PARTNER POWER

This is a tool to use in planning and debriefing a meeting with a community partner. Your goal is to be able to fill out this empathy map after your meeting is over.

Partner name:  
From (community, organization, etc.):

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<tr>
<th>CHALLENGES THEY FACE</th>
<th>VALUES THEY HOLD</th>
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<th>GOALS THEY’RE PURSUING</th>
<th>COMMITMENTS THEY CAN MAKE</th>
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TO THIS PARTNER, SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

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Partner Power Question Bank

Use any of these questions (or write your own).

Questions to warm up and start the conversation:
● How’s your day/week going so far?
● Thanks for picking our meeting place. Is this your favorite [cafe, lunch spot...etc]?
● Tell me about your work.
● How did you get into doing the work you’re doing now?
● How long have you been with your organization?

Questions that help you understand the values they hold:
● What/who inspires you?
● What currently in your life makes you feel the most fulfilled?

Questions about the challenges they face:
● Tell me about a big hurdle you faced. What did you learn?
● What are you most concerned about in your community?

Questions about their goals:
● What are some changes you’d like to see in your community?
● Tell me about one of your life goals.

Questions about commitments they can make:
● Tell me more about yourself and your work.
● What is your schedule like?

Questions about what success looks like:
● What does a great day look like for you?
● Tell me about a time when you felt safe, happy, and valued in a community project.
● What can we do to help advance your goals?
Tips for Empathetic Listening

- **Ask open-ended questions.** Yes/no questions or questions that can be answered in one word prevents you from understanding what’s in their minds, thoughts, and emotions.

- **Ask neutral questions.** Encourage their fresh perspectives. Avoid asking questions in a way that implies that there is a correct answer. Allow them to self-express on their own terms. For example:
  - DON’T ask: What frustrates you about...?
  - DO ask: What do you think about...?

- **Encourage storytelling.** Prevent generic responses by framing questions in ways that give you more context to their experiences and why they value them. For example:
  - DON’T ask: Do you like to go to the park?
  - DO ask: Tell me about the last time you had a great time outdoors.

- **Embrace silence.** Long pauses happen, and that’s okay. Give them time to reflect. They could be thinking about something you brought up, what they previously said, or a past experience, which can help you understand them better. Let them break the silence.

- **Pursue tangents.** Sometimes your initial Partner Power meetings will go off-script and that’s okay. Free yourself from the urge to steer the conversation back on topic. A conversation fueled by passion will give insight into how they might feel on a certain cause or issue.

- **Observe body language.** Non-verbal cues can express how someone feels before they can verbally say it. If someone expresses a strong reaction to a question you asked, use it to drive your conversation forward. Use your judgment on whether that means you take a step back or lean in.

- **Be ready to participate fully.** If you ask personal questions of your partner, expect that they might ask the same of you. You don’t need prepared answers, but you should be whole-heartedly open to where the conversation goes.