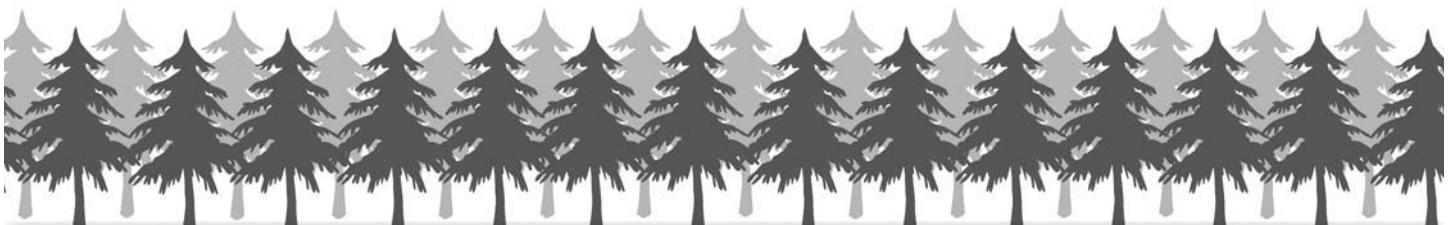


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## ***7. Partnerships – Working Together***





### Introduction

The sport, culture and recreation sector is changing and must be better positioned to connect with other sectors. There is a direct benefit to linking with health promotion, education, physical education programs, teachers and others. Each sector or group adds value and brings assistance to the partnership table. Each collaboration can elevate the whole group and increase the acquisition of or sharing of resources between sectors.

There are two main types of partnerships at the community level. One is the type you have with other groups, sectors or organizations (health, business, industry, schools/education, justice, etc.). These are often called external partnerships because they are with partners that are not directly connected or are external to the organization. The other type of partnership is called an internal partnership, which takes place within a specific organization (if it is large or spread out) or between several groups doing similar work – such as a multi-district or north-wide partnership for sport, culture and recreation groups.

Regardless of the type of partnership, it is in everyone's best interest to work together and to develop a better understanding of partnerships, as very few things that make big improvements in our communities can be done alone.

### What is a Partnership?

A partnership is often defined as a relationship between two or more groups who are working together on something that most likely could not be done by one group alone. Simply put, it is an agreement to do something together that will benefit all involved. The term partnership implies shared decision making, power, resources, work, risk and responsibility – and ultimately a sharing of both the benefits and burdens.

When there is agreement for two groups or organizations to work together, it is important to know why and for what, and to ensure that the values each partner brings will be compatible with the others. They do not have to be identical but they should be close. The arrangement should also add value to each partner's respective services, products, goals, or situation – allowing for some give and take and with a clear process to resolve disagreements or conflicts.

Partnerships vary in how they operate, what they are called, and how long they last. They can range from simple, short-term work on a common project to more elaborate agreements that spread out over time. Collaboration is similar but often less formal, keeping in mind that the more that is at stake (or the more you need each other) the more important it is to write down the agreement, the roles, and the desired outcomes.

### Keys to a Successful Partnership

In order to have a successful partnership, you need to be a good partner. This means:

- Making time for the partnership;
- Having a common vision and clarity about what is possible and what is not;
- Sharing authority and responsibility;
- Joint investment of resources;
- Having a clear understanding of what the partnership is about;
- Knowing what outcomes each partner wants and why; and
- Being clear about expectations, who is doing what and when it will happen.

Many partnerships fail because they do not have a clear purpose or they are not given enough attention. Selecting the right partners at the right time and ensuring that everyone knows what is going on is critical to success. Not all organizations are ready or able to be partners in a big event or project, but can be included in other ways. Communication is absolutely the most important aspect to working together and requires time and effort to make it effective. This includes not only how the partners share information, but also how the partnership is communicated to others and in the community.

As important as it is to know when to form a partnership, it is equally important to know when to evaluate progress and make adjustments and when to end a partnership. What many partners say is that sometimes they don't know why they are partners with another group or organization so it is important to keep the relationship current and focused and not take each other for granted.

“Through the Community School Recreation Coordinator Program, I believe we bring a closer relationship between the school and community members through programming at the school and by the school providing programs in the community.” – Mike Bouvier, Coordinator, Ile-a-la-Crosse.

### The Partnership Process

Each partnership is slightly different, but they all follow a certain process – not necessarily in the same order. The following is a brief overview of the components that most often make for a good partnership.

#### STAGE 1: INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Vision – create a common picture for the future.
- Goals – identify desired outcomes for the partnership.
- Assessment – assess the current situation.
- Commitment – confirm the desire to work together and understand what is involved.
- Implications – consider the impact of the partnership and possible legal issues or questions.

#### STAGE 2: MAKING IT HAPPEN

- Action Plans – determine the specific steps that are required to reach the goals of the partnership.
- Resources – identify the resources that are required and how they will be obtained.
- Roles and Responsibilities – decide who will do what.
- Capacity Building – build on the partnership's strengths and address areas of weakness.

#### STAGE 3: ACCOUNTABILITY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Evaluation – determine the success of partnership activities.
- Future Directions – maintain momentum and determine what needs to happen next.
- Revision, Renewal and Closure – identify how to adjust and move on or end the partnership.

### Selecting Partners

Not everything is a partnership; sometimes it is just a meeting and as such it may not really matter who attends or doesn't. It might also be a funding arrangement in which case there is a contribution or funding agreement in place. So selecting partners really comes down to why you want to have a partnership and with whom. Partners, much like in a marriage, know why they got together, when it happened, and what they hope for together. They trust that even if things don't go exactly as planned, they will stick together for the benefit of the community or for the project that they are undertaking.

One way to determine who should be involved in a partnership is to establish a clear goal for the partnership and identify groups or organizations that have (or might benefit from) a similar goal. It is useful to look at various organizations' purpose or mandate to see where connections might be made. Often they will be working with or involved with the same interest group (youth, elders, children). Logical partners for sport, culture and recreation are often found in health and education as well as justice and other social or wellness organizations.

Strong partnerships are formed when everyone acknowledges that they need each other and are willing to spend the time and resources it takes to reach some of the bigger goals that cannot be reached alone. Each organization and sector has a responsibility to get beyond programs and projects and dedicate some time and effort to root causes of issues and to work together to change the situation or environment in which problems are being created.



### The Northern Context

We've always done things together in the north and very rarely do we need to be formal partners. Sometimes it helps to get an agreement in place – particularly if what we are doing can affect many people or the future. There is sometimes a lack of trust between our northern communities and organizations and those from the south or in government. We are getting better at it and want to be good partners – but the partnerships have to have some give and take and respect northern ways and Aboriginal culture – that's the only way they will work.

## 7. Partnerships - Working Together

### What's Important to Know?

- ★ Partners do not have to be equal but the relationship should be equitable.
- ★ Some partnerships require a formal agreement if there is lots to gain or lose.
- ★ Relationship building should be a central part of any professional life.
- ★ A partnership can be specific for one program or project or it can be a general agreement that involves working together on many things.
- ★ Partnerships build trusting relationships based on working on common goals.
- ★ Undertaking the partnership process is often as important as the result.
- ★ One big obstacle is the assumption that all the partners will think the same way.

### Tips and Advice

1. Establish different types of relationships with various partners (casual to formal).
2. Draft a simple agreement so everyone is clear about the goals and expectations.
3. Make sure that all partners are able and willing to commit to what is required.
4. Maintain a respectful relationship with those who might be future partners.
5. Develop a communication plan for the partnership (internal and external).
6. Evaluate the progress and results as well as the partnership process itself.
7. Don't let partnership issues fester, address them quickly and seek help if needed.



### Story

Working in partnership is an expectation in Pinehouse! The interagency committee meets on a regular basis. All organizations share their plans and care is taken to avoid duplication and to share resources. There is a monthly calendar so everyone knows what is happening in the community. Partnerships have proven there will always be enough help and no one is “burnt out” by doing things by themselves.

“I feel that it is best stated that our property crime (break and enters, property damage, etc.) has dropped a total of 77% since the Community/School Recreation Coordinator’s program has been running. Simply stated, we find fewer children on the street in evenings. They have some pride in the accomplishments in the sports they partake in.” – Green Lake Community Detachment, RCMP.

“The communities of Jans Bay and Cole Bay joined Green Lake to make a team for the Northern Lights School Division #113 Student Games & Cultural Festival. It was a good partnership that allowed all three small schools to participate.” – Greg Hatch, NLSD #113 Extra-Curricular Consultant

### Toolbox Connection

In the toolbox you will find the following tools related to this section:

- Buy - In Sheet
- Partnership Planning Questions
- Partnership Agreement Template
- Sample - Northern Spirits Partnership Agreement