

Collaboration Tips

Why collaborate? To achieve something you can't do on your own!

- To share resources, expertise, and connections
- To build upon existing strengths
- To reach new audiences

Be patient! Collaboration takes time.

- Start small; developing a relationship and building trust takes time
- Communicating takes time: your organizations have different cultures and terminology
- Always keep the long-term relationship in mind while working on shorter-term projects
- Start early; your partner's schedule will vary from your own, so be sure to include enough lead time so that you both can be prepared for the work of the collaboration

Be clear about your goals and expectations. Discuss:

- What: Decide on your common goals; be sure your partnership is mutually beneficial
- How: Agree upon activities to meet your shared goals and missions
- Who: Clarify your roles and responsibilities for all project activities
- Where: Decide upon the locations of activities
- When: Agree upon a timeline and key dates, and check in regularly

Get to know each other. Each partner has a lot to learn and a lot to offer.

- Familiarize yourself with your partner organization through websites, newsletters, events, and other opportunities
- The more you understand about each other's purpose, activities, audiences, and culture, the easier your partnership will be
- Individuals come to a partnership with different strengths and experiences; every group needs dreamers, developers, and doers

Communication is critical!

- Strive to achieve a flexible, trusting atmosphere; be open and honest while still being tactful and supportive
 - Things may not always go smoothly, so don't hesitate to pick up the phone and have an honest conversation to work things out
 - Involve more than one contact person at each organization at different levels to ensure a deeper relationship that can survive changing circumstances and turnover
 - Stay focused on your goals. And don't forget to celebrate your successes!
 - Reflect on the original goals of your partnership and project, and consider how you want to improve, change course, or evolve the relationship
 - As you work together, keep your long-term relationship in mind; by leveraging your combined resources and strengths, you can each do much more for your community
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