

Building Relationships and Partnerships

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For most CTAs, their personal relationships and partnerships with other community organizations are their most important assets. These partnerships can provide the leverage that your association needs to meet its mission, carry out its programs, and expand the range of people it serves. Today, few associations have the resources to operate their programs alone. Creating partnerships can be a win-win situation for all partners.

How do you start building partnerships? The first step is to recognize that partnerships can assist your association in achieving its mission and furthering its activities. You must also recognize that partnerships can be threatening. Other organizations may feel your association is coming in to take over their programs, or your own board of directors may feel the association is giving away too much.

Before you venture out to develop partnerships, your association should ask two key questions: What assets do you currently have? What other organizations exist in your community that may wish to partner with you? Find out what other organizations like yours are doing. Consider the organization's mission, culture, leadership style, and the population it serves. Then ask these questions to evaluate the potential partnership:

- Will the partnership further our association's mission—that is, what does the partner bring to the relationship?
- Do we and our potential partner(s) have adequate resources (both staff and financial backing)?
- Does the partnership meet IRS and legal requirements?
- Will this partnership achieve the desired results?
- Is developing this partnership worth the time and effort?

Partnerships are not always elaborate or complex. Your partnership may be as simple as having your CTA's program information included in a parks and recreation department seasonal brochure, sharing a conference room for meetings, or splitting the cost of needed equipment; or the partnership may be a little more complex. For example, the parks and recreation department might enter into a contract with you whereby you operate the town's tennis facilities and programs. Whatever shape the partnership takes on, your association should set up some guidelines to develop a win-win partnership.

- Set expectations for both organizations in advance. Define roles and responsibilities clearly.
- Set realistic goals and agree on the method of evaluation.
- Communicate on a regular basis.
- Share the credit with your partners.
- Set up a pilot period; give both organizations some time to see if this partnership is effective.
- Be open to including more partners as your situation changes.
- Foundations like to see collaboration, so work together with your partner and you'll be more successful at obtaining grants.

Establishing relationships and partnerships within the community is good business. Corporations everywhere are constantly merging, selling, outsourcing, and sub-contracting services to improve the bottom line. Your association can also do this by developing partnerships to provide improved services to your participants and members. Partnerships demonstrate that your association is part of a larger community effort, which leads to increased credibility and respect.

Partnering with Schools

There are schools located in almost every community of the United States. CTAs should make an effort to reach out to schools to increase youth and overall community involvement in the sport of tennis. Every day the USTA and its partners help kids learn not just a sport but also self-confidence, sportsmanship, and the habits of an active, healthy lifestyle. We are committed to making sure that all kids have an opportunity to play and learn from this lifetime sport.

When you bring tennis into your school, whether you work at the elementary, middle school, or high school level, the benefits transcend the boundaries on the court. And now, bringing tennis to your school is easier than ever, with the following resources the USTA offers to help grow tennis involvement among school-aged children:

Training – School Teacher In-Services, 10 and Under Tennis Workshops, and Recreational Coach Workshops.

Curriculum – An easy and exciting way to bring tennis to physical education.

Equipment Assistance – New equipment that is age appropriate and easy to use is available through deeply discounted programs and equipment grants for qualifying schools.

Staff Support – Technical expertise for program start-up and play formats, along with recommendations for converting play areas for tennis.

Coach Recognition – Recognition for coaches who offer No-Cut programs (programs that allow all players to participate regardless of talent level).