

SOURCE Presents: “The Do’s & Don’ts of Community Partnerships”

DO

Listen to and learn from your community partner
Understanding the context and history of the project is an important part of addressing community-identified needs.

Approach involvement as a means for **social change**
Think about the impact of your work in the long-term, even if the timetable for your community engagement is only short-term.

Be **honest** about the parameters of your **schedule**
Open communication is paramount to an effective partnership. Let your partners know what your other obligations are.

Dedicate time to growing your partnership
Developing the trust and understanding necessary for a good working relationship requires listening, patience, and persistence.

Consider communities in terms of their **assets**
Building upon the strengths of community organizations is just as important as capacity development.

Recognize (and embrace) **lessons** from partners
Be careful not to take an attitude of privilege. Be mindful of how this might affect your perceptions and assumptions.

Keep the **sustainability** of your partnership in mind
Be sure to work with SOURCE, faculty, and students to understand how to continue partnerships when students leave. Various programs and courses exist to help sustain projects.

Keep SOURCE involved with your experiences
Update our office on your community involvement. Don’t forget to report your service activities!

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DON’T

Ask a community organization to just **implement** your program
Communities do not want to be “laboratories” for student projects. Imposing your vision will not lead to true collaboration.

Approach your partnership with the “**Savior Syndrome**”
Be careful not to approach your partnerships as a resident “expert.” This attitude will not contribute to a balanced, reciprocal partnership.

Overcommit to a schedule you can’t keep
Do not view your engagement as optional. Remember that your partners are relying on you to hold up your end of the work.

Assume an immediate partnership
Partnerships must be built. Do not take your partners or their goodwill for granted!

Focus on the **deficits** of the communities you work with
Remember that you are working with passionate and resilient people with years of experience. They know their communities best.

Expect partners to be **desperate** for any help they can find
The community organizations you work within are capable institutions. They need partners, not “helpers,” “saviors,” or “experts.”

Assume new students will maintain your connection
New students may have different interests, and not continue with your service project. It is always possible to damage or destroy a partnership by walking away without a sustainable plan of action.

Try to **single-handedly facilitate** your involvement
Students are encouraged to work with SOURCE directly, to understand history, context, logistics, policies, and resources for preparation, recruitment, action, reflection, and evaluation.

Sources: *The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning* (eds. Stoecker and Elizabeth A. Tryon, Temple UP 2009); Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (<http://www.ccpd.info>); SOURCE (Student Outreach Resource Center)’s “Mutual Expectations for Partners” (<http://www.jhsph.edu/bin/c/w/MutualExpectations.pdf>).

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