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## Building Effective Partnershis

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# Building Effective Partnerships

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## AGENDA

- I. Discussion: What is a partnership? Why are partnerships important?
- II. Steps for effective partnership-building
- III. Attributes of effective partnership-builders
- IV. Tips and tools for building partnerships with children and young people in your program
- V. Tips and tools for building partnerships with families
- VI. Tips and tools for building partnerships with schools
- VII. General information on partnerships with communities
- VIII. Involving volunteers
  - Ideas for volunteer positions
  - Tips on recruiting and integrating volunteers
  - Sample flier for recruiting interns and volunteers
  - Sample volunteer/intern checklist
  - Sample volunteer/intern contract
- IX. Building partnerships with businesses

## Building Effective Partnerships

### I. What is a partnership? Why are partnerships important?

A definition of “partners”: two or more parties with shared interests and goals as well as specific roles and responsibilities in relation to each other’s work.

### II. Steps for effective partnership-building

1. Determine “stakeholders” in your program.
  - Children and youth in your program
  - Families of children in the program
  - Schools attended by children in the program
  - Communities: local community agencies, businesses, colleges and universities
2. Determine needs and wants of each group of stakeholders.
  - Informally ask stakeholders questions
  - Brainstorm possible needs with staff
  - Conduct surveys
  - Convene focus groups
3. Determine needs and wants of your program.
  - People resources: support, volunteers, parent involvement, etc.
  - Material resources: supplies, food, money
4. Transform “stakeholders” into “partners.”
  - Hold special meetings with representatives of each group of stakeholders.
  - Establish common goals.
  - Match program’s resources and abilities with partners’ needs. (How can your program benefit each partner group?)
  - Match partners’ resources and abilities with program needs. (What resources needed could each potential partner help you with?)
  - Establish roles and responsibilities of each partner. Be sure that all partners agree to all roles and responsibilities.
  - Maintain regular contacts and conduct regular meetings as appropriate.
  - Write down and follow-up regularly on all partners’ responsibilities through phone calls, meetings and other methods.
5. Acknowledge Partners: Constantly thank partners for everything they do, personally (verbally and through thank-you notes and gifts), at public events,

and in newsletters.

### III. Attributes of effective partnership-builders

- **Understanding** (see others' points of view, agendas, needs, wants and abilities; understand how to ask enough but not too much)
- **Flexibility** (accept help other than what you immediately think you need, alter plans and goals to work better with those of other people)
- **Persistence** (don't give up when people aren't immediately as receptive as you had hoped; expect that some partnerships you try to form will be more effective than others)
- **Commitment** (help partners see your commitment to the program; express sincere commitment to understanding and meeting needs of stakeholders)
- **Trust** (believe in your partners and their ability to really make a difference in your program, believe in your ability to draw out and sustain help and input from partners)
- **Organization** (find out and keep track of needs; record and follow-up on specific responsibilities; establish and stick to concise agendas for meetings)
- **Humility** (admit needs and ask for help, be willing to share praise as well as blame with partners)
- **Gratitude** (express thanks publicly and privately)
- **Other Ideas....**

### IV. Building partnerships with children and young people in your program

#### Importance of Involving Children and Youth as Partners

Successful out-of-school programs involve children heavily in program planning and implementation. During their out-of-school hours, children want to control their own time and choose their own activities. Programs that engage children in program planning and solicit their input on program policies find that children are more excited about the program and less prone to act out or complain about policies or activities.

## Tips For Effectively Involving Children As Partners

Put together an “advisory group” made up of 8-10 children of different ages to represent the whole group. Rotate the children who are part of this group so that everyone gets a chance. Meet regularly with this group to discuss:

- rules for the program
- possibilities and ideas for upcoming activities
- needs of the program (personnel and material resources needed)
- points of view about how things are going and what should be improved

As appropriate, offer all children the chance to make suggestions and vote on rules for the program, field trips to be taken, allocation of resources, etc.

Involve children in determining the needs of the program and soliciting donations and volunteers.

Hold focus groups with children whenever a new policy needs to be made or a new program component is to be added. Ask a small group of children to share their ideas and concerns about the policy or component in question.

Assign children responsibilities. On a rotating basis, assign children to help with such tasks as setting out and cleaning up snack, supplies and equipment, peer mediation, reading with younger children, making sure all coats are hung up, etc. Children can help determine what responsibilities are included on the list of regularly rotating “jobs.”

Involve children in designing and decorating the program’s environment. They can help determine what sort of space is needed for the regular activities involved in the program, help develop lists of needed and wanted supplies, and help find donations.

## V. Building partnerships with families

### Importance of Involving Families As Partners

In many ways, staff of out-of-school programs serve as “surrogate parents.” Parents and family members of children in the program entrust the care of their children to staff of the out-of-school program. Staff are involved in guiding children’s behavior, encouraging children’s social, emotional and academic growth, meeting children’s needs for food and nurturing, and many other duties for which parents and family members typically take primary responsibility. To effectively serve children, staff and parents **MUST** see each other as partners in the process of raising, teaching and nurturing children.

When parents and families are asked for their help and input, and when that help and input is taken seriously, programs are able to more successfully meet children’s needs and staff receive more support from families.

*Developed by Saren Eyre Loosli for the National Institute on Out-of-School Time  
Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College, 1999*

## Tips For Effectively Involving Families As Partners

Set up a “family advisory group” that meets regularly (monthly often works well) to discuss upcoming activities, program needs, needs of children, etc. Set up sub-committees to take responsibility for planning special events, fundraising, soliciting donations, etc. Establish meeting goals and agendas in advance so that you can keep meetings short and targeted. If at all possible, offer child care during meetings. Reserve time at the end of the meetings for families to chat with each other and with staff. Offering refreshments can be very effective during this time (have parents sign up to bring in refreshments if you like).

Capitalize on the resources of family members. Ask families to fill out a form about their interests, hobbies, professions, etc. Integrate family members’ knowledge and abilities by inviting their input in activity planning and their participation in activity implementation. Find out about contacts and connections family members may have that could benefit your program in some way.

Send home newsletters on a regular basis. Include information on upcoming activities, announcements of the program’s needs for donations and/or volunteers, and information on community resources and events that might be of interest. Family members can be invited to help write newsletters.

Hold regular family celebrations. Invite parents, siblings and other family members to attend family celebrations where they have the opportunity to learn about recent program activities through children’s presentations, performances, galleries of art, etc. These events are especially popular if they involve food (pot luck can work very well). Such events help families get to know each other and get to know staff members and volunteers.

Set up regular meetings with individual parents or guardians to discuss children’s strengths, progress and needs. Hold special meetings with parents or guardians of children who are in need of special attention. Track progress of children having difficulties and regularly share information on progress with parents or guardians.

Take concerns and suggestions of family members seriously. Take time to talk with parents and family members. Make sure they know that you are interested in their input and will try to do all you can to implement suggestions and make changes in response to concerns.

Regularly survey families about their perceptions of how the program is going and what they’d like to see changed.

## VI. Building partnerships with schools

### Benefits of Involving Schools as Partners

Schools have many resources that can benefit out-of-school time programs. Out-of-school programs can do a great deal to make the work of schools easier and more effective. Schools and out-of-school programs that serve the same children need to understand each other's curriculum, needs, goals and points of view. Ideally, OST programs and schools should work hand in hand to provide children with a well-rounded education that helps them develop mentally, socially, physically, and emotionally.

### Tips for Effectively Working With Schools as Partners

Attend teacher meetings at schools. Regularly send staff members to attend school meetings so that they can get to know schoolteachers and staff, share reports on activities going on in the out-of-school program, and find out about activities going on at the school.

Have staff members volunteer in school classrooms. By going into the classroom and assisting schoolteachers from time to time, staff members can build good relationships with teachers, learn about experiences children in their program have while they're at school, and come to understand more about school curriculum.

Invite school personnel to regular family/community celebrations held by your program and attend children's programs at the school. Help schools to learn about what your program is doing and do all you can to learn about what is going on at the school.

Trade newsletters/bulletins. Distribute your program's newsletter to schoolteachers and the school principal. Make sure that you receive the school's newsletter.

Learn about homework assignments. In order to effectively help children in your program with their homework, it is helpful to regularly communicate with schoolteachers about the homework assignments that children have been given.

## **VII. Building partnerships with communities**

Community partnerships can include partnerships with the following types of groups:

- Volunteer Centers/United Way chapters
- Businesses
- Non-profit organizations that provide youth services (like the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, tutoring and mentoring organizations, etc.)
- Churches
- High Schools
- Colleges and Universities

Partnerships with these and other entities in your community can offer your program:

- Volunteers to come in and work in your program as tutors, club leaders, mentors, sports coaches, etc.
- Material resources (donations of new or used items needed by your program)
- Connections to other potential partners

A partnership with your program can offer these organizations:

- Opportunities for more meaningful placements for volunteers
- Opportunities to build the future of the community by offering the next generation more resources and possibilities
- Opportunities for positive publicity
- Opportunities to further the mission of their organization

## **VIII. Involving volunteers**

### **Specific Ideas for Regular Volunteer Positions**

Following are examples of positions that can be filled by family members, school personnel, community members – anyone you've invited to volunteer in your program. All volunteers should receive a job description, participate in training, and sign a contract.

- Club leader (come in and lead a club based on their interests/hobbies at least once a week)
- Homework helper or tutor (come in regularly to help with homework or tutor specific children in need of extra help)

## Partnerships Module

- Coach/sports leader (come in regularly to coach a team or teach skills relating to specific sports)
- Chaperone (accompany children and program staff on field trips to provide extra help)
- Special event helper (help publicize, gather supplies, set up and run special events and family/community celebrations)
- Fundraiser/Donations coordinator (solicit donations of needed funds or supplies)

### **Tips on Recruiting and Integrating Volunteers**

Develop specific volunteer job descriptions and eye-catching fliers for all positions you hope to fill with volunteers. (See samples later in this packet.)

Send home announcements with children, inviting all parents to volunteer or to recommend friends/neighbors as volunteers. Include descriptions of the types of volunteer jobs you have available.

Call local groups that help match volunteers to needs. Explain a little about your program and offer specific examples of activities that volunteers could be involved in. Offer to send or fax them a flier to post. They may also need a brief job description to put in their referral books. (See samples at the end of this packet.) Look for the following organizations in your local phone book or call the 800 information line (1-800-555-1212) to get a national number for the organization so that you can call and find out about local chapters.

- Volunteer Center (if you don't know which volunteer center is nearest you, call 1-800-59-LIGHT and they can tell you)
- United Way
- Governor's Community Service Commission (connections to AmeriCorps, etc.)
- State Office of the Corporation for National Service (connections to Senior Service Corps programs, etc.)
- Colleges and Universities – community service and/or service-learning offices and/or work-study departments
- High schools (many high school students have to perform a certain number of hours of community service in order to graduate and students really enjoy working with younger children as tutors, coaches, club leaders, etc.)
- Senior citizen's groups
- Church groups
- Community centers
- Mentoring organizations (such as "One-to-One")
- Local chapters of national volunteer groups such as the Lions Club, Kiwanis International, and League of Women Voters
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters

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Call local colleges and universities. Place intern and work-study job descriptions at career, intern, work-study or placement offices of schools near you. You may want to send fliers that can be posted. Interns can get credit for volunteering and you can get some great, reliable help from them. In many cases, you have to be willing to do a little paperwork for interns who need credit. You can get work-study students to work for your program for free if they serve as America Reads or America Counts tutors. Call the financial aid department of colleges and universities near you to find out about this possibility. More than 1200 colleges and universities supply tutors to local programs and pay them with federal work-study dollars. For more information on America Reads, look at the website: [www.nationalservice.org/areads/aread.htm](http://www.nationalservice.org/areads/aread.htm).

Call local businesses. Many businesses have employee volunteer programs that allow employees to devote a certain amount of paid time each week or each month towards volunteer service. Other companies may not offer paid volunteer time, but encourage their employees to volunteer and regularly post opportunities. Ask for human resources or the employee volunteer office and tell them about specific volunteer needs and opportunities and send job descriptions. Talk about ideas for working in partnership. (See tips later in this packet for more details on partnerships with businesses.)

Set up information meetings and interviews for potential volunteers. Interviews help volunteers/interns take positions seriously. Combining a small group information session with interviews can work well. At such a meeting, you can:

- Tell potential volunteers about your program.
- Answer their questions.
- Interview them briefly – one-on-one.

Ensure that all volunteers have an orientation and participate in training. If they receive adequate orientation and training, volunteers will generally be happier and more confident in their positions and more helpful to your program. Volunteers should typically receive much of the same information and training as regular staff members receive. See the checklist later in this packet for ideas about what you should do for volunteers before they start work at your program.

SAMPLE FLIER

## INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!!

# Want to share something you love?

\_\_\_\_\_ offers innovative after school enrichment programs for elementary school children in the \_\_\_\_\_ area. Our curriculum offers children the opportunity to **gain new skills, build meaningful relationships, increase their self-esteem, participate in character-building activities, and have a lot of fun.**

### We need "experts" to share their knowledge and talents with children

One of the major components of our program is called "Clubs." Led by interns and community volunteers, Clubs give kids a chance to explore their interests in such subjects as:

art	science
music	theater
languages	computers
sports	animals

With support and training from \_\_\_\_\_ program staff, Club Leaders design and implement two-month-long clubs based on a subject that they love. Clubs are held one afternoon a week with a group of approximately 10 elementary-age children.

### Qualifications for Club Leaders are as follows:

- Knowledge of a particular subject that would be an appropriate club theme
- Experience working with children and good references
- Creativity and flexibility
- A sense of adventure!

### To Apply:

Please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at 000-000-0000 for further information and an application.

## Partnerships Module

SAMPLE

### Volunteer/Intern Checklist

To be completed by Site Managers for all Volunteers and Interns

Name of Volunteer/Intern: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. Have the volunteer/intern fill out the appropriate application.
- 2. Have them fill out a CORI (criminal background check) form and send it in immediately.
- 3. Conduct volunteer training (in a group or one-on-one)
  - Educate volunteers on the importance of out-of-school care so they can feel the significance of their help. Let volunteers know that you have an investment in them, and that the staff is here to back them up 100%. Let them know you appreciate their help
  - Go over the \_\_\_\_\_ Program's mission statement, daily and weekly schedule and activities and basic information on families and children involved in the program.
  - Go over their job description, clearly defining their role and explaining what we expect of them and what they can expect from us. *Each volunteer must receive a Job Description Form stating their title, specific responsibilities, time commitment required, and what hours they must be on site.*
- 4. Give the volunteer a TOUR OF THE SITE including:
  - classroom/storage space
  - the sign-in log which must be filled out each time they come
  - the place to find announcements
  - the location where the volunteer/intern schedule is posted.
- 5. Have the volunteer/intern sign a contract stating their job description and committed hours.

#### \*\*\* Points to highlight in talking about expectations \*\*\*

ABSENCES: Volunteers should notify Site Managers of ALL anticipated absences. A one week warning of an absence is highly recommended.

DRESS: While casual clothes are welcomed, we do request a neat, clean, professional appearance from all our volunteers and staff.

REPORTING ISSUES WITH STAFF: If a volunteer has a problem regarding a student or any member of the staff that they cannot quickly resolve on their own, they should contact the Site Manager.

MEETINGS: Volunteers are invited to all staff meetings, plus a monthly volunteer meeting designed to address problems and concerns.

**Partnerships Module**

SAMPLE

## Volunteer/Intern Contract

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

I commit to volunteer/be an intern for the \_\_\_\_\_ Program from \_\_\_\_\_ (date) to \_\_\_\_\_ (date). I plan to be on site on \_\_\_\_\_ (days of the week you'll be there) from \_\_\_\_\_ (time) to \_\_\_\_\_ (time).

While serving in this capacity, I understand that I must comply with the standards of the \_\_\_\_\_ Program. I have received a job description and training about my position.

If I must be absent, I will give one week's notice and will attempt to find a substitute. I will give two weeks notice if I must leave the program for some unforeseen reason.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Instructions for Approaching Businesses

**Goal:** Contact businesses in the area with the intent of gaining material and human resources. We hope to receive support in terms of donated goods, supplies, food or financial assistance as well as volunteers.

In order to gain the support needed, we ask that staff:

- ⇒ Make a list of all local businesses around your site that could be possible donors of products or supplies. (An ideal time to do this would be at a site staff meeting)
- ⇒ Set up an appointment with managers and owners.
- ⇒ Put together a specific “ask list” - specific things you plan to ask for – before going to your appointment.

In talking with business owners and managers, do the following:

- ⇒ **Familiarize them with the program.** Explain who you are and offer them a general overview of the program.
- ⇒ **Ask for something specific.** Assess what the store or business could offer you and let them know how their products could fit into our program. If you approach a grocery store, let them know about the need for snacks and refreshments at special events and ask if they would be willing to make any kind of donation. If the business sells paper products or supplies, let them know that we need these kinds of materials for daily art projects and would greatly appreciate a donation.
- ⇒ **Invite them to visit your program.** Set up a specific date and time. Let them know that something great is happening in their community and they are welcome to come and see the things that kids are doing after school and how much we need and appreciate their assistance.
- ⇒ **Tell them about benefits for them.** Let them know that their business will be listed as a sponsor in your newsletter and all publicity efforts.
- ⇒ **Follow Up.** A few days after an initial conversation, follow up with a letter that thanks them for their time and clarifies any understanding you have about what they have agreed to donate.

SAMPLE

## Corporate Partnership Program

A primary focus of the \_\_\_\_\_ program is to link families, schools, communities, and businesses, helping them work in partnership to provide children with meaningful after school activities. Our enrichment programs are designed to help elementary school children deepen their love for learning, build important skills, strengthen their sense of citizenship and develop such universal human values as respect, responsibility and honesty.

By working in partnership with businesses, we help match resources to needs and provide employees and companies with meaningful opportunities to directly affect students, their families, and our nation's public schools.

Following are some ways that you can be involved in our program:

### **Engage employees as volunteers:**

- Partners make it possible for employees to act as "Club Leaders" or homework coaches in our program. Club leaders come in once a week for about an hour and a half to lead a group of up to ten children in activities related to the subject of their choice. Homework coaches come in an hour a week and consistently work with one or two children who need academic help. All volunteers receive quality training and are always supported by our staff as they plan and execute their sessions.
- Partners offer their employees opportunities to assist with our monthly parent celebrations and our occasional special events and field trips.

### **Sponsor a specific element of our program:**

Partners can choose to sponsor a specific element of our program (homework help, a service project, a field trip, a club, etc.). Through in-kind donations and active involvement in our activities, partners contribute both economic and human resources to our program.

*Example: A local newspaper sponsors our Journalism Club which engages children in writing their own newspaper about their community. The newspaper sponsor provides the program with copies of their paper to give out to the students to use as models, sends a reporter to the program to speak to the children, assists in the production of the newspaper, and pays for the food for the family celebration at the end of the expedition. The newspaper gets great positive P.R., gets their product in the hands of potential new customers (the children's parents), and provides employees with meaningful volunteer opportunities.*

### **Sponsor our financial assistance program:**

Our sites are located in \_\_\_\_\_. Over 85% of children in the school system are on some sort of assisted lunch program. This population that desperately needs enrichment programs after school. While our fees for the program are extremely low, there are still many families who cannot afford the \$3 per hour that we charge. To aid us in offering the program to all children, our Corporate Partners can commit to subsidizing a certain number of children who can not afford the program.