

NWX-OS-OGC-RKVL

**Moderator: Tish Hall
September 17, 2014
1:00 pm CT**

Coordinator: At this time all participants are on a listen only mode. During the question and answer session you may Star 1 on your touch tone phone if you would like to ask a question.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. Now I would like to turn the meeting over to our conference host (Ms. Tish Hall). (Ms. Hall) you may begin, if you need assistance please dial 5-0, thank you.

Tish Hall: Thank you. Good afternoon. I'd like to welcome you all to today's Webinar entitled Organizations Are People Too, How relationship skills can help improve your strategic partnerships.

This Webinar today will rely on the Office of Adolescent Health, building sustainable programs resource guide which will help you to identify, develop, and improve strategic partnerships. You'll be encouraged to draw connections between your current knowledge of your healthy relationships and healthy organizational practices.

You will also hear from other OAH TPT grantees about their solutions for working through relationship issues with their own strategic partners. So today we are joined by three speakers, the first being (Brandon Stratford) and (Brandon) works in the Youth Development Research area of child trends. He provides technical assistance to team pregnancy prevention and pregnancy assistance fund grantees.

He has a PhD in Public Health from John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Masters of Social Work from the University Of Maryland School Of Social Work with a Concentration in Management and Community Organization. He has over a decade of experience working as an educator and a social worker for in-domestic and international settings.

He also has implemented a number of evidence based programs related to child and adolescent mental and behavioral health in both English and Spanish. In addition to this work for the Office of Adolescence Health he conducts research in both school based and community based settings with an emphasis on ensuring that organization and policies and practices from a high quality programming and services for youth.

And we also have (Dr. Melissa Peskin) and she is an Assistant Professor of Health Promotion Behavioral Science in Epidemiology at the University Of Texas School Of Public Health. She has expertise in the development implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of adolescence sexual health and dating violence interventions. She is particularly interested in understanding how schools adopt, implement, and maintain the use of effective sexual health education programs. And she is developing a web based decision support system to help school districts stakeholders do these activities.

She is Co-Principal Investigator in the Office of Adolescence Health Project to disseminate the It's Gain Keep it Real Program in ten school districts across Harris County and the surrounding areas. We also have (Sarah McQueen) and she has been the Program Manager of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program at San Diego Youth Services since October 2012. She received her MSW from Columbia School of Social Work with a Concentration in Child and Family Policy.

Upon graduating she worked at the workplace center at Columbia School of Social Work conducting research and providing technical assistance to the New York State Office of Mental Health related to barriers individual space in the workplace for example working parents, transitioned age youth and individuals with serious mental health conditions. Previously before she moved to San Diego she managed two Boys & Girls Clubs in Wisconsin and served on a board of directors to a local emergency shelter for youth. She was thrilled to work with Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs in San Diego upon moving there and has perfectly blended her experience with her direct practice in research.

So I will turn this over to (Brandon) and he will then turn it over to (Melissa) and (Sara).

(Brandon Stratford): All right. Thanks, Tish for that introduction. I'm very excited to be joining you all today and thank you for your patience as we work through some technical difficulties and I'm also especially excited to be joined by (Melissa) and (Sarah).

So as we get started I'd like to encourage you all to go up to the hand out section at the top of the screen. It has an icon that looks like three pieces of paper. You'll find the file labeled Worksheet that you can download and print.

If you can print that out or just keep it open on your desktop, we'll use it in a few minutes. And while you're doing that I'll briefly explain the other features that we'll be using today.

Throughout the presentation I'll be asking you to let us know by your own experiences related to partnerships via a series of polls. I'll open up the poll and you'll have about 15 to 20 seconds to indicate your answer by clicking on the most appropriate response. I'll then close the poll and we'll be able to see how folks responded.

In addition there's a Q and A button at the top of the screen. You can click on that to submit a question and we'll to address them during the presentation when it makes sense or at the very end. All right so let's go ahead and get started.

Today we're going to spend to time discussing strategic partnerships with a bit of a twist. Many people who work in social services agencies have at one time or another worked in positions where they were working to provide direct services. In the field of teen pregnancy prevention, that often means helping youth to understand aspects of a healthy relationship.

So today we're going to consider how maintaining healthy strategic partnerships is similar to maintaining a healthy relationship. We'll also hear from (Sarah) and (Melissa) about their challenges and successes with maintaining strategic partnerships. At the end of this Webinar you should be able to identify at least two components of a healthy strategic partnership, describe how relationship skills relate to the cultivation of strategic partnerships, and implement at least one strategy for addressing concerns in order to strengthen existing strategic partnerships.

To start off we need to define what we mean by partnership to make things simple for us today we'll use the definition that is included in OAH's collaboration toolkit which I hope you've all checked out at some point already.

I've included the link on the resources slide so you can check it out if you haven't. Partnership refers to a group of organizations with a common interest who agree to work together toward a common goal. So as a basic definition that makes a lot of sense. However much of the literature around strategic partnerships really describes partnerships as existing along a continuum. As I'm sure you are all aware not all partnerships are the same.

In fact, you wouldn't really want all your partnerships to be the same because they are probably serving different purposes for your organization. However, one of the most important things in a relationship is having clear expectations. So it's good to understand which type of partnerships we're talking about. Here you can see the partnership continuum. As you'll see there are increasing levels of integration as we move from left to right, but again I want to stress that it isn't necessary for all of your relationships to be classified as that final partnership level on the right.

So let's go ahead and take a closer look at each level of partnership. The first level is coordination. At this level partners learn about the services and clients served by each other's organizations. They also learn about each other's motivation for participating in a partnership. For example your organization might have referred some youth from medical care at various local clinics and found that participants who went to a particular clinic report higher levels of satisfaction.

In that case, you might want to actually get in touch with that clinic to better understand their services and also let them know about what you're organization does. Neither of you are really doing anything different but now you have a particular contact person and a better understanding of the services. Now might even agree to place brochures for their clinic in your own space and advertise their events and vice versa. There's still a lot of organizational independence but you've been able to define one another's interest and resources.

The next level is cooperation. At this level organizations work to develop and increased understanding of each other target population so that commonalities can be identified and joint strategies developed. For example a local pediatric clinic may be targeting middle school youth in an effort to increase HPV vaccination rates while you're organization is recruiting participants for the Making Proud Choices Program that you'll be implementing in a local after school program.

You might invite the clinic to make a presentation at a meeting that you are organizing for parents in the community and the clinic might agree to share information about your program with parents of middle school aged girls in their practice. The next level is collaboration.

At this level there's increase recognition of the values of each organization and an effort to build trust and earn respect. Both organizations should also have a much more clear understanding of the potential benefit offense the partnership. At this stage innovative ideas are presented by both organizations to meet a common problem. There can be challenges but they're usually well worth the effort. Both organizations may work together on a specific project to reach clients, provide education, or develop a marketing campaign. Often organizations in collaborative relationships start to put plans in writing.

So going back to your example, perhaps the clinic has been hoping to open a school based health center in the local high school. Your organization has also been hoping to increase your scope and start targeting high school students. You sit down with focuses from the clinic to develop a plan to present to the school board or you present local statistics about teen health and reproductive health concerns along with some strategies that your organizations have identified including opening the school based health clinic and implemented the be proud, be responsible, be protective, curriculum during health classes.

This is the most intense level of partnership and requires a high level of trust and communication. Roles and responsibilities at this partnership level are well defined and developed. There's a feeling of us. There might be shared space in staff, shared authority and decision making. Over all there's also a shared vision. Plans and agreements should definitely be in writing at this stage. Challenges continue especially in the areas of funding streams and support but there are generally established processes for problem solving and decision making.

In our example let's say that your organization in the health clinic have decided that it would make the most sense for the school based health clinic to be a joint venture because they have expertise in providing clinical services but your organization is more experienced in providing prevention program. In addition, your organization has some long standing relationships with local foundations and you think they would be interested in helping to fund comprehensive school based services to help reduce teen pregnancy in your community.

Both organizations work together to draft the plan and obtain funding including fee for service funds through Medicaid and private insurance. The

executive directors of both organizations meet quarterly and have check-ins over the phone on a fairly regular basis. After working out some challenges around administrative roles and budgets, you feel comfortable with the relationship and are able to jointly troubleshoot problems as they come up.

So now that we've looked at the continuum of partnerships, you're probably thinking about some of the relationships that you have with other organizations and classifying them based on the four categories. While our examples follow the trajectory with the two organizations developing an increasingly integrated relationship the truth is that some relationships may remain in the coordination category which is perfectly fine. One way to starting about your relationships is to use this work sheet that is included in the Factor 7 section of the Office of Adolescent Health, building sustainable programs or resource guide which you can actually access up in the handout section here. You'll find a file that you can download and you can also find it on the OAH website.

The purpose square in the middle represents your own organization with the surrounding squares representing partner organizations. You might consider writing the names of organizations that you consider to be true partners in the boxes closest to yours with those that are at the level of coordination furthest away. Once you've characterized each relationship based on the current status, you can move onto assess potential. This is another work sheet from the sustainability guide that can be useful as you think about your partnerships.

As you fill this out for your various partners, you may find that some relationships that are currently at the coordination level have the potential to move toward the collaboration. You might also find that some relationships that are currently more time intensive may no longer be serving as important a role in your organization's efforts in which case you may want to consider

adjusting the amount of time and effort you spend on maintaining that relationship.

Remember just like personal relationships strategic relationships between organizations require an investment in time and effort. In fact, in the next few slides we'll look at how maintaining a healthy personal relationship and maintaining healthy strategic partnerships are similar. But before moving on, I want to draw some connections for you between the resources the LAH has provided on sustainability and this topic strategic partnerships. Let's take a look at what OAH has to say about sustainability.

Sustainability is effectively leveraging partnerships and resources to continue programs, services, and or strategic activities that result in improvements in the health and well-being of adolescents. As you can see partnerships play an important role in OAH's perspective on sustainability. Here you can see a list of the 8 sustainability factors that are highlighted throughout OAH's sustainability resources, create and action strategy, assess the environment, be adaptable, secure community support, integrate programs and services into local infrastructures, build a leadership team, create strategic partnerships, and diverse financial opportunities.

It can be helpful to think of sustainability as a rope. A rope is a bunch of strands that have been braided together. You might think that a single strand would be just as good as a bunch of strands as long as they're the same thickness. However, there are actually a number of benefits to having multiple strands in your rope. You might not realize it but there are a few lessons to be learned from mountain climbers that can assist with sustainability especially when it comes to how climbers rely on their ropes. As I just mentioned, braided ropes are preferred for a couple of reasons. One, if a single strand fails

on a rope, the rope remains intact, if that were to happen with a single strand rope, the failure could be catastrophic.

And two, a multiple stranded rope is generally more flexible than a single stranded rope. As you might imagine mountain climbers put a lot of thought into getting the right rope for a climb because they want a combination of strength and flexibility. No mountain climber would ever want to rely on a single stranded rope when dangling from a cliff. Similarly your organization should also seek to make sure that you achieve a sustainability plan that combines the strength and flexibility of all eight factors.

Our final mountain climbing lesson has to do with maintenance and care. Climbers take efforts to maintain their ropes in good condition in fact I doubt many of you didn't realize that climbers actually wash their ropes. Washing a rope helps to get abrasive dust out of the rope that could damage the strands and weaken the rope's integrity over time. Throughout the rest of this presentation, we'll focus specifically on how to maintain the strategic partnership strand of your sustainability rope. As I mentioned before we'll use what we know about healthy relationships to help us think about how to build and maintain healthy partnerships.

Here you can see a list of characteristics that experts that identified as important more healthy relationships and partnerships. As you can see the top five characteristics of each list are basically the same commitment, satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution, and trust. I would argue that the remaining three characteristics under healthy partnerships are also pretty similar to the healthy relationship characteristics in this box, interdependence, coordination, and formalization.

In order to take a closer look at these relationship characteristics I've actually taken a few questions that are sometimes used to assess the quality of romantic relationships. As we go through these questions what I would like for you to do is this of a partnership that your organization has developed. When I say partnership I'm referring to that far right category in the partnership continuum. If you don't think that any of the relationships that your organization currently has would qualify just think of a partnership that falls closest to the right hand side of the continuum. After each question, I'll ask you to rate the relationship.

Now if I can bring up that work sheet I asked you to download earlier, you'll be able to keep track of your answers. This activity can serve as a quick assessment of your partnership with this particular organization. You may come away with a couple of areas that you know you need to work on after this which will help you to develop a plan to strengthen the relationship. The work sheet also has a link to a few more comprehensive partnership assessments that you might like to use to get even more information.

So when thinking about a romantic relationship commitment refers to taking a long term perspective towards the relationship and having an intention to persevere when difficulties arise. When thinking about strategic partnership commitment referring to a future orientation in which partners attempt to build a relationship that with weather unanticipated problems. More committed partners will exert more effort and balance short term problems with long term goal achievement. Now I'd like you to take a moment to think about that partnership that you identified. How committed do you think your partner is to the relationship? Remember nobody will see your particular answers but this will give us a chance to see where everybody is. So I'm going to go ahead and open our first poll and you'll have about 15 to 20 seconds to

indicate your response then I will close the poll and we'll see where everybody feels like they are.

All right. Now I'm going to go ahead and close the poll and it looks like most of us feel pretty good about shared goals and common values with the partnerships that you're thinking about. In fact it looks like about three quarters say mostly or always you feel like you have shared goals and common values with your partners. And now I'm going to turn it over to (Sarah) real quickly. (Sarah) Could you briefly share with us a little bit about your experience with this topic in your own work?

(Sarah McQueen): Sure can you hear many?

(Brandon Stratford): Yes go ahead.

(Sarah McQueen): Okay I want to make sure with all the technical things. So here in San Diego we are working as a collaborative so we have five agencies that we consider our partner agencies to provide reducing the risk in schools and community based settings and I think the analogy to a relationship is so applicable because when we started you know your program four years ago, we looked at some of the main agencies across the county that we find of already either worked with or were familiar with and so we kind of already had some shared either history or at least knowledge of them and so I think that really laid ground work to be able to you know work with them on kind of building this program.

I think that that also allowed us to feel comfortable to know that we have those common goals and values because we already knew the work that they did in their communities. And I think that we were just very up front about you know what we were trying to accomplish with this five year grant and

really recognizing that for all of us it was actually a big shift to be providing you know pregnancy prevention services but also to be participating in a rigorous evaluation and that that provided some very real challenges to you know folks that were direct service providers that wanted to just provide the best care to every kid that we can and recognize that some kids might get randomized out and not receive the RTR curriculum and so we just kind of talked through those challenges as they came so that everybody you know still comfortable that kind of being able to frame it in a larger picture of what we were trying to do and accomplish by participating in this evaluation and we just really kept that as sort of an ongoing topic of discussion so that you know folks really felt like we could problem solve as needed but also stay connected to that larger goal.

And then I think- oh sorry.

(Brandon Stratford): No go ahead.

(Sarah McQueen): I was going to say I think you know we've also sort of seen the commitment and how important it's been over the whole life of the grant and especially now as we're thinking about sustainability planning. You know we're kind of revamping again in terms of really coming to the table and thinking about our commitment and you know what we're looking to do post year five of our grant.

(Brandon Stratford): Great so it sounds like for you a big part of the commitment process was to really be clear about what people should expect going into this kind of with their eyes wide open and say you know are you ready to go down this road with us. We're going to lay out what we think might happen we know we don't know everything that's going to happen but you know is this something you all can commit to.

(Sarah McQueen): Absolutely.

(Brandon Stratford): Great. Well thanks for sharing that. So another important component of a healthy relationship of any sort is satisfaction. For romantic relationships this refers to whether you as an age feel that the relationship is worth it. If you generally find you're wishing that you were not in the relationship then it probably isn't going very well. That doesn't mean that you should call it quits but it definitely means that you should consider making some changes.

Similarly for strategic partnerships you want to think about how happy you are with the results of the partnership. Is working with this particular partner organization more trouble than it's worth? Do you dread phone calls or meetings that involve this partner? Now think about that partnership that you identified for this activity and let's see where folks are on this one. So go ahead and indicate your response here. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?

All right I've going to give everybody just a couple more seconds and then I'm close up the poll. All right. So good news it seems like most of you are pretty satisfied with the relationships that you're thinking about. There are about 10% of you who are having some what looks like significant trouble with your satisfaction with this relationship which I said even with romantic relationships doesn't necessarily mean it's time to call it quits but it definitely points to kind of this need to step back and consider who's going well and who's not going well. And speaking of that, (Melissa) could you share with us a little bit about your experiences with this?

(Melissa Peskin): Sure. So here in Texas we are coordinating the implementation of (unintelligible) program on it's your gain keep it real program with ten school

districts in Harris County just to give you a little bit of context and so we have worked with schools for a long time like many of you all and we know that school districts they are our primary partner for our initiative and so we know that they are already overwhelmed with many tasks and activities that they need to complete and so it was really important for us for your partners to be satisfied with the relationship that they were having with UT and not to feel like we were asking them to take on additional tasks and responsibility without compensation.

And so to ensure satisfaction among the partners up front before they even got involve with the project we told them that we would be providing them with incentives and resources for their assistance and cooperation with activities. So we ensured them really clear in terms of when incentives would be delivered. So we told our partners ahead of time that we would tie incentives to the completion of certain deliverables like once they got their district approval, once they developed their implementation plan, once their teachers were trained. And then we also tied the dollar amount to the district school side so that the amount would be proportionate to the workload in a particular district.

So we have some really large school districts in fact one of them is one of the largest in the U.S. and then we also have some really districts and so we were able to tie the compensation to the number of teachers, the number of students that actually would be implementing the program.

And then we were not strict regarding how they could spend the money so we were very flexible in how the school district could allocate their funds. So I think up front just showing you know that we appreciated their work and we could provide additional compensation I think went a long way in helping to maintain satisfaction among all the partners and UT.

(Brandon Stratford): Great and I think that's actually an excellent point because it might have sounded a little bit like what I was talking is primarily how your organization is satisfied with the relationship but (Melissa) it sounds like you guys also did a lot of thinking about how satisfied your partners would be and what you could do to help maintain and increase satisfaction with the partnership.

(Melissa Peskin): Yes definitely.

(Brandon Stratford): Great. So moving right along as I'm sure you all know good communication is crucial for any relationship. For romantic relationships researchers note that it isn't necessarily the quantity of the communication that matters as much as the quality. Positive communication is respectful and has been characterized as involving compromise and humor.

For strategic partnerships it's a little different because both quality and quantity are important. The frequency of communication is particularly important. Unlike a married couple who lives together, strategic partners will not necessarily interact with one another on a regular basis, they're not sharing space. As a result, setting up regular systems of communication to facilitate the sharing of timely, accurate, and relevant information is key. Checking in on a regular basis and proactively seeking out your partner's feedback can help prevent minor problems from becoming larger issues later. So let's think back that partnership that you're keeping in mind and see how folks feel about communication.

So we'll go ahead and open the poll and give you a few seconds to respond. Do you feel that you and your partner communicate effectively? All right I'll just give you a couple of seconds more to log your response. And I'm going to go ahead and close it. So it looks like nobody marked always which is

probably pretty reasonable for most of us in our relationship across the board, but it also look like the vast majority of you feel like you're pretty good at communicating with each other all though there is about a quarter of us that are saying that we feel like we have somewhat effective communication with your partners.

So at this point I'm going to go ahead and ask (Sarah) if she could share a little about her experiences and talk specifically about the importance of communication.

(Sarah McQueen): Sure. You know I think sometimes it kind of seems like common sense but I just generally take the approach to over communicate and you know we have set up monthly you know meetings for our collaborative. I meet individually quarterly with the agencies and you know sometimes there's more or less to talk about but I think always having those structures in place that people know you know happened on the third Wednesday of every month is just really helpful to kind of make sure we have consistent communication.

And then I think just little things you know kind of like what (Melissa) was referring to in terms of just knowing how busy everyone is that I really try to do as much as I can to you know send out reminders, making sure that I have agendas, sending out minutes from the meetings as soon as possible and you know sometimes I struggle with trying to make sure I'm not being kind of sending out too much information but I think at the end of the day you know it's just very helpful for people to know they don't have to rely on something that we talked about at a meeting that they're going to get that in an email and they can always refer to that and so I think that also recognizing that you know people do have kind of different communication styles and that you don't want to just rely on you know only verbally communicating something that's really important to have these things written down to send them out in

emails and kind of just trying to cover all of your basis so that everybody is as connected as possible.

(Brandon Stratford): Great. I think that's a great point too about the medium of communication and writing things down because people are very busy and sometimes something that sounded important in a meeting doesn't get remembered quite the same way and so sending out something that is kind of documents helps everybody to have something to refer back to so that you know everybody can be on the same page about things.

(Sarah McQueen): Absolutely. And I think just trying to be you know as responsive to their needs as possible I know you know a lot of times I'm sort of the liaison between the agencies and our evaluators or the agencies and OAH and so I just you know always try to be mindful that their questions usually you know really impact their programs and the work that they're doing and so trying to be as responsive as possible and sometimes that has to include me saying you know I don't know when I'm going to get that information but I think at least being able to tell them that helps them plan you know as best they can.

(Brandon Stratford): Right. I think you know it's important timeliness and respect and you know part of respect is being able to own up to when you don't know something instead of you know giving information that you're thinking is correct and you know I think we all like to be able to answer people's questions and help them with their work but we also need to be respectful of the fact that when we don't know something we need to let folks know that as well.

(Sarah McQueen): Absolutely.

(Brandon Stratford): Great. So moving along. Our next question has to do with conflict resolution. Every significant relationship experience conflict and disagreements. If you're still at the coordination stage you may not necessarily but once you get started working together challenges are bound to come up. How you resolve those conflicts will have a significant impact not only on how you feel about the relationship but also on how productive it is.

For romantic relationships conflict resolution is the ability to address and resolve conflict in a way that does not undermine the relationship. Conflict resolution may involve successful problem solving, a respectful decision to agree to disagree, or acknowledgment that the source of the conflict is something external to the relationship.

It's important to note that conflict resolution includes the ability to address the conflict which means that partners will need to communicate with one another rather than ignoring the problem and hoping it re/KO*Fs itself. For strategic partnerships the same can be said. Successful partnerships are characterized by partners that are motivated to engage in joint problem solving. The use of persuasion rather than coercion or domination is important to successful conflict resolution between partners. Partners also use proactive techniques rather than ignoring or avoiding problems. Unaddressed tensioned between partners can lead to the downfall of a partnership.

So now let's take a look we'll consider this question about conflict resolution. I will go ahead and open up the poll. Do you feel that you and your partner respect one another's views and decisions even if you do not agree with one another? And we'll go ahead and give it about ten seconds more and then I'll close it up. All right. So it looks again like people feel pretty good about this. We have 16% who feel like there's some room to grow in terms of conflict resolution but a lot of people seem to feel pretty positive about their abilities

to resolve conflicts with their partners. And (Sarah) could you share a little bit with us about how conflict resolution has worked - has come into play in terms of your work.

(Sarah McQueen): Yes definitely. So when I started in the position the program had been going for about two years and so kind of in my first months there you know I just spent time meeting with each of our agencies, getting to know them and kind of their experience with the program, reviewing their contracts for that year, and there was one agency that is in a particularly conservative region of the county and they were just not able to get into the schools to provide a comprehensive sexual health curriculum.

And so their target numbers were not what we had expected because of that obstacle but I definitely encountered some challenges because they were kind of reporting to me that they had spoken with my predecessor and we just had very different ideas of what their target number of kids that they should serve for that year would be theirs being much less than what I thought and the problem was there was nothing written down. There was no - the contract hadn't changed, I couldn't find any documentation - they couldn't find any documentation to support that and it just presented a challenge because they were still receiving the same amount of funds but serving a lot less youth.

And so we just kind of met probably consistently for kind of two or three months in a row trying to figure out what we were going to do and you know it became very clear that they just wasn't reach that the target number I had in mind in that year and there really wasn't much that we could do about that and so we kind of chose to focus on when we were renewing the contract for the following year of being mindful of you know what their challenges were making their target number more in line with what the previous year had been and we actually put in a clause to say that if that at a certain time - if at a

certain point in the year they hadn't met a certain number of kids, we would actually reallocate some of their funds to an agency who was able to kind of over compensate which felt like a really good solution because we came up with it together and they recognized that you know it didn't make sense for them to receive the same amount of funds if they were serving a lot less kids. And so I think once we were able to kind of stop focusing on the current year and start focusing on the next year we kind of got over that hump and then throughout the process that program got a new manager and it was just really wonderful that everything was documented and written down and it just made the conversations so much easier with that new person.

(Brandon Stratford): Great so it sounds like you were able to follow a lot of those rules of conflict resolution and kind of coming to a solution focus sort of discussion rather than kind of trying to hash out who's to blame but kind of moving forward with a solution that everybody felt comfortable with.

(Sarah McQueen): Yes absolutely.

(Brandon Stratford): Okay so we are to our final question here. This one is also a very big one. Trust. So trust often comes as a result of time and experience so we might feel like it's something that will just happen on its own. However we do know some things about actions that would be considered trustworthy.

One of the most damaging things to a romantic relationship is actual or feared infidelity and as a result trust is really a corner stone to a healthy relationship. For strategic partnership trust referring generally to the belief that a party's word is reliable and that obligations will be fulfilled. So here for organizations the main thing is that both organizations need to believe that they're on the same page and that they can trust that the other organization is going to uphold their end of the bargain.

Interaction should really feel genuine so that you aren't left wondering about ulterior motives. So let's go ahead and so our last question poll here. Do you trust your partner to be share and truthful with you and I'll just give a couple more seconds. All right. So it looks like a good number of folks feel like mostly or always they can trust their partner to be fair and truthful. There's a few that have some concerns and again I think that that really is something that you know comes with time but we really also need to think about how we're interacting with others - with the other organizations to kind of set that up over time. And (Melissa) would you mind sharing a little bit about your experiences with how to develop trust with partners.

(Melissa Peskin): Sure. So as I mentioned before we're working with a large number of schools so ten school districts so over 80 schools. And so it's really important to us that not only can we trust our partners but that they also can trust us. And so we had a situation that came up a couple of years ago where we had another district who was actually not part of our initiative but they independently decided to implement the "it's your day" program.

And after the program was approved in their school district there was some controversy in that district regarding the content of the "it's your day" program and whether it was appropriate for the youth and so this created a lot of media attention and a lot of our districts who were participating expressed some concern and so it was really important for us to ensure that your existing OAH partners continued to trust us and ensuring to remind them and to assure them that "it's your day" was appropriate for the youth in their school.

And so really my example was more about sort of how we kind of maintain this trust and so what we did is we were just completely open. We opened up "it's your day" to all the school districts again, went to school health advisory

committee meetings, present to parents, I was representative and we shared the program. We even had school board members who went through the whole program again to review it again and we were just completely open in terms of our communication and this really helps to ensure that all the partners continue to trust us and so as a result we didn't have any of our partners leave the OAH initiative. So this was a really big kind of hiccup that happened during this implementation but I think as a result of our efforts in being open and honest and being willing to share we were able to maintain the trust that we had among all the partners.

(Brandon Stratford): Great. I think that's a - so how did you kind of come to the awareness that this was something that you really needed to do? Was it brought to you by folks in the school or was it a committee of folks who were kind of deciding...

(Melissa Peskin): Yes so it all started because someone from the school district that had decided independent to implement it had I guess they had received from training and so it sort of just an email from that school district and then it just sort of spread among all of the different school districts and so we had - because all of the school district people many of them know each other and so it just kind of spread and so people just started questioning you know what was in this program you know has been approved by their school district but they just felt like maybe they needed to review it again and we were just really open about you know what the program contained and you know try to alleviate any concerns that people were having.

(Brandon Stratford): Great. And I wanted to talk also a little bit about coordination. And I think that coordination in general is making sure that things get done and for romantic relationships coordination may have more to do with support for one another, you know when one partner is over loaded does the other help to pick

up the slack, do partners demonstrate appreciation for the help and support that they receive?

For strategic partnership, coordination is related to boundary definition and reflects the set of task that each party expects the other to perform. Coordinated actions directed at mutual objectives are hallmark of a healthy relationship and if rolls are unclear, tasks they not be accomplished on time leading to potential conflict and stress. Also partners should be willing to share knowledge and skills with one another and services accomplishing a task and appreciation should be expressed for a job well done. And I am going to move us along actually because due to our logistical problems getting started, are running short on time. We're already to three o'clock. So I am going to go ahead and move on to discuss a little bit about the common challenges so that we can finish up. We're going to run a little bit late so I apologize for folks who might have to jump off at three.

And in order to kind of look a little more at where people are finding challenges I am going to bring up a poll for us to complete so if you all could take a look at this poll. What is your biggest challenge with partnerships? Conflict, over goals and objectives, allocation of resources, accountability which kind of talks to that coordination piece that I just brought up, cultural differences, and power issues. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to give you guys a little bit more time with this one because I'm just going to jump to the one or two challenges that you all indicate are your biggest challenges and we'll just focus on those. And the slides will be available probably sometime next week for people to kind of review. So we'll just focus on the ones that people seem to be having the most trouble with.

And it looks like accountability and allocation of resources. So I'm going to give just a couple more seconds left in case that isn't one of the ones that you

find to be the most challenging. You can still get your response in, and all right. So we will talk a little bit about allocation of resources and also accountability and then we'll just move into some of our solutions for what we can do to maintain positive relationships with your strategic partners. So here we see the list of common challenges, conflict over goals and objectives, allocation of resources. So allocation of resources this is an issue as we just saw that come out pretty frequently, and while money is probably the first resource that comes to mind for a lot of people there are other resources that can also cause tension. For example, you may need a certain amount of class time to deliver your curriculum or access to particular technology such as video projection equipment. Schools may not be aware of your time or equipment needs or may be unable to fulfill them in which case they may expect you to make some modifications that you think would impact program fidelity.

And these sorts of mismatches can definitely cause some significant tension in terms of being able to complete and I think as (Sarah) was mentioned as well you know people can have difficulty even getting started, getting into the schools. So allocation of resources is definitely something that comes up a lot and accountability is the other one I think that people were primarily pointing out and so this was generally comes up when one partner doesn't feel that the other is meeting their responsibilities.

For example, and again this also goes back to kind of (Sarah's) example that you know if you think that your partner is supposed to be completing certain things and then you find out they're not, you realize that you know your goals aren't going to be accomplished. On the flip side sometimes those partners also feel like maybe they haven't received enough training or support from you either and so I think accountability we you know as we see the picture here can go both ways. And so we really need to understand that times we're

going to have to kind of talk things out and really figure out you know what is the solution focused sort of way to address that.

And for the sake of time we'll go ahead and move along to some strategies to achieve strong partnership and address these issues that come up. And so to keep things simple we boiled it down to four Cs, connect, clarify goals, and clarify roles, and of course communicate, communicate, communicate. So these can be considered as a sequence of steps to ensure that you develop a healthy relationship from the beginning but you can always go back to them whenever you run into a challenge and in fact as we've heard throughout communication is really something that we need to know how to do well from you know all throughout.

So just like with dating the first step is to get to know your partner. As we noted previously commitment is a key characteristic of a healthy relationship, but you don't want to jump into a committed relationship without taking the time to learn about each other. When it comes to strategic partnerships you need to understand what their organization. What are they good at? Presumably you already know something about what they do or you wouldn't be looking to partner with them but try and get to know what they do beyond the things that are directly relevant to you. This will be helpful when it comes time to clarify roles and assign tasks.

Getting to know what they do and who their key staff are will also help you to understand what their motivation might be for partnering with you which will help when it is time to clarify goals. Finally you should do your best to understand who holds the decision making authority. If most of the planning is being done among people with little authority to put plans into action, it's not likely to get done. While this step can set the stage for a successful

partnership you might also need to go back and reconnect from time to time especially when there are staffing changes.

As dating relationships get more serious conversations move from getting to know one another to defining mutual interest and dreams. Do you want to have kids, how close do you want to live to family? For strategic partnership, the same is true. If you've taken the time to get to know one another then you should be able to identify areas of common interest which will help to strengthen the commitment to the partnership. For example, you may both be looking to increase your work with a particular target population or to work on an area of common interest.

As we noted before, conflict over goals and objectives can be a significant challenge. It's also possible and in fact likely that things will come up throughout the course of the partnership that might require you to reassess things. Developing clear decision making processes will make such decisions a lot easier. When couples move in together there's always a process of identifying roles and responsibilities. Who will do most of the cooking? Who prefers laundry? Who should definitely not be responsible for paying the bills? If one person is an extraordinary cook it may make sense for them to do most of the cooking in which case the other person might do the dishes. However, when roles are not clearly defined or when efforts aren't acknowledged and appreciated, trouble can ensue and the person who is always doing the cooking or laundry can begin to feel resentful.

In a similar way it's important for strategic partners to clearly outline who will be responsible for what. It can be very frustrating going to a meeting to discuss how a particular task is progressing only to find out that each partner thought the other was in charge of that task. We noted earlier that trust and interdependence are characteristics of a healthy relationship but they're most

likely to occur when you've taken the time to assign roles and responsibilities based on expertise and allocate resources based on what is necessary to accomplish a given task so that everyone can fulfill their end of the bargain.

Sharing relevant expertise and information can also help to build trust as does acknowledging the efforts and expertise of your partners on a regular basis. As with romantic relationships, you should assume that there will be challenges in any strategic partnership. Developing a system to monitor and evaluate the results of your common efforts on a regular basis will allow you to identify challenges early on rather than being caught off guard later which often leads to a tendency to place blame.

In fact, it's important to establish a collaborative problem solving process from the beginning to ensure a culture of openness in which the goal is to solve the problem rather than to place blame. Having transparent processes related to monitoring and evaluation makes coordination much easier. And in the same way that many people seek to formalize romantic relationships with some sort of ceremony, it's also important to formalize your strategic partnership agreements.

Of course if you develop your agreement without first getting to know one another, the chances that both partners will remain committed to the partnership in the face of adversity are pretty slim. And finally we're coming to a theme that we heard kind of throughout from both (Melissa) and (Sarah), the importance of communication. So communication is probably the most critical aspect of any relationship. In a sense, communication is the currency of a relationship, exchanging information builds trust, reinforces commitment, increases satisfaction, and ensures that conflicts can be resolved respectfully.

Communication is also crucial for coordination of efforts. All of this allows partners to feel increasingly comfortable with their interdependence which makes it more likely that the relationship will help each organization take full advantage of the partnership rather than feeling like the partnership is draining resources. Good communication should be relevant and timely. Don't wait until the last minute to inform your partner of something that's likely impact your joint ventures.

On the other hand, most of us don't want to sit through 15 minutes of a conference call where each organization shares interesting but largely irrelevant information about completely unrelated topics. As I mentioned before, communication should be proactive. Check in about progress on a regular basis. Don't wait for the quarterly meeting to bring up concerns. Also don't wait to praise your partner's efforts for a job well done.

Finally make sure you have a system in place to resolve conflicts openly if this is a problem you might want to bring in a third party but generally communicating concerns early and in a respectful manner and taking a solution focused approach rather than seeking to assign blame will go a long way. All right: so I should point out here that these different strategies that we've talked about were kind of presented as steps in a sequence as if they were some order to them, and to some degree there is an order but in reality what you'll find is that achieving a strong partnership is much more of a dance.

You'll take some steps forward, you'll take some steps back, you might step on some toes or have your on toes smashed a few times tend to happen less when you're paying careful attention to one another and it also tends to happen less as you spend more time dancing together. You'll probably notice that some partners are better at certain dances than others, and you might find

that there are times when you need to find a new dance partner all together. However, before you dump your dance partner you might want to figure out which steps are most problematic and focus on improving those. Hopefully the information presented in this Webinar will help you do just that. And we're going to go ahead and I'll kind of pass through this one really quickly because I want to get to some resources that are available here. Some of you might have actually explored up there in the hand out section there were more files there than just the worksheet.

So this presentation was intended reinforce the importance of spending time and effort on developing and maintaining strategic partnerships. Hopefully you're motivated to go out and do a more formal assessment now that we've talked a little bit more about how important it is. And to help you do that I've included a few additional resources that you can use to guide your own organization's process. So one of the things up in the hand out section comes from the offense of Head Start, and it's basically ten page checklist that covers things like planning and developing a partnership, communicating, decision making and negotiating, managing the partnership, leading the partnership, assessing and stipulating continual improvement of the partnership and just general partnering with the greater community. So that one is just kind of a ten page checklist.

The next one that I want to talk about actually comes from the CDC and it's a much larger document that really provides a set of recommendations for how to do a partnership evaluation. It talks about annual assessments, basic assessments which kind of build on the annual assessment and focus a lot on processes and also what they all enhanced assessments which focus more on outcomes as well. And finally I also included a resource from the UK. This is another sort of checklist but it kind of combines the checklist with more information about how to use the checklist and how to set up and evaluation

or assessment of your partnerships and they focus on six principles of partnerships, recognizing and accepting the need for partnerships, developing clarity and realism about the purpose of your partnership, ensuring commitment and ownership, developing and maintaining trust, creating clear and robust partnership agreements, and monitoring, measuring, and learning. So those are just a couple of different resources that you can take a look at and it'll give you a bit more in-depth understanding of some questions you need to ask and some processes that you might want to use to really assess your partnerships.

I know a number of you work with schools so I also included links to a few different resources there. This top one that comes from the CDC and the National Association of State Boards of Education is actually called how schools work and how best to work with schools, and it's also up in the hand out section so you can go ahead and download that. And then I also have a link here to a Webinar that was produced by the national campaign to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancies, and that talks more about working with schools to implement evidence based programs, and it sounds like a lot of you do that kind of work.

So you can go ahead and check that out and also of course OAH, the Office of Adolescent Health has done a stellar job of putting together a number of resources in the resource center. This top link goes to section of the web site that talks about collaborations and I'll bring that up so you can see. There are a number of different resources on this page that you can go ahead and check out. And then also I wanted to point to point out that the Office of Adolescent Health has developed a collaboration toolkit that has a lot more information and about how you can go about developing partnerships. And as always your feedback is appreciated. So I'm going to go ahead and put up the feedback slide here and ask that before you leave us, if you could go ahead and click on

that next box and full out that survey, and while people are doing that I would actually love if (Sarah) and (Melissa) could share a little bit you know we talked about some ways to overcome challenges, the importance of connecting with your partners, figuring out what the goals are, what everybody's role is going to be, and the importance of communication. And we talked a lot about communication but I'm wondering if you all could just talk briefly about the role that clarifying goals and clarifying roles has played in your partnerships.

(Sarah McQueen): Sure this is (Sarah). I can just speak quickly to one thing that we found to be very helpful is really trying to be responsive to sort of if needs and the feedback that we've gotten from our partners and so recognizing that you know things kind of need and needed to change over the life of this grant and so at the beginning stages you know we met monthly and we had a separate meeting for our educators and then a separate meeting for our program managers and as you know things kind of got a little bit smoother and sort of they got their relationships established with their schools we just kind of recognized that maybe we don't need to meet every month and so we moved it to meeting every other month.

Then we recognized that it made more sense to just have one meeting so that everybody could hear the same information and so I think we've just had you know a couple of instances of really being able to hear that feedback from our partners because like you said, we want to respect their time and we want to make sure the time that we have is effective with each other. And then kind of now at this point, now that we're starting to really work on our sustainability plan through the smaller portion of us that are meeting more frequently and so I think you in the same way that kind of relationship needs change over time, the same is true for strategic partnerships.

(Brandon Stratford): (Melissa) did you have any last words for everyone?

(Melissa Peskin): Sure. I'll just add briefly just that you know we work with such a large number school districts that one of the things that's really worked well to help facilitate our partnerships is really to bring them together quarterly so we have someone identified from each district, the district coordinator and all of them come together quarterly and it's just a place where we can bring all of them together so that they can really feel connected to the larger initiative.

We know that schools always like to learn from each other and what's working and what's not working and so it's a really a place where they can share their challenges and successes, and it's also really good place that we can clarify goals and clarify expectations. And so I will just say that this particular feature of our project has been really, really beneficial in helping to get the program implemented in the schools.

(Brandon Stratford): Well I want to thank both of you for taking the time to share your experiences with the rest of us, and I want to thank everyone who was able to join us today for your time. So go and check out those resources and please make sure to fill out the feedback survey before you leave and have a great rest of your week.

Coordinator: Thank you for joining us. This concludes the conference call, all parties may disconnect at this time. Leaders please stand by for the post conference.

END