STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." – African Proverb

Purpose

The Strategic Partnerships team was charged with providing guidance related to liaisons with both internal partners (e.g., institutes) and external collaborators (e.g., other professional societies) to develop, formalize, and manage strategies to advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) initiatives and programs.

Identification of best practices

Strategic partnerships are leveraged by many organizations as a means of promoting JEDI. Informed by a review of research in tandem with collaboration experts and an experiential knowledge of organizational partnerships, the following best practices have been identified as essential components to creating, developing, implementing, and sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships with internal and external entities to promote JEDI.

- **Alignment of core values** – establish a shared vision and understanding, and shared values as the partnership is being formed.[1]
- **Leadership** – demonstrated commitment from leaders at all levels.[2]
- **Relationship building** – creating a culture of trust and respect across partner organizations.[3]
- **Shared measurement, accountability, and resources** – reaching agreement on a system of metrics and evaluation as well as defining expectations and deliverables at the onset of the partnership.[4]

[1]Devonish-Mills, L., "Form Partnerships to Advance Diversity and Inclusion in Your Industry." American Society of Association of Executives, April 8, 2019. https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an_plus/2019/april/form-partnerships-to-advance-diversity-and-inclusion-in-your-industry/. (Last accessed 12 Aug. 2021.)
[2]Peel, H. A., Peel, B. B., & Baker, M. E. (2002). "School/University Partnerships: A Viable Model." International Journal of Educational Management, 16(7), 319-325.
[3]Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011). "Collective Impact." Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011. https://ssir.org/images/articles/2011_WI_Feature_Kania.pdf. (Last accessed August 12, 2021.)

Summary of best practices

Alignment of core values
Establish a shared vision and understanding, and shared values as the partnership is being formed.

- Identify and select partner organizations whose mission, values, beliefs, and practices are aligned with advancing JEDI.
- Engage stakeholders at all levels in developing a shared vision for the partnership.
- Develop a clear, concise written statement that defines the partnership's core values and benefits.
- Develop and maintain a respect for the uniqueness of each partner's organizational culture and adopt/adapt strategies that work within and across those differences.

Leadership
Demonstrate commitment to JEDI from leaders at all levels.

- Educate oneself on the personal, professional, and societal value of JEDI.
- Raise personal awareness of current and historical inequities and commit to actively working to eradicate them within the organization and partnership.
- Commit fully to the shared vision. This includes "time, effort, and resources to achieve the benefits of partnership."[5]
- Communicate the shared vision and direction of the partnership.
- Execute a memorandum of understanding stating the details of the partnership.
- Assign project directors to serve as the lead representatives of the partnership effort within their respective organizations.

Relationship building
Create a culture of trust and respect across partner organizations.

- Establish partnerships with organizations/entities that represent – and include – the stakeholders impacted by the proposed work.
- Avoid token representation in partner selections and ensure that the partnership is based on mutual respect for the cultural and intellectual diversity of the partners.
- Ensure stakeholder groups at all levels are included in the planning and design of programs and initiatives.

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[5]Harrison, K., Robinson, J., Marks, L., Blander, J., & McDermott, P. (2018). "ACTing in Partnership to Accelerate Impact." *J. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes, 78*, Supplement 2, Aug. 15.

- Create regular opportunities for partner organizations to collaborate and socialize with both internal and external stakeholders.[6]
- Participate in and informal meetings, conferences, etc., with partner organizations.
- Establish consistent lines of communication at all levels, within and across organizations, which includes responsiveness to solicited and unsolicited stakeholder input.

Shared measurement, accountability & resources

Reach agreement on a system of metrics and evaluation as well as defining expectations and deliverables at the onset of the partnership.

- Ensure all partner organizations agree on measures of success, expectations, and deliverables.
- Collaborate on establishing a system of metrics and evaluation that aligns with the agreed-upon core values. This includes evaluating the extent to which partners fulfill their agreed-upon commitments.
- Collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data regularly and utilize the results to inform decision-making for continuous improvement.
- Develop and implement a system for reporting progress, results, challenges, and opportunities to internal and external stakeholders at all levels.
- Clearly define at the onset what supports and resources (financial, personnel, in-kind, etc.) each organization will commit to the partnership.[7]

[6] Kania & Kramer, 2011.
[7] Martin, J., & Samels, J. (2001). "Lessons Learned: Eight Best Practices for New Partnerships." *New Directions for Higher Education, 2001 (116)*, 89-100.

American Society of Civil Engineers
1801 Alexander Bell Drive
Reston, VA 20191
703-295-6234
asce.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion