



Objective: Develop and nurture partnerships with organizations representing or affiliated with diverse communities.

Implementing diversity and inclusion successfully means engaging and creating relationships with organizations and communities that work with diverse populations. Without expanding into unfamiliar territory and working with organizations who are experts in this area, the AUCD network will not know what is, or who are, in the communities that may be essential to the understanding and expansion of the individuals and communities served.

The Office of Minority Health, Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (CLAS Standards), Standard 13 reinforces this objective stating: “Community partnerships are an essential component in the provision of cultural and linguistic competency. Only through meaningful community partnerships can an organization truly understand the individual needs of the diverse population it serves, appropriately allocate resources, and develop an accountable system that provides equitable culturally and linguistically appropriate care and services (Douglas et al., 2009; Wu & Martinez, 2006).

Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., et. al (2008, p. 7) describe some of the essential elements to establishing these partnerships:

It involves “building authentic partnerships, including mutual respect and active, inclusive participation; power sharing and equity; mutual benefit or finding the ‘win-win’ possibility” in the collaborative project. The emphasis on community engagement promotes a focus on common ground and recognizes that communities have important knowledge and valuable experience to add to public stakeholder discussions.

Nearly every contributor to this Toolkit, including the federal partners who provided funding, emphasized the need to develop partnerships with organizations representing a range of diversity within communities. A range of strategies and resources are provided to enhance work in this area.

Strategies:

1. Create relationships outside of traditional partners, including criminal justice, military, arts, civic, civil rights, refugee, community planning/action, ethnic-specific Chambers of Commerce, health, mental health, outreach clinics, ethnic-specific advocacy groups, sororities and fraternities, ethnic-specific professional associations, social justice organizations, immigrant rights organizations, and other groups tasked with serving diverse communities. Networking with cross-silo cultural and linguistic competence initiatives connects to others who may serve

as resources for AIDD/AUCD/UCEDD/LEND work, helps other “mainstream” human services see the ways cultural and linguistic competence issues play out in disability services, and helps those mainstream organizations recognize the ways that disability is also a diversity and inclusion issue.

2. Participate in activities and events with diverse organizations and communities to build rapport and meet them on their turf. This shows respect and humility. Expand your “collective intelligence” and cultivate a cross-influence and -action relationship with community leaders from diverse cultural groups.
3. Reputation matters. People you connect with will tell others about their experiences, good or bad. Interact with a humble mindset and a desire to learn, rather than as an expert who will tell others how to do things. Admit what is unknown about a culture or language and ask for assistance. Listen. Learn. Make no assumptions.
4. Provide various ways for community members to give feedback and suggestions.
5. Identify external organizations with common goals; form collaborative partnerships to enhance each other’s work toward common goals.
6. Contact people personally, using as much connection as possible (ex: in-person preferred over phone, Skype preferred over email, physical presence at community meetings rather than a survey link) to enhance relationships. Be aware that physical accessibility or chemical sensitivity may impact someone’s ability to be physically present, so be sure to check in with people about the best way to communicate and/or be present with them, and honor their choices.
7. Bring in experts from diverse community/advocacy groups, or send staff to unique conferences, to help inform team in areas where further awareness is needed. Additionally, invite these experts to join your committee on diversity, inclusion, and cultural and linguistic competence.
8. Be aware of the important tension and balance between identifying with a community and labeling people within a community. Attend carefully to language used within communities, as these are cues to values and priorities.
9. Ensure clear expectations for action following every conference or meeting with community stakeholders, and in every collaboration. Develop action items at the end of each meeting, or within 24-48 hours afterward. This will ensure talk is followed by action. Follow-up builds trust.
10. Learn about the historical trauma suffered by community groups. Know about unethical research conducted with state and national and international groups. Build/rebuild trust with communities. Be aware that universities/ hospitals/ governments have been responsible for unethical research and experimentation with underrepresented groups so relationships may need rebuilding. Learning about trauma experiences can be difficult, traumatizing, or re-traumatizing. Build self-care and safe spaces into these learning opportunities.
11. Be aware of body language that conveys respect and affirmatively engages in the culture of the person or community you are partnering with. Eye contact, smiling, handshakes, and the like differ across cultures.
12. After relationships are established, create opportunities to educate community organizations on the purpose of UCEDD/LEND programs and available services and supports in a manner that responds to the needs and values of those communities. These conversations can arise organically out of an effort to learn and be educated.

13. Ensure that community partners are true partners, and not just people to turn to when advice is needed on certain issues, or a letter of support is needed for a grant application. Invite partners to give input on all organizational activities via roles on Board of Directors, advisory groups, and other means.
14. Remember the importance of celebrations as a tool of partnership and collaboration, so that initiatives and successes are not only publicized but people can also gather to celebrate, preferably with food involved. Breaking bread together enhances cross-cultural dialogue. It is another form of gathering around a table.
15. Develop partnerships with community-based organizations in ways that enhance the resources and activities of those organizations, and build trust.
16. Provide resources on translation, interpretation and cultural brokering to the direct support professional community and people with disabilities.
17. Spend time in communities, listening and building relationships. Identify the trusted leaders within the community (formal and informal leaders by position or influence), and identify future leaders as well. Remain engaged even when funding opportunities are absent or have ended.
18. Look carefully at how advocacy and advisory groups are used. Ask whether they are being used to fulfill a federal requirement for input? Truly listen to priorities of advocacy groups and advisory members (including but not limited to self-advocacy groups and the Consumer Advisory Councils (CACs)), and work those priorities into Center/Program projects in a collaborative manner.
19. Support bridge-building between advocacy groups where intersectionality exists. For example, self-advocacy groups for people with intellectual disability and LGBT advocacy groups may prove worthy partners in support of people who experience both identities.
20. Create partnerships with other projects, committees, and departments (including cultural studies and language departments) within the University addressing diversity, inclusion, and cultural and linguistic competence.
21. Develop listening sessions within direct support professional (DSP) community, as DSPs are increasingly from many minority and ethnic communities, to identify what they may need, what gifts they bring to their roles, and their advice related to collaborating with the cultural communities they represent. A direct support staff person may be a leader within a particular community or know who the leaders are, as well as have knowledge about how/if disability is discussed and addressed.
22. Engage in a community needs assessment process to identify gaps your program could fill and see which groups are not accessing your services.
23. Create products reflecting the content of community meetings and conversations; disseminate broadly within the community so people see their voices and contributions making an impact.
24. After a trusting relationship is established and with permission, advocate with community-based organizations. Offer to join with them in their advocacy and grant-writing efforts, introduce them to key folks, etc. Offer training to build capacity in grantwriting and/or advocacy to build capacity and inform policymakers of their needs.
25. Join the Regional Health Equity Council.

26. Reach out to recipients of NIDILRR field-initiated grants addressing diversity and inclusion for information and potential partnership.
27. Advocate with State or Territory agencies and partners to help all see value of this work. Support their efforts in this area and be a resource where needed. Invite members of diverse communities to key meetings and broker introductions with State or Territory personnel, to benefit both State or Territory agencies and community organizations.