

Materials from “Partnerships” Group

The materials that follow have been put together by a Delivery System Committee sub-group that was tasked with providing information about and leading discussion on:

Building partnerships with other legal and non-legal entities in creative ways to address unmet client needs and to address systemic issues that move and/or keep people in poverty.

The material falls into three components:

A. Information about “best practices” in forming and sustaining successful partnerships and collaborations.

This information is in the first two attachments: (1) a list of best practices and (2) a helpful article that goes into further explanation of how these practices can help to create successful partnerships.

B. Information about collaborations that are already happening in the legal aid arena to address important client and community issues. The goal in providing this material is to give models contact information if you want to know how these collaborations were developed or work, which might be useful even if considering a partnership totally unrelated. **Please note:** We are not suggesting that these are the only collaborations in our community or necessarily the “best” ones. They simply present a wide variety of examples of the kinds of partnerships our colleagues have built.

This information is in the next attachments: (3) Collaborations with Organizations Beyond Legal Aid and (4) Successful Collaborations.

C. One example for discussion of a multifaceted, statewide client community problem – transportation – that (with some exceptions) is not yet being systematically addressed by legal aid in our state, and on which creating partnerships could provide new ways of approaching solutions. We will discuss possible partnerships to work on this problem as a way of thinking through an approach to large problems like this one, and consider a draft recommendation to the ATJ Board about approaches to this kind of problem. **Please note again:** This is only offered for discussion. We do not have a goal of asking everyone to work on transportation issues or to come away with clear solutions. The goal is to have a discussion about possible collaborative approaches.

The transportation information is in the last two attachments:

(5) “Transportation Problems of People of Low Income and Potential Collaborations” and (6) “Suggested Recommendations to the ATJ Board.”

Building and Sustaining Successful Collaborations

A Dozen Best Practices

This is a non-exhaustive list of factors to consider that experience suggests make any particular collaborative effort successful. They are provided to help guide efforts to evaluate and move forward on collaborations to effectively address client needs in our community.

1. Use a problem-solving approach. Identify a client need that is not being addressed (at least not sufficiently or adequately) and determine ways where collaborative efforts would be essential or vitally important to address the identified problem(s). This will help make individuals and organizations willing to invest the time, energy and other capital in building the collaboration.
2. Identify models and learn from them. Do not feel a need to start from scratch or have a “new” idea. Others have tried various types of collaborations and you can learn from their experiences.
3. Identify the specific common or complementary client need(s) that you hope to address and develop a shared vision for how the collaboration will address those need(s).
4. Educate each other on short term and long term organizational goals and purposes. Consider how each organization’s role in serving the clients’ needs will further each organization’s goals.
5. Set realistic, but ambitious, expectations of each organization’s resource commitments. Then honor the commitments. Hold each other accountable to commitments.
6. Be patient. Each organization must have time to evaluate what the collaboration will look like and how it will benefit that organization and its clients. Allow sufficient time for all to have “buy in” at all levels of their respective organizations. Leadership – including boards and funders – must be committed to the goal.
7. Remain flexible. Allow the initiative to evolve and remain open to considering alternatives as the idea develops or as the collaborators see what is working and not working.
8. Identify who within the organization will do the work and assign responsibility. Develop a succession plan. Many successful collaborations arise from personal relationships or the energy of particular people, but should not wilt if those person(s) are no longer available.
9. Seek out funding and other resources. One advantage of collaboration is it may open doors to avenues for grants, etc. that might not be available to each organization separately.
10. Do not ignore ethical issues. Make sure all are comfortable with arrangements for sharing information and divisions of responsibilities.
11. Evaluate performance against goals and client needs regularly and honestly. Try to establish objective measures for success to help make evaluation meaningful.
12. Communication – frequent, open and honest – with each other and with relevant constituencies. Establish regular schedule(s) and process(es) for making sure communication happens that is all of these things.



Nonprofit Collaboration & Mergers: Finding the Right Fit

A Resource Guide for Nonprofits

A Collaborative Effort of:



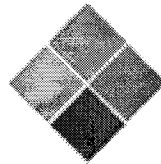
United Way
of Greater Milwaukee



Center for Urban Initiatives and Research



Helen Bader Institute
for Nonprofit Management



Nonprofit
Management Fund

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