Community Partnerships
Guide for Faculty

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON
I. KEY DEFINITIONS

A partnership is composed of a reciprocal collaboration between organizations, institutions and communities that work together to address needs of a group beyond the University. A diverse set of individuals, organizations, and institutions provide a mix of expertise, experience and perspectives to the partnership. From a University’s perspective, we are talking about external partners. Partners may range from local to global and cut across sectors and type, including small businesses, industry and corporate entities, schools, nonprofits, healthcare organizations, governmental institutions, other institutions of higher education, neighborhood associations, clubs, advocacy organizations, and many more. Equity is crucial in a Community-University partnership. While both parties benefit, members of the community should ideally end up more empowered and resourced than before.

II. GENERAL OUTLINE:
Broad Steps to Achievement in a Community Partnership Project

Networking; Coordination; Cooperation; Collaboration. This PARTNERSHIP CONTINUUM is a theoretical construct acknowledging that not all aspects of project effectiveness can be achieved simultaneously, and they are likely to follow the following stages: Networking; Coordination; Cooperation; Collaboration. Even if you commit more to one stage than another, you will (eventually) want to have covered all four stages by the end of the project. These stages also form a continuum between the Transactional to the Transformational, for both University and the Community Partner.

III. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUR COMMUNITY ENGAGED PARTNERSHIP

a. Once you and your community collaborator have mutually decided to enter into a partnership, you should:

• assess your respective strengths – what do you bring to the partnership: people, time, administrative capability, financial resources, contacts with other potential collaborators?

• identify your goals for the partnership – which goals are common; which goals are not

• decide on how, together, you might achieve your common goals – what processes and products do you want to see? who will these goals serve?

• determine how each ‘side’ of the partnership will achieve its particular goals

b. Once you have identified key issues and shared goals, set up an initial meeting. Be prepared to discuss, in depth, each side’s particular:

• needs: what is required for the daily work operation of achieving shared goals?

• resources: what is your partnership’s budget? Are there enough financial resources to cover the budget? What additional resources are needed – Space? Administrative support? Publicity? What are the sources of financial support, if needed?

• tracking: strategize ways to collect data and information on project outcomes. Who, in your partnership, will keep records on these?

c. You are ready to launch your partnership once you and your partner have been able to:

• concisely state the purpose of your partnership

• proudly identify shared values

• clearly outline the responsibilities of each side: University (department, personnel, etc.) and Community (organization, etc.)

• collaboratively define how decisions will be made – e.g.: how often will you meet for joint decision making? Will you delegate someone from each side to be a point person for decision-making?

• humbly acknowledge that there are virtually always power differences between University and Community organization/member – and be prepared to address these as part of your process of engaged work.

IV. MAINTAINING YOUR PARTNERSHIP

a. Value yourself and your community partner – celebrate achievements of the Partnership, no matter how small. These also provide a chance for additional evaluation, e.g., if only one ‘side’ of the partnership has done things that are being celebrated, then clearly the contribution to achieving the shared vision is not in balance.

b. (Re)connect regularly to your shared vision – If you feel someone in the mix is losing sight of shared values, gently refer them to the “6 Rs for maintaining genuine engagement from participants”:

• Recognition of individuals encourages them to stay focused and committed

• Respect for people’s values, culture, ideas and time is crucial for any successful partnership

• Keeping each person’s Role clear and supported is key

• Continue to build Relationships, including expanding networks beyond the partnership

• Rewards for participants can be incentives or material contributions to people’s lives

• Distribute and Celebrate the Results and Impacts of your partnership

c. Review the principles that have been guiding you – At OCP we add a Seventh “R”: Reflection, which underscores the need to evaluate your partnership – something a grant may require you to do in the midst of, or at the end of a partnership process. Assess, Discuss, and Revise any plans you already had for moving forward. Ask yourselves:

• Is our partnership meeting our goals and objectives?

• Do we need to adjust how we organize ourselves in this partnership?

• Is there anyone we should invite to join our partnership?

• Here are a few examples of useful assessment tools:

  • The “Principles of Partnership Self-Assessment Tool” – This is a self-scaled evaluation tool examining the guiding principles of what makes partnerships work, sustainable, and impactful to a community. It assesses personal and group dynamics, measures processes and outcomes of the partnership and its community and transformative experience.²


²http://www.gpcnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Principles%20of%20Partnership%20Self-Assessment%20Tool.pdf
- **The “Partnership Self-Assessment Tool” (PSAT)** – This tool measures how well the collaborative process is working and helps to identify areas that the partnership can focus on to improve the collaborative process. It examines: synergy, leadership, efficiency, administration, management, resources, decision making processes, overall satisfaction, and the benefits and setbacks that partners may experience.³

- **Surveys** – These can be used to inform your team and the public (such as grant-makers, policy-makers, the community, etc.). They can be directed to specific pools of individuals (e.g., students, partners, the Community) and incorporated in various ways to gather information and data (e.g., qualitative or quantitative; demographic information; structured and unstructured questions; focus groups, pre- and post-tests, and longitudinal tests).

- **Feedback loops** – Consider building in particular milestones or check-in points to discuss the project’s progress with your community partners. You can think of it as a sort of “gut check” to ensure you have not strayed from your vision. And if you find that you have, you can feed this information back into the partnership discussions: does a change make sense? Do you need to recalibrate your efforts? Are there additional people outside the current partnership whose perspective could be helpful?

- **Power Checks** – Check your power dynamic, too. Remember: Universities and Communities have always had very different amounts of power, especially when dealing with the wider public, the press, funders, city/state officials, and students.

- **Learning Checks** – If connected with a course curriculum, check in with students for their reflections on how the partnership seems to be working. What are they learning? How are they applying it? How are they being transformed by the partnership?⁴

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³https://www.nccmt.ca/knowledge-repositories/search/10

⁴Learn more about some student engagement opportunities already being coordinated on our campus, visit the Office for Student Leadership and Community Engagement: https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/oslce. The Center for Innovative Teaching can provide advice on community engaged teaching and other student-centered pedagogies: https://www.umb.edu/cit/forums/forums

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V. ASSESSING YOUR PARTNERSHIP

Here is a summary of characteristics of sustainable partnerships – reviewing these points can help you broadly assess the effectiveness of your project:

- All parties clearly understand the shared goal, objectives, strategies, timeline, roles, and responsibilities;
- All stakeholders benefit, and with equity;
- Relationships feature trust, mutual respect, clear expectations, and shared decision making;
- There is a realistic understanding of all stakeholders’ resources, needs, goals and limitations;
- There is a focus on partner strengths, and on enhancing them;
- Accountability is built in, e.g., partnership involves regular evaluation;
- Growth takes place – no matter how minimal – and is recognized;
- The project can be incorporated into what your side and ‘the other side’ are each doing;
- The project is defined by the core principles of **reciprocity, equity, and attention** to impactful outcomes.
VI. SERVICES AVAILABLE AT THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Our office is available for consultations to discuss your partnership needs, support you through your partnership development, and connect you to existing and/or potential internal contacts.

UMass Boston Engage is a useful virtual tool for identifying and connecting with other external engagement efforts. It is the University’s web portal for community engagement. Users can easily navigate through a rich assortment of activities in which UMass Boston faculty, staff, students and partners engage, from local service-learning courses and internships to global research projects, and everything in between. The application also enables users to identify faculty with relevant expertise and interests, determine existing or past connections with partner organizations, etc. The Engage Portal:

• Allows stakeholders to identify similar efforts, strengthen connections among existing departments and partners, and think more holistically about the University’s engagement activities;
• Allows users to navigate easily through a rich assortment of activities reported by UMass Boston faculty and staff;
• Lists opportunities for further engagement as provided by potential partners looking to engage with faculty, staff and students;
• Affords faculty and staff a personalized registry for sharing all their engaged research, teaching and service work.
• Enables users to identify faculty with relevant expertise and interests, determine existing or past connections with partner organizations, and much more!

Help for faculty and staff: http://engage.umb.edu/dashboard/help.

For questions related to the Engage portal, email us at engage@umb.edu

For partnership consultations, contact us at ocp@umb.edu, Ph.: 617.287.4223

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

On-campus

ScholarWorks UMass Boston is a digital repository for the research, creative and scholarly contributions of faculty, staff, researchers, and students at UMass Boston. Check out UMass Boston’s community-engaged teaching, research, and service working papers, conference papers, theses, dissertations, or other academic works. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/

National

American Association of State Colleges and Universities: http://www.aascu.org/

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities: http://www.aplu.org/

Campus Compact: http://compact.org/

Carnegie Classification on Community Engagement: http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/

Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities: http://www.cumsonline.org/

Coalition of Urban Serving Universities: http://usucoalition.org/
Focused on Community-Academy engagement research, teaching, and service/leadership

Building Healthy Communities

Building a Two-Way Street: Challenges and Opportunities for Community Engagement at Research Universities
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/246520

The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health
https://ccph.memberclicks.net/

Community Health Partnerships: Tools and Information for Development and Support

Community Tool Box
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents

Creating and Sustaining Authentic Partnerships with Community in a Systemic Model

The Data Center: Research for Justice
http://www.datacenter.org/services-offered/

Deepening Community Engagement in Higher Education: Forging New Pathways

Developing and Sustaining Community-Based Participatory Research Partnerships: A Skill-Building Curriculum
https://ccph.memberclicks.net/cbprcurriculum

Different Worlds and Common Ground: Community Partner Perspectives on Campus-Community Partnerships

Engaging Your Community: A Toolkit for Partnership, Collaboration and Action
http://www.jsi.com/JSIInternet/Inc/Common/_download_pub.cfm?id=14333&lid=3

Evaluating Community-Based initiatives
http://www.hfrp.org/var/hfrp/storage/original/application/19b2539882d0ff8a9064b88341dbad3a.pdf

Faculty Toolkit: Designing Community-Based Courses
http://publicservice.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/Faculty_Toolkit_brief_update_Nov_2015.pdf

K-H Partnerships Toolkit (Campus Compact for New Hampshire)

Making Community Partnerships Work: A Toolkit for Community-Based Participatory Partnerships

Implementation Guide – Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement

Partnership to Uplift Communities (PUC) Schools: Building and Maintaining Successful Community Partnerships

Partnership Assessment Tool for Health (PATH)
https://www.chcs.org/media/Partnership-Assessment-Tool-for-Health_FINAL.pdf
Principles of Community Engagement, National Institutes of Health

Research University Engaged Scholarship Toolkit
http://compact.org/initiatives/trucen/research-university-engaged-scholarship-toolkit/

Realizing STEM Equity & Diversity through Higher Education-Community Engagement

Rhode Island Partnerships For Success (PFS) Partnership Rubric
https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1038&context=mu

Teaching Civic Engagement Across the Disciplines (from American Political Science Association)

Toolkit for Developing Community Partnerships

“To Serve a Larger Purpose” Engagement for Democracy and the Transformation of Higher Education

Universities Working with Communities: An Evolving Partnership
http://outreach.msu.edu/bpbriefs/issues/brief32.pdf