Partnership Development for Lifestyle Programs

This brief provides guidance and resources for managers of CDC-funded WISEWOMAN programs to establish and sustain valuable partnerships to improve health outcomes among WISEWOMAN participants.

Partnerships for WISEWOMAN Programs

Partnerships are critical for building and sustaining capacity within WISEWOMAN programs. Partnerships may be defined as two or more people or organizations coming together for a common goal. When WISEWOMAN programs join together with partners, their collective efforts can often have greater impact than their work independently. To be successful, a partnership must have a clear and deliberate purpose, add value to the work of each organization, and undergo ongoing assessment to ensure that the partnership is achieving its goals. Common pitfalls to avoid in partnerships are participant burnout, insufficient decision-making authority in partner representative, and a lack of direction in the partnership.[1]

Beginning in 2013, WISEWOMAN programs were charged with developing and maintaining formal partnerships with community-based organizations to provide lifestyle programs (LSPs) to program participants. WISEWOMAN funding cannot be used to develop new or experimental LSPs. Instead, partnerships for LSPs are intended to strengthen the implementation of evidence-based program strategies and sustain outcomes through more efficient use of limited resources to reach priority populations.

Benefits of Partnerships[1,2]

- Leveraging and maximizing resources.
- Minimizing duplication of efforts.
- Coordinating activities.
- Increasing access to priority populations.
- Promoting the delivery of program services.
- Understanding and sharing data.

Lifestyle Program (LSPs) are evidenced-based programs designed to increase physical activity, improve healthy eating, support weight loss (when appropriate), and support smoking cessation. Typically, LSPs follow an established curriculum, have multiple sessions, and incorporate face-to-face interaction.

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1 National Business Coalition on Health. Community Health Partnerships: *Tools and Information for Development and Support* website. http://www.nbch.org/NBCH/files/ccLibraryFiles/Filename/000000000353/Community_Health_Partnerships_tools.pdf. Accessed December 8, 2014.

2 National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Engaging, Building, Expanding: An NBCCEDP Partnership Development Toolkit*. Atlanta, GA. US Dept. Health and Human Service; 2011. http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/pdf/toolkit/NBCCEDP_Toolkit.pdf. December 8, 2014

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention

Steps for Developing and Maintaining Partnerships[3]

Assessing Gaps in Services Offered Through LSPs

As an initial step, it is important to assess aspects of current LSP services that are not being offered by existing partners. WISEWOMAN programs can determine what areas to focus on when looking for new partners or expanding roles of existing partners.

Assessing Potential Partners and Evidence-Based LSPs

Determining the most appropriate partners is an important next step. WISEWOMAN programs should seek organizations that offer community-based LSPs that have been proven through rigorous evaluation to be effective in one or more of the following areas:

- Improving nutrition and physical activity by incorporating national recommendations.

- Working toward smoking cessation for current smokers.

- Addressing weight loss as appropriate.

- Delivering culturally appropriate messages and materials.

- Improving medication adherence.

The table below provides a brief overview of potential community-based organizations to partner with to support LSP implementation, along with specific personnel who may be directly involved.

Potential Partners

Community -Based Organizations	Personnel to Deliver LSPs
- Local health departments - Community hospitals - YMCAs/YWCAs - Community centers - Quitlines - Pharmacist organizations	- Public health nurses - Nutritionists - Behavioral counselors - Community health workers - Pharmacists

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3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Engaging, Building, Expanding: An NBCCEDP Partnership Development Toolkit*. Atlanta, GA. US Dept. of Health and Human Service; 2011. http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/pdf/toolkit/NBCCEDP_Toolkit.pdf. Accessed December 8, 2014.

A few key activities can help you to identify potential partners and determine the benefits of establishing a partnership.[4]Conduct a needs and resource assessment of the priority population(s).

- Establish goals and objectives for development of potential partnerships.

- Gather information about potential LSPs and partners. Use national and local websites and other resources for basic program information (e.g., content, activities, dosage, delivery details).

- Generate a list of potential LSPs and partners.

- Assess each partner's fit given shared or complementary mission or goals, activities, audiences, and outcomes. Consider the organization's leadership and capacity to implement and sustain the LSP with fidelity—that is, consistent delivery as planned—over time.

- Narrow the list of potential partners on the basis of gathered information and resources.

- Select the most appropriate partner(s).

> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Partnership Development Toolkit provides a sample checklist for assessing and planning steps to initiate a new partnership. This checklist may also be helpful for developing and sustaining ongoing partnerships. You can access the sample checklist here: http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/toolkit.htm

To determine if an LSP is evidence-based, consider the following [5,6]:

- Different types of evidence available such as in scientific literature or field-based experience.

- The effectiveness of the LSP in achieving the desired outcomes as demonstrated by the evidence.

- The feasibility of implementing the approach in the target setting.

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4 Administration for Children & Families. Selecting an Evidence-based Program That Fits for State PREP Programs. Washington, DC: Family and Youth Services; 2012. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/prep-program-fit-ts.pdf. Accessed December 22, 2014.

5 Spencer LM, Schooley MW, Anderson LA, Kochtitzky CS, DeGroff AS, Devlin HM et al. Seeking Best Practices: A conceptual Framework for Planning and Improving Evidence-Based Practice. Preventing Chronic Disease. 2013;10:30186. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd10.130186.

6 Puddy, RW & Wilkins, N. Understanding Evidence Part 1: Best Available Research Evidence. A Guide to the Continuum of Evidence of Effectiveness. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2011.

Initiating the Partnership

A well-planned initial meeting with your new partner is critical for sharing information and establishing a mutual interest in collaboration. This is also a good time to identify overlap in missions, goals, activities, and assessment to help structure appropriate plans for the partnership. The key is to understand the resources and skills that each organization brings to the table and then use this information to establish common goals that the partnership aims to achieve.

Formalizing the Partnership

Once an organization has agreed to partner with your program, the relationship should be formalized. Short-term partnerships with a limited scope may require a simple, informal agreement, while long-term partnerships with a broad scope may require a more complex, formalized partnership (e.g., developing a memorandum of understanding). In general, partnerships exist along a continuum based on their level of complexity (see the graphic below).

Least Complex   **Most Complex**

| Networking | Coordinating | Cooperating | Collaborating |
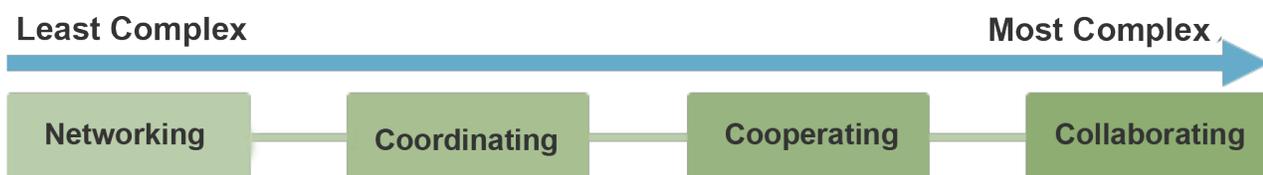
Adapted from source: National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. Engaging, Building, Expanding: An NBCCEDP Partnership Development Toolkit. Atlanta, GA: CDC; 2011. http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/ pdf/toolkit/NBCCEDP_ Toolkit.pdf. Accessed December 22, 2014.

- **Networking** involves the exchange of ideas and information for mutual benefit.

- **Coordinating** involves exchanging information and altering activities for a common purpose.

- **Cooperating** involves exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources (e.g., staff, funding) for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose.

- **Collaborating** includes enhancing the capacity of the other partner for mutual benefit and a common purpose, in addition to the above activities.[7]

Using the information you have gathered about the organization, determine the appropriate level of partnership. Then, work with your partner to solidify the terms of the partnership by defining roles and responsibilities, developing timelines, clarifying activities and tasks, and identifying a contact person for regular communication.

Evaluating, Monitoring, and Sustaining the Partnership

Partnerships should be monitored regularly to ensure that they continue to be beneficial to both partnering organizations and that the relationship is maintained. It can be helpful to develop a plan as early in the process as possible for how to sustain the partnership and to revisit that plan periodically to ensure that it remains accurate and relevant. In addition, communication between you and your partner should be mutual and consistent to ensure that processes and activities are carried out as planned. Questions to consider when determining whether a partnership is beneficial over time include the following:

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7 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Partnership Toolkit: Program Version. Atlanta, GA: US Dept. Health and Human Service; 2006. http://cancercontrolplanet.cancer.gov/CDCPartnershipToolkit.pdf. Accessed December 22, 2014.

- Are administrative processes effective?

- Are communication channels appropriate given staff and program activities?

- Are the necessary processes in place to ensure data are available and delivered in a timely manner?

- What are key successes of the partnership?

- What are key challenges of the partnership?

Remember to discuss any lessons learned throughout the partnership process to ensure that the relationship remains beneficial to both parties.

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to your success in working with partners. Partnering organizations should work together to determine whether the partnership is making a difference in program processes and participant outcomes over time. Organizations can use findings from partnership assessments to improve partnership activities; test hypotheses to determine the partnerships' contribution to program outcomes; and identify lessons learned for future partnership efforts. Potential evaluation questions that derive outcome and process data of interest to key stakeholders for required reporting include the following:

- **Processes**

  - How many WI SEWOMAN participants were referred to participate in LSPs?

  - How many WISEWOMAN participants enrolled in LSPs?

  - How many WISEWOMAN participants completed LSPS?

  - How many WISEWOMAN participants were referred for smoking cessation?

- **Outcomes**

  - Did participation in LSPs contribute to desired behavior changes among WISEWOMAN participants (e.g., increase in physical activity, increase in healthy eating behaviors, and decreases in tobacco use)?

  - Did participation in LSPs contribute to desired decreases in participants' weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and other biometric indicators?

  - Did participation in LSPs contribute to desired changes in WISEWOMAN participants' health care usage (e.g., number of prescriptions, emergency room visits)?

In addition to these questions, your program may identify other evaluation questions to further inform and strengthen program planning and delivery.

Ending a Partnership

Just as it is important to maintain and sustain ongoing partnerships, it is equally critical to take planned and deliberate steps to bring a partnership to an end. Partnerships may end for several reasons, including the following:

- End of contract or funding source.

- Change in program needs.

- Completion of collaborative program activities.

- Partnership deemed unsuccessful by one or more parties.

- Changes in the availability or delivery of LSPs.

When your program outgrows the need for a particular partnership or the program needs change, it is important to ensure that the end of a partnership is positive and mutually agreed upon. Meet with your partner organization to discuss the situation and leave open the possibility for future collaboration. If your partner expresses interest in maintaining the relationship, make an effort to work together to identify ways to adjust or modify some aspects of the relationship, such as making the partnership less formal or complex. Be sure to reflect on successes and lessons learned to ensure the partnership ends on a positive note.

Sharing Successes and Lessons Learned

WISEWOMAN programs should share successes and lessons learned from developing partnerships. Potential activities include the following:

- Document how partnerships supported program efforts by developing products and publications.

- Identify opportunities to share with key stakeholders such as program staff and decision makers.

- Present findings at national, state, and local conferences.

Resources

Engaging, Building, Expanding: An NBCCEDP Partnership Development Toolkit (CDC): http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/pdf/toolkit/NBCCEDP_Toolkit.pdf.

Identifying and Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, US Department of Health and Human Services [HHS]): http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA09-4205/SMA09-4205.pdf.

Selecting an Evidence-Based Program That Fits (Administration for Children and Families, HHS): http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/prep-evb-fit.

Tools and Information for Community Health Partnerships (National Business Coalition on Health): http://www.nbch.org/NBCH/files/ccLibraryFiles/Filename/000000000353/Community_Health_Partnerships_tools.pdf.

A Pocket Guide to Building Partnerships (World Health Organization): http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/68386/1/WHO_HTM_STB_2003.25.pdf.

Partnership Tool Kit (Cancer Control Planet): http://cancercontrolplanet.cancer.gov/CDCPartnershipToolkit.pdf.

Essential Tips for Successful Collaboration (North Carolina Health Schools): http://www.nchealthyschools.org/docs/schoolhealthadvisorycouncil/essentialtips.pdf.