



OF/BY/FOR ALL

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.):

CHALLENGES THEY FACE	VALUES THEY HOLD
GOALS THEY'RE PURSUING	COMMITMENTS THEY CAN MAKE
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?



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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.