

Partnerships

Just as effective working relationships within the staff team are key to the success of the UBC Learning Exchange, so are effective working relationships with others. We work collaboratively with many other units within the university and many organizations in the community. The success of these relationships rests on the cultivation of TRUST, just as our internal relationships do.

In the course of our work, Learning Exchange staff have identified several guidelines for effective partnerships with others. These can be categorized either as concrete behaviours or as more abstract attitudes, values, or beliefs. These key guidelines are:

GUIDELINES FOR BEHAVIOURS:

1. Carefully plan and organize your work together. Put the plan and any associated agreements in writing.
2. Know what the shared priorities are and use them as a reference point.
3. Explicitly identify the benefits each partner gets from the relationship.
4. Clarify roles and responsibilities.
5. Balance process and product. Aim to create a harmonious, enjoyable process where people learn together and at the same time as achieving outcomes that are important.
6. Listen.
7. Communicate with others in the partnership network about what is happening and what is being achieved. This includes people at different levels of the hierarchy of your unit and partner organizations or units. Use stories and experiences as well as numbers. People are informed by quantitative data and look for it when making decisions but people are moved to act when they identify with stories.
8. Be enthusiastic. Have fun. Keep your sense of humour.
9. Negotiate, compromise, cooperate.
10. Commit to working through difficulties.
11. Be empathetic and supportive of your colleagues.
12. Learn and teach by example.
13. Return phone calls and emails. Be punctual. Meet deadlines.
14. Be mindful of language, tone, and intention when sending emails. Never hit the "send" button when you are upset. Remember that e-mails, once sent can easily be distributed to others.

ATTITUDES, VALUES AND BELIEFS:

1. Freedom and responsibility should be balanced.
2. Autonomy and interdependence should be balanced.
3. All people are worthy of profound respect, even reverence.
4. Solutions to problems should not be imposed from outside.
5. Relationships among diverse people and groups create new synergies and creative ideas.
6. Initiatives that are created collaboratively are more likely to create shared ownership and are more likely to be sustainable.
7. Discomfort is part of learning.
8. Learning requires courage.

FACING CHALLENGES:

In any partnership there will inevitably be times when difficulties arise. When you or your team is facing challenges in your working relationships consider these guidelines:

1. Put yourself in the others' shoes. What is their perspective?
2. Do not make assumptions. Be clear about everyone's expectations.
3. Find out what the priorities, interests and investments of others are. What is motivating them? To what extent is there buy-in to shared goals? How much shared accountability is there?
4. Be pragmatic. What is do-able under the circumstances?
5. Be aware of the constraints others face, including constraints on resources such as time, money, and person-power.
6. Do not fight battles you cannot win. Choose where to put your energy.
7. Consider the desired outcomes. Where are we going and why?
8. Revisit the original vision or shared interest in the project. Use shared goals or mutual benefits as grounding places.
9. Use e-mail to clarify or confirm concrete things like meeting times, but **DO NOT** use email to try to sort out misunderstandings or other difficulties in relationships. E-mail is too prone to misinterpretation. Think about how easy it is to hit the send button and how impossible it is to get messages back. Use the phone or set up a personal meeting when a difficulty arises.