**A Brief Guide to Reciprocal Community-University Partnerships**

The following checklist is adapted from *A Guide to Reciprocal Community-Campus Partnerships* from Portland State University. The complete guide, along with other partnership tools, can be found on our website: <http://gvsu.edu/community/partnership-development-tools-30.htm>)

**Exploring partnership opportunities:**

* Why are we here? What question(s) does the project propose to answer? The initiating partner, either community or university, provides information about the opportunity or request
* Why are you here? Each participant shares intentions, motivations, and desired outcomes
* What assets and resources do we bring, and how might we combine them to address this opportunity?
* What challenges might we face?
* What could each partner contribute and how would each benefit?
* Decide whether to initiate a partnership

**Initiating partnerships, with an emphasis on mutuality:**

* Discussion topics for establishing a partnership:
  + What ground rules do we agree on?
  + What are our long-term and short-term goals?
  + What are each partner’s needs and interests related to our overall goal?
  + What contribution will each make? What roles will each play?
  + What processes and action plan will we execute?
  + How will we track and evaluate progress?
* Provide opportunities to explore similarities and differences more deeply:
  + Begin meetings by sharing history/traditions, values, needs, interests, or other information to provide additional answers to “Who are you?” and “Why are you here?”
  + Discuss differences in culture, modes of decision-making, perceived identity, and ways of thinking about knowledge
  + Distribute partner materials (e.g., program brochure, journal literature)
  + Compare missions and values
  + Develop a vocabulary list of acronyms and jargon
  + Schedule intentional, facilitated discussions of each partner’s culture, power differences, expectations, and other elephants in the room
* Address logistics
  + Establish contact people and infrastructure to support ongoing communication
  + Determine location and frequency for partnership meetings

**Sustaining reciprocal partnerships:**

* Develop a timeline and regularly chart progress and accomplishments
* Develop a means to document achievements over time
* Conduct progress checks using an inquiry approach (for more in-depth and systemic questions, see also *Focus Group Guide for Evaluating and Reflecting on CBPR Partnerships* from the UNM Center for Participatory Research)
  + What’s working well in our partnership?
  + What’s not working well?
  + What expectations have been met so far?
  + What expectations have not been met?
  + What are sources of satisfaction for each partner?
  + What are sources of frustration?
* Revise or develop new action plans based on responses to the questions (Strategic Doing methodology could work well for ongoing learning, adjusting, and implementation cycles)

**Additional suggestions for cross-disciplinary partnerships:**

* “Think systemically, act interpersonally.” F. Ellen Netting, Ph.D.
* Questions to consider when finding an academic research partner (From Ross, et. al., *The Challenges of Collaboration for Academic and Community Partners in a Research Partnership: Points to Consider*, 2010.)
  + Does the academic have the skills, experience, and resources for the specific research project?
  + Does the academic researcher seem willing to collaborate and respect the agency of the community?
  + Is the researcher committed to long-term relationships with community partners?
  + Is the researcher willing to pursue the advocacy and policy issues that emanate from the research? If not, can others help in these roles?
  + Does the academic researcher have some degree of institutional commitment for promoting successful academic-community partnerships?