



Partnerships, What you need to know

by Lynn Eakin

1. Forming a partnership is a strategic decision

The agency needs to be clear on its planning, understand who it is, and where it wants to go.

What are the reasons for the partnership?

Because bigger is better,
To better serve the target group,
To bid on a contract,
Because the Funder requires it
Because the Funder would like it
To be able to do things differently

Be clear about objectives to be achieved so you do not get caught in the process.

2. The Forced Partnership.....an arranged marriage?

Funder needs to be clear on why they are requiring the partnership and what they expect as an outcome

Agency should ask funder to be clear on the gains anticipated; the reasons behind the forced partnership; how much is laid on and how much can be negotiated. *Get it in writing.*

Agency needs to evaluate the funder proposal and develop their own objectives.

explore with potential partner if there is the possibility of a successful agreement.

determine course of action, working alone or with potential partner.

- To get the funder to change their mind
- To negotiate with funder for different terms
- To negotiate with potential partner terms of partnership

3. What kind of partnership is it?

Is it a pooling of resources and/or dollars to operate a joint program
Is it a dividing up of roles and responsibilities e.g. you do classroom learning, we do job placement
Is it staff secondment e.g. we will both put staff into the program to work together.
Is it a working arrangement between two services with different jobs e.g Child Welfare and Police in child abuse investigation.

You must be clear about the objectives of the partnership so you know what kind of agreement you need.

4. Potential stumbling blocks to successful Partnerships

Different philosophies and values (real and apparent)
Different organizational cultures (e.g. Toronto Sun and Toronto Star)
Power imbalances
Unequal working conditions, comparable staff

5. Characteristics of Successful Partnerships

Trust between parties
Role clarity between parties
Core service, not sideline service for partners
Clear decision-making process
Conflict resolution process
Delegation of responsibility for operations
Negotiated written agreement

6. Negotiating an Agreement

Funder	Clarify – role and involvement of funder -A party to negotiations? (when, how, and for what) -Sign off (Remember a funder is not a mediator)
Partners	Negotiate how to negotiate Clarify decision-making process (who, when, how, what) Have a dispute resolution during negotiations
Third Party	is a third party needed to facilitate/mediate? Selection of mediator Engagement of mediator, payment of mediator,

7. Critical Clauses in an Agreement

Nature of the agreement, purpose and intent
Roles and responsibilities of the parties
Resource commitments, dollars, staff, space, equipment
Applicable policy and procedures
Day to day decision-making
Program management structure and decision-making
Conflict resolution process
Crisis management protocol
Liability, responsibilities and limits
Communications policy, internal and external
Partnership agreement review process
Termination of agreement clause

8. Implementing a partnership, -managing staff

Communication is critical
Have a clear structure, expectations and decision-making
Provide opportunities for joint problem-solving, program design
etc.
Respond to issues quickly
Problems are usually with management and Board not front-line
staff.

Lynn Eakin is a consultant in the not-for-profit sector working with agencies adapt and changewith the new realities of service provision. She can be reached at 207 Balmoral Ave, Toronto, Ontario M4V1K1, Telephone 416 961-3924, e-mail lynn@lynneakin.com Lynn Eakin and Associates has a web site with information about the consulting practice and more articles like this one. www.lynneakin.com