TOOLS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre for Community Engaged Learning

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1. Defining Your Partnership

At the Centre for Community Engaged Learning, we like to support our community partners to be co-educators with us. We believe that effective partnerships are reciprocal. wherein everyone participates in both the learning and teaching processes. To help facilitate this, it is important to define roles and responsibilities whether you are working on a large project with a group of students and a faculty-member, or you are collaborating with one student or staff from the Centre on a small project.

Answering the questions in this document will help all involved to explore goals and to align your perspectives.

When to use this

This document may be a useful tool at the beginning of your work, particularly when working with students because it can help you to get to know each other. Sections can be filled out individually and then shared or they can be used as guiding interview questions at initial meetings.

Student Participant, ask yourself:

1. What are my learning objectives? What do I hope to gain from this opportunity?
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_____
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2. What skills, experience, and knowledge do I bring to this partnership?
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_____
_____
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3. What interests do I hold that might be relevant to work being done at this community organization?
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_____
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4. What skills would I like to develop while in this partnership?
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_____
_____

Defining Your Partnership

Community Partner, ask yourself:

1. What is the mission of our organization?

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2. What skills can I bring to this partnership? What skills can my colleagues bring?

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3. What do my organization's clients (students, if you're at a school) bring to the partnership?

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4. What kind of experience can my organization provide that contributes to a positve experience for the student and their learning goals? What information do we hope to share?

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5. What kind of support are we able to provide to students?

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6. What would I like to share with students about our organization? What information will help students to better understand the organization and feel engaged? (Explain what motivates your work. Share the dreams you have for the organization. Share the challenges that the organization faces.)

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2. Providing and Receiving Feedback

It is almost inevitable that you will have to give feedback to students at some point during your project and it should therefore be a regular part of your interactions. Although it may sometimes feel uncomfortable or challenging, feedback is essential to learning, reflection, and the success of your project. Here are some key considerations to keep in mind when delivering and inviting feedback.

When to use this

This can be used at anytime. However, it may be helpful to explore these ideas as early as possible, so that you can establish ways to deliver constructive feedback in an effective manner throughout your project.

Five things to remember when giving feedback:

1. Ask permission. Find out if this is the right time to give feedback. If not, work together to find a better time.
2. Be specific and descriptive. Explain what you saw. Focus on thebehaviour, not on personal qualities.
3. Include positive comments. Say what you like as well as what you don't like.
4. Be caring and open. Listen to the person.
5. Focus on moving forward. Decide on concrete goals for the future.

Three things to remember when receiving feedback from students or colleagues:

1. This is not a personal attack. It is an opportunity to learn.
2. Ask for clarification if anything is unclear.
3. Thank the person giving the feedback.

Think about how you receive feedback. Do you get defensive? Do you shut down? Do you apologize? Try to be aware of this when providing feedback to others.

An example

A student has been arriving late for her scheduled shift time. She works hard once she arrives, but her late arrivals mean that others have to cover for her. Using some of the strategies listed above, how might you speak to this student?

3. Student Orientation Checklist*

This list provides tips for how to prepare for the beginning of your project. It outlines how you can support students to prepare and what students should know before starting.

When to use this

Use this checklist before your project starts to ensure that you are ready to receive new students. If applicable, you may be able to ask student leaders to support you in sharing some of this information to their student teams and help you with the orientation of other UBC students.

> Is there anything else that would make students feel welcome and prepared?

*Adapted from California State University Resource Guide for Managing Risk in Service Learning (2011)

Before students arrive:

- ☐ What is the site address? Where are the closest buses? Is there parking available?

- ☐ Is there a training or orientation to attend? When? Where? How long?

- ☐ Who can the students contact with questions or concerns about their placement (Learning Site contact, and campus contact)?

- ☐ Have students completed criminal record check (if applicable)?

- ☐ Do the students have/need their site supervisor's contact information?

After students arrive:

- ☐ Where do students check in at the site on their first day?

- ☐ Have you reviewed confidentiality rules for the site. Are pictures or videos allowed?

- ☐ Who do the students call if they cannot make their scheduled service or if they will be late?

- ☐ Have you given a tour of site? Where is the restroom? The break room? The kitchen? The smoking area? The photocopier?

- ☐ Have you reviewed safety rules of the site, location of emergency exits, and emergency procedures?

- ☐ Are there other staff members that student should meet?

- ☐ Have you reviewed the schedule (total number of hours, days and times of the week, etc.)? When does the project begin and end? Will there be time-off?

4. Tips for Effective Reflection

An important contributor to the success of your partnership and the project as a whole is the practice of reflection. In order to fully evaluate your goals and explore the work that you are doing together, it is helpful to reflect on and assess the experience as it progresses.

When to use this

This document can be a useful tool at the beginning of your work. It may help to establish communication and feedback strategies. It may also help to formulate when and how debriefing will occur throughout your partnership.

Examples of reflection activities include journal writing, class presentations, feedback sessions, blogging, or creative art projects.

Reflection should help to answer three basic questions:

• **What?** What event/activity are you reflecting on? What are the objective facts and events?
• **So What?** How do we understand what happened? What meaning can we give to the facts and events?
• **Now what?** Now that we understand what happened, how does this impact us, the community organization, the community, or the university? How can we apply what we have learned?

Think about how you can include reflection in your partnership with students by reviewing the following guiding questions.

1. What can you do together to ensure that the goals that you set out at the beginning of your partnership are being accomplished?
2. What kinds of reflection activities will help to strengthen your partnership?
3. How can you ensure that you have a meaningful experience during the project?

What steps can you take to carry out these ideas? Do you need to decide on dates, times, or locations? Do you need any tools or supplies?

5. What Kind of Communicator Are You?

When working together it's important to recognize that everyone has different ways of interacting and communicating with others. Understanding individual communication styles can help you to work better as a team. This is a simple tool to help you explore these differences.
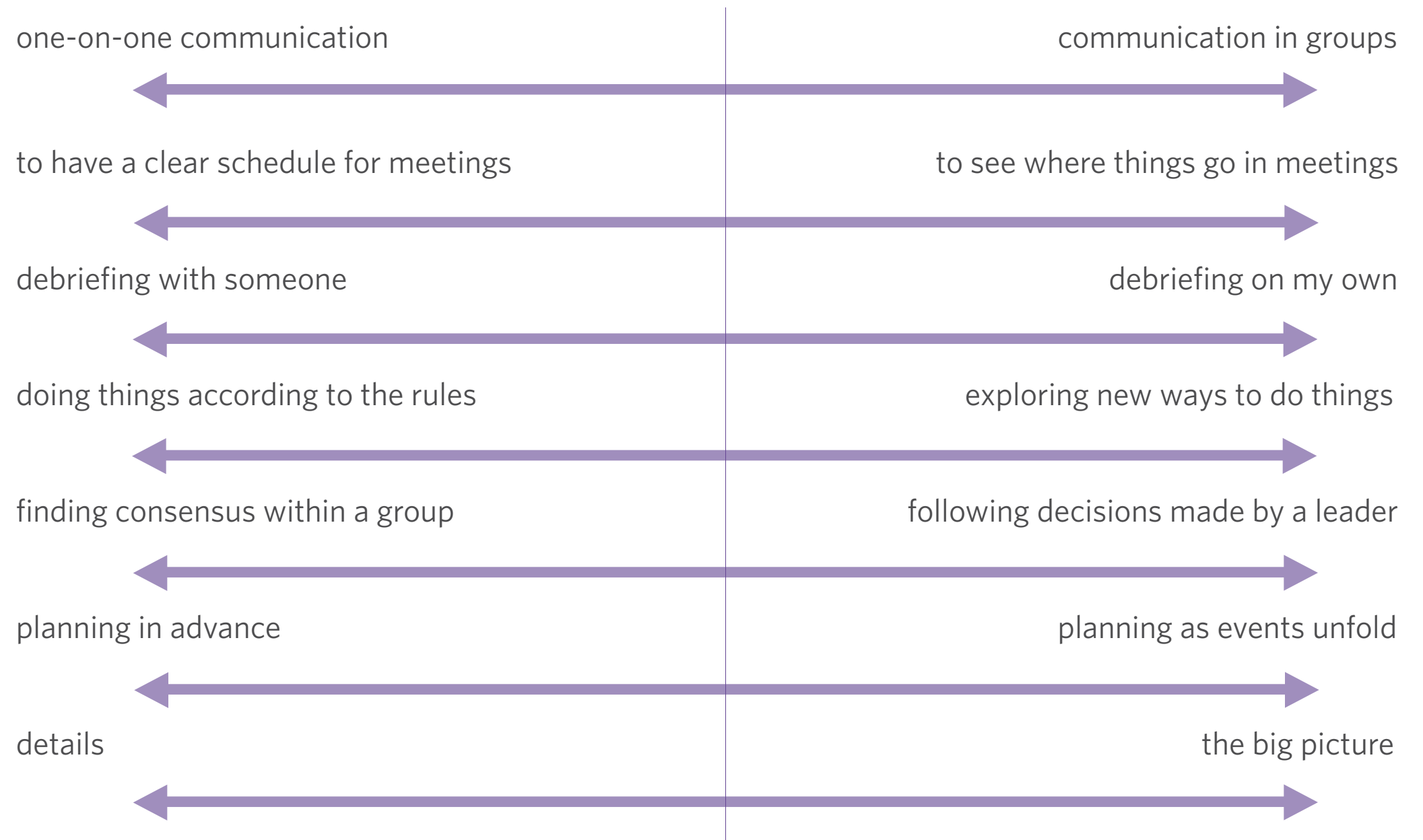
When to use this

This can be helpful when planning weekly/monthly meetings or a project. Try filling it out on your own or fill it out together and compare where each person falls along each line.

It's important to remember that no one approach is better than another. Each one has its benefits and people who have different approaches can work well together.

Think about what these differences mean for meetings, reflection, and daily communication. How do you work with your common strengths while incorporating individual styles?

I prefer...

one-on-one communication	communication in groups
⬅───────────────────────➡	

to have a clear schedule for meetings	to see where things go in meetings
⬅───────────────────────➡	

debriefing with someone	debriefing on my own
⬅───────────────────────➡	

doing things according to the rules	exploring new ways to do things
⬅───────────────────────➡	

finding consensus within a group	following decisions made by a leader
⬅───────────────────────➡	

planning in advance	planning as events unfold
⬅───────────────────────➡	

details	the big picture
⬅───────────────────────➡	

6. Student Learning Objectives

What?

Learning Objectives are brief, clear statements about what you think students will be able to do when they have completed their project with you. We have broken student learning objectives into three components: intellectual development, civic engagement and personal growth, and have listed ways in which each of these can be achieved. This list is by no means exhaustive and we encourage you to explore other objectives, including areas of skill development.

Why?

Learning objectives clearly communicate expectations to students and staff and guide and organize the project. They can be used to define the type and depth of learning students are expected to achieve and provide an objective benchmark for assessment and this will help you scope the project appropriately as well. A long list of learning objective for a short term project, such as a community event, may not be suitable, whereas a 3 month community consultation or research project would lend itself to more robust learning outcomes.

Intellectual Development

- ☐ Students are able to make connections between what they are learning in the classroom and what they are learning in the community
- ☐ Students learn to look at community issues from different perspectives
- ☐ Students learn to think critically and assess their own assumptions

Civic Engagement

- ☐ Students consider the impact of individual actions on society
- ☐ Students recognize the role that they can play in their community
- ☐ Students become committed to service and change and recognize that they have a responsibility to community
- ☐ Students grasp the complexity of community settings and their needs
- ☐ Students gain an understanding of the complexity and dimensions of diversity by examining factors like histories, languages, belief systems, and intersectionality

Personal Growth

- ☐ Students gain a sense of who they are, and their role in community and society
- ☐ Students consider their own identity and socio-cultural background in social interactions
- ☐ Students begin to feel personally connected to community
- ☐ Students increase understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses
- ☐ Students gain a sense of self-efficacy
- ☐ Students demonstrate leadership, communication and teamwork skills