

Community Democracy River

GROW STRONG RELATIONSHIPS – WITH COMMUNITY, PARTNERS,
AND DECISION-MAKERS



Grow Strong Relationships – with Community, Partners, and Decision-Makers

- Growing strong and trusting relationships is the spark to community change. It is ongoing action that takes time and attention to connect with partners and in real and authentic ways.
- Authentic Relationship Building (ARB) is a way think about your relationships before, during, and after connecting to think about how you want to build be with neighbors, partners, decision-makers, and community.
- Build Strong Relationships with those who [2]:
 - Will be most **impacted**
 - Have **experience and expertise** with the problem you're trying to solve
 - Will likely anticipate **risks and problems** that you might miss
 - Have **desires or considerations** that might be in the minority or be different from yours
 - Have **personal identities, experiences, or roles** that may be on the margins of your team
 - Have been historically **left out** of similar decision-making processes

River point: Upriver – Building strong relationships can be helpful at any time. Strong relationships will help pull every other lever in the River, especially:

- Engage your relationships and community

Strengths & Skills that can pull lever:

- Relationship Building & Feeling
- Influencing & Motivating
- Thinking & Strategy
- Doing & Executing

Relationship building is the foundation of community change. It is an ongoing process that takes time and investment, as well as connection with community partners and members in real and authentic ways. Whether it is a new-to-you community, or a community that you are a part of, it takes time, care, and intentionality. Here are our tips for building relationships:

- Create a realistic timeline which accounts for the time needed to build relationships - even in your community.
- Create concrete goals and build time into your schedule for explicit relationship-building activities.
- Map out who you want to be relationships with, including community members, nonprofit and other community-based organizations, businesses and other local influencers, and municipal decision-makers. Check out the next page to help you map out your relationships.

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Map your relationships to move your vision to action, thinking about who you should have trusting, authentic, and reciprocal relationships with.

	Community Members	Nonprofit, Community-Based Groups, and Faith-Based Groups	Businesses & Influencers (Colleges, Medical Facilities, Foundations)	Decision-Makers (Government + Quasi-Government)
Who is most impacted by your vision & goals?				
Who has experience and expertise with your vision & goals?				
Who will likely think about risks and problems that you might miss?				
Who has desires or thoughts that might be different from yours?				
Who has identities, experiences, or roles that may be different than you or your team?				
Who has historically been left out of similar decision-making processes?				
Who has power over decisions about your issues?				

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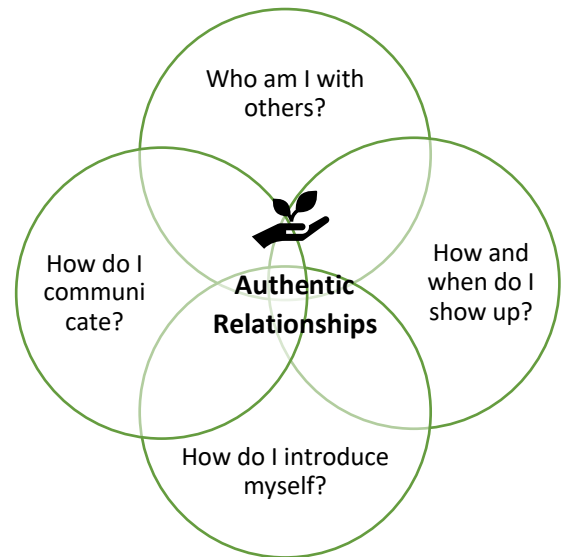


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Build Authentic Relationships

Authentic Relationship Building (ARB) [1] is a reflective practice that can be used before, during, and after connecting with others to think intentionally about how you want to build relationships with individuals, partners, and community.

- It involves ideas to internally reflect upon, and active steps to take, say, and do to build strong, reciprocal and respectful relationships with community partners and members.
- ARB allows you to share layers of yourself to form connections with others, helps you be aware of your own needs and the needs of community members, helps you facilitate conversations effectively, and helps navigate power dynamics while being aware of your own safety and levels of support present.
- The layers of yourself that you share may look different from relationship to relationship



Who you are with others: How you choose to define yourself, including your identities, personality, culture(s), spirits, or character, when building relationships. Reflect upon:

- What role(s) do you hold?
- What relationships do you have or have had with the person you are talking to, and how you have tended to those relationships previously?
- What perceptions of your organization are present?
- What parts of yourself do you want to share?
- Are there parts of yourself that you do not want to share – for your own safety or personal needs?
- Are there parts of yourself that will be noticed regardless of if you want to share them or not? What are ways you can feel safe and supported around these?

How you introduce yourself: The immediate pieces of yourself you share to create connection. Reflect upon:

- What values, identities, histories, or experiences do I share with this group that will lead to trust and connection right away?

How you communicate: Think about the important values and characteristics of the audience you are talking to - not only what you say but how you say it. Consider the communication methods you prefer and those that the community members you are communicating with prefer, the words you choose, formality, etc. Reflect upon:

- Different learning styles, literacy levels, ages, culture(s), values, customs, languages, trauma, accessibility considerations, and other needs that the group may have.

How and when you show up: Showing up on an ongoing basis for partners, participants, and community can lead to a true connection and deepen relationships over time. This means physically showing up to support community events, work, or advocacy needs, as well as being invested in other ways. Reflect upon:

- How do you support the work of your partners on an ongoing basis?
- How do you continue to stay engaged beyond this specific project?
- How can you speak up for common goals or intersecting issues?
- Are there people or communities that are missing from your partnerships? In what ways can you begin to build authentic relationships with them?

References and Resources

1. Authentic Relationship Building was developed by Grace Caligtan, Linda Guijosa, with additional credit to Faster than 20 (<https://fasterthan20.com>) and Dr. Sara Flowers as part of the Linking Families and Teens program.
2. Using Fair Process to Make Better Decisions. (Oct 21, 2021). The Management Center. https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/using-fair-process-to-make-better-decisions-a-quick-start-guide/?utm_source=Management+Center+Resources&utm_campaign=d9ba32c8bb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_05_06_01_02_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c9e85c2aa3-d9ba32c8bb-410504448
3. Linking Families and Teens was developed by Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands with the goal of increasing family connection in rural communities in the Pacific Northwest. More information can be found at: <https://sparked.net/lift/>.