

Developing a Successful Community Agency Partnership

Your peers share proven ideas for choosing a community partner and building rapport.

Choosing a Partner

- Select an agency with goals which are in accordance with your library's mission.
- Find a common goal that both the library and the community agency share; our common interest was the importance of the Hudson River.
- Find an agency that is open-minded and communicative.
- Choose a partner who is a good, easy fit.
- Pick a group that is in close proximity to your library for ease and visibility.
- Examine what local resources exist and most of the time these organizations are clamoring for more participants.
- Connect to agencies that extend an area of your communities interests.
- Pick a group with a built in audience of participants like the Town Rec. Department.
- Identify groups that do programs with kids in the community.
- Reach out to agencies that you know to have strong track records of successful programming to families and children.
- Get to know a teacher or two through the school. Strike up a relationship with teachers that come into the library.
- Jump on any opportunity you perceive. Our collaboration formed from an informal conversation with the agency representative when she came into the library.
- Start by contacting a known library user / advocate within the community agency.
- Do your research before you approach a potential partner so that you are prepared to answer their questions.
- Just ask, you never know who might be willing to partner.

Planning with Your Partner

- Come up with a premise or a solid idea for a project but work out the details together.
- Be open to the community agency's ideas and possible alternative suggestions to your partnership.
- Plan programs that both organizations are enthusiastic about.
- Choose a project that furthers both of your goals.
- Be flexible and willing to understand that an organizations needs may be different than yours, but you can still work toward a common goal.
- Look at the community you are currently serving and decide what may fit with the population.
- Have group meetings with all participants in attendance.
- Allow your partner to be an equal part of the decision making.
- Actively engage the community agency in the planning process.
- Incorporate the community agency into the program pieces as much as possible. We used not only their physical resources but showcased their talents and knowledge.
- Outline or set up a communication schedule with your partner agency (like a weekly check in).
- Communicate what each agency will be responsible for. Stay organized and have a clear plan.
- Keep the project straightforward and simple for both parties.
- Sit down before the project starts to decide what the goals are and how they can be reached.
- Have times and dates available at the start so there is no confusion or difficulty with project date.
- The active project should be completed in one month or less.
- Be cautious about holding a weekend program during the summer and other community activities which might conflict.
- Plan for a sustainable program that lasts the entire year.
- Use social media to promote your project

- Advertise well: newspaper, social media, posters around town etc.
- Work together to publicize your program because the project benefits both organizations.
- Make the program fun so the children are excited. Having the participants on board helps the program and your partnership succeed.

Creating a Lasting Partnership

- Thank agencies, and continually acknowledge all community partners.
- Support their community events.
- Keep in touch with your "community agency" throughout the year.
- Identify ways that the library can further the mission and goals of these community groups by providing programs and media.
- Be open to different ways that the library can be involved with the community.
- Contact non-profit community organizations and list their events in your newsletters.
- Have fun!

The #1 Tip:

- Do not be easily discouraged. If you get turned down by a community agency, move on to the next one.

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