6 Creating a Sense of Ownership

Creating a sense of ownership is essential to building and sustaining productive TB partnerships. This chapter describes three steps that can help you create a sense of ownership among partners; these steps also help you ensure that the partnership is productive and enjoyable.

Three Steps for Creating Partner Ownership

1. Creating your partnership's culture
2. Consistently sharing information
3. Creating a common vision

Step 1: Create Your Partnership's Culture

You can create a culture of trust and respect that all partners work to maintain.

Research Suggests

Partnerships are more successful when partners create a culture that encourages open communication, mutual respect, and concern for the interests of others. The ability to develop this culture appears dependent upon partners establishing standards of conduct. These standards help partners to:

- Openly share information
- Surface and explore diverse perspectives
- Develop trust and cooperation
- Work through differences
- Increase perceptions that the partnership is enjoyable and productive

Establishing Standards of Conduct—The Process is Key

The process for identifying standards of conduct (ground rules) is as important as the standards themselves.

- Introduce the concept at a meeting by discussing the potential benefits to partners and the work of the group.
- Inform partners well in advance of the proposed discussion date. Prior notice increases comfort level, allows partners time to develop proposals, and permits them to gather suggestions from others in their organizations and/or communities.
- Consider the adage "people support what they help to create." Have members brainstorm and generate their own list of ideas. After brainstorming, the group can review the standards of conduct and determine which ones to adopt.

Examples of standards of conduct include:

- Open and honest communication and information sharing
- Valuing the views and perspectives of others
- Understanding and respecting cultural differences
- Seeking win-win solutions when differences arise
- Using open and fair decisionmaking processes

Tips and Strategies

- When partnerships include diverse members, it is important to understand and honor cultural differences associated with identifying and implementing standards of conduct. For instance, in some cultures respectful communication requires expressing differences directly in a one-on-one setting, rather than in a group setting.
- Existing partnerships may have informally established their ground rules or standards of conduct over time. In these instances, identifying and formalizing these standards can help to ensure they are incorporated into your partnership recruiting process.
- Have partners establish ground rules or standards of conduct early in the partnership.
- When partners do not have a history of trust and positive working relationships, it is helpful to make "Establishing Ground Rules" an agenda item at your first partnership meeting. When all partners participate in creating and adopting these principles, they are more likely to own them throughout the life of the partnership. This sense of ownership ensures that when differences arise in the partnership, they are handled in ways that do not damage the spirit or the work of the partnership.
- When recruiting new partners, include a discussion of the partnership's culture and ground rules in the orientation process.
- It is often helpful to review the standards of conduct at least annually to ensure they are being honored and to amend them as appropriate.

Step 2: Consistently Share Information

After you have established a commitment to openness and respect, the partnership can begin to create a common understanding of the TB issues they are charged with addressing.

Research Suggests

High-performance partnerships conduct extensive, honest, and ongoing information sharing. Leaders use information sharing as a tool to develop a common understanding of the complex health-related issues the partnership is charged with addressing, as well as to identify the assets and barriers that can impact their efforts. This common understanding is a significant precursor to multisector partnerships working effectively.

Some of the benefits of extensive and ongoing information sharing can be categorized as follows:

- Reduction in conflicts and disagreements caused by unrealistic expectations, inaccurate information, and lack of trust
- Increased ability to focus on issues and actions that will significantly improve TB prevention and control outcomes

Tips and Strategies

It is important to acknowledge your TB program's current limitations and service gaps. When you share the challenges your TB program faces, partners are more likely to take responsibility for working with you to solve these problems.

The TB information that seems to be the most important for all partners to understand can be categorized as follows:

Transmission and pathogenesis of TB

- Epidemiology of TB in your program area
- Stigma, language, and cultural issues that impact TB prevention and control
- State rules and regulations governing TB prevention and control efforts and how they were established
- Comparison of your TB program objectives and outcomes to national TB objectives and priorities
- Current TB prevention and control strategies and practices, as well as how and why they were chosen
- Resources currently designated for TB prevention and control in your area
- Potential impact of strengthened TB prevention and control activities on TB stakeholders

Things to Keep in Mind

- Having a common understanding is not the same as agreeing on individual issues; instead, it is a shared awareness of the variety of perspectives, concerns, and factors impacting the situation.
- If partners make critical comments about your TB program or its past efforts, try not to take the comments personally. Instead, you might respond with a comment that TB programs and services need to improve and that it will take the commitment of all partners to make this happen.

- Before tackling difficult issues, set a cooperative tone by acknowledging the:
  - Partnership's ground rules or standards of conduct
  - Complexity of the issue(s) being addressed
  - Importance of every partner to the success of the partnership

Two Approaches to Information Sharing in Partnerships

Tell and Sell

Description This communication style emphasizes a perceived expert sharing a limited set of predetermined messages on a given topic or issue, followed by selling listeners on the importance of the information and perspectives presented. Little time is allotted for dialogue or feedback.

Risks This style has limited success in partnerships with diverse members. Partners may feel that their views and perspectives are not valued, which may lead to cynicism and a decline in their commitment to the partnership. In turn, partners may fail to believe or value the information presented.

Benefits The *Tell and Sell* approach can be useful when addressing issues of minimal importance to all partners and thus do not merit an in depth discussion.

Source: Clampitt, P. G., R. J. DeKoch, and T. A. Cashman. 2000. A strategy for communicating about uncertainty. *Academy of Management Executives* 14:4.

Communicate and Explore

Description This communication style emphasizes participation. Partners provide feedback on the type and scope of information they would like to receive on a given topic or issue. Partners' expertise on various aspects of the topic is identified. At the following partnership meeting, several partners provide information on the topic to the group. Presenters agree in advance to share information as objectively as possible, without expressing their opinions. A facilitator then encourages discussion that explores and clarifies the varying perspectives and perceptions, placing special emphasis on differences that are likely to impact the partnership's future work. These perspectives are categorized into common themes and partners determine whether additional information and exploration is appropriate.

The goal of this communication style is to surface, respectfully explore, and more fully understand the factors impacting complex TB problems. This style is particularly helpful when TB partners are from diverse sectors and cultures.

Risks For this communication style to be effective, partners must communicate openly and without defensiveness. In the absence of a qualified facilitator, this may not be possible. In addition, poor facilitation may cause information to be inaccurately summarized and opportunities to create a common understanding of complex issues may be missed. This approach has limited success when partners with valuable insights are not comfortable expressing themselves in a group setting. Thus, it is important to speak individually with partners to assess their comfort level and to design additional information-sharing channels as needed. Creating these channels may be as simple as developing trust with these partners and contacting them personally to gain their insights and perspectives. These partners can then work with you to determine how best to incorporate their perspectives into the group discussion. Conducting anonymous surveys of partners and exploring the resulting information at a meeting have also proven useful.

Benefits The *Communicate and Explore* approach promotes the sharing of a wide variety of ideas and perspectives in a short period of time. This approach allows partners to develop a more thorough understanding of complex issues.

Step 3: Create a Common Vision

Information sharing helps partners create a common understanding of "where we are right now." The process of creating a common vision helps partners commit to a common understanding of "where we would like to be." This shared vision of a desired future will help partners to stay focused, productive, and inspired, even in the toughest of times.

Research Suggests

A compelling, shared vision serves as a unifying force when partners recruit and orient new members, speak in public, undertake short- and long-term planning processes, make decisions, and address differences that arise among partners. A compelling vision is not the same as a mission statement, which describes the purpose of the partnership. Rather, it is a vivid and inspiring description of a desired future.

A compelling vision

- Is easy to understand and remember
- Is tangible and executable, yet stretches far beyond what is currently being done
- Has a time limit, usually 5 to 10 years into the future

A compelling vision will help

- Illuminate the most direct path from where your TB prevention and control efforts are today to where you would like them to be
- Inspire partners to focus on activities that cause the greatest strides in TB prevention and control
- Serve as a catalyst for team spirit, inspiring enthusiasm and commitment among members
- Enhance partners' desire to solve problems associated with realizing the vision
- Minimize the conflicts that arise among partners

Reflections from a TB Partner

"When I joined, people were sharing what they were doing, but there was no real coordination amongst the partners. We needed to define a common vision--the reason we were all inspired and willing to expend our time, energy and resources. Not everyone was excited about this. We took a novel approach to get energized by watching a short video, 'The Deep Dive' from an ABC Nightline segment. It demonstrated what can be accomplished when people from diverse backgrounds bring their skills and perspectives to the table. The video is all about how to create truly novel solutions and integrate the best ones into a final extraordinary product.

"We used this approach to develop our own vision to eliminate tuberculosis. Our vision has given us a sense of ownership and unity of purpose. Now we are all moving in the same direction, but with different people working on different components. Once we had the vision, we had a whole lot more commitment and excitement. People didn't feel like they were floundering."

In addition (see Chapter 3: *What Successful Health-Related Community Partnerships Have in Common*), effective partnership visions encompass all four of the following principles:

- Active involvement of multiple and diverse stakeholders in the identification, prioritization, and implementation of partnership goals, objectives, and activities;
- A focus on community health, not just the treatment of individual patients;
- Implementation mechanisms that facilitate and coordinate service delivery to the most appropriate recipients, at the most appropriate times, and in the most appropriate settings; and
- Effective use of limited resources by providing the most efficient services possible.

Not observing these four principles will severely limit partnership productivity. [42]

Tips and Strategies

- The visioning process is most beneficial to partnerships when all partners participate.
- Your visioning process needs to acknowledge and address the stigma, language, and cultural issues impacting TB prevention and control.
- Use a clearly defined process to develop the vision, such as the one below:

Creating a common vision among partners—a sample approach

1. Review the purpose of the partnership and remind all partners that their perspectives and input are essential for this purpose to be achieved.
2. Have partners brainstorm about the limitations and barriers that exist to realizing this purpose.
3. With the group, categorize the barriers into three to five common themes or areas, such as:
   - Screening, diagnosis, and treatment
   - Patient care
   - Education and outreach
   - Funding and resources
4. Review the themes to determine whether any significant categories or barriers have been omitted.
5. Brainstorm what you would like each category to look like in 5 to 10 years, being as specific as possible.
6. Write a summary of the resulting vision for review and adoption by the group.

[42] Shortell et al., 3.; Israel et al., 186.

The Vision: A Guide for Effective Action

A shared vision tends to inspire partners to focus on identifying the goals, strategies, objectives, projects, and activities most likely to accomplish their vision.

A number of organizational theorists believe that it is important for action planning processes to build upon current successes and available resources.[43] Following is one such approach for moving from vision to effective action.[44]

For each category identified in Step 3 of the sample process above, ask the following questions, encouraging input, discussion, and feedback from all partners as you go:

- What specifically are we already doing well that is moving us toward our vision? What specifically makes it work? Skills? Resources? Attitudes? Structures? Approaches?
- How and where can we do more of this? What added skills and resources could help us accomplish more? Where and how can we access them?
- What can we do better or differently? What skills and resources do we have to accomplish this? What added skills and resources do we need? Where and how can we access them?

Moving from Overall Goals to Effective Action

Goals describe the overall mission of the partnership. They are broad, general statements that clearly portray general improvements you wish to make.

> *Sample Goal:* Increase TB awareness among physicians treating high-risk populations.

Strategies are the approaches you will use to accomplish your goals.

> *Sample Strategy:* Work with associations of physicians (such as hospital emergency department physicians), medical directors of communities serving high-risk populations, and respected leaders of these same populations to develop a TB training session.

Objectives state the expected result. They are the specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-framed (SMART) outcomes that are partial accomplishments of the goal. (See the *Planning With Partners Worksheet* in the Toolkit).

> *Sample of a SMART Objective:* Upon completion of the 2-hour training session, participants will be able to identify three TB stigmas common to their high-risk populations and three strategies for minimizing these stigmas.

Activities are specific actions or procedures that are expected to occur in order to meet the objectives.

> *Sample Activity:* Leaders of high-risk populations will be identified to attend the training session.

Answering each of the above questions helps the partnership identify the work that needs to be done. At this stage, it is helpful for the partnership to:

- Review the answers to the above questions to identify potential partnership goals, strategies, objectives, projects, and activities.

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[43]Oakley E, Krug D. 1991. *Enlightened leadership: Getting to the Heart of Change,* 96–121. New York: Simon and Schuster.
[44]Ibid.

- Discuss, write, and prioritize the goals, strategies, objectives, and activities that are likely to have the most impact on your vision. (See Chapter 16: *Toolkit, "How to Write SMART Objectives Checklist"* to help you in writing SMART objectives.)

- Explore partnership structures and decisionmaking styles that will help you determine next steps, which partners are willing to work on these steps, when the steps will be undertaken, and how information will be shared with the group. (See Chapter 7: *Making Progress and Making Decisions*.)

Things to Keep in Mind

- The vision is not merely a document; it is the guiding force that partnership leaders consistently use to motivate, unify, and inspire partners throughout the life of the partnership.
- Effective leaders ensure partners discuss priorities, possible projects, and decisions in terms of their impact on the vision.
- When brainstorming, make sure you put all ideas on the table, especially the untried, unique, and novel ones.
- Be alert to partnership discussions or disagreements that become "either/or" focused. See if a "both/and" approach might solve the problem. For instance, if half the group wants to work on one project and the other half on another, perhaps partners can commit to undertaking both projects.

By following the steps outlined in this chapter, partnership leaders can create an environment that fosters cooperation and productivity.

Related Resources

- TB-Educate

  This is an e-mail listserv through which hundreds of health professionals from across the country and around the world exchange information, share experiences, and ask TB education and training questions. Subscribe to the listserv at www.cdcnpin.org/scripts/subscribe.asp#tb.

- *TB Notes Newsletter*

  This CDC quarterly newsletter contains news about the CDC's Division of Tuberculosis Elimination activities and highlights from state and local TB programs across the country. It also contains a calendar of events describing meetings, conferences, and other educational activities of potential interest to those working in TB. Access the newsletter at www.cdc.gov/tb/notes/notes.htm.