

# Developing Community Partnerships – Transcript

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**Power Point Presentation:** [www.ed.uiuc.edu/illinoisrcep/activities/teleconf.htm](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/illinoisrcep/activities/teleconf.htm)

**Lynda Leach, Facilitator:** Welcome! I am Lynda Leach at the University of Illinois and this is our monthly RSA Region V CRC-RCEP teleconference. Today Laura Ritterbush will be talking about “Developing Community Partnerships.”

**Laura Ritterbush:** Thanks Lynda. I’m excited to be here with everyone. For me, teleconferences are always a little strange because I can’t see the audience. I would appreciate any questions you might have at the end of the presentation. I have been in the field for over ten years and have been a director in management as well a job development. I have developed several partnerships during that time and will be using some of those examples throughout the presentation. If you have the PowerPoint’s please follow along. I’ll be talking from these PowerPoint slides and also adding to them. So, let’s just jump right into it.

Let’s just start with the first slide—What are partnerships? I have a quote from Arthur Kemlman that defines partnerships – “Where each organization wants to help partners become better at what they do.” A true partnership is not a competition, but a way to help each other improve services. This is something we’ll discuss again in later slides, but it’s the willingness to look at making changes in your organization instead of preserving the status quo. So, when you’re looking to collaborate or develop those partnerships you are typically also looking at how you can improve your services by joining a partnership.

Moving onto the next slide—Why do you want to? No agency has all the needed resources to plan and provide comprehensive services for people with disabilities. I see agencies that are trying to become everything for everyone and services typically suffer. It’s hard to excel in all those areas of needs for people with disabilities. We normally have an expertise area that we have and we need to draw in other partners with other expertise to have a well-rounded program. Partnerships also create new funding possibilities. Also, creative solutions will present themselves when other people are involved. When you brainstorm ideas, the more people you have, the more ideas you’re going to get with usually better outcomes. If you partner with other people, other possibilities will be presented and allow more

creativity. I know many organizations have partnered with One-Step Centers and were able to draw down grant dollars that would not have been available to them without that partnership. To browse grant opportunities I often check the *Federal Register* online.

The next slide—The purpose of partnerships—we need to remember the real reason we form partnerships is to improve services for individuals with disabilities in reaching their goals. In order to better assist them we need the second purpose that is listed—”To improve the capacity of community rehabilitation providers and communities to provide services and resources that enhance quality of life for people with disabilities.” For many of us on this teleconferences, that means impacting the outcomes of employment. There may be other outcomes as well such as housing or stability with social security. It’s really looking at enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities through partnerships.

Next we’re going to be talking about the main focus of this presentation—the continuum of partnerships. Partnerships really move along four different levels—networking, coordinating, cooperating, and collaborating. We are going to look at each one of those and then toward the end we will also be discussing interagency agreements and what may be included in these more formal documents. We will also be focusing on the collaborating piece. So the first part of the continuum is “networking.” That is basically just the exchange of information for mutual benefit. This could be sharing information with each other about specific disabilities and educating each other on how it affects individuals, or maybe you’re sharing job development ideas. Anything that would help each other out, but you don’t make any changes to either organization on how you do things based upon that information. It’s just networking. It’s the easiest thing to do.

The next step is coordinating. This is also the exchange of information. Now, you begin to alter your activities for mutual benefit to achieve a common purpose. So you can see coordinating the relationship begins to get a little bit more involved.

One example of this could be a new employer is coming into town. This employer is going to employ a large number of people. Instead of all the community rehabilitation providers going separately to do their pitch, you just decide to come together to make a pitch to this employer so you have a common purpose, which is to help individuals with disabilities get hired by this new employer. The activities that you may be altering might be your style of job development. So you’re going to be sharing that information and then developing a more cohesive way of presenting that information. You will be altering some of your activities. Hopefully that makes sense to everyone. If you have any questions please e-mail those to Lynda or wait until the end.

After coordinating, there is cooperating. You’ll see with each level there is a little bit more risk involved for people. So in cooperating, you are doing the same thing as coordinating, but now you’re starting to share resources. We all know how tight resources are among community rehabilitation providers. When you get to this point there is a trust factor of “Is it worth putting the money or resources into this effort?” If you continue with the example we were just using, with service providers who are doing job development for that employer, perhaps they also decide to not only present information together, but to develop material for a cohesive presentation. Each need to contribute money and time to develop and print the materials. When you get to that point, it’s going to take a lot more time and work and you’re beginning to share more and have more trust with the other cooperating organizations.

The next step is the ultimate step—collaborating. This is where each organization wants to help its partner become better at what they do. This is what we talked about earlier. Now, you're sharing the risks, responsibilities, and rewards. These all contribute to helping each other achieve a common purpose. Next these two or three organizations might decide to pursue a grant together. So in taking on the endeavor they must share their risks of staff being involved from all agencies and each one gives up a little control. I'll talk a little bit about that and some of the partnerships I've done. They may develop a shared training program to benefit all staff from the agencies. They could also share in the investment of time and staff to develop a grant proposal. Of course, if they receive it they will both probably have some financial contribution, but they also would both receive the awards and the benefits of those grant fundings. Once you receive the grant award you also have to continue working on that grant.

You can see that the collaboration part is a lot of work and takes a great deal of trust. A simple project can take months to put together. The largest investment in collaboration is the upfront time it takes to develop. That's what we're going to be concentrating on—collaboration itself. What are some different pieces of it and how do you make it work the best? Slide number ten shows the structure, authority, and accountability. These can really be sticky issues in working together as an organization. The authority over staff and the dollars – how has that worked out? Accountability—What if someone didn't do as they say they were going to do? How do we hold that person accountable? How does that work? What is the structure of this new group of people working together? Is there a hierarchy in it? Who do we go to if we have complaints? There are a lot of other questions to answer. Structure needs to be in place when you're on the level of collaboration. What makes collaboration work? Here are some elements that make for a successful collaboration

The first—mutual respect, understanding, and trust. That's a real foundation and it needs to be there. If you don't respect the other people around the table it's going to be very hard to trust them and to have an understanding attitude toward them. Members of the team should reflect all parties who are going to implement the plan and reflect all who are going to be impacted. If we are working with people with disabilities, they need to be involved in the planning process as well. How you decide to implement this program impacts how they are going to receive their services. So should they have a say in it as well? So you need to make sure you have a very diverse membership and it includes everyone.

We need to have open and frequent communication. A lot of times when I go to a meeting, we set our next agenda date, and nothing happens in between. So I would be thinking, "I wonder if they are doing their action stuff, I have mine done, I wonder if this decision has been made?" Open and frequent communication such as e-mail is great. It is necessary to ensure partners are updated on progress and outcomes. Everyone then sees that things are happening and moving forward.

The next is sufficient funds and that is always the issue especially when you're dealing with non-profits. How do we have the funding to invest? Again, the *Federal Register* and other grant announcements would be worthwhile. For example if you identify that there is a prison in the next community and we get a lot of those people coming to this community and that needs services for individuals with disabilities, we might need a re-entry type program. There might be some other financial resources out there. A lot of times when you're looking for grants, people just look to disability grants. Real

opportunities are also under other areas such as the justice system. They're looking for people to get employed when they reenter the communities so why not partner with them? Your expertise of working with those people with disabilities, whether it be mental illness or a developmental disability can be very beneficial.

The next one is a skilled facilitator, or leader. This person must make the team feel very comfortable, needs to stay positive, and needs to allow everyone the chance to be heard. That means, if you are in the first meeting and someone has not spoken up the whole time, the leader needs to draw that person out and makes sure all opinions are heard. The worst thing that could happen is that the team makes a decision and that person who never spoke up says, "Well you all didn't even care about my opinion." In order to stop some of those things, you need to make sure everyone's opinion is heard and that you're soliciting that information.

The other thing that the leader needs to do is help everyone stay on task. That can be a very big frustration point for people who have a very tight schedule. The facilitator/leader needs to be strong enough to pull the group together and say, "That's an important issue, but that's not what this meeting is about." The facilitator also needs to help the team come to consensus or agreement when they get to the point of making a decision. This person needs to be a peacemaker. Obviously, there are going to be some differences of opinion. Counseling skills are great to use at this point—the listening and the repeating to people what you thought they said so that they understand. Sometimes people are saying the same things, but they are saying it differently and they are not hearing each other. A facilitator needs to be one who can listen to everyone and say "This is what I think I hear you're saying," and "Does this make sense?" Then, more people will be able to join in and agree with that.

Members also need to share a stake in the process and the outcome. The last piece is the critical one—the history of collaboration and cooperation in the community. If your partners have never partnered before, even with cooperating or networking or even some of those basics, it's going to be a very difficult road. So, most organizations cannot just end up collaborating together without first cooperating or working on a smaller scale together. Sometimes getting to that ultimate last step of collaboration may take some smaller steps first to make sure your organization can work well together.

Moving onto the next slide—What inhibits the success of collaboration? There are several things that can really be hampering the process. The first one is a lack of understanding of other agencies' policies. It can be easy to get frustrated by someone's apparent unwillingness to help with finances or to move quickly through their system so they can receive services. If we take time to get to know the other agencies' policies we may find that they do have constraints on them by other entities or regulations. Always have an open mind and remember to stay positive in dealing with some of those issues.

Another one is a lack of communication among service providers. We're used to doing our own thing in our organizations. When you're collaborating it is important to check back with the other members to get agreement for any new actions or to report back on activities you were assigned. I talked about that before, if in between meetings you accomplish something, e-mail the group and say "Hey, I got this done." The difference there is that you are making sure the group is at the same place. You cannot charge ahead if other people are not ready.

Another one is a lack of time for collaborative efforts. Collaborating is an investment. It takes a lot of time and effort and collaboration doesn't occur after just one or two meetings. A lot of times, it can take years of planning and fine tuning. When you get into it, you have to make the commitment.

The last one I listed on this slide is "Unclear goals and objectives." Without clear goals and objectives people do not know when or how to reach the desired outcome. We all know how easy it is to get off task during a meeting. Goals and objectives provide a clear path for everyone to follow. One that really can help is to have a flip chart on the wall that clearly states your goals and objectives. If someone starts going off task, instead of having them feel like you're the bad guy you can just point to that and say, "Here is what we are supposed to be doing. Can we table that for another time so we can accomplish our goals and objectives?" It's really important to keep that in front of people.

Other inhibitors, the next slide—"Excessive use of jargon." I don't know how many times I have sat in meetings and heard way too many acronyms and words that other people are not going to understand who are outside of the disability system. When I've gone to meetings of providers who are not in the disability system and they start talking about their services and their language, it's like a foreign language to me. So it is very important to make sure you cut out the jargon and you talk in normal terms and actually explain what you're talking about instead of using a shorter term for it or using an acronym. You want to make sure people are clear about what is being said. You may even want each organization to develop some sort of cheat sheet and say, "Here are our acronyms and here is what they mean." That often will be helpful in sharing information.

Also—inconsistent service standards. Every organization has a level of standards. In order to work effectively together, your organization standards need to be fairly well in line with each other. For instance, if your standard is that nobody should have to wait for their intake appointment for more than two weeks and your partner has people waiting for an average of six weeks, that's going to be a problem when you start to deliver services. People are not going to be getting consistent services across the two agencies. You want to make sure that your standards are brought into alignment. When you collaborate you are going to add a new level of bureaucracy to your work. It is important to take time to understand other agencies' hierarchy, protocols, procedures, etc. This investment in time will assist you in working more effectively with them. You really want to make sure there are no misunderstandings.

It is also imperative that partners build ground rules that they will use as they function as a team. One important rule is decision making. Everyone needs to know how decisions are going to be made. If people are not happy with the decision they may not want to collaborate. You need to make sure everyone is in consensus.

Time is always an issue in working on a team. Again, one crucial thing that I have about time is when I facilitate a meeting, if it's going to start at two, we're going to start at two. If we're going to end at three, we're going to end at three. You need to respect everyone's time.

Lastly, resistance to change may be a problem for some agency members. A lot of agency staff are not always used to collaborating with others, especially people who have been working in the field for a long time. Some people don't see the benefit and thus have to be educated and encouraged. I want to

key in on “encouragement.” A lot of times we feel like we’re butting our heads against the wall when we’re trying to get someone to change. The best way to do that is through education and encouragement. Continue to encourage and educate them and they will come along. Of course, we always need to have a smile on our face and a positive attitude.

For equal partnerships—How do you achieve equality when you’re collaborating so that one agency doesn’t seem to be in charge of everything? People worry about that. All team members should be treated with respect and all should feel comfortable communicating their ideas and concerns. This includes people with disabilities and their families who are key team members. It is best to bring on all members at the same time, if possible. When teams start together, they develop the ground rules from the beginning, everyone is on the same page, and you’re all learning at the same rate.

You want a consistent membership. If an agency is always sending a different person to the team meetings they’re not going to gel very well and they are also not going to know exactly what happened at the last meeting. We all know that meeting minutes don’t always do justice to what happened. So, you want to keep it as consistent as possible and try to have everyone on early in the process. Again, this slide focuses on the jargon and the acronyms. Remember we need to really watch ourselves when we talk about our services. Again, the last part is to always use consensus when making decisions. If this is stated up front then everyone will understand that and everyone will be on the same page.

Sometimes we can be frustrated by that person who seems to be critical of everything, but every team needs “a criticizer.” It’s an important role. One of my family members is considered a “criticizer.” He says, “Everyone always feel like I criticize everything,” but he is a very detailed and organized person and really thinks through things. So, always pay attention to the “criticizers” and figure out how to solve the problem that they are pointing out because they may be saving you future troubles.

Next slide—How to be a true collaborator. The most successful team has a committed team of members who are true collaborators. This gets to you personally. If you have a long-term mission you never want to sway from that mission unless you change the mission, of course. As the group, you decide this is not the direction you want to go. You need to understand and believe in the principles that have led you to this point. You need to understand and believe why you care enough to continue to work toward change and a better future for all people with disabilities. The reason why this is important is because we know it can get frustrating and if you remember why you care enough to do this it will get you through some of those tougher times.

You always want to be clear about your purpose, your goals, and what you try to achieve through your efforts. If people on the team are not clear about this you need to step in and discuss it and make sure everyone is on the same page. You also need to understand and believe what you have to offer. Knowing what your agencies’ collaborative values are have a lot to do with whether your agency will be able to partner with other agencies. You really have to have a good understanding about what you’re able to offer as part of a collaborative team. You also need to know why you’re a good collaborative partner. What are your unique skills and abilities? We have access to new and better resources, both organization and financial, and we have more support to implement activities and opportunities. So, with all those things, what do you bring to the table?

When I was part of a team I really enjoyed facilitating meetings and running meetings. I am usually pretty good at getting people back on track and helping people stay focused. So you need to understand your value to the collaborative team. Knowing your values in relation to collaborating is imperative. A true collaborator believes that we can get more from working together than from working alone. Most of all, collaborating develops a sense of camaraderie and common purposes that can motivate us to achieve things that we might not have been able to achieve. I know some people would rather work by themselves. They hate working in teams. They are not good people to put into a collaborative effort. You want to use people who work better on teams and are positive together about these experiences.

Next slide—A successful team meeting. The list you see on this slide includes key elements of running a successful meeting or participating in one. Even if your beginning partnership has the best intentions, if your meetings are not run well, you will not get very far. These should be guiding principles throughout the meeting. They can be written into the ground rules of the meeting and some teams even sign a contract that they will follow these rules. That may sound silly to some people but if people have to read a document and sign it they might pay attention to it a little bit more. Collaborating and making changes can be a frustrating undertaking at times. Keep your vision in front of everyone. Second, expertise is recognized. Everyone usually has an area of expertise. Recognizing this and using it to improve services and solicit ideas are important.

On the flip side, recognize that you may need help as well.

Next is dialogue and listening. You need both dialogue and listening. One person cannot do all the talking and members cannot just sit and listen. It is very important to get both from every member. You have some members who just speak once during the meeting. You need to make sure they can at least speak once. Usually if they only speak up once or twice what they have to say is pretty important.

Safe environments to share information—Nobody should ever be looked down upon for an idea or a suggestion and every idea is discussed openly with respect. You don't put people down. It is one of those obvious things.

Next is reciprocal learning. No one knows everything. Make sure that you are giving information as well as taking in information and learning from the process.

Shared responsibilities—all members should have some responsibilities. It may be just making sure the meeting room is ready or sending out a reminder e-mail about upcoming meetings. Sharing the responsibilities gets more people involved and when you have a job to do for the group you are more committed. If you have someone with a disability who may not be able to do a lot, involve them in refreshments or maybe making sure the meeting room is unlocked and available when everyone gets there. Make sure that everyone on the team has something to do because then everyone feels valued.

Next is shared leadership. One person needs to lead meetings and discussions. Share that role with others who are comfortable leading meetings. This helps to decrease the chances that someone will see that my organization is “in charge.”

The last one is—active leadership of people with disabilities. They should not only be represented but given an active leadership role. We usually miss critical insight into how best to deliver those services by not including those individuals.

The interagency agreement—this can be a pretty formal document. It just depends on how your collaboration is working. This is not necessarily a requirement, but I will tell you that if things are written down people are more likely to follow them. It's something to really look at especially when you start looking at exchange of finances to support a project. You really want to look at what might be necessary for your collaboration.

So what are some basic things that should be included in interagency agreements? Of course, the first thing is the purpose of your collaboration and not just an overall purpose of, "We want to improve the quality of lives of people with disabilities in Chesapeake, Virginia." That's not good enough. You want it clear and concise as to what your true purpose is specifically for this collaboration. So, the purpose is to assist twenty individuals with certain disabilities or just with severe disabilities to obtain employment through a customized employment process.

Next, operating procedures and principles—These need to be detailed so everyone can follow them. They may include things like how decisions are made, who is responsible for collecting data for reports, who is responsible for aggregating them and completing write-ups, how meetings are called and scheduled, etc. You have to remember this is a new entity and involves several organizations. Everyone needs to come to an agreement on how those things are going to be handled in this group.

You want to have an inventory of existing services and funding sources. This should be done for each partner—What services they offer and what funding pays for each service. This will help you identify any gaps you may have in your group. It also gives you an understanding of what each organization does. You also want to have a process for disputes and resolution. When someone is not happy about what is going on they need to know who they can go to and how the issue is going to get resolved. With that, you want to make sure there is one person from each agency to handle resolving disputes.

Cross-agency training—Agencies should be trained together and across services to make sure everyone is on the same page as to how the services are going to be extended.

Service Coordination—How are the services going to be coordinated to make sure there is no duplication and there is no gap between services offered by different partners?

The next set of slides gets into a little more detail of how you develop an interagency agreement. Some of this is going to be a bit of a review of what we've already discussed. When you're beginning to develop an interagency agreement you're actually beginning to develop the collaboration. You want to form the committee to develop an agreement. Again, we've talked about a lot of things—diverse membership, including people with disabilities, and making sure that everyone has that shared vision. You want to create that shared vision together as a team. You do want to make sure that you include people from the different parts of your own organization. For instance, I was in management and I found it necessary to have a front line staff there with me to understand more about what was actually

happening in the field with service delivery. I understood more about the financial end of things and what we could do with rules and regulations.

The next slide is a list of possible partners. I see these as very generic and I would encourage you to be very creative. Excellent collaboration possibilities would be schools, both high school and colleges, especially community colleges. I would encourage you to really be creative.

The second step is to develop an action plan. When you develop an action plan it is important to first develop a timeline. When dividing responsibility, it should be divided evenly. Volunteers should be sought; otherwise people should be assigned tasks for duties. Assignments are made to keep members on task. You don't want to have someone skating through the collaboration with no responsibility at all because for one they are not committed when they do not have a job to do or they don't have a responsibility and two, that means someone is doing more work. We're all very busy and all have a lot going on so you need to be sure that everyone is part of that action plan.

The facilitator needs to keep the team members focused on the goal. People tend to want to jump ahead in the action plan and get to the end, but you really need to be very systematic about it. Make sure that some of the beginning assignments, like defining what your current services are, what criteria are in place for your current services, the mission of your organization, why it was nice to collaborate with a particular organization, just all those little things that may seem unimportant. If you don't do all those first steps it's going to be a lot harder to accomplish things down the road.

Timelines should be developed that show completion of action plans. Most people work better with a deadline. If I don't have a deadline it's easier to procrastinate. So this will ensure that people keep the project moving. Be brief with the action plan. People don't want to read through pages and pages of an action plan, they want to be able to quickly glance through it and identify their role. The action plan should be distributed to all members so everyone can be accountable for their own actions. Most people will not want to let the members of the other group down and everyone will be able to see who is responsible for what. It's called peer pressure. If everyone can see I'm responsible for getting the meeting reminder out and the meeting minutes, they better see them or they'll know that I didn't do it. So it's important to always have a name with an action plan.

The third—Reach consensus of the purpose of the agreement. So why are you writing this agreement and how will it help you to accomplish these goals? The most important point is to eliminate broad generalizations and focus on clarifying specific goals and responsibilities of all parties. The clearer you are, the more focused people will be, and the better your action steps will be able to be defined.

Fourth—Identify key items to include in the agreement. Again, make it brief in focus and use “user friendly” words. We've talked about this a lot before. Make sure everybody has each other's contact information. Identify the process protocol of the agreement.

Fifth—You want to have follow-up meetings to discuss the agreement and how it's being carried out. You want to make sure there are regular meetings for reportings. The last step is to evaluate the success or outcomes of the agreement and you want to make sure you are getting input from all team members

about the status of the agreement. Many times that's where we fall short. It's necessary to have a good evaluation in place from the beginning.

We've made it to the example and I'm going to try to be brief. This is a collaboration. I worked for Goodwill Industries in central Indiana. I was their Director of Disability Services. We had a collaboration among the IPIC, the Indiana Private Industry Counsel, Crossroads Easter Seals, Vocational Rehabilitations, and the Department of Workforce Development. When I became the Director, I knew that we needed other revenue sources to support what we wanted to do and to support employment programs. I became a student of that *Federal Register* and looked at it on a regular basis. There were many grants coming out to assist the One-Stops in serving people with disabilities. So, that became a focus of mine. When we looked to continue partnerships we talked about networking. The reason why this was possible was through networking. I was on the Indiana Advocacy Board and went to a lot of other trainings and state meetings and really got to know people in each of those organizations to the point that I trusted them, I knew what their philosophy was, and I knew that their values matched mine. I knew my partners.

The first grant we applied for was providing disability awareness for One-Stops. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring all these organizations together. One partner provided assistive technology services. It was very easy to define our role and objectives and really helped us in that part.

The next grant we applied for moved into the collaborating realm. We got into customized employment which meant we both were going to have staff doing customized employment activities who normally would have been considered competitors in the market. So, we had to take some of those initial steps to get to the point where we felt comfortable working together and both having staff out there doing the same job. So, I want to share a couple things I learned from those experiences. One is we did not have someone with a disability represented in our decision making group. I think we missed having that perspective and we could have learned a lot. We also did not have enough front-line staff represented on our leadership team to make sure that we understood how this was going to impact what they were doing. We also needed better and more consistent evaluation of what was happening so we could better track our outcomes. I believe sometimes we don't give ourselves a hard enough look. We tend to gloss over problem areas. It's important to really take a hard look at your collaboration and improve things. All of these things that I was just describing took place over a three-year period. It took a lot of energy to make those collaborations work.

The last side is—Interagency collaboration and solution. You need to ask yourself—Do I need help in serving this population? Is there something missing from our services? Is there someone in this area who can help, who has an expertise? We saw that Crossroads Easter Seals had an assisted technology team and could definitely do that better than we could. Will they want to help? Is it worth the effort? Is this going to serve two people from this entire effort or is it going to serve 50-60? So, looking at the impact it's going to have and being able to use the help when it's provided. Those are some questions you may want to ask yourself when you're developing an interagency agreement or trying to start a collaboration. Collaboration is a great tool in introducing new and creative ways to serving people with disabilities. Commitment is the beginning of it and the key to it.

I am ready to open it up to questions with the little amount of time that's left.

**Lynda Leach, Facilitator:** That was great Laura. We do have some time for questions so we will ask people who have questions to unmute their line. Anyone with a question right now for Laura?

**Caller:** Hello!

**Lynda Leach, Facilitator:** Hi. Go ahead with your question.

**Caller:** A couple of comments, criticism is participation. The second thing is jargon and it goes also to your issue of respect. I've worked with a lot of lawyers and got to ask all the silly questions that they were too ashamed to ask of each other. Sometimes, it's making sure that people really understand the jargon and they're not ashamed to ask.

**Laura Ritterbush:** Absolutely. I think you're right where the respect issues comes in—no question is a dumb question. No one should ever be laughed at for laughing at an acronym. You “place somebody on this job,” what do you mean by “place?” What does that mean as far as your job development strategies? It is important to have that respect. Criticism is participation. We need to pay attention to that person and figure out, okay there is a legitimate criticism here and let's not look at it as a negative. It's actually a positive to have that person there because they're asking a hard question. We're going to need to have answers to them eventually anyway so let's figure it out now.

**Lynda Leach, Facilitator:** Laura please give everyone your contact information for future questions.

**Laura Ritterbush:** My e-mail is [laura@ritterbush.com](mailto:laura@ritterbush.com).

**Lynda Leach, Facilitator:** Thank you! I know you'll look forward to hearing from people. You had lots of good examples, visuals, and ideas for putting a partnership together and we do appreciate it. Thanks everyone for participating. We'll talk to you next month.