

# BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIP PLANNING

Human trafficking requires a coordinated and integrated response from victim service providers and other stakeholders. No one agency or organization can provide the complex array of services often needed by victims of human trafficking. Building collaboration through partnerships is an effective way to maximize limited resources, identify existing gaps in services, minimize the likelihood of any duplication of efforts, and, ultimately, provide comprehensive, trauma-informed services for victims.

## *Strategic Alliances*

Partnerships are **strategic alliances** that can streamline operations to improve efficiency, expand programs and services, and increase awareness. Reasons to partner and strengthen an organization's anti-trafficking networks include—

- Provide an integrated continuum of care to meet a victim's needs;
- Expand service areas to reach different geographic regions;
- Deliver additional victim services;
- Reach new audiences;
- Increase program awareness and extend outreach efforts;
- Share workload and support for victims' needs; and
- Develop a coordinated, community-based response to human trafficking.

## *Formal Versus Informal Partnerships*

Whether formal or informal, partnering opportunities should be carefully planned and support an organization's mission and goals. Formal partnerships usually include joint programming or shared services with documented agreements between two or more organizations. Informal partnerships are done by casual association and do not include the formal paperwork.

Building and maintaining a successful partnership will take time and ongoing effort. Regardless of the type of partnership, relationships are at the cornerstone of all successful ones. Partnerships require developing internal buy-in at the leadership and staff level and establishing and maintaining trust. Unresolved issues or a prior history between organizations and individuals within an organization may need to be addressed. Hosting partner meetings or participating in local working groups, such as continuum of care programs, anti-trafficking coalitions and taskforces, provide avenues to foster and strengthen relationships. When an organization invests in building relationships, opportunities to build strategic partnerships evolve and increase.

### *Developing a Partnership Plan*

A partnership plan is a roadmap for determining which type of partnership(s) to pursue and which organization(s) to involve. Partnership plans typically include—

- Background of the organization including the types of partnerships they are seeking and how they could benefit from partnerships;
- Need/purpose for partners;
- Goal of the partnership(s);
- Tactics/mechanisms to achieve the partnership;
- Accountability mechanisms for the partnership;
- Timeline to achieve the partnerships; and
- Evaluation mechanism.

### *Formalizing a Partnership*

A well-documented agreement can clarify responsibilities and expectations, hold partners accountable, and shape the outcomes of the partnership. Partnership agreements can be formalized through a subgrant agreement or a memorandum of understanding. A letter of intent is typically used as part of a federal grant application process to document an intent to formally partner. A well-documented agreement can clarify responsibilities and expectations, hold partners accountable, and shape the outcomes of the partnership.

**Subgrant Agreement** is formal contract where a portion of grant funding is allocated to another organization, called a subrecipient, subgrantee, or subawardee. This formal contract establishes the terms, conditions, and requirements for a partner to use grant funds. A subgrant agreement may be useful when an organization shares responsibility in carrying out a grant award.

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** or a memorandum of agreement, is a formal agreement where two or more organizations establish common goals and shared responsibilities. While it can be a legally binding contract, a MOU does not allocate any funds. An organization may want a MOU to describe the partnering organization's specific services and document the associated costs of those services.

**Letter of Intent** outlines an understanding between two or more organizations to formalize the relationship in time. Like a MOU, a letter of intent outlines services a partner organization will provide, represents the start of a relationship, and is a precursor to a more formal and binding agreement.

### *Maintaining a Successful Partnership*

To sustain a successful partnership, communicate openly, measure impact, and adjust the partnership terms as needed. Partnerships may evolve, particularly as needs change; making adjustments ensures partnerships stay relevant.

## Sample Partnership Plan

Use this worksheet to as tool for developing an internal partnership plan for your organization. The italicized text provides instructions for the type of content to include in each section.

# [YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME] PARTNERSHIP PLAN

### Background

*Provide a description of the organization and include core principles, values, and goals. List existing partners by name (e.g., Children’s Hospital), indicate the type of partnerships (e.g., informal or formal), and describe the purpose of the partnership (e.g., provide medical services for minor clients).*

### Need/Purpose for Partners

*Describe how expanding partnerships will benefit the organization. List benefits and the organization’s partnership needs. Document “must haves” for any partner organization (e.g., share a similar vision, participate in open communication, mutually benefit from the partnership).*

### Goal of the Partnership(s)

*List potential partners by name, indicate the type of partnership, describe each partnership, and determine the desired outcome. For example—*

Name	Type	Description	Outcome
Capital City Shelter	Formal	Execute a MOU; create a process to refer male clients to this organization for services.	Offer emergency and transitional shelter to male clients.

### Tactics/Mechanisms to Achieve Partnership(s)

*Determine specific, measurable tactics to build relationships (e.g., referral contact through an existing relationship, cold outreach email, phone call, in-person meeting, working groups, events) and who will be responsible for seeking the partnership. Describe ways to maintain the partnerships over time (e.g., weekly coordination calls, monthly or quarterly meetings).*

### Accountability Mechanisms for the Partnership

*Outline expectations of each organization’s roles and responsibilities, setting boundaries (e.g., establishing clear policies on privacy, confidentiality, and information sharing), and identify how partner organizations will be held accountable.*

### Timeline to Achieve Partnership

*Draft a timeline for contacting potential partner organizations and document specific, measurable tasks to build relationships.*

### Evaluation Mechanism

*Describe ways to evaluate the partnerships and the process for documenting the metrics (e.g., number of referrals, expanded services, coordination opportunities).*