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A Brief Guide to Reciprocal Community-University Partnerships

University of Southern Maine

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The following checklist is adapted from *A Guide to Reciprocal Community-Campus Partnerships* from Portland State University. The complete guide, along with other partnership tools, can be found on our website: http://gvsu.edu/community/partnership-development-tools-30.htm)

Exploring partnership opportunities:
- ☐ Why are we here? What question(s) does the project propose to answer? The initiating partner, either community or university, provides information about the opportunity or request
- ☐ Why are you here? Each participant shares intentions, motivations, and desired outcomes
- ☐ What assets and resources do we bring, and how might we combine them to address this opportunity?
- ☐ What challenges might we face?
- ☐ What could each partner contribute and how would each benefit?
- ☐ Decide whether to initiate a partnership

Initiating partnerships, with an emphasis on mutuality:
- ☐ Discussion topics for establishing a partnership:
    - o What ground rules do we agree on?
    - o What are our long-term and short-term goals?
    - o What are each partner's needs and interests related to our overall goal?
    - o What contribution will each make? What roles will each play?
    - o What processes and action plan will we execute?
    - o How will we track and evaluate progress?
- ☐ Provide opportunities to explore similarities and differences more deeply:
    - o Begin meetings by sharing history/traditions, values, needs, interests, or other information to provide additional answers to "Who are you?" and "Why are you here?"
    - o Discuss differences in culture, modes of decision-making, perceived identity, and ways of thinking about knowledge
    - o Distribute partner materials (e.g., program brochure, journal literature)
    - o Compare missions and values
    - o Develop a vocabulary list of acronyms and jargon
    - o Schedule intentional, facilitated discussions of each partner's culture, power differences, expectations, and other elephants in the room
- ☐ Address logistics
    - o Establish contact people and infrastructure to support ongoing communication
    - o Determine location and frequency for partnership meetings

Sustaining reciprocal partnerships:
- ☐ Develop a timeline and regularly chart progress and accomplishments
- ☐ Develop a means to document achievements over time
- ☐ Conduct progress checks using an inquiry approach (for more in-depth and systemic questions, see also *Focus Group Guide for Evaluating and Reflecting on CBPR Partnerships* from the UNM Center for Participatory Research)
    - o What's working well in our partnership?

- What's not working well?
- What expectations have been met so far?
- What expectations have not been met?
- What are sources of satisfaction for each partner?
- What are sources of frustration?
☐ Revise or develop new action plans based on responses to the questions (Strategic Doing methodology could work well for ongoing learning, adjusting, and implementation cycles)

Additional suggestions for cross-disciplinary partnerships:
☐ "Think systemically, act interpersonally." F. Ellen Netting, Ph.D.
☐ Questions to consider when finding an academic research partner (From Ross, et. al., *The Challenges of Collaboration for Academic and Community Partners in a Research Partnership: Points to Consider*, 2010.)
- Does the academic have the skills, experience, and resources for the specific research project?
- Does the academic researcher seem willing to collaborate and respect the agency of the community?
- Is the researcher committed to long-term relationships with community partners?
- Is the researcher willing to pursue the advocacy and policy issues that emanate from the research? If not, can others help in these roles?
- Does the academic researcher have some degree of institutional commitment for promoting successful academic-community partnerships?