or more representatives, at the monthly URC Board meetings and on steering committees for specific URC-affiliated projects and attending and participating in national, regional or local conferences, workshops and meetings, as appropriate.
- Organizations that are willing and have the capability to facilitate ongoing, two-way communication between the partner organization and the URC Board that fosters collaboration, coordination, development of new projects and participation in special activities involving the URC partners.

Resources for Navigating through Difficult Decisions

Tips and Strategies

- **Give careful consideration to decision-making processes very early on in the development stages of your partnership.** 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)
 - differing levels of responsibility? (funder, institutions, community)
 - how will you balance process and action?
- **Develop a set of “Operating Norms”** for your partnership. Engaging in a collaborative process for developing these can enhance trust among the partners involved. This set should be a living, breathing and dynamic document that can be revised based on team process evaluations and periodic review and discussion by the partners. Operating Norms differ from CBPR Principles in that the Norms provide guidance to the partnership in how it works together to get things done (for example, at meetings and during small group and one-on-one interactions) while the Principles serve as the overarching blueprint to ensure that the research is conducted using the CBPR model.

A set of Operating Norms can outline the strategies for decision-making chosen by individual CBPR team (e.g., consensus, etc.). For example:

- **Meetings facilitated by someone with considerable group process experience**
 - **Community members serving in positions of power** - such as chairing the board and/or serving as principal or co-principal investigators, and participating in all levels of decision-making, can help to create a balance of power between community and institutional partners.
 - **Hold regular meetings of the partners that are accessible to all partners** – and ensure that meetings take place during convenient times, with available parking, child care, food.
 - **Ensure that all members have an opportunity to express their opinions and be heard**, especially when multiple languages are spoken, encouraging quieter members to contribute their ideas,
 - **Resolve conflicts when they occur**
 - **Ensure that all partners are involved**, to the extent they are interested, in the day-to-day operations and governance of the partnership.
- **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.

Example Partnership Policy on this Topic

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 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.