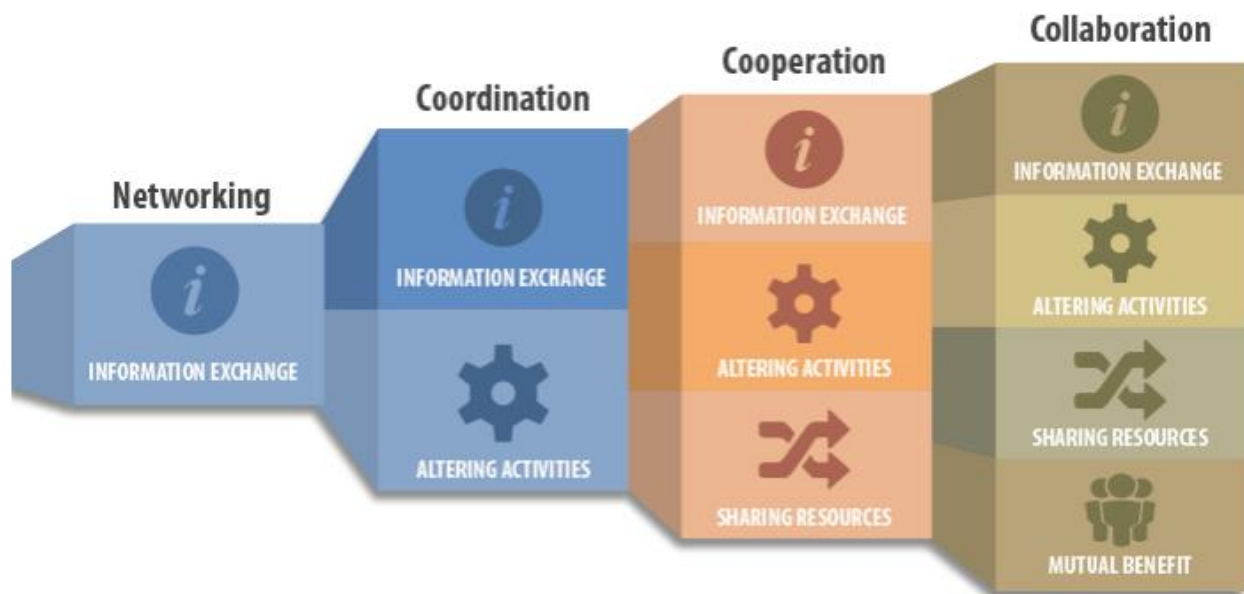


# What Successful Partnerships Do: 6 Key Activities Health Nexus

*Adapted from a resource originally developed by Health Nexus for HC Link*

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Partnerships involve building relationships between more than one individual, group or organization. Often, each partner comes to the table with different objectives, activities, resources and expectations<sup>1</sup>. Today, more and more organizations are called upon to work in partnership, and so having capacity for developing and maintaining effective partnerships is necessary for success. Himmelman's Collaborative Continuum<sup>2</sup> depicts common levels of partnership, ranging from networking to coordination to cooperation and collaboration.



*Himmelman's Collaborative Continuum (Source: [Toolkit2Collaborate.ca](http://Toolkit2Collaborate.ca))*

No matter where they fall in the continuum, dynamic and effective community partnerships practice the **6 activities**<sup>3</sup> outlined in this factsheet. Of course, each partnership will practice the activities in their own unique way. The activities are as equally relevant for forming or maintaining a community partnership.

**Connect:** This activity involves reaching out to new partners. Always reflect before you connect; be clear about your own organizational priorities, position and history in relation to the people you are trying to connect with.

There are many different ways to define partnership. The common thread amongst these many definitions is “organizations/ agencies coming together to work towards a shared goal or vision”<sup>3</sup>

**Foster shared understanding:** This activity involves getting to know one another and building a deeper understanding of each partner’s unique stories, perspectives and priorities. While this is important at the beginning of a partnership, successful partnerships will find ongoing opportunities to share stories and explain perspectives and priorities. When a new person or group joins your partnership, be sure to take enough time for new shared understandings to solidify.

**Create a shared vision:** Collaborations often attract groups with similar interests. Sometimes we assume that we share a common vision without taking the time<sup>3</sup> to agree on why we are working together. Creating a shared vision involves seeking common ground between all individuals and organizations involved in the partnership.

**Plan collaboratively:** Planning is an activity your partnership will return to periodically. Whenever planning, keep in mind your shared vision and an appreciation for the diversity among your partners. HC Link recommends using participatory and visual approaches. Remember to strike a balance between planning adequately and spending all of your time in meetings!<sup>3</sup>

**Work together for change:** Many partnerships identify collective action as the glue that bonds them over time. Clear and graphic documentation of your workplan will help people act as a team through busy times. Effective meetings are key to keeping up your momentum in a coordinated way. Include small appreciation activities within meetings to enliven your work together.

**Celebrate, evaluate and renew:** A successful partnership is a process, not a destination. Partnership must be continually nurtured and developed. Set aside time. Reflect on and learn from your experiences of working together. Identify and celebrate the impacts you might never have achieved alone.

These 6 activities are not a linear process – practice them often in a variety of ways. Tending to each of the 6 key activities will support success in your partnerships.

***For more information on building and maintaining dynamic and effective partnerships, including the levels of partnerships and the 6 activities, visit the [Supporting Partnerships](#) page on Health Nexus’ website.***



For more information about partnership support, contact us at 1-800-397-9567 or visit our website [www.healthnexus.ca](http://www.healthnexus.ca)

## References

<sup>1</sup> HC Link. [Partnership Development](#). Toronto, ON. 2009 (revised 2015).

<sup>2</sup> A.T. Himmelman. [Collaboration for a Change](#). Minneapolis, MN: Himmelman Consulting. 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Quality Improvement & Innovation Partnership. [Community Partnerships Resource Guide](#). 2009 (amended 2010).