

Partnering and Collaborating to Support and Build Equity and Inclusion

The purpose of this practice brief is (1) to introduce the concept of partnership and collaboration (2) to examine the importance of collaboration and coordination amongst diverse stakeholders for a more inclusive community; and (3) to provide support and resources around forming creative and inclusive partnerships. EDs/CEOs, managers, frontline staff, consultants, volunteers and community residents can use this practice brief in order to operationalize the commitments in the D&I Charter of Peel.

INTRODUCING THE ISSUE

Creating diverse, equitable and inclusive communities and organizations is a complex and multifaceted process that requires collaborative solutions. No one individual or organization has all of the skills, resources, networks and knowledge necessary to affect large-scale change. In order to move the needle forward on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), it is important to build cross-sectoral capacity to create community-wide and systemic impact. Moreover, it is essential to engage in multi-level collaboration – wherein diverse actors share knowledge, resources and skills - to build credibility, enhance commitment and sustain that impact (Tamarack Institute, 2003).

Partnering and collaborating to support and build equity and inclusion is beneficial for a number of reasons:

- It facilitates the coming together of diverse perspectives and expertise, allowing for more integrated service provision and a clearer policy/programmatic response to complex DEI issues
- It enables the strengthening of existing work in multiple sectors, moving the agenda forward on collaboratively defined outcomes
- It leads to more creative outcomes, particularly when stakeholders have not previously worked with each other, or have generally addressed an issue in sector or industry-specific ways
- It allows for a more efficient use of skills, resources and infrastructure
- It creates more visibility and a critical mass of support around a given issue/set of issues
- It enhances the sustainability of programs, projects and initiatives

It is important to ask: **WHAT** role do diverse stakeholders play in partnering and collaborating around DEI; and **HOW** does one do it? There are multiple strategies by which to engage in effective partnerships and collaborations; irrespective of the method chosen, it is important to remember that by working together, we can create more vibrant, innovative and engaged communities where people have both the feeling and reality of belonging, and where everyone can achieve their full potential.

'HOW TO': TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- **Think about factors affecting successful collaborations:** Environment, membership, process/structure, purpose and resources are all factors worth considering when engaging in a cross-sectoral collaborative partnership
- **Engage in community advocacy:** Advocacy efforts are useful for generating support and fostering a wide variety of partnerships on particular DEI issues
- **Develop engagement strategies to foster local partnerships:** Partnerships and collaborations with local governments, community residents/leaders, faith & culture groups, and local businesses are important for gaining credibility on local issues.
- **Participate in networks, advisory committees, coalitions and taskforces:** Organizations can ensure representation around collaborative DEI tables to build internal capacity and learn from others
- **Identify assets:** In forming collaborative partnerships, it is important to identify and map out where one's comparative advantages lie, and where one can benefit from the assets of others
- **Share promising practices and resources:** Consistent sharing of promising practices and resources with partners and with community members increases support for collaborative efforts; it also allows others to build on the work
- **Celebrate collaborative efforts:** To keep the momentum going, it is essential to consistently recognize and celebrate the work of collaborations/partnerships in moving the agenda forward on DEI issues

RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

- [Equity and Inclusion – Partnering with Allies](#) (College Student Educators International)
- [Why we Need Inclusive Partnerships](#) (CitiesAlliance)
- [Community-Based Strategies - Multisectoral Collaboration](#) (Tamarack Institute)
- [Building Community Through Partnership](#) (Caledon Institute of Social Policy)

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO SUPPORT & BUILD EQUITY AND INCLUSION?

The responsibility to partner and collaborate around DEI does not fall on any single stakeholder; rather, each has a unique role to play in the collaborative effort. Examples of community stakeholders include (but are not limited to): funders, small businesses, service providers, lawyers, law enforcement officers, public institutions, planners & policy developers, governments, researchers, community members, and community advocates.

It is important to recognize that while all stakeholders may be committed to engaging in a collaboration and/or partnership around DEI, there are sometimes competing priorities that limit the nature of and/or the degree to which collaboration can occur. Adapting to the evolving nature of collaboration around equity and inclusion is pivotal to the collaborative effort.

PARTNERSHIP, COORDINATION & COLLABORATION: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

While the nature of the relationship may differ, each is important for collectively furthering DEI work:

Partnership - Individual links between organizations; the strength of partnerships varies by context

Coordination - Relationships built on "compatible goals...joint planning...and consistent communication channels" (ACPA 2015)

Collaboration - Relationships where roles/responsibilities, outcomes and structure/process are firmly in place. Organizations have established long-term/ongoing coordination of activities