

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING PROSPECTIVE COMMUNITY ALLIES

Community allies can help you do the actual work of initiating and sustaining partnerships. However, before you engage allies you have to do some homework. You need to find out which individuals and groups have the interest, resources or access to resources, and can benefit from collaborating with you to improve the district's science program. Here are some strategies for engaging prospective allies:

- 1. Target preexisting groups and networks.** Targeting individuals alone can take a lot of time and effort. Therefore, try connecting with people through groups that already exist. In order to sustain lasting partnerships, you have to gain broad and diverse support.
- 2. Find out what they can contribute.** At this point you can build on the issues that you brainstormed with other administrator colleagues. Use the issues that you previously identified and match those against the strengths and resources that this group brings. Depending on your community and how you work to bring about change, you may want to invite members of these groups to be part of a partnership committee or working group. The actual makeup of the group may vary from place to place, but be sure to include at least one classroom teacher, school leader, parent and local business representative.
- 3. Have them help you brainstorm and plan activities for different stages of the partnership.** As members of the partnership task force, you can expect to have members work with you to create a plan for the partnership. Creating a plan will give you opportunities to talk about the role of partnerships, the issues they need to address, as well as identify possible collaborators for meeting those needs. It will also give you an opportunity to describe how you can support their efforts.

For more on creating a plan, refer to the planning section of this toolkit.

- 4. Solicit recommendations for a partnership coordinator.** Coordinating the work of multiple and simultaneous partnerships can be a full-time job. Therefore you will probably need to have someone in this position. It can be a teacher released from full time teaching, or a parent or other volunteer. Another way to engage your allies is to ask them to help you find strong candidates. Ideally, you want someone that knows the schools, has a good rapport with members of the community, and if not a science person, someone who can work with you to learn about the program.