

Tips for Forming and Sustaining a Successful County TEAM UP TN Partnership

The following tips are lessons learned from the TEAM UP TN Pilot Project, which was composed of a state team and eleven county partnerships.

TEAM UP TN is a unique collaboration with the American Cancer Society's Mid-South Division, National Cancer Institute's Mid-South Cancer Information Service, Knoxville Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the Tennessee Breast and Cervical Screening Program (TBCSP) and the University of Tennessee (UT) Extension, which began in 2003. Each of these organizations has a representative that provides resources on the local level, whether on a county basis or a regional basis. While the resources provided to residents vary from form, type and topic, TEAM UP TN is packaging the strengths of each partner as to needed resources (educational, promotional, media, funding, professional expertise) and clinical services to empower Tennesseans to overcome barriers to understanding the importance of cancer screening and accessing screening services. County partnerships are facilitated by county UT Extension educators.

TEAM stands for: Together Everyone Achieves More

Advantages of Using a Partnership Structure to Address Cancer Education and Screening

- Brings together diverse community members who do not normally meet face-to-face.
- Provides a neutral ground for exchanging ideas and information.
- Unifies community structure: raises public awareness and reduces duplication and fragmentation of services.
- Packages the county cancer resources together as a team expanding the outreach of each organization by combining resources of all the partners to address cancer in the community.
- As a team, can be a powerful community advocate for conquering cancer.
- Fosters trust among members.
- Not a magical cure – does require work and leadership.

Members

- County TEAM UP TN core partners are:
 - American Cancer Society
 - County health department

- County UT Extension
- County hospital or regional cancer center
- Regional coordinator for the TN Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, if the partnership is focusing on these cancers
- These core members have a vested interest in cancer education and screening. This partnership advances their efforts by expanding their outreach into the community.
- Other members may include business representatives, cancer survivors, volunteers, interested health professionals, and county health council representatives. But the bottom line is anyone can join who wants to help their community conquer cancer.

Leadership

- TEAM UP TN partnership chair has been the county UT Extension educator, who serves as the meeting facilitator.
- Tasks are delegated so the work load is shared by all members.

Meetings

- Keep meetings at the same place, time and date.
 - As the partnership progresses, monthly meetings may not be necessary.
 - Changing meeting places leads to lower attendance because people forget where the meeting is going to be or forget directions.
- Luncheon meetings are best. TEAM UP members can attend during their lunch hour. Professionals, especially health care professionals, have a difficult time getting away outside of the lunch hour.

Member Participation

- Regular attendance is not critical.
 - Partnership members are very busy, with limited time to commit to this effort.
- Be inclusive.
 - Invite a variety of community members who have an interest in conquering cancer in their community.
- A core group will actively participate in the partnership. They represent organizations who will gain by participating in the partnership. This group may know each other and have worked together successfully in the past. The rest of the membership will be fluid in response to the type of activities being coordinated by the coalition.
 - Accept that the membership will be fluid.
 - Meeting attendance will vary.

Communication

- Meeting agendas and minutes are critical.
- Use other forms of communicating with coalition members such as conference calls, e-mails and coalition Web site.

Decision-Making

- Include as much of the membership in the decision-making process. This generates a sense of program ownership.

Team-Building

- Recognize that the TEAM UP TN partnership is a team. There are four stages of team development: forming, storming, norming and performing. Each stage must occur before the majority of the members (core group) can function as a team.
 1. Forming: In this first stage, there is a lack of common ground. Each person present at the coalition meeting is questioning why certain people are there. At this stage, it is critical for the coalition leader/chair to provide opportunities for members to get to know each other and discuss their expectations of the coalition.
 2. Storming: At this second stage, each member is struggling with his/her role. The group is struggling with how to work together. The coalition leader must encourage open discussion of feelings and frustrations, avoid an authoritarian role, and establish meeting rules with input from members.
 3. Norming: At this stage, members begin to be comfortable with each other. They begin to fit together and the team begins to "bond." Each member now accepts each other's style, needs and expectations. The overall mission of the coalition is accepted by all. The coalition chair needs to model cooperative behavior and focus on the group not the individual.
 4. Performing: This the final stage of team development. The team now has a system for communication and a structure for working together. The coalition moves as a team. It is critical that the coalition chair serve as a catalyst to maintain this stage by working on tasks and building relationships.
- While the four stages of team-building are vital, we found it advantageous to the partnership if team-building is viewed as an ongoing, "growing" process. A somewhat "loose," less rigid structure may prove invaluable. A partnership does not simply move from stage 1 to 2, 2 to 3, 3 and on to 4 where the works begins. The group evolves as new people come to the meetings, make a contribution (or not), and go (or choose to stay). Performing takes place continuously as people bond, develop relationships and discover role(s) and degrees

- of commitment. A partnership may never feel a strong sense of "at last, we've arrived," and yet when looking back, see that they have accomplished a great deal.

Benefits of a Partnership Structure to Address Cancer Education and Screening

- We found the partnership model to be an effective structure for making community changes.
- Big benefits: cost little, modest time commitments, no special expertise required, and pooling of talents of community members.
- Links people from different areas of the community to deal with a community problem.

Partnership Successes

- Recognize that a partnership does not last forever.
 - Dissolve it if the goals have been met or the partnership is no longer effective.
 - Not all partnerships are effective.
 - Partnerships consist of people who may lose interest in the issues or their job focus changes.
- Regardless of the outcome, the shared effort of the partnership leaves members with:
 - Surprises
 - Memories
 - Mutual respect
 - Lasting community networks/partnerships
 - Lasting impact on a community problem

Suggested Resources on Partnerships and Coalitions

- Kaye, G. and Wolff, T.: From the Ground Up: A workbook on coalition Building and community Development. AHEC/Community Partners. 2nd Edition Spring 1997.
- Berkowitz, B. and Wolff, T.: The Spirit of the Coalition. American Public Health Association, Wash., D.C., 2000.
- Kretzmann, J. and McKnight, J.: Building Communities From the Inside Out. ACTA Publications, 1993.
- Winer, M. and Ray, K.: Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey. Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2000.