

# What Does a Successful Partnership Look Like?



For years, organizations have been partnering with each other. For years, public broadcasting stations have been doing the same. Yet along the way, lessons learned have rarely been shared making it easy to repeat mistakes or, worse yet, decide to forego partnerships completely. A thriving partnership, where organizations equally share in the work and in the success or failure of the effort, is possible when you consider the following factors.

## Support

The entire organization buys into the partnership; it's not a secret but widely known and supported from top to bottom. If someone from the outside called to talk to someone about the partnership, there would be more than one person to talk to. Better yet, it's commonly known in the organization what commitments have been made to enable the partnership. Co-created partnership agreements can really help this.

## Buddies

Let's face it, partnerships – like all relationships – are personal. If the people sitting at the table like each other, they are much more likely to keep each other informed, help each other out and think about each other's organizations. Like relationships, we can only handle so many partnerships. Buddies often mean fewer rather than more.

## Trust

Without trust, partnerships won't happen. Everyone needs to know that once a commitment is made to do something, it's going to happen as promised. In fact, each of the partners should try to do more and sing each other's praises for doing it.

## Willingness to share

Every partner should bring something to the table to help carry the load or they shouldn't be there. True partnerships are based on combined resources and spirit.

## Needs, Wants & Desires

To be successful, partners need to agree on shared expectations of outcomes and impact. And to get there, partners have to be able to voice what their organization needs to get out of the partnership, what they really want and, just as importantly, what would knock their socks off.

## Constant & Clear Communications

Sadly, this is one area that seems to be a source of problems. Whether it's not communicating enough, not communicating in the format that is most appropriate to each of the partners or simply forgetting to keep each other in the loop, figuring out a system from the beginning is essential.

## Ongoing Assessment

Checking in with each other both on content and the health of the relationship is a must. There's nothing like assuming that all is going well only to find out otherwise. A predetermined schedule for revisiting goals and objectives, and pulling out the partnership agreements, may be the way to go.



NCO is funded by  
the Corporation for  
Public Broadcasting