

Partnership Type Reflection Tool

Purpose: Many schools are engaged in more than one school-community partnership. Each of those partnerships matches a different type – Cooperative, Collaborative, or Integrated. Each school, depending on its resources, will have a different capacity to support these different kinds of partnerships. For example, schools rarely have capacity to engage with more than 3 Integrated partners, while they may have quite a few Cooperative and/or Collaborative partners. While some partnerships may shift from one type to another over time (e.g., from Collaborative to Integrated), others will always stay the same because that is what matches the needs of the school, partner, and community.

How to use this tool: Use this tool to reflect on what type(s) of partnership you have and decide how to move forward.

A partner is defined in this case as a school, community-based organization, school district, or other agency involved in collaborations to support young people.

Type A - Cooperative

Cooperative is defined in this context as partners operating “side by side.” They may recognize each other’s value but mostly “stay out of each other’s business.”

Type B - Collaborative

Collaborative is defined in this context as partners working jointly together on a program or programs towards a shared goal. Partners recognize that all have an important role to play in supporting youth.

Type C - Integrated

Integrated is defined in this context as partners that work together to set goals, make decisions, and evaluate shared programs and their partnership. In an integrated partnership, partners report being on the same page with, embedded, integrated into, or supported by the work of other partners.

Reflection Questions

- Which of your partnerships matches each of these types?
- Are there any partnerships you think would be a better fit for a different type? If so, how will you shift from one type to another? (For more ideas, see the Partnership Identification Checklist starting on page 2.)

This checklist will support you to identify your capacity for a new partnership, reflect on an existing partnership, or review all of the partnerships your organization or agency currently manages. To determine which category is the best fit for a single partnership, choose the column where you have checked the most boxes. This allows you to prepare for and to begin a conversation with your partners about what type of partnership you currently have, what you’re aiming for, and what actions would move your partnership to another type. These types are not designed to be a continuum – in fact, a healthy ecosystem of supports for students will include cooperative, collaborative, and integrated partnerships in a single school community.

Topic	Type A – Cooperative	Type B – Collaborative	Type C - Integrated
Definition	Cooperative is defined in this context as partners operating “side by side.” They may recognize each other’s value but mostly “stay out of each other’s business.”	Collaborative is defined in this context as partners working jointly together on a program or programs towards a shared goal. Partners recognize that all have an important role to play in supporting youth.	Integrated is defined in this context as partners that set goals, make decisions, and evaluate shared programs and their partnership. In an integrated partnership, partners report being on the same page with, embedded, integrated into, or supported by the work of other partners.
Shared Vision	<input type="checkbox"/> Each partner independently develops their vision, goals, and program outcomes. Some alignment of goals between agencies may be acknowledged, but vision is not shared.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners discuss vision, goals, and strategic priorities with all involved giving input during the partnership planning process, and each individual partner can identify at least one outcome aligned with a strategic priority of the partnership.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners co-construct shared vision and goals and share responsibilities for implementing them, including ensuring alignment of other partners. Goals include those for how they will work together in partnership, in addition to what they want to do.
Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Each partner determines their scope of work independently. Partners have discussed and documented roles and responsibilities related to the partnership and have identified appropriate check-in points. Communication on an ongoing basis is limited.	<input type="checkbox"/> Each partner communicates with one or more leaders from the other partner organization(s) about decisions and gives/takes input, but the final say rests with a single organization. Partners regularly provide feedback to each other, and it is common for partners to participate to engage in a site-based decision-making body together.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners determine their shared scope of work, with all voices at the table. There is a structure and process for collective decisions that impact the partnership. Partners recognize each other’s value and contributions, and invest in trust-building through frequent check-ins.
Coordination	<input type="checkbox"/> If there is a coordinator, the coordinator does not work closely with all partners and coordination structures, especially around communication, attend to the most basic of partner needs and interests.	<input type="checkbox"/> Coordination is helped by sharing resources including spaces or timing of activities (i.e., the how, when, and what of the work). There is information flow between partners and stakeholders, and there may be some regular meetings during the year to check in.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partnership coordination is well-resourced and may include a full-time staff member dedicated to coordination. Every partner engages in efforts that support, facilitate, or enable the work of the other partners and all agree trust exists within the partnership.

Topic	Type A – Cooperative	Type B – Collaborative	Type C - Integrated
Aligned, Responsive Implementation	<input type="checkbox"/> Each partner can identify how the other partner(s) is addressing needs of the community, although each partner develops their set program based on their expertise and identified need(s) and does their work independently. Communication exists primarily at the beginning of the partnership to establish expectations for all partners and at the end of the program/activity to evaluate impact.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners have some alignment of support for youth by identifying and leveraging resources from partners and from the larger community according to identified needs. Partners meet at least twice a year to discuss program(s), review data, incorporate feedback on unmet needs, and may revise programming in the moment or in the upcoming year. Partners have explicit agreements re: communication, e.g., response time, preferred method, etc. Partners contribute to each other's communications, e.g., newsletters, flyers, brochures, events.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners work closely so that strategies are complementary and impact top priorities or needs to create an ecosystem of supports. Regular communication is supported by built-in structures such as weekly meetings, which include giving and receiving feedback, centering relationships, and linking to shared goals. Using data, they revise strategies and make program course corrections throughout the year to address community needs. Partners have an identified process for conflict resolution and problem-solving with each other. Partners share ideas and methods for communication about the partnership.
Shared Accountability for Success	<input type="checkbox"/> Each partner may use a continuous improvement process although improvement efforts are typically focused on a single program or initiative. Partners may be collecting their own data but may not have data-sharing agreements in place or other mechanisms to report on program or partnership evaluation efforts. Each partner plans for the sustainability and resource allocation of their own program. Collaborative planning is not common, although one or more partners may provide in-kind resources (e.g., space).	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners share information on program quality and improvement goals and work together to plan strategies for meeting shared outcomes. Partners collect and share some data on participants, trends, and disparities. Partners review data on outcomes to support equity efforts, although data collection and use may be infrequent or inconsistent, such as once during the planning phase and once at the end of the year. Partners access resources together to support identified partnership priorities and agree on the alignment of those resources (e.g., grants, in-kind).	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners have defined roles, legal agreements, process, timeline, and data reporting systems in place, leading to timely and relevant identification, collecting, sharing, and use of data to fine tune strategies in programs and partnership. Partners collect, share, analyze, and discuss participation and assessment data on a regular basis to support continuous improvement and equity efforts, and communicate with stakeholders about results and post-evaluation actions. Partners plan for and work together on resource allocation to ensure continuous services and sustainability of partnership and programs.

Topic	Type A – Cooperative	Type B – Collaborative	Type C - Integrated
Example	<p>A childcare provider offers a before and after-school program at an elementary school. The provider and school share the goals of supporting families through extended care, providing inclusive learning environments where youth feel a sense of belonging, and offering students agency in the interests they pursue, but in this case the childcare provider operates on its own and neither the school nor provider influences each other's activities, beyond supporting some program outreach and beginning and end-of-year reports.</p>	<p>A high school and a community-based organization develop a partnership around a program that includes job training, paid internships, and a summer program with academic and enrichment components. They share goals around supporting leadership and job readiness skill development for students, particularly youth of color and those that live in poverty. The school supports the community-based organization with outreach, and they check in every quarter to assess the program status and give each other feedback on how the program and their coordination could improve. In the summer, their depth of collaboration increases, with some school educators working in the summer program, although the community-based organization still takes the lead on program development, decision-making, and delivery.</p>	<p>A community-based organization and a middle school collaborate on a grant proposal for programming to support Black and Brown students with after-school, summer, and family engagement programming. The community partner and assistant principal work with the Youth Council to establish shared goals, design the programming, identify roles and responsibilities, and determine a plan for continuous improvement and evaluation. The organization, which is led by Black and Brown community leaders, also plays a lead coordination role in bringing other partners in to enrich programming and collaborates with a team of school staff to build the academic enrichment summer program. The partners meet monthly, monitoring progress towards their shared goals, collecting youth and family input to support evaluation efforts, and identifying ways to strengthen collaboration.</p>