

# COLORADO MAIN★STREET

## COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS TOOLKIT

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# How to Use This Toolkit

Welcome to the Community Building and Partnerships Toolkit! This short reference guide will lead you through one of the most important parts of the Main Street program: relationship building. We know your time is precious, and that's why we've condensed the key points so you can get information quickly and efficiently. If you'd like to read more, we have several in depth Appendices on topics to take you to the next level. Now go out, make friends and have fun!

Keep in mind, not all partnerships involve money or funding. You have partnerships with volunteers, in kind partners who donate space or food, champions for the Main Street program who share information, and other important relationships. Don't limit your thinking at the start - be open to creative partnerships in the community!

This Toolkit is designed to deliver the information you need in a short and easy to read package. Within the sections, watch for the following:



## **Bright Ideas:**

- These are the most important ideas to read and retain - success will follow!



## **Keep in Mind:**

- Check out this section for some key takeaways to keep in mind as a Board Member or Manager.



## **Program Manager's Corner:**

- This section is for Main Street Managers specifically, but is also useful for Board Members.



## **Big Ideas:**

- These are key ideas of how your team can customize and adapt best practices to meet your local needs.



## **Words of Wisdom:**

- This section has helpful information that will make your life easier and keep you on the right track. Don't reinvent the wheel (and revisit mistakes)....



## **The Honest Truth:**

- Sometimes it's hard to hear the truth (and hard to tell another Board member or staff member the truth)! This section will help you understand different perspectives.

## **Main Street 101**

Colorado Main Street is a program founded by the National Main Street Center® (NMSC), a national organization committed to historic preservation-based community revitalization. The Colorado program uses the NMSC model to assist communities as they preserve and rejuvenate their downtown and commercial districts within the context of historic preservation. A town's main street says a lot about the community, and bringing to life the history and unique aspects inspire creative energy and pride. Local residents are eager to share their heritage and visitors come to learn and enjoy.

**Main Street is about real places doing real things.** The program is designed to advocate and support a return to local empowerment, and the rebuilding of central business districts based on the traditional assets of each community's unique architecture, character, and local ownership. The Colorado Main Street Program has three things: a proven strategy for revitalization, a strong network of linked communities, and a committed Main Street staff who manage the program.

**How does it work?** This is a statewide program that assists local governments, communities, and downtown organizations through a process that helps organize community needs and ideas so they result in a strategic plan. It provides technical resources and training in the four points addressed in the Main Street Approach:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Organization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Economic Vitality
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Promotion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Design

# YOUR MAIN STREET

There's a lot of guidance out there to help your Main Street program succeed. Partnerships and relationships can leverage your work, make Main Street even more successful, and create a win/win situation for the entire community. One important part of the process is to make sure you understand your own Main Street: structure, bylaws, Strategic Plan, and the Work Plan. Here is a short list that you should be familiar with before tackling the next steps:

- ✓ Local Program Bylaws
- ✓ Strategic Plan (especially the Vision and Mission)
- ✓ Annual Work Plans
- ✓ Colorado Main Street Memorandum of Understanding
- ✓ Board Contact List
- ✓ Position Descriptions
- ✓ Local Main Street Program Organizational Chart

Some board activity may be governed by Colorado State Statute (if you are a DDA, URA, etc). For an overview, check out the Colorado Municipal League's

"Handbook for Appointed Boards and Commissions."

## A Little Help From Your Friends

In compiling these Best Practices Snapshot Reports, Colorado Main Street would like to thank the following documents for their usefulness in providing great pointers for boards:

- ✓ [The Main Street Board of Directors Toolkit](#)
- ✓ [Colorado Municipal League "Handbook for Appointed Municipal Boards & Commissions"](#)

## Additional Resources Include

- ✓ [Colorado Main Street Website](#)
- ✓ [National Main Street Center Website](#)
- ✓ [Colorado Main Street Program Manual](#)



## Don't Forget DOLA

The Colorado Main Street Program is administered through the Department of Local Affairs. Each local program signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that defines the relationship with the State.



## Politicking vs. Relationship Building:

Boards play a critical role in communicating with partners, both existing partners and potentially new partners. Have an "elevator speech" ready to talk about the impact of your program. Also, be sure you know your Vision and your Mission, and how your Main Street team benefits the community as a whole. You might find more in common with other groups than you think!

## WHO is Main Street?

The Main Street Approach is a product of collaborative efforts on a variety of levels, all with the goal of helping empower local communities to revitalize their Main Street. The various levels include:

### Main Street America™:

Main Street America™ is a program of the National Main Street Center. It is the umbrella for a powerful, grass roots network consisting of 45 coordinating

programs and over 1600 neighborhoods and communities across the country committed to creating high-quality places and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development.



### Colorado Main Street:

The Colorado Main Street Program provides technical assistance in the Main Street Approach to competitively selected Colorado communities.



The Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) manages the Colorado Main Street Program, which is partially funded by a grant from History Colorado, the state historical fund. The mission of the Colorado Main Street Program is to coordinate resources and technical assistance for communities seeking to revitalize their historic downtown commercial districts.

### Local Community Main Street Boards:

Local Colorado communities apply to join the program to help them work toward downtown revitalization. Each local program has a Board of Directors that is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of local efforts.

### Local Task Forces & Committees:

Many local programs create task forces or committees to address specific initiatives of implementing the Main Street Approach in their community. With efforts based on the annual work plan, these ad-hoc groups help advance specific initiatives on the local Main Street programs.

## What is the Main Street Approach?

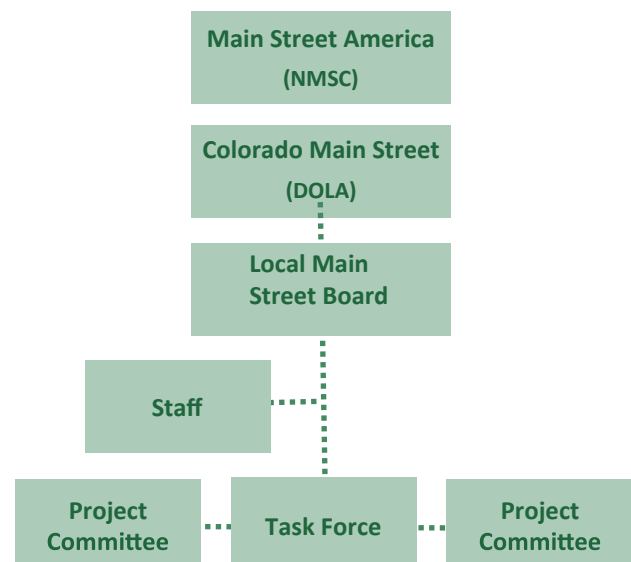
Community revitalization can be complicated. That's why Main Street America™ created an intuitive approach to four key points. They are:

ORGANIZATION involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. A governing board and volunteers or specific project committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program.

PROMOTION sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, media, retail promotions, special events and marketing campaigns.

DESIGN means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets — such as historic buildings and pedestrian-oriented streets — is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere, well-managed parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, lights and landscaping, conveys a positive visual message about the commercial district.

ECONOMIC VITALITY strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. The program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners, helps to foster entrepreneurial start-ups and expansions, and recruits compatible new businesses and economic uses.





# THE BENEFITS: Why Should We Build Partnerships?

*"There is nothing in business today that provides as much economic and social benefit, on as many levels, to as many stakeholders, as a strategic partnership between any combination of the nonprofit, for profit, education and government sectors when focused on the greater good. Nothing else even comes close."*

*Bruce Burtch, Author and Partnership Expert*

Having problems keeping Board members? Is motivating your volunteers becoming difficult? Do you have more projects than funding? Is attendance at your events decreasing? These are all common issues faced by Main Street communities, and building better relationships is one easy way to build support and address all of those issues!

Main Street organizations are just one of several groups who typically work in communities to improve the business environment. The overlapping roles of chambers of commerce, visitors bureaus, economic development agencies, municipalities and other community organizations can be wonderful opportunities to partner. Together you can create even more energy and efficiency to accomplish your shared goals!

We all have limited time to help build relationships for Main Street (we volunteer, we have a job, we have family...). Use the resources in [Appendix G: List of Resources and Tools](#) as a shortcut. Take a few minutes with your Main Street team to conduct a quick assessment ([Appendix A: An Assessment of Your Relationships](#)), create a list of potential partners ([Appendix B: A List of Potential Partners](#) will get you started), and then craft a simple and easy plan ([Appendix C: A Partnership Plan](#)). If that seems a bit daunting, don't worry - the benefits are huge for Main Street!

## Top 10 Benefits for Your Main Street:

1. Increase funding
2. People genuinely want to be with your team - you increase your base of support
3. Connect to new partners
4. Attract new volunteers and in kind support
5. Share your information and telling your story to a wider audience
6. Attract new Board members, keep and motivate your volunteers, secure pro bono and in kind help
7. Increase recognition and media coverage
8. Solve mutual problems for the benefit of the entire community
9. Build excitement about events and meetings
10. Develop long term opportunities



## The Honest Truth

Your Main Street Program just can't be successful without partnerships. You already partner with the State of Colorado through DOLA, as well as the National Main Street Program. You likely also partner with the Chamber and the City or Town. But to be wildly successful, you **MUST** build relationships that are mutually beneficial. If you are only focused on raising funds and having your hand out, you will be left behind.

# THE STEPS: A Quick List Before You Start

There are 10 critical steps to building great community partnerships and relationships. To get some in depth details, see [Appendix C: A Partnership Plan](#). In short, those key steps are:

- 1. Understand your Main Street Program:** How was your Main Street Board formed (non-profit, DDA, Chamber, Town)? Can you accept funding? Can you manage volunteers? Do you have a Vision and Mission that is clear and understandable? How do you describe what Main Street does?
- 2. Complete an assessment** (see [Appendix A: An Assessment of Your Relationships](#)) of your existing partnerships, and which partnerships you need but don't have. Usually this means a written assessment, but even an informal one is better than not at all.
- 3. Identify potential partners in the community.** Make a full list, even if it may not seem that some groups could be partners. Not all partnerships involve funding, some involve mutual support, social media mentions, linking to websites....don't limit yourself at the beginning!
- 4. Do your homework** Understand how your Main Street Vision, Mission and Transformational Strategies mesh with and complement the Vision and Mission of your potential partners. Do some research - if you can tell your story to your partners and it aligns with their story, you have a solid foundation for the future.
- 5. Get personal** - really know your partners on a personal level. Rarely do people give money and support to an organization - they give money and support to someone they know who is passionate about a cause. Take someone to coffee, invite them to an event, attend their events.
- 6. Seize the opportunity to partner!** Look for ways, be creative....but don't forget #7. Think about writing letters of support, sharing a Facebook post, volunteering at their events, spreading the word, having your Board donate to their organization....

## **7. Be strategic**

You can't, and don't want to, partner with everyone. Or just anyone, for that matter! Make sure your Vision, Mission and Goals are aligned and that you are working on the same issues.

## **8. Invest in your relationships.**

Like any other relationship, your Main Street partners benefit from a regular investment of your time and support. Have a Plan and follow the Plan.

## **9. Have fun and be creative every time you reach out.**

After all, if it's not fun if it feels like work. Deliver balloons, send some cookies, dream up a Main Street mascot, hashtag them on Twitter!

## **10. The attitude of gratitude - say thanks every chance you get.**

If you take nothing else away from this Toolkit except #10, you will be successful. Recognize the people and groups that support you. Say thank you with letters, in person, on social media and in the newspaper. A little thanks and recognition will reap big rewards.



### Big Idea

Finally, monitor and evaluate your partnership program (see Appendix C) at least once a year when you update your Strategic Plan. What gets measured, gets done!



### Words of Wisdom

Don't reinvent the relationship wheel - find great examples of other partnerships at the National Main Street website, contact your DOLA staff at Colorado Main Street, and do a quick internet search for good ways to build and create partnerships that last. Appendix D: Examples of Arrangements and Agreements is a great place to start.

*"Our success has really been based on partnerships from the very beginning."* Bill Gates

# MIRROR, MIRROR: A Relationships Assessment

Now that you know why you should partner, and the steps that will create successful partnerships, it's time to do some reflection. Just like with any other Plan, think of your Partnership Plan like a road map. A critical question to ask is, "Where are we now? What's working well, what's not working well, and what is the current situation?" The answers to that assessment will put you on the map.

The next steps in your journey will include where you want to go and who you want to travel with! You'll make a list of possible partners and narrow that list (being strategic). Then you'll make your Plan and invest in those partnerships. Let's start with the mirror.

As in any area of business, taking a quick assessment of where you are right now is a strategic place to start. [Appendix A: An Assessment of Your Relationships](#) gives you a full assessment tool, but here are the critical questions to ask your Main Street team:

- ✓ What partners for Main Street exist in your community? ([Appendix B: A List of Potential Partners](#) can help you get started on a list!)
- ✓ What types of partnerships do you already have? (Hint: don't just think of funders. List your volunteers, your business owners in Main Street, your in kind partners that help with events and support you on social media. Partners come in all shapes and sizes!)
- ✓ How are they working? Be honest: is it a mutually beneficial relationship? Is Main Street helping them and are they helping Main Street?
- ✓ How would you rate your relationships? An easy scale is 1: working great, just need to continue to invest and support; 2: needs some time and attention to really be successful; or 3: needs evaluation to determine if we want to continue to partner.
- ✓ How would you improve them? Be specific. Would you have coffee? Would you share more information? Would you attend their events? Make sure you think about being in their shoes: if you were that partner, how would you want Main Street to improve the relationship?

- ✓ What tools do you currently use to maintain partnerships and relationships? (Face to face meetings, phone, letters, attendance at meetings, social media, Board membership, etc)
- ✓ Are community partners represented at Board meetings? Hint: they should be!
- ✓ Does your funding come from a variety of sources within (and outside) the community?
- ✓ How strong is your volunteer program? Strong volunteer programs can inject some fun and engaging new ideas to continue to motivate and encourage your supporters.
- ✓ Who attends important events? Do you get the right people at your events? That might include local and state elected officials, other Boards and Commissions, local philanthropists, business owners, tenants, or property owners.



## Bright Idea

Tackle this Assessment as a team - set aside 15 minutes at your next Board meeting and have each Board and staff member fill out the form. Then hand them over to your Manager and get the results by email within the week. Set time on the very next Board meeting to take the next steps in the process.



## The Honest Truth

Sometimes it helps to have someone outside of Main Street conduct your assessment. Often being so closely aligned with your organization doesn't give you the space needed to be honest about the current condition of your relationships! Plus, more people thinking about how to help improve partnerships is always a good thing.

*"If we are together nothing is impossible. If we are divided all will fail." – Winston Churchill*



# IDENTIFICATION: How Do You Choose?

## Identifying the Right Partners

Once you have completed an assessment of your existing partnerships and your desired partnerships (there's usually a gap to fill!) the next step is to agree to build a new relationship. And to do that, you need to identify the right partners.

Different community organizations (think potential partners) have distinct missions. Knowing the vision, mission, goals and responsibilities of each organization can help you forge mutually beneficial partnerships. Also, each type of organization has their own funding mechanism. Be aware and thoughtful of how your efforts overlap to ensure a great relationship with these valuable partners. Beginning with a broad list of potential partners, begin winnowing them down by asking:

- ☑ Why would they want to partner with our Main Street?
- ☑ What resources and benefits do we have to offer to them?
- ☑ What is the compelling story we will tell to a potential partner that defines a win/win result? [Appendix E: Sample Letter, Social Media, Press Releases](#) has some examples of story telling.
- ☑ What is it that Main Street needs from this partnership (contacts, funding, volunteer support, grant writing)? Can this partner provide that?
- ☑ What problems can you help your partners solve? No one will give money or time to an impossible situation. They need to have hope that their donation will meet a need. So offer hope and a picture of the future.

## Some of the most common partners for Main Street Programs can include

- ☑ City/Town
- ☑ County
- ☑ Chamber of Commerce
- ☑ Visitor/Tourism Bureau
- ☑ Special Improvement Districts
- ☑ Library Districts
- ☑ Hospitals
- ☑ Home Owners Associations
- ☑ Downtown Development Authority
- ☑ Business Improvement Districts
- ☑ Economic Development Corporations
- ☑ Service Clubs: Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis
- ☑ Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, FFA, FBLA
- ☑ School District
- ☑ Community Foundations
- ☑ Business owners
- ☑ Art Organizations
- ☑ Fire District
- ☑ Historical Society
- ☑ Elected Officials (local, state and federal)
- ☑ Community Philanthropists
- ☑ Property owners
- ☑ Tenants in Main Street
- ☑ Residents of the community
- ☑ Event sponsors
- ☑ Small Business Association
- ☑ Small Business Development Center



## Bright Idea

If you can't beat 'em, get them to volunteer for Main Street! For example, chamber board members often know local business and can be a great resource to connect with the local businesses. Visitor's Bureau folks are all about promoting the community, so they're a natural fit to help with events. Many Main Streets also serve on other organization's boards to keep an open dialogue between various groups.



## Keep In Mind

The Main Street Approach may be able to help you smooth out relationships with other community organizations by wrapping their efforts into your transformation strategies. Rather than trying to undertake all aspects associated with the four points, the Main Street Approach acknowledges that partnerships can span many organizations to affect change in a community. In fact, taking a holistic view of transformational strategies is more likely to succeed if it includes players beyond the Main Street Board.



# GET PERSONAL: Creating Partnership Opportunities



## Keep in Mind:

It's about what they want to invest in  
(not what you can offer).

Now that you have identified some potential partners that match your Vision and Mission, it's on to the next step: getting personal. Remember that people give to people to help people - This basic truth means that you must state your what Main Street needs in human terms whenever possible. Why would people and organizations decide to partner with you?

- ☑ They have appreciation for what you do.
- ☑ Your Main Street makes an impact on what they do and see.
- ☑ You are solving a problem for them as well.
- ☑ They benefit from the end result.



## Bright Ideas:

Make sure you know and can talk about the benefits of the Main Street Program, but more importantly, how Main Street can benefit your partners and potential partners. Practice talking to people about how historical preservation improves the community as a whole by attracting new investment. Take one of your programs and pretend you are asking for support from a specific partner. How would that Main Street Program help the Chamber? The local hospital? The school district? Pretend you are that partner and think of reasons you would (and would not) support Main Street. You're ready to go out and tell your story!

The key to your partnerships is to **tell your story**. Invite your supporters to help change the world! Instead of asking for funds that Main Street needs, invite partners to accomplish their goals by making downtown a better place. But you have to keep it real, and translate your story into a relatable case for supporting Main Street. Don't use jargon or acronyms. Instead, give your donors what they want - heart-warming stories about people in need, and how you help them thanks to this partnership. Many communities want to attract a wide range of ages to downtown, and many younger residents feel as if there is nothing to do downtown. So if your Main Street is contemplating gathering spaces (a small park, or even an improved area downtown with benches and lighting) tell that story: "Our teenagers have no welcoming and safe place to gather after school and talk with their friends. Our dream is to build a gathering spot, with four benches, trees for shade, and a planter for beauty and safety. When we are done, the younger generation in this Town will feel like they are part of this community. We need your help to purchase a bench - would you consider donating \$500?" If you have designs or photos, and a short brochure to leave behind, you have told a compelling story, shown the benefits, and engaged your partners on an emotional level. [Appendix E: Sample Letters, Social Media, Press Releases](#) has some great story telling examples, too.



## Program Manager's Corner:

Creating opportunities is a large part of what the Main Street Manager does every day. Reaching out, attending meetings, taking training opportunities, writing reports - those are all opportunities you can seize to tell the story of Main Street and make it personally relatable to potential partners.

*"A friendship founded on business is a good deal better than a business founded on friendship."*

— John D. Rockefeller

# BE STRATEGIC: Tie Into Your Vision and Mission

*“Strategic partnership is based on a shared set of values.” — Benigno Aquino III, Politician*

Every Main Street should have a Strategic Plan that has a Vision, Mission, Values, Goals, Projects, and Transformation Strategies. A Strategic Plan is an overall road map to success, keeping you on the right path and allowing you to make decisions based on the big picture.

Building partnerships should be just as strategic, and should have a Plan ([Appendix C: A Partnership Plan](#) can help) For example, relationships should be mutually beneficial, but not always equal all the time. All that homework you did with the Assessment and Identifying Partners will allow you to be very strategic and make great decisions that won't stress your Main Street resources and staffing.

★ **Understanding Roles** - Clearly understanding the roles you each play to support each other and accomplish your Mission is the first step. This can be captured in an agreement ([Appendix D: Examples of Arrangements and Agreement](#) is a good place to start) If you find a partner who does not have a similar Vision and Mission, it may not be strategically sound to invest time in building a relationship.

★ **Think long term** - Raising support through relationships is a long-term commitment that you need to make to Main Street. Many of your projects involve infrastructure improvements that will take many years to complete. Take the long-term view.

★ **Use long-term strategies** - Don't appeal to short-term motivators, such as fear, that raise plenty of short-term funds but not enough long-term friends. Instead, have plans for the future that show consistent forward progress. Some great analogies to use about your work would include retirement (investing in the future each day), health and wellness (working out each day so you can become and stay healthy 20 years from now). Many Main Street communities have a Vision for the future that dreams of historical preservation, family friendly gathering spots, and diverse retail. Those long term changes are important to share so your partners understand that long term Vision.

## Big Ideas



Small towns are the best, aren't they? You know everyone, everyone knows you...so use that to your advantage! Be an advocate, a champion, for relationships with Main Street. Be on the lookout to establish new relationships wherever you go: the grocery store, the playground, the high school football game - you never know who might become your partner.



## Bright Ideas:

**Have a plan** - know who you are going to reach out to meet, when, why, and what you will say (see [Appendix C: A Partnership Plan](#) for more information). Each year take a look at your Partnership Plan - use the Assessment Tool in [Appendix A](#) as a guide - and keep moving forward.

# INVESTING: Strengthen and Maintain Relationships

Want long term success in your relationships? Then invest in them! Communicate, provide proof, and promote the benefits of Main Street.

## The 3 C's: Communicate, Communicate, Communicate.

Did we say Communicate? Think of the organizations you volunteer your time to or donate money to their cause. How do they communicate with you? Give your partners enough information to make an informed opinion about their support. Anticipate the questions and objections that thoughtful people will raise about your organization, your mission and your story, and be prepared to answer them.

There are several common strategies for communication (all of which also encourage more involvement and commitment):

- ✓ Direct letters or newsletters updating on progress and giving information
- ✓ Annual appreciation dinners where recognition is given and new initiatives unveiled
- ✓ Social media updates via FaceBook, Twitter, or Instagram
- ✓ Direct emails that share information, have photos, and are inspiring and motivational
- ✓ Videos! Facebook, Twitter, Adobe Spark and many others offer a quick and easy way to share videos with your partners. Take advantage!

**Provide proof positive that you do what you say** - Describe your projects and how you are making progress. The majority of long term partners want to make a difference, and many want to know their last effort was put to good use the way they wanted - so show ample proof. One great way to provide proof is to describe a Return on Investment (ROI) - Treat your partners as thoughtful investors who care how their money is spent. Tell them what the return will be, even if you have trouble quantifying it. For example, you might not be able to track how much sales tax is related to a new mural, but you can definitely see that improvement! So take pictures of people smiling in front of the mural, or notes from people saying how much they liked the mural.

**Promote the benefits** - to the community and to the partners. And, don't just focus on the long term benefits (such as increased businesses, fewer vacant buildings, increase in sales tax). Instead, stress the difference their help makes in lives changed and problems solved today. You want relationships who believe in your cause, who want to help others more than they help themselves.

## The Honest Truth

No Main Street group can truly excel at all forms of communication. Pick a strategy and be the best you can be at that form of communication. The bare minimum? A website and a social media presence (recommend Facebook or Instagram). But a great email list is also important for communication.



## Word of Wisdom

Sometimes, especially in small towns, there will be competition over resources. Relationships can be frayed and memories can be long, so sometimes it's best to step back and find ways to support another partner in their efforts to secure funding. Don't "poach" existing relationships at the expense of another group in town.





# HAVE FUN: Reach out in Fun and Creative Ways

It's true - you need to have fun! And your partners need to enjoy being with you and supporting you, too! Remember, people WANT to support you and the work that you do. There's no need for a formal event or a special reason to build partnerships - you are literally creating relationships every day. So think about what makes you smile and turn that into an opportunity to tell your Main Street story.



## The Honest Truth

Sometimes there is discomfort, even dread, at the idea of reaching out and asking for support. "Fundraising" can be terrifying! So change that thought, and instead make it easy and fun. Ask people you know (remember: Get Personal) and make it comfortable for you and for them. Invite them to an event and offer to pay for that dinner. Ask them for coffee and take them on a walking tour of your project. You don't have to cold call and door knock to build a partnership!

## Fun ideas to build relationships

- ✓ Goofy awards or gifts. One agency gave away frog shaped gum ball dispensers as part of a reminder to change (based on the story of the frog in boiling water).
- ✓ Partnering with the Chamber, or Main Street business owners, for free coupons as a thank you (coffee, scone, burrito).
- ✓ T shirts, preferably very visual with a photo or catchy phrase.
- ✓ Thank you signs on your projects recognizing people and organizations that helped.
- ✓ One Main Street community partners with the historical group to give out historical photos of Main Street to people in the community
- ✓ A themed thank you party (come as your favorite construction sign, for example).
- ✓ A surprise gift of cookies or balloons from a Main Street business.

- ✓ A serenade or poem in honor of your partners.
- ✓ A hand written thank you note from a Board member
- ✓ An unusual gift: for the 2013 floods one community gave out squeeze stress balls in the shape of a port a potty (their sewer had failed). That same community gave awards for the best decorated port a potty - social media exploded!

The key is simply to enjoy yourself while making sure your partners enjoy themselves, too! People love to be recognized, but hate to have it be awkward. Each Main Street community has hidden talent and resources - don't be afraid to ask for creative ideas. At one meeting it was discovered a Board member was also an amateur magician!

## Bright Idea



If your town has a Western theme, think Cowboy Poetry Night (careful, though - those cowboys can be rough around the edges!). Think of a mascot for the next parade. Design a memorable event/fundraiser that would attract interest. Some Colorado examples include Frozen Dead Guy Days in Nederland, Mike the Headless Chicken in Fruita (he has his own Facebook page), the Coffin Races in Manitou Springs and more.

*"Never, ever underestimate the importance of having fun."*— Randy Pausch, Author

## ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE: Say Thanks Every Chance You Have

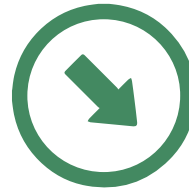
Given all you know now from reading this toolkit, this may be obvious. Say thank you early and often - Thank your partners promptly and personally every time they help out. Your relationships with your partners are built on mutual respect, trust, and being appreciate for what you offer them and what they are able to offer to Main Street. Above all, be heart felt and specific with your thanks.

You can leverage your appreciation by using some of the same communication techniques outlined above. When you write that informational newsletter, thank people or organizations by name. Those “goofy” awards mentioned? They are a great way to show your appreciation for special work. Give your volunteers a t-shirt, mug or even a bumper sticker. Feature another partner on your social media as you thank them for the help. Taking a page from successful Chambers, take photos at all of your events, and publish those photos with names. The more personal you can be with your appreciation, the more heartfelt it will be and your partners will appreciate it even more! A hand written note, stopping by their office to thank them personally, choosing a unique thank you gift that is personalized - let the relationship give you a guide as to the thank you!

### Words of Wisdom



Make sure to publicize your thanks, too - social media is a great and easy way to recognize and appreciate people! You can make it easy by following them on their social media page, then sharing what they post with a quick comment. See Appendix E: Letters, Social Media, Press Releases for more ideas.



### Program Manager's Corner

Make sure you ask your Board to thank your partners, and remind them. Not everyone is comfortable thanking publicly, so think of ways to make it easy on them! Keep a stock of cards unique to Main Street on hand for easy notes.



### The Honest Truth

Sometimes the Main Street Manager is NOT the best person to give appreciation, although they are a key part of your efforts. Usually the Board members, as the ambassadors and champions of Main Street, are the right people to thank your supporters. But, it's all about building relationships - if you know a potential partner personally, you are often THE BEST resource to reach out. If your Manager has an existing relationship, they can reach out. There is no exact answer - just don't expect one or two people to do all the heavy lifting.

*“Silent gratitude isn’t very much to anyone.”*  
— Gertrude Stein, American writer

## FINAL THOUGHTS

First, thank you for all you do for your community. Being a part of Main Street is a gift you have given that we truly appreciate. The work that you and your Main Street team are completing will leave a lasting legacy, improving your downtown and the whole area for years to come. Don't ever underestimate your influence and your ability to create change for the better!

Now that you have read (or even skimmed) this Community Building and Partnerships Toolkit, you have the basics needed to get out there and strengthen your programs. Remember these 10 steps:

1. Know your story.
2. Complete an assessment of your existing partnerships, and which partnerships you need but don't have.
3. Identify potential partners in the community.
4. Do your homework.
5. Get personal - really know your partners on a personal level.
6. Seize the opportunity to partner!
7. Be strategic.
8. Invest in your relationships.
9. Have fun and be creative every time you reach out.
10. The attitude of gratitude - say thanks every chance you get.

And when you have a few extra minutes, make sure to check out the Appendices for some more detail.

Appendix A: An Assessment of your Relationships

Appendix B: A List of Potential Partners

Appendix C: A Partnership Plan

Appendix D: Examples of Arrangements and Agreements

Appendix E: Samples: Letters, Social Media and Press Releases

Appendix F: FAQ's

Appendix G: List of Resources and Tools

Please, reach out to your DOLA staff, and other Main Street communities. We are all more successful together, and we are here to help support you in your work. Call or email any time!

## Colorado Main Street Program

### Colorado Department of Local Affairs

1313 Sherman Street, Room 521  
Denver, Colorado 80203  
Phone: 303.866.2369  
Fax: 303.866.4819  
[www.dola.colorado.gov](http://www.dola.colorado.gov)





## APPENDIX A: AN ASSESSMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS

In many communities, partnerships between Main Street and other community organizations and agencies are helping to create vibrant downtowns where businesses thrive. These partnerships bring together diverse individuals and groups, including land owners, business owners, residents, visitors, economic development organizations, local governments, and other nonprofits.

Creating a successful Main Street partnership is a complex, challenging, and time-consuming task. To be effective, partnerships need to engage in a thoughtful process to define a vision and clear strategies. Main Street needs to have effective governance and management structures to ensure that programs operate efficiently and the Main Street Board is responsive to community needs.

Main Street partnerships also need to draw from a broad range of perspectives and expertise—from inside the downtown as well as from other organizations and individuals within the community. Finally, Main Street partnerships need to connect, coordinate, and leverage resources from a variety of sources to support and continue their work.

This tool contains a series of checklists to assist Main Street and community leaders in creating and/or strengthening community Main Street partnerships.

- The first checklist helps you to assess the development of Main Street Partnerships.
- The second checklist helps you to take inventory of existing programs and services in or connected to Main Street that support your Vision and Mission.
- The third checklist helps you to identify the funding sources that support these programs and services.

Once completed, these checklists can serve as a planning tool to develop strategies to strengthen Main Street, improve coordination of existing programs and services, and/or to expand current levels of support.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP ASSESSMENT

Building and maintaining effective community partnerships requires dedicated time and ongoing attention to the collaborative process. This checklist focuses on the **process** of bringing partners together and working to achieve desired results. This checklist can help Main Street to focus on, assess, and improve the quality of their collaborative efforts.

Main Street has developed a clear vision.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Main Street has collaboratively identified the results we want to achieve for Main Street.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Main Street has successfully engaged a broad base of partners from a range of individuals and organizations representing the community. This can be seen through funding, attendance at events, and social media.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Main Street has developed strategies for coordinating and linking the array of supports and opportunities for Main Street.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Main Street has established a clear organizational structure. Main Street has agreed upon the roles that individual partners will play, and ensured that all partners understand and accept the responsibilities of those roles.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

All partners involved in Main Street understand who the other partners are, what organizations they come from, and what those organizations do.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Main Street regularly communicates with all partners to keep them informed about its work.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Main Street engages in activities to create awareness about and increase support for the work of Main Street.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Main Street has identified and requested resources (financial and other) from partner organizations and other entities throughout the community.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

The Main Street Board has representation from a wide range of community partners.

DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	AGREE
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

# MAIN STREET PROGRAMS AND SERVICE CHECKLIST

An important first step for Main Street and community leaders seeking to create or expand Main Street partnerships is to assess the broad range of resources that are currently available within or connected to their Main Street. Some of these programs and services may be directly managed by the Main Street Board; others may be managed by community organizations and agencies. This checklist helps you to take inventory of the programs and services already administered by Main Street and its partners. Once you know what programs and services exist, your challenge is to make sure these programs and services are strategically coordinated to achieve desired results and to identify new programs and services that may be needed.



Programs and Services	Program Administrator?			
	Main Street Board	Community Org (List)	Local Public Agency (List)	Other (List)
Historical Preservation				
Downtown Events				
Façade Improvements				
Business Attraction				
Business Retention				
Business Expansion				
Training				
Murals or Art				
Beautification (flowers, lights, benches)				
Capital infrastructure (sidewalks, etc)				
Other				
Other				
Other				

## FUNDING SOURCE ASSESSMENT

Once you've taken inventory of the current programs and services operating in or connected to your Main Street, the next step is to identify the sources of funding that support these services. (Don't forget volunteers and other in kind support!) In some cases, funding may come from federal, state, or local government agencies. In other cases, funding may come from private sources, such as community-based organizations or private foundations. Your funding should be like a retirement plan - as diverse and long standing as possible.

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SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR MAIN STREET PROGRAMS AND SERVICES	
Source of Support	<b>Funding Amount</b> Note if In Kind, Volunteer or Restricted?
<b>Community-Based Organizations</b> (i.e. YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, faith-based organizations)	
<b>Universities and Colleges</b> (i.e. work study or service learning students, professional development training)	
<b>Federal Funds</b> (i.e. transportation funds through CDOT, VISTA, AmeriCorps)	
<b>State Funds</b> (i.e. funds from state departments, OEDIT, etc)	
<b>City or County Funds</b> (i.e. funds from City Council, County incentives)	
<b>Private Foundations</b> (i.e. local community foundations, national foundations)	

Private Businesses	
Non-Profits (Rotary, Kiwanis, Boy Scouts)	
Participation Fees	
Volunteers	

## APPENDIX B: A LIST OF POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Considerations in any partnership will vary based on the kinds of organizations involved, as well as on the intensity and interdependence of the relationship you choose to have. Following are some categories of partnerships that will help you determine what kind of working and management relationship works best given your specific situation. **The key for you to establish and maintain successful partnerships is to find a way to build on the strengths of all partners in various categories.** Don't forget: Agencies at the Federal and state levels, universities, corporations, and national nonprofits have all provided support to partnerships with community impacts.

Helpful Hint: The assessment tool in **Appendix A** can also help define potential partners. A common list of partners for Main Street could include:

- ✓ City/Town
- ✓ County
- ✓ Chamber of Commerce
- ✓ Visitor/Tourism Bureau
- ✓ Special Improvement Districts
- ✓ Library Districts
- ✓ Hospitals
- ✓ Downtown Development Authority
- ✓ Business Improvement Districts
- ✓ Economic Development Corporations
- ✓ Service Clubs: Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis
- ✓ School District
- ✓ Community Foundations
- ✓ Business owners
- ✓ Art Organizations
- ✓ Historical Society
- ✓ Elected Officials (local, state and federal)
- ✓ Community Philanthropists
- ✓ Property owners
- ✓ Tenants in Main Street
- ✓ Residents of the community
- ✓ Event sponsors
- ✓ Small Business Association
- ✓ Small Business Development Center

**Tip:** Partnerships can fall into different categories.



Diverse organizations often join forces to achieve shared goals around community improvement. Several types of partnerships are described below:

- Partnerships among community-based nonprofit service organizations
- Cross-sector partnerships (between nonprofits and the business, government, and/or academic sectors)
- Partnerships between donor organizations and recipients

For resources see [Appendix G: List of Resources and Tools](#)

When community-based nonprofits join forces, each organization must have the organizational capacity necessary to manage projects, budgets, and staff involvement. In community-based partnerships, decision-making should be inclusive and deeply engage the community itself.

Consider the following four categories of properties that are important in a community partnership:

1. Leadership - There are many styles of leadership in both formal and informal organizational structures. The key is noting who is providing the leadership in the partnership.
2. Funding - A partner can bring resources to the table in several ways: actual funding, access or links to funding, and/or a cooperative approach to secure funding.
3. Goals - If your partner doesn't have funding, they can often help with goals. Goals can be developed through consensus or they can be accepted because one party in the discussion is the "expert."
4. Process - Decision processes in community organizations and community institutions can be either inclusive or exclusive. Important to community development is how actively, and deeply, the community was engaged.

Cross-sector partnerships are simple to initiate but challenging to maintain. Regardless of the goodwill of the participants, two very different organizational cultures must come together to produce results. One key is to find common ground and use shared language that underscores the vision of the partners.

Cross-sector partnerships are between organizations from different fields: non-profits, business, government, and academic. These partnerships can be challenging to maintain over time because you often have divergent needs and cultures. However, within cross-sector partnerships this weakness can be turned into a strength. The key is to find common ground and purpose that everyone in the partnership has a stake in.

**Benefits to Partners** Why should potential partners participate in a cross-sector relationship? What benefits will result in their favor? They are connected to the community and can build infrastructures that can create long-term capacity. They are more representative of community concerns. And while Main Streets are often required to provide certain geographic connections to maintain funding, other types of organizations are not required to do so and can therefore enable access to greater funding resources. Moreover, this type of cross-sector partnership provides Main Street with greater citywide/region-wide connections and provides the other organizations with greater grassroots connections. Another benefit for governmental/business/academic organizations is the positive public perception regarding the interest and commitment to the community and its development. These organizations also benefit from being able to participate in community development without having to deal with political and legal regulations, permit issues, etc. The result of a cross-sector partnership is a win-win situation for all the parties involved.

**Partnerships between donors and recipients** can create confusion. Is the partnership just about receiving money? This type of partnership aims to take advantage of what the recipient, as well as the donor, can bring to the relationship. For instance, this might include local expertise, on-site workers, or clarification of priorities and constraints. Donors can't coerce recipients, for the sake of obtaining resources, into doing things they don't want to do. Together, both sides must define the terms of the relationship.

A partnership is not a gift. A partnership aims at taking advantage of what the recipient, as well as the donor, can bring to the relationship. This can include local expertise, on-site workers, and a better understanding of priorities, needs, and constraints. Even more important, a partnership seeks joint "ownership" of the relationship and tries to build the capacity of the recipient to undertake sustainable development. A partnership is not a relationship based on "if...then" terms. This means that donors cannot impose conditions to coerce Main Street to do things that they don't want to do to obtain resources they need. A partnership recognizes that both sides must be involved in defining the terms of the relationship.

In a donor partnership, the donor cannot prescribe the terms of the relationship in the way that an employer can specify terms of employment when hiring a worker. A partnership is not simply a "team" activity. In an ideal sports team, everyone has the same interest in winning, and the team members win or lose together. While the members of a partnership development certainly have strong interests in common, they are likely to have some divergent interests too. Finally, although the formal terms of a partnership may be expressed in a valid contract under international law, the donor and recipient usually have no intention of using courts to resolve their

conflicts. Instead, like nations bound by treaties, partners rely mainly on each other's need to maintain a good reputation to secure future agreements.

**Remember: Partnerships can also be thought of by type of relationship.**

This list of partnership types might help you determine what kind of relationship you want to establish.

- Collaboration involves great autonomy and no permanent organizational commitments or combined services. Examples: sharing information; coordinating efforts. Offers greater autonomy, no permanent organizational commitment
- Strategic alliance involves shared or transferred decision-making power. Examples: Joint programming such as a program or event of mutual interest to participating organizations' missions'; administrative consolidation of one or more functions, such as accounting or grant writing (partners still operate independently). Benefits are that decision-making power is shared or transferred.
- Integration involves changes to organizational structure and control mechanisms. Examples: joint ventures (two or more organizations create a new structure to advance a program-related function); mergers (previously separate organizations combine program/administrative/governance functions)
- Funding alliances are established to provide or share funds, this requires Main Street to come together in a recipient-donor relationship or share a larger grant/donation. Issues of fiscal and administrative management can be a great hindrance, so often a separate body can be created to manage the funds and allocate them to each partner organization as determined in the original agreement.
- Cost-sharing occurs when each organization provides different resources, such as facilities, staff, or equipment. Both partners share the benefits; both share the costs
- Grant-match occurs when one organization provides a grant and the recipient provides a match in services, cash, maintenance, supplies, or volunteers.

## APPENDIX C: A PARTNERSHIP PLAN

Sustaining a variety of nonprofit organizations is positive and healthy for a community as it provides for a wide-array of approaches, leadership opportunities, individual choices and customization at the local level. However, the effectiveness of a community's nonprofit organizations also depends on successful relationships with one another as well as with businesses and government. Regardless of form, these relationships can serve a variety of purposes, including resource sharing, policy influence and improved operational efficiency. While nonprofits operate in both cooperative and competitive environments, strong relationships can strengthen both the capacity of individual organizations and the sector.

As your Main Street approaches the idea of partnerships, there are a few basics to keep in mind:

- Need for Partnership - is there a need that you can solve for them? Can they help you with your needs?
- Clarity of Leadership - are you, and is your partner, ready for this partnership?
- Clarity of Understanding - who will be doing what at what time?
- Different cultures/practices - are your Vision, Mission and Values aligned enough to make this a success?
- Clear Purpose - why are you partnering?
- High Commitment Levels and Trust - without commitment and trust a partnership will fail.
- Clear Working Arrangements - see [Appendix D](#) for some ideas on agreements
- Performance Management Systems - measure and evaluate!

### 7- Step Plan to Attract and Keep Partners

*Some content from a web post Simon Mainwaring which can be found at <http://www.bethkanter.org/7-step-np-plan/>*

One of the biggest opportunities for Main Street success is building partnerships. That said one of the toughest hurdles every Main Street faces is how to present the opportunity in a way that inspires interest and commitment from a potential partner. Surprisingly, many Main Streets fail to secure valuable partnerships not because the companies are too busy or disinterested, but because they fail to frame the it in the right way.

If there's a single mistake behind most failed partnership attempts, it's this: **Too many non-profits approach companies with their cause in mind, rather than explaining how working together will help your partner.** This is not to say that the



cause, whether it be pedestrian safety, beautification or economic viability, does not carry a compelling moral imperative that is reason enough for someone to get involved. It simply fails to recognize that their audience - time-poor, overloaded and busy partners - respond far better to a **solution to an existing problem** than the addition of a new one.

Main Street must follow seven key steps to attract the attention of a corporate partner and maintain their partnership over time.

**1. Study your audience:** Every partner has specific business objectives, unique core values, and several targeted audiences that they are trying to reach. By opening your presentation with an understanding of their Vision, Mission and Values, you have instantly position a partnership as a benefit rather than a burden.

**2. Distinct point of view:** Many non-profits confuse the cause they support as their brand, when in fact you need to have a distinct point of view on that cause to stand out and align effectively with a partner. For example, is the focus of your work improving the business economy on Main Street or funding capital improvements to historic buildings? Specificity on your part will help to clarify your alignment or provide that partner with much need specificity.

**3. Customer engagement:** The most effective way to ensure a partner commits its resources to your efforts is to show the partner how working together will benefit the work that they do. Only then will the partner commit the time, creativity and resources.

**4. Creative content:** Every partner is burdened with the need to create more content to feed multiple social media channels. By explaining how your team can help co-create branded content using different media, you can position the partnership to ease this burden while enhancing the partner's reputation.

**5. Celebrate success:** Every partner is seeking to mitigate risk and earn customer goodwill, and Main Street work is an important part of that effort. But these efforts will only build the partner's reputation if the success stories are told. So be sure to position a partnership in terms of content creation that celebrates their social impact earning customer loyalty, goodwill and sales (for your corporate or for profit partners).

**6. Measurement:** While partners are interested in leveraging resources, they are still faced with justifying the cost of a partnerships. A powerful way to overcome this obstacle is to include the metrics by which success will be measured both in terms of the impact and the value. Such accountability will give confidence to commit to the partnership and help them sell it internally.

**7. Leadership engagement:** Every CEO is now charged with the responsibility of being the face of their organization. By designing a role for leadership within your

partnership efforts, and sharing this engagement with employees and volunteers, you can secure greater executive support and offer additional benefits including improved employee satisfaction and productivity.

The theme of these seven points is how a non-profit must frame a partnership in ways that solve existing problems for the partner. As with any relationship, once the benefit to the other party is clear they will more readily share their time, expertise and resources. Without such an approach, the best of intentions and heart-felt commitment can fall on deaf ears, leaving both parties and the community at large the poorer.

### Ongoing Components of Your Plan

Now that you've done the **Assessment (Appendix A)**, Identified the **List of Potential Partners (Appendix B)** and are ready to be personal and strategic with your outreach, keep this in mind as the next few steps in making sure you have a Plan for the right partners:

- ✓ Plans should **align** with Main Street's mission, vision and values.
- ✓ Your Board should **actively adjust** plans to ensure that assumptions and activities adapt to changes.
- ✓ Plans should be based on a **careful assessment** of the multiple resources necessary for implementation, including human resources, financial, relational, and organizational commitment.
- ✓ Main Street should create plans with **evaluation in mind**, assessing what processes and goals they intend to use and how they will measure their successful completion.
- ✓ Plans should be informed by a **review of the external factors** that affect your operating environment, considering the opportunities for action or collaboration and threats to success or sustainability.
- ✓ Main Street should be responsive to community needs and **actively engage and gather input** from a variety of sources, such as the board, staff and community members, and other constituents.
- ✓ Main Street should **confer with their counterparts** to determine the need for services, the best practices in delivering them and the effective use of community resources.
- ✓ Always provide **timely notice of significant changes** to partner organizations or constituents who depend on or are making plans reliant on the organization's availability of services.

Something to avoid: ambiguity (or even conflict) regarding the division of responsibility between a partnership and the individual partners. Appendix D has some examples of agreements and arrangements to help with clarity and other issues.

Clear procedures are needed for everyone to understand how agreements on action will be taken and to help create a sense of shared responsibility for achievements and

failures of the partnership. These procedures should be agreed upon in writing, setting out the key aims, objectives, and outcomes of the partnership. These documents could take the form of a legal contract, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or just a letter of agreement. Keep in mind that the partnership needs to constantly review its purpose, goals, and targets.

### Some Strategies for Creating Connections

Before you hop right into the documents (see Appendix D) you should take a few moments to strategize, and be aware of your own time, resources, and ability to partner. A few strategies that might help:

1. You should be aware of ongoing developments and changes in Main Street, including opportunities for coordination or joint action with other organizations.
2. You should seek appropriate strategic partnerships and alliances to achieve organizational goals, increase impact and strengthen connections.
3. Decisions regarding strategic alliances should be consistent with the strategic goals and advance the missions of all partners.
4. Absolutely you should determine what resources would be required in a potential alliance, the availability of those resources and the estimated cost in comparison to the anticipated benefit to accomplishing Main Street's mission.
5. Agreements should establish clear roles and responsibilities. They should also include ways to ensure accountability and rules that allow for changing the alliance agreement or ending it.
6. Your board should assess on an ongoing basis whether resources are being used wisely and participating organizations are fulfilling their agreed-upon roles.
7. Main Street should coordinate their activities with other organizations providing similar or complementary services in their communities.
8. Main Street should work to establish communication channels, mutual understanding and beneficial alliances among government, nonprofit and for-profit sectors to take advantage of the total resources and interests of the community.
9. When possible and appropriate, Main Street should assist nonprofits in the community through alliances and sharing of resources, connections and expertise.

Now you are ready for the next step – a checklist! (Who doesn't love a good checklist?) Some source content came from

<http://www.strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/guidebooks/Partnerships.pdf>

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## CHECKLIST FOR SETTING UP AND MAINTAINING THE PARTNERSHIP

Quick tips for setting up and maintaining the partnership (in case the longer version makes your eyes cross!) Answers to these questions (and a written agreement) are the minimum steps you should take to have a great partnership!

- Agree on the structure, process, and support mechanisms for the partnership
- Agree on the main purpose/priorities
- Agree on the performance management process (how do we know when we are successful?)
- Identify a work program (who is doing what?)

If you really want to be successful, look at these questions and jot down your thoughts in the space provided. Like any great relationship, getting some of these answers will provide a solid foundation for years of success!

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Is there a genuine shared vision and set of goals across the partnership? A common understanding of, and agreement to, the vision and objectives needs to be reflected in any project brief, strategic plan, or work program.

Document the vision and agreed goals:

Are there clearly identified goals and projects that all partners can articulate and agree to? The partnership's aims and goals need to be reflected in its actions and practices.

Document goals and projects:

Is the purpose of the partnership clear? Are the members clear on what their role and responsibilities are? Are members clear on the "added value" of the partnership? Members need to agree and understand what their role and responsibilities are within the context of the purpose and outcomes of the partnership. Members need to understand their role in collective decision-making, delivering activities, and representing the partnership.



Document roles and responsibilities of members:

What skills and competencies do we need to manage and support the partnership? Has a full assessment been made of the skill and competencies required to support/manage the partnership? The partnership needs to understand what skills and competencies it will need to achieve the agreed goals, as well as to ensure processes are effective. Consideration will need to be given to making training resources available.

Document skills and competencies:

To whom will the partnership report? Is there a process to report on progress?

Document the lines of accountability/reporting processes:

Is there an accepted process for decision-making? Who is the accountable individual for the partnership? The decision-making process needs to be understood by all members of the partnership. Decisions should be made through recognized processes with partners having equal power. Processes for decision-making need to define a quorum, how decisions will be recorded, and arbitration processes.

Document processes for decision-making:

Is there an accepted performance management framework? Are processes in place to monitor performance and act on results? Do defined criteria exist against which to benchmark achievements? Individuals responsible for delivery of the plan to the partnership need to be specified.

Document the performance management framework and key performance indicators:

Is there an accepted commitment to joint investments/resources to support the partnership by all the organizations/individuals? Resources mean more than just money; they include time, knowledge, energy, and personnel.

Document the accepted commitment to joint investment/resources:

Is there a robust communication strategy in place? Do partners know about each other's organizations and what the pressures and imperatives are? Do partners talk to each other about their organizations agendas and priorities? It is important to have an effective communication system in place at all levels within the partnership and within partner organizations, sharing knowledge and information.

Document the communication strategy:

Are there accepted ground rules for partnership work that include the reconciliation of different organizational cultures and ways of working? Being open and honest, communicating, and exchanging information in open networks will also help to build trust within the partnership.

Document accepted ground rules:

Is there an accepted approach for partners to invest time so they can identify and agree to the vision, goals, and targets? It is important at the initial stages of setting up the partnerships that members agree on the vision, goals, and targets. Don't forget to schedule time throughout the year to review these goals and targets, checking that they are on track.

Document the process established to agree on vision, goals and targets, and how these will be monitored and evaluated:

Is there a clear, measurable plan for administering the partnership? Is the plan clearly linked to partnership aims and objectives, and do all parties agree to this plan? Any partnership needs to have structure and processes so members clearly understand its purpose, aims, objectives, and outcomes. The plan should also identify the process to review/update aims and outcomes when monitoring reveals it is out of date or reflects changing circumstances.

Document the administration plan:

Are there clear processes in place to ensure all new members of the partnership are well informed of its purpose, aims, and objectives? As the partnership grows and existing members leave, new members will come on board. It is important that each new member has a clear understanding of the purpose of the partnership. Spend time to induct new members into understanding and supporting the partnership's aims.

Document the "orientation processes" utilized for new members:

## APPENDIX D: EXAMPLES OF AGREEMENTS

### Setting Up and Maintaining the Partnership

A formal and very important part of collaboration is the need to develop a contract, or other type of written agreement delineating the details of a partnership. The first thing to think about is whether a formal contract is the correct document to choose, or whether another type of agreement would be sufficient.

**Contract:** A contract will be the right document for a major collaborative undertaking like a merger or a joint venture. A contract is legally binding and enforceable in a court of law, and will protect the interests of each organization participating in the collaboration. Each organization's specific obligations will be noted, and the document will follow the necessary elements of offer (one of the collaborating parties puts forth an offer of terms for the contract), acceptance (the other party agrees to the offered arrangement), and consideration (a bargain in which each party offers something of value, or promises to perform designated duties, according to the terms of the arrangement).

**Memorandum of understanding (MOU):** An MOU will serve a similar purpose as a contract, but it is not as strict or formal, and it is not usually legally binding. Much like a contract, the document will outline the goals, expectations, and duties involved in the collaboration, but it tends to be more direct, brief, and lacking the types of complex terms and conditions that are included in a contract. An MOU can be a good option for a more informal partnership, or it can sometimes be used as an early form of agreement before a more official contract is drafted.

Under some circumstances an MOU can be deemed legally binding - particularly if the language used is comparable to that of a contract, or if the MOU features the elements of an offer, acceptance, and consideration - and if you are certain that you do not want your agreement to be legally binding, you should be sure to say so within the document. Be advised, though, that if you proceed with a non-binding agreement, you are missing out on the protections that a contract would provide.

<http://www.ecomii.com/business/memorandum-of-understanding> is a great article to read on developing the MOU.

A much less formal letter of agreement is also a good approach, when the partnership is more of a collaboration or help with an event. Whether you opt for a formal contract or a slightly simpler document like a memorandum of understanding or letter, here are some of the key points that your document should cover:

**Goal/vision for partnership.** Be clear on the specific aim of your collaboration. Why are you partnering with each other and what do you each plan to get out of it? Determine whether you are working together to broaden the reach of your organizations, or to tackle a specific issue or project together, or for reasons of



financial sustainability, or any other type of purpose. Note whether this entails a formal or an informal partnership, and whether it will be short-term or long-term.

Given the complicated nature of collaborations and the possibility for unexpected challenges to crop up along the way, make sure that each organization has a thorough understanding and agreement on what the collaboration is about before delving in too far. Having this information in writing will ensure that everyone is on the same page, and will cement the commitment of each group to the pursuit of the common goal.

**Division of control/responsibility.** Think about each partner's role in the collaboration, the way the work will be divided, and the level of control each group will have. Will this be a 50/50 partnership or is one organization taking the lead? If one of the players will be taking on a dominant role, this is important to make very clear in any written agreement, to avoid problems later.

In addition, what will each organization bring to the table? Are there certain tasks that both will share? Create a list of the responsibilities that each organization will handle, and note any that will be shared by both. This way, if there is ever any confusion or forgetfulness concerning either organization's duties, they will already have been clearly defined in the agreement.

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Finally, it will be useful to designate at least one point person to coordinate the collaboration and act as the official contact for any issues that come up. If possible, assemble a management team to handle the coordination aspect.

**Timetable for the collaboration.** Do you see this as a permanent alliance, or are your organizations joining forces for a set time to work toward a concrete goal? Your written agreement should note the length of time for which the collaboration is scheduled, along with designated points for review of the agreement.

**What other things should you consider before putting an agreement into writing?**

**Is this the right partner?** It's crucial to know your partnering organization thoroughly before diving into your collaboration. Make sure that the goals, values, management style, reputation, and ethics are all compatible with your own. You need to be able to trust each other, and you need a good grasp on each other's strengths and weaknesses before you sit down to create any written agreement.

**Have you done your due diligence?** As part of ensuring that you've chosen the right partner, you should perform due diligence before arriving at the stage of drafting contracts and agreements. Review your potential partner's finances, programs, licenses, contracts, and any other relevant documents. You should also discuss the impending collaboration with your funders in advance.

**Have you chosen the correct structure?** Think over the goals of your collaboration carefully before settling on a structure for the partnership.

- Looking for a very loose, simple partnership with like-minded groups? Consider forming a network.
- Do you want to band together to address a very specific mission? A coalition might be appropriate.
- Interested in something more formal and closely tied? You might want to consider mergers or joint ventures.

If you're looking to explore collaboration agreements and contracts further, there are some great samples to be found online, such as [this one](#) from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's site, or [this one](#) from the Insight Center for Community Economic Development. In addition, Don Griesmann's Nonprofit Blog has a helpful post on [putting together collaborative agreements](#).

This example agreement is for illustrative purposes only - you should always check with your legal advisor on any agreement!

EXAMPLE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT  
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
EXAMPLE MAIN STREET  
AND  
MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER

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This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) describes the responsibilities and expectations between Example Main Street (Example Main Street), Lead Organization, and Most Awesome Partner Ever (MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER), Community Organization Partner, for the use of funds received through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) Communities Empowering Youth (CEY) Program for the YOUTH NEEDS CAPACITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP. The purpose of this partnership is to build our capacity to address youth violence issues in our community.

Example Main Street is partnering with MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER to carry-out the CEY program. The Partnership contains three components: (1) community needs assessments; (2) training and technical assistance provided by Example Main Street to MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER for capacity building to meet the needs of youth who are at-risk of being involved with gang activity, youth violence, and/or domestic abuse and neglect; and (3) financial assistance provided by Example Main Street to MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER to implement capacity building activities.

## RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

For the CEY program, *EXAMPLE MAIN STREET* serves as the “lead” organization. As the lead organization, Example Main Street is responsible for the following:

- Ensuring that the program activities and finances of the Partnership are in compliance with CEY requirements and Federal regulations;
- Providing direct technical assistance and training services to MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER by Example Main Street staff professionals, as needed for MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER capacity building;
- Providing “financial assistance” (CEY grant funds) to MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER, to be used by MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER to finance capacity building activities;

- At MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER's request, and with regard specifically to the "financial assistance," acting as fiscal agent for MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER for purposes of contracting technical assistance and training services or undertaking other procurement actions on behalf of MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER;
- Serving as the coordinator for the multiple community assessments and evaluation activities for the Partnership; and
- Reporting the results of the Partnership activities and accomplishments to HHS.

Under this Agreement, MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER agrees to:

- Actively participate in the community assessments and evaluations;
- Complete an organizational self-assessment, with Example Main Street support, to determine the priority capacity building needs for MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER and its partners as they relate to youth at risk of becoming involved in gang activity, youth violence, and/or domestic abuse and neglect;
- Develop a detailed capacity building plan based on the organizational self-assessment, including, timelines, budgets, sources of technical assistance and training, clearly defined anticipated outcomes and specific indicators to measure results;
- Arrange for and ensure participation in capacity building activities by staff and Board members of MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER and its partner organizations;
- Provide monthly reports to Example Main Street on MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER capacity building activities undertaken in pursuit of CEY program objectives, using the sample format in Attachment A;
- Comply with all local, state or Federal laws and regulations regarding the use of funds provided through the Partnership (per Attachment B); and
- Submit a final report at the end of the MOU period listing MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER's major accomplishments and outcomes attributable to the CEY program.

## DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

For direct technical assistance and training services provided to MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER by Example Main Street professional staff, Example Main Street will cover all costs directly.

For “financial assistance” (CEY grant funds made available by Example Main Street to MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER pursuant to the CEY program), funds will be administered in two ways:

- a) Advance/liquidation of funds: When needed and requested by MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER, Example Main Street will advance funds to MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER. MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER will submit to Example Main Street a monthly advance liquidation invoice, including a description of expenditures incurred with detailed back-up and/or receipts. Additional advances will be made by Example Main Street to MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER as needed, covering anticipated MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER requirements for the succeeding month.
- b) Funds administered by Example Main Street on MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER’s behalf: At MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER’s request, Example Main Street will act as MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER’s fiscal agent to administer the “financial assistance” funds. Example Main Street will contract for technical assistance and training services, and undertake other procurements, per instructions from MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER. In these instances, Example Main Street will be solely responsible for the accounting and administration of the relevant expenditures.

#### TIME PERIOD

This Agreement covers the first year of the CEY program, corresponding to the period from October 1, 20xx through September 30, 20xx. If the CEY program is extended for a second and third year, as currently anticipated, the time period of the Agreement will be modified subject to amendments signed by the two parties.

#### TERMINATION

*EXAMPLE MAIN STREET* may terminate this Agreement, in whole or in part, with or without cause, with a seven (7) day written notice of termination. Such notice shall be given in writing MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER and shall be sent via certified or registered mail with return receipt requested.



## Signatures of Authorized Representatives

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Jo Smith

President

Example Main Street

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Steve Jones

Chair

Most Awesome Partner Ever

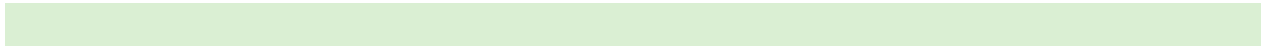
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Date

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Date



## ATTACHMENT A (SAMPLE MONTHLY REPORT)

**Organization Name:** MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER

**Reporting Period:** (insert month, e.g., June 20xx)

**Reporting Date:** (ten days following end of month, e.g., July 10, 20xx)

**Brief Overview of the Capacity Building Plan:** Most Awesome Partner Ever, through direct technical assistance and training services provided by Example Main Street, as well as “financial assistance” (grant funds) provided by Example Main Street, is undertaking a multifaceted capacity building program. To date, the MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER program has consisted of ..... (summary of most important activities underway or completed).

**Summary of Activities in Current Reporting Period:** During this period MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER has ..... (detailed summary of all activities undertaken in the month under review).

**Problems Encountered, Solutions, Observations during Reporting Period:** (provide detailed information for consideration by Example Main Street and MOST AWESOME PARTNER EVER).

**Attachments:** (provide copies of relevant consultant, training, assessments and other reports that have not been submitted previously).

## APPENDIX E: SAMPLE LETTERS, PRESS RELEASES, SOCIAL MEDIA

Remember the 3 C's from the Toolkit? Communicate, communicate and communicate! Reach out and share your story! Personally is best, but leverage your writing skills to reach a larger group of supporters, or when you don't have time to reach everyone individually. Three great ways to do that: letters, press releases and social media.

### EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE FUNDRAISING LETTERS

This information (with minor changes for Main Street) is from <https://www.thebalance.com/samples-and-templates-for-nonprofit-organizations-2502286>

Quick Tips:

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1. **Personalize your letter.** Use first names if possible. Spell the name right. Never call a Ms. a Mr. Never start a letter with "Dear Friend."
2. **Thank the donor for his or her past support.** There's nothing worse than writing to a long-time donor as though he never gave before. Look it up. Say thanks first before you ask again.
3. **Tell a story.** Stories win out over facts hands down. Collect heart-warming stories from the people you serve so that you always have a good one to include in your fundraising letter.
4. **Make the donor the hero.** Don't talk about your organization very much. Talk about the great good your donor can do by donating.
5. **Write conversationally.** This is no time to show off your big words. Tell your story and make your pitch as though you're talking to a good friend, your next-door neighbor, or your grandmother.
6. **Make a specific ask.** So much money is left on the table by charities that never say exactly what they want the donor to do. Say what you need and for what and when you need it.

From <https://www.thebalance.com/examples-of-effective-fundraising-letters-2502074>

## Here Are Five Example Thank You Letters for Partners (and Volunteers!):

### *1. Create a picture in your donor's mind. Help her "see" the people she helps.*

Dear Deborah,

Thanks to you, Michael and his sister, Janet, celebrated Michael's 9th birthday with cake and balloons in a safe and loving place.

They are no longer scared and love having their very own rooms.

Thank you for your recent generous gift of \$100 to Children's Residential Services of Greater Boston. Your willingness to help displaced children in our community weather the crises in their lives makes all the difference for children just like Michael and Janet.

Thanks to you, we have provided 250 children just this year with a place to live, learn, and feel safe.

Your donation will help purchase new computers for our kids over the next six months. The children are eager for the new computers so that they can do their homework and communicate with friends and family.

The computers are part of our Excellence in Service Campaign that will make our home even nicer for Michael, Janet, and their new friends. You and other people like you have brought us closer to our goal of \$50,000 for that campaign.

We would love to give you a tour so you can meet some of the 15 staff and 50 children who are now with us. We love to show off our comfy home, and the kids enjoy meeting visitors. One or two might even show you what they can do with their new computers.

Janet Teebs, our development director, is always available to set up a visit for you or to answer any questions you may have. Don't hesitate to call her at 520-446-0912, or email her at [janetteebbs@CRS.com](mailto:janetteebbs@CRS.com).

We would love to keep you in the loop with our emails and newsletter. You can sign up for those at our site, [www.crc.org](http://www.crc.org).

Again, thank you for all you do for our kids. You are a part of their lives too.

Sincerely,

Malcolm Wexter  
Executive Director

P.S. We depend on volunteers to help us. If you would like to share your time, just let Janet know, and she will ask our volunteer coordinator to get in touch. We have frequent introductions to our work for volunteers. We would be delighted to see you there.

*2. If one story is good, are more stories better? Well, not better but just as good, as this example of a thank you letter shows.*

Dear James,

First, let me just say, thank you!

Your recent donation of \$150 means that you understand just how valuable riding a horse can be to a child with cognitive or physical challenges.

But let me tell you what our services at Therapeutic Riding of Atlanta mean to some of the children who come to our classes.

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- One little boy with severe cerebral palsy learned how to sit up tall on his horse. His mother was so proud and said, "I never thought he'd be able to do so well. If he can do this, what else can he do?"
- A young girl who had never said a word suddenly said "go" to her horse.
- Because she built her confidence by riding, one little girl is no longer afraid to be on the playground swings.
- A child who had trouble walking by himself started doing so after only a few times on a horse.
- A young girl could speak louder in her classroom because she had become stronger and her respiration better from riding her horse.

Although these victories may seem small to the average person, you know that they are not. That's why you gave, and why the kids we serve and we are full of gratitude for your generosity.

Donors like you help make our therapeutic riding possible, ensure that our horses are well fed, housed, and trained, and guarantee that we can offer scholarships to children and their families who could not, otherwise, afford these life-enhancing activities.

We want you to be an active member of our community too. Please visit our website at [www.tra.org](http://www.tra.org) to sign up for our emails and newsletters. And do watch for invitations to our events such as Horsin' Around, Hearts & Horses, and the special tours we offer all year round.



We are volunteer intense and would love for you to experience the joy of helping a child ride a horse. Just indicate your interest at our website or call volunteer coordinator, Sandy Converse, at xxx-xxxx. Volunteers get to wear some great t-shirts too!

Again, thank you! We love your support.

Best always,

Lilly Anderson

Executive Director

P.S. As a special thanks, we will be adding you to our exclusive circle of friends and listing your name in our annual report and our newsletter. Please stop by our ranch soon so we can say thanks in person.

*3. Mailing thank you letters to donors creates a lasting bond that will bring in funds year after year. Reconnect the donor with your mission, mention your specific programs, and restate the need. Let the giver know just what his or her donation did, the results it made possible.*

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Dear Frank and Louise,

This week, thanks to your help, we moved Tom and Francis, a senior couple in their 80s, into a bright, well-furnished apartment in a community devoted to the health and happiness of our older citizens.

No longer isolated in a hard-to-reach walk up in a high-rise building, Tom and Francis now have easy access to the services they need. Plus, they will receive two meals a day and participate in healthy and fun activities ranging from exercise classes to community field trips.

Thank you for your thoughtful donation of \$250 to the Wildthorne County Agency on Aging. Your donation will make sure that older people in our county, such as Tom and Francis, thrive.

As you know, more than 30 percent of our seniors live on small, fixed incomes. The Agency on Aging provides meals, rent subsidies, counseling, recreation, and health care for many of them.

Because of you, we can keep helping older people in distress. Donations from caring people like you help us make up for cuts in our state and local government funding.

Truthfully, we could not do this without you. We, and those we serve, sincerely appreciate your generosity.

Sincerely,

Merry Baker

Development Director

P.S. Please call me at any time at xxxxx if you have questions, would like an update on what we're doing, or wish to volunteer at one of our sites. We would love to meet you in person so we can say thanks, face-to-face.

*4. I loved this warm letter from Best Friends Animal Society for my monthly donation.*

Dear Joanne,

The healing starts with a tiny spark ... a glimmer of hope in soft, soulful eyes.

And for homeless pets with serious injuries who come to Best Friends, the hope and the healing are all because of you.

Thank you so very much for your recent donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to Best Friends Animal Society and our Guardian Angel Program!

Your kind gift is already creating miracle recoveries for the special needs pets of Best Friends. You're helping give these grateful strays the time and attention they need to heal, with state-of-the-art tests, lifesaving surgeries, gentle rehabilitation therapies and more. Plus, plenty of love from Best Friends staff and volunteers!

We'll share the stories of the extra-special friends being helped by your generous gift, in coming editions of our regular newsletter and in Best Friends magazine. If you have any questions in the meantime, give us a call at XXX-XXXX.

With best wishes and our sincere gratitude,

Gregory Castle

Best Friends Animal Society

P.S. Follow their progress, as these furry and feathered friends are transformed by your love and support, in the Guardian Angel section of the Best Friends website at [www.bestfriends.org](http://www.bestfriends.org). Thanks again!

5. *Are you mailing a thank you letter to donors who gave during your Giving Day? Don't let Giving Day donors get away after one gift. This letter from the International Center for Research on Women(ICRW) reminds the donor of when and how she gave and includes results and a story about a particular person who was helped.*

Dear Joanne,

We did it! Thanks to your generous support, ICRW raised over \$\_\_\_\_\_ during the Do More 24 giving day challenge. Your gift provides critical support for research and advocacy that address the root causes of inequality to ensure women and girls can reach their full potential.

Women and girls are community leaders, entrepreneurs, educators and so much more. For the last forty years, research has shown that investing in women and girls has ripple effects through a community.

Take Akina\*, a young woman in Kenya who works for BURN, a clean cook stoves factory and social enterprise business supported by Acumen, a non-profit that invests in companies and ideas that aim to tackle poverty. Before BURN, Akina had never worked in a factory, but thanks to their investment in women, she has moved up to become a supervisor. Her wages pay for her younger sister's education and the transportation costs for her brother to commute to his job.

Acumen is using ICRW's research to better understand how integrating women throughout their social enterprise business models can not only make businesses more successful, but also improve the lives of low-income customers, including women.

On behalf of all of us at ICRW, thank you again for participating in Do More 24 and for your generous gift of \$\_\_\_ to support women and girls around the globe!

Sincerely,

Gretchen Hutula

Senior Director, Business Development

P.S. Be sure to visit [blog.icrrw.org](http://blog.icrrw.org) to read more stories like Akina's.

*\*Name has been changed to protect her privacy.*

## PRESS RELEASES

A press release is a more formal way to interact with the media, and the media have their own formats you should use! While it's important to provide well written, engaging and informative content, keep in mind there are lots of things going on with Main Street that you can share. You can even share state wide or national information on your press releases!

A good source of information for National Trust for Historic Preservation press releases:

<https://savingplaces.org/press-center/media-resources#.WOz1HIWcGf4>

Here's a great one for Beaumont Main Street about appointing new members.

[https://media.wix.com/ugd/cee212\\_4ba55d23c94b456880d50472e5cf0b77.pdf](https://media.wix.com/ugd/cee212_4ba55d23c94b456880d50472e5cf0b77.pdf)

Another sample press release on the National Main Street website:

<http://www.mainstreet.org/main-street/awards/gamsa/2014-gamsa/harrisonburg.html>

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### BASIC ELEMENTS OF A PRESS RELEASE

1. When the release can be distributed. Usually, the release will carry the words, **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.**  
(This can be put above or below the headline and can be on either side of page)
1. **Headline**  
(Centered across top of organization's letterhead or special news release stationary)
2. **Organizational info:**  
(Can go above the headline or below. Usually appears on the left side)
  - o Name of Organization
  - o Address
  - o Phone Number
  - o Website URL
3. **Contact information:**  
(Can go above or below headline; and on the right or left side of the page. Check out various samples to see the variety of formats)
  - o Name (can be a person's name or a [generic](#) place such as "the Public Affairs Department")

- Email address of person or department
- Phone Number (include office phone and cell phone numbers)
- 4. **Place, day, date**  
(Start the first line of release.)
- 5. **Body of release**
- 6. **Boilerplate information about the organization**
- 7. **Repeat contact information**  
(And/or offer to provide someone to interview.)
- 8. **###**  
(These marks are centered just below the content of the release and signal the end of the release.)

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#### WHAT TO DO WITH A PRESS RELEASE ONCE IT'S BEEN WRITTEN

Here are a few thoughts about your finished press release:

- Make sure you have someone proofread it for you!
- If you have staff, that's a great way to get feedback - the more eyes on your press release before it's sent out to the public, the better the end result.
- Make sure you know the publication deadlines for your local newspaper. You don't want to send your press release on a Wednesday if the deadline is a Tuesday!
- Be prepared with photos or graphics to accompany the information. Reporters and editors love to use your work, so plan ahead! Caution - don't submit them as an email attachment with your press release. Make the offer and wait to be asked for photos.
- Even though you put a quote in the information, often the press will ask to interview you - make sure you have someone who is willing to do an interview, either on air for the radio or in print.
- Send out the press release to all your press contacts - don't be shy!
  1. Local newspaper: Editor
  2. Local radio: News Director
  3. Local and regional TV stations: News Director
  4. Your web site
  5. Your Facebook or Twitter can link back to the website
  6. Your partners and ask them to put it on their social media or mention it
  7. Regional paper that your community reads (the Denver Post, for example)
  8. Regional radio stations - don't forget Colorado Public Radio as a resource
  9. If it's for an event, don't forget to send it to your community calendar AND to magazines (Sunset, AAA, local power companies - they all have community calendars that can publish your information)
  10. Online news sources or blogs in your community



- Make sure to follow up with a phone call or email within a few days.

## SAMPLE MAIN STREET PRESS RELEASE

**\*\*NOTE:** This is a fictitious release and organization. It is used for illustration only.

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Small Town Main Street Historical Preservation Program

Small Town Main Street begins the critical process of identifying historical buildings in downtown

Small Town Main Street

11001 Main Street

Small Town, Colorado 42500

[www.stms.org](http://www.stms.org)

Contact: Jo Smith, Main Street Manager

[josmith@mainstreetsrus.net](mailto:josmith@mainstreetsrus.net)

(111) 333-0000 (office)

(111) 658-0000 (cell)

**Small Town, Colorado, Thursday, August 01, 2017** Small Town Main Street is the historical core of the community. Its buildings embody our past and our visual identity. And, a historical area can be a major tourist attraction, bringing in revenue and people to Small Town. Having a revitalized and healthy core of the community is a key part of the vision for Small Town Main Street.

Five buildings have been determined to be historically significant, and STMS has begun a program to invest in those buildings, in partnership with the land owners to preserve the past and protect the future. Those five buildings (with plans and photos if you have them) are:

STMS has published a brochure on historical preservation that can be describes the benefits and value of investing in our buildings. The brochure describes future plans for Main Street and how members of the public can be involved and support those efforts.

The benefits to the Historical Preservation Program are:

1. xxxxxx
2. xxxxxx
3. xxxxx

4. xxxxx
5. xxxxxx

The things you need to know about Downtown Small Town are:

1. xxxx
2. xxxxx
3. xxxxx
4. xxxxx
5. xxxxx

The brochure can be downloaded as a PDF file from: xxxxxxx.

"Historical preservation is one of our main pillars for Main Street. It improves the economy, helps local business succeed, and reinvests in our community as a whole," said Steve Jones, Chair of the Small Town Main Street Board.

Downtown Main Street is the heart of our community, and preserving our historic buildings will benefit residents, visitors and business owners. Small Town Main Street needs volunteers to help support these important projects. .

#### About the Small Town Main Street Program

36 *The STMSP, founded in 2014, is a nonprofit organization with a volunteer Board of Directors focused on improving the economy in downtown Small Town. It does this by.....([mission](#), programs, etc)*

The Executive Director of Small Town Main Street, Lisa Gordon, is available for interviews about the importance of historical preservation and which buildings in Small Town are considered historically relevant.

Contact: Jo Smith, Main Street Program Manager  
josmith@mainstreetsrus.net  
(111) 333-0000 (office)  
(111) 658-0000 (cell)

###

For more information about [press releases](#), we recommend the following sources:

- Bill Stoller's PublicityInsider.com provides a [press release template](#).
- FPRC Free Press Release Center offers a [sample release and many tips](#).
- eReleases offers [The Advanced Guide to Writing Powerful Press Releases](#).
- Main Street should study the press releases of other Main Streets, especially large ones that have well-oiled media departments. [The American Red Cross](#) is a great source.

## SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLES

There are lots of great resources around social media. The key is to pick one or two “channels” and stick with them. Given your limited time and resources (including limited staffing!) it’s important not to stretch too thin. Facebook and Instagram would be two recommendations, but if your Main Street already uses Twitter or another social media channel, just build on that! (Note: ALL Main Streets should have some sort of web site or event just a web page that is regularly updated)

Believe it or not, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) has a GREAT section on social media:

<https://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/tools/guidelines/guideforwriting.html> and part of that is below:

### Social Media and Communication Strategy

Keep in mind that social media is one tool in a larger communication strategy. Always consider your overarching communication goals when developing social media activities.

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As with all media outreach, the keys to an effective social media presence are to...

- Identify your target audience.
- Determine your objective.
- Select the appropriate channel for your message.
- Decide upfront how much time and effort you can invest.

From <http://socialmouths.com/2014/10/14/10-writing-tips-great-social-media-posts/> and their 10 tips for writing great social media posts:

### 1. Craft shareworthy posts

The same strategies apply here as with shorter posts. A shareworthy post needs to be one that that others find enough value in to share with friends and colleagues. On longer posts, you can gain valuable share ability by:

- **Building trust.** In longer posts, there’s more flexibility to include citations and references, and by sharing your expert sources, you gain in trust and credibility.
- **Sharing your data.** For greater credibility, let the numbers and stats speak for themselves regardless of your expertise. Check out [datavisualization.ch](http://datavisualization.ch) for some creative ways to present your information.

- *Be mobile friendly.* Given the staggering increase in mobile users, the following quote from Matt Trotta of BuzzFeed pretty much sums it up. “You can’t go viral if your content can’t be viewed and shared on the mobile web.”

## 2. Post with purpose

Danny Wong, posting on Shareaholic, cites Marcus Cordero “It starts with having a purpose beyond pushing your brand”. Show your readers you’re not only an expert, but that you care about them.

Writing longer pieces can be challenging to stay on topic with. To keep your writing on purpose, post with your audience in mind: know what their questions and concerns are and why they’re using social media.

## 3. Write great headlines

Short posts or long ones, great headlines rule. Check out Jon Morrow’s [Headline Hacks Report](#) or Brian Clark’s [Magnetic Headlines](#) for comprehensive instruction on how to create compelling headlines for optimal social media shares.

## 4. Go longer for better performance

Neil Patel explains SerpIQ’s study which shows search result ranks based on volume of word count: “The more content you have, the more of it gets indexed. The more that gets indexed, the better it will perform in searches and results. It’s just that simple.” Still, be smart and don’t overdo it. Remember, it’s not all about length - it’s about quality and length. Mr. Patel recently claimed that much depends on your target audience: businesses or consumers.

## 5. Write longer posts to leverage the power of keywords

Also, Mr. Patel makes the convincing point that in longer posts, the opportunity for using a variety of keywords is greater. And this means better performance in search queries for semantically related keywords, not just exact matches.

## 6. Longer content creates greater backlinks and gets shared more

And a final point from Neil Patel’s post. He presents a couple of graphics from Moz that show an undeniable relation between higher word count and increased backlinks - which increases SEO and, of course, conversions.

A second chart shows the same correlation between word count and social media shares. Facebook and LinkedIn shares almost doubled when word count rose from 400 to 1,500, and Tweets increased by approximately one half in the same span.

## 7. Give your blog posts time to simmer

When writing longer articles, give your posts a day or two to age. This gives you time to switch gears between writing and editing to really fine tune your post.

## 8. Use more, bigger and better images

You can exercise greater hold on your readers' attention in longer posts with interesting photos, screenshots, or graphics. Ensure they're of high quality and relevant to your post for visually stimulating engagement.

Rebecca Corliss of Hubspot reports on their study that shows using images on Facebook pages increased shares by 53% over the average post, and that posts with images have an increase of 104% in comments. That's substantial and well worth getting out the camera for.

## 9. Avoid repetition

Mitt Ray of Social Marketing Writing presses this point home on his blog. In longer blog posts, it can be easy to fall into the trap of repeating your ideas when trying to hit a specific word count. Don't try to force your ideas with filler content; if you're satisfied with what you've got, stop writing. And edit ruthlessly after you've finished writing.

## 10. Put share buttons at the bottom of every post

Make it easy for your readers to share by placing **social media share buttons** at the bottom of all posts and pages. With longer posts, readers are less likely to share if they must return to the top to find how to share it.

And there you have it, 10 tips for creating great social media posts that your audience will love and share. Try them out if you're new to writing longer posts, and of course, test, test, test to find the best ones for your audience.

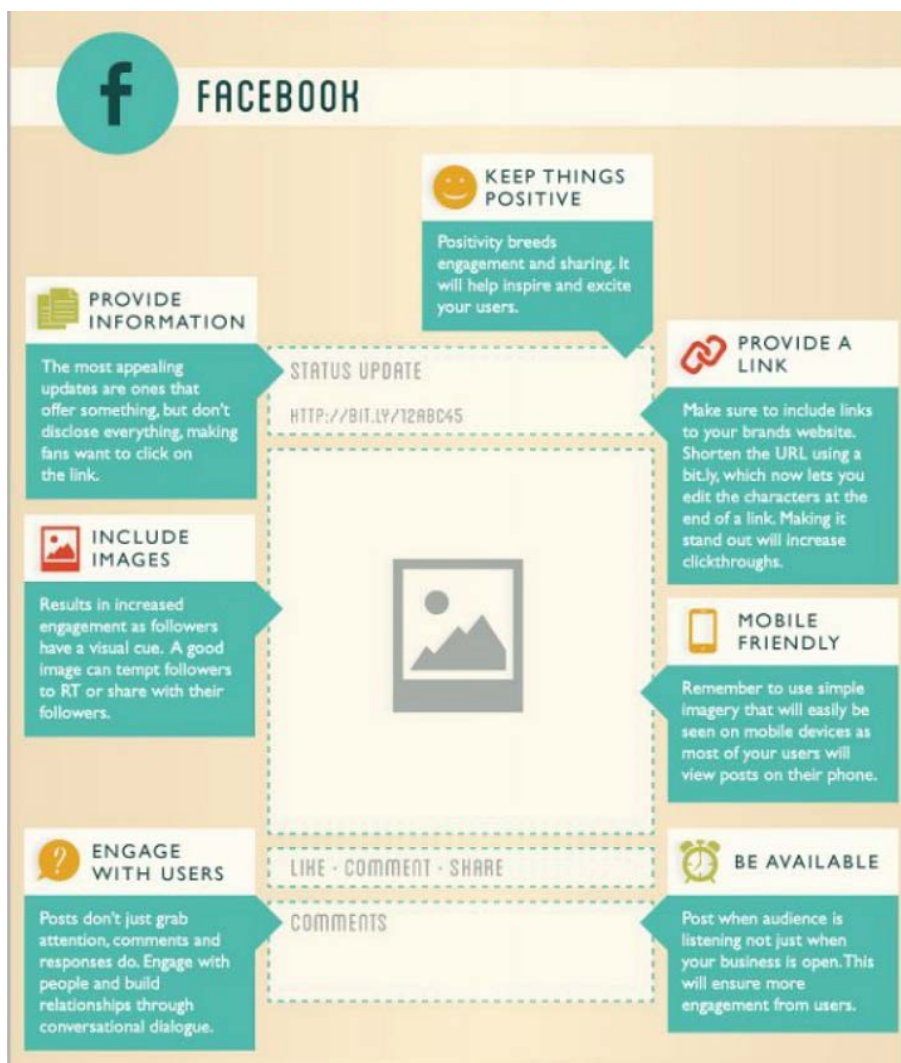
Facebook is one of the most common (and easiest) ways to interact with your partners via social media. It's easy to create an account, easy to post (and schedule those posts) and easy to share images right from your phone or your computer.

[https://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/How\\_to\\_create\\_perfect\\_social\\_media\\_posts\\_\\_14901.aspx](https://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/How_to_create_perfect_social_media_posts__14901.aspx) says 2 things are critical for FaceBook:

**Be positive.** Positivity is more appealing and inspiring for your fans, and it will encourage them to share your post.

**Provide a link.** Drive fans to your website. After all, your Facebook page exists to support your business.

This is a great graphic to help you get started!





## APPENDIX F: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1) Gosh, now I'm overwhelmed. Just give me the 3 things I need to do to be successful at Main Street Partnerships!!

I get it! So here you are:

#1: Make personal connections. Whatever you do, get personal - letters, social media, asking for volunteers.... add a personal touch.

#2: Be strategic. Make sure your partner with the right groups to further your Vision, Mission and Goals - and make it beneficial!

#3: Say thank you. A lot.

### 2) We are a small Board - this seems like a lot of work. How can I move beyond just the 3 steps, but maybe not complete every checklist?

Great question. So here are a few more things that if you have the time, will cement the foundation of your success:

- ✓ Do the Assessment, and review your partnerships every year to make sure you are accomplishing your goals and making them happy.
- ✓ Have a written agreement of some kind with your partners (this includes Board members, volunteers, donors, government agencies). That way you know the expectations and they know your progress!
- ✓ Make sure you communicate: newsletters, websites and social media would be the basics. If you have time, send thank you notes or letters. You'd be amazed what impact a simple thank you note from a Board member will have.

### 3) We're not sure how to approach a partner. Who should do that work? When should it be done?

Sometimes the thought of partnerships can be intimidating - you're not alone! It is critical that your whole team (Board, staff, volunteers, business owners, and everyone else) be part of the approach. I'd suggest this: once you have a list of partners to approach, have your team volunteer to approach those partners. There is no "wrong" way to talk to a partner. If you know the partners personally, that's a great start. If you don't, take some time to read their website, maybe even attend a meeting. Then, find the right person to ask. If I don't know who that person is, I'll often stop by the office and ask: "Who should I talk to about Main Street programs and how we can support your \_\_\_\_\_ (insert their program or project here)". They'll know.

## APPENDIX G: LIST OF RESOURCES AND TOOLS

### Resource Guides

<http://www.impactfoundry.org/about-impact-foundry>

A resource webpage with tools for you to use.

<http://www.strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/guidebooks/Partnerships.pdf>

A great resource guide for partnerships that goes into depth.

<http://www.fundraisingip.com/fundraising/non-profit-resources/>

Nonprofit resources on line, including marketing, public relations, fund raising, social media, writing newsletters and more!

### Frequently Asked Questions

<http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/PubApps/nonprofitfaq.php>

FAQ's listed by area, easy to search.

### Collaboration and Partnership Studies

[https://www.serve.gov/new-](https://www.serve.gov/new-images/council/pdf/CommunityCollaborativeToolkit_all%20materials.pdf)

[images/council/pdf/CommunityCollaborativeToolkit\\_all%20materials.pdf](https://www.serve.gov/new-images/council/pdf/CommunityCollaborativeToolkit_all%20materials.pdf)

A data driven study with information about how successful collaborations are created and maintained.

### Examples of Partnerships

[http://www.sonomavalleyfund.org/reports/partner\\_section.pdf](http://www.sonomavalleyfund.org/reports/partner_section.pdf)

Great example of an organization partnership effort (from a Community Foundation).

[http://ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-partnerships#node\\_toolkits\\_full\\_group\\_outline](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-partnerships#node_toolkits_full_group_outline)

A web page devoted to an outline of how to create collaborative partnerships with examples.

<http://www.shinemanfoundation.org/nonprofit-relationship-building-part-i>

To build a relationship with a local community foundation

<http://nonprofitshub.org/nonprofit-marketing-plan/6-examples-nonprofits-working-profits-greater-good/>

Examples of nonprofits and partnerships with for profits.

### Local Government Partnerships

[http://localgov.fsu.edu/publication\\_files/Feiock&Andrew\\_Nonprofits%20and%20Local%20Government.pdf](http://localgov.fsu.edu/publication_files/Feiock&Andrew_Nonprofits%20and%20Local%20Government.pdf)

Understanding the relationships between nonprofit organizations and local governments

### Websites

<https://www.coloradononprofits.org/>

Colorado Nonprofit Association

<http://crcamerica.org/>

Community Resource Center (location in Colorado)

<http://www.coloradocollaborative.org/training-center.html>

Colorado Collaborative for Non-Profits, Training Center

<http://www.cnecoloradosprings.org/>

Center for Nonprofit Excellence (in Colorado Springs)

### Other Resources referenced in this Toolkit

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