



Public Sector Primer to Partnership Mapping

Local government officials are at the forefront of democracy; often, they are at the frontlines of providing critical services to constituents, whether it be election administration, tax collection, public health programs, or maintaining essential infrastructure like roads, water, or sewage systems. Each service plays a distinct role and has a unique impact on the daily lives of community members. However, these critical services can be challenging when local governments face limited budgets, staffing shortages, or evolving priorities. Partnerships offer local governments the opportunity to leverage additional resources, expertise, and networks, thereby enhancing their ability to serve constituents better. This resource aims to assist election officials and other local government officials in identifying potential partners for collaboration, based on the rules within their jurisdiction.

Government entities rarely have all the resources; partnerships can offer benefits, such as expanded capacity, resource sharing, cooperative purchasing, and even intelligence sharing, to ensure communities are secure, sustained, and thriving. To effectively identify helpful partners, it's essential to follow a repeatable process to identify, understand, and engage with potential partners who can contribute to shared goals. Consider the following framework when approaching partnership mapping:

- 1. Begin with Clear Objectives** – Understand and document your needs to help identify goals and achieve successful outcomes.
- 2. Identify Partners by Casting a Wide Net** – Think beyond obvious and traditional choices and consider indirect stakeholders who might have related interests or goals.
- 3. Assess Partners and Prioritize** – Consider each potential partner and evaluate key dimensions, such as resources, strategy alignment, and access, to help prioritize engagement and outreach.
- 4. What's Your Relationship Status?** – Before reaching out, understand where you currently stand with each partner. For example, do you have an existing relationship, past collaboration, or are there potential barriers?
- 5. Tailor Engagement** – Develop an engagement strategy and compelling propositions for each partner, tailored to their background and aligned with your goals.

Forging robust partnerships is paramount to effectively addressing the escalating demand on limited resources. These collaborations are not only beneficial but essential for ensuring that constituents receive optimal service and gain access to a broader spectrum of resilience services. While the establishment of these partnerships marks a significant milestone, it is merely the beginning. A collaborative approach and the true impact materialize in sustained connection and coordinated efforts that follow. As you cultivate partnerships, here are a few practical actions to consider together:



Work Together

Agree to work together and define rules of engagement with clear responsibilities.



Plan Together

Prepare educational documents and response plans, including guidelines on how to share information and respond to disruptions, as necessary.



Share Perspective

Share experiences, knowledge, and details about each other's field of practice.



Practice, Practice, Practice

Finally, practice builds rapport and muscle memory. Where possible, exercise simulated scenarios to strengthen policies and procedures based on each other's strengths.

Partnership mapping provides an opportunity for the public sector to shift working within the confines of traditional resource allocation by leveraging broader ecosystems of resources and expertise, where permitted. In an era of constrained budgets and limited resources, no single government agency has all the capabilities to deliver comprehensive services everywhere. Strategic partnerships enable local governments to amplify their impact by combining public services with other avenues to innovate and deliver continuously. The most successful services today emerge from collaborative partnerships that share diverse resources, creating sustainable value for citizens. To help jumpstart the effort, a checklist has been developed below to provide a practical roadmap for public officials.

About this checklist

This checklist is designed for local government teams beginning their partnership mapping journey. It's organized into sections that align with the core framework while being actionable for busy staff.

Tip: Partnership mapping is a living process, not a one-time effort. Officials are encouraged to regularly visit and update their partnership map as relationships and the operating environment change.

Preparation and Objectives

- Get leadership buy-in** from key leaders
- Define the problems or goals** needing support from partners
- Identify your needs** from partners (funding, expertise, community engagement, etc)
- Assign a lead** person for coordination and outreach
- Set realistic timelines** for partnership development
- Understand potential restrictions**, depending on jurisdiction rules

Partner Identification

- Identify partners** across all sectors.
 - Local partners in your organization (law enforcement, human resources, facilities, technology, emergency management, public health, public works, etc)
 - State-level partners (election authorities, technology, transportation, emergency management, fusion center, etc)
 - Federal-level partners (DHS, CISA, FBI, USPIA, USPS, etc)
 - Private sector partners (technology, healthcare, utility companies, etc)
 - Nonprofit and civic-minded organizations (service providers, advocacy groups, faith-based organizations, etc)
 - Education (school districts, community colleges, universities, research bodies, etc)
 - Associations (local, state, or federal-level associations, such as elections or IT, NASED, NASS, Election Center, etc)

Assessment and Prioritization

- Evaluate** partners' backgrounds by understanding their roles and responsibilities.
- Create a simple matrix** to assess key dimensions, such as goal alignment, resources, and access.
- Prioritize partners** based on the matrix evaluation to distinguish between primary (essential), secondary (valuable), or tertiary partners (nice-to-have).

Evaluation

- Assess existing relationships** to better understand the current state of affairs (no prior contact, occasional interaction, strong relationship, etc).
- Identify potential barriers** to gauge each partner's motivations, constraints, or potential engagement.
- Review mechanisms for engagement** to plan for formal relationships (MOUs, contracts, joint committees) or informal relationships (voluntary).

Kicking Off Engagement

- Set an engagement timeline** with specific milestones
- Draft compelling messaging** by clearly articulating needs and mutual benefits
- Plan relationship-building activities** (meetings, events, site visits, etc)
- Create an outreach plan** to know who to approach first, second, etc)
- Set up first meetings** or phone calls with potential partners