



## Engagement Step #3: Partnerships

A partnership is a recognised relationship between service providers in the community. Although partnerships can be beneficial to the active living provider, the main purpose is to learn about the agency's services, connect with the community members they serve, and to provide appropriate programs, working towards community-led opportunities.

The partnership can be formal or informal. The community organization does not have an obligation to provide anything to the active living provider, though often they will choose to do so. Their contribution is to allow you access to their clients. Partnerships can result in a number of benefits, including:

- Credibility
- Continuity
- Support at multiple levels and
- Access to the community.

### Things to remember

Steps to creating partnerships:

#### 1. Have a clear purpose for the partnership. Do you want to:

- Understand Your Community? To begin with, you may just want to focus on gathering community information and creating connections with community members.
- Develop & Deliver a Program? In some cases, you may have a mandate and/or funding to develop programs for a specific neighbourhood or target group. If funding is limited, discuss with potential partners to weigh the pros and cons. You do not want to start an unsustainable program, but it may also be a way to build ongoing support for the future.

#### 2. Identify and consider all possible partners

- Once you have identified and gotten to know the various community organizations, consider which agencies have the capacity and connections to enter into a partnership.
- It may help to keep notes on potential areas of partnership.



A joint initiative of  
BC Recreation and Parks  
Association and the Heart  
and Stroke Foundation of  
BC & Yukon.



ActNowBC.ca

An initiative of these  
BC Healthy Living Alliance  
members



Canadian  
Cancer  
Society  
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HEART &  
STROKE  
FOUNDATION  
OF BC & YUKON



### 3. Approach Potential Partners

- Explore ideas with community organizations, but be clear that you would like to work with the clients and not just staff.
- This process will vary depending on the complexity of the organizational structure and approval process.
- Remember that the primary goal for the partnership is to work with the community, so try to be flexible to the community organization's needs.

### 4. Determine the Nature of the Partnership

- Formal Partnership – This involves a signed agreement, but be sure to check on policies and approvals of your own organization.
- Informal Partnership – This involves a verbal agreement, which is simpler and sometimes less intimidating for smaller organizations.

### 5. Finalise Details

- Whether the partnership is formal or informal, it is important to agree on the following:
  - Purpose
  - Objectives
  - Commitments of your organization (as the community organization really only needs to allow you access to their clients)
  - Timeframe
  - Administration (if needed)
  - Communication
  - Flexibility (discuss how the partnership can be evaluated and altered at any time)

### 6. Build and Maintain the Relationship

#### 7. Evaluate the Relationship

- How often you meet with your partner and how formal the meeting will be up to you and your partner.
- Keep in regular contact with your partner to remind them of your organizations presence. It is easy to get caught up in day to day business, especially during busy times.
- Sometimes there will be high staff turnover at community organizations. Try to take time with a new contact to explain the partnership and build rapport.

**Adapted from the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit:** A toolkit developed through the national Working Together Project, initiated by the Vancouver Public Library to explore methods for libraries develop programs and services by and for low-income community members through a community development approach. The techniques and advice in this book are transferrable to the active living sector. The full toolkit is available for download from [www.librariesincommunities.ca](http://www.librariesincommunities.ca). The project was funded from 2004 to 2008 by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) and co-led by the Vancouver Public Library, Regina Public Library, Halifax Public Libraries and Toronto Public Library.