



Takeaways & Tips

Rest Stop Chat: Cultivating Strong Partnerships for the Road Ahead

Why Partnerships Matter

- ✓ Strong partnerships—whether with clients, colleagues, or community stakeholders—are the foundation of trust, reliability, and sustained impact.
- ✓ Lasting relationships lead to repeat engagement, stronger collaboration, and better outcomes—for everyone involved.

Key Takeaways from Today's Discussion

1. Trust is Built in Small Moments

- Do what you say you will do—consistently.
- Be present, listen carefully, and follow through.
- Small lapses (missed emails, broken promises) can slowly erode trust.

2. Reliability Creates Long-Term Value

- Reliability means being dependable—not just once, but over time.
- Make yourself (or your team) approachable and visible, even when you're busy.
- Communicate early if commitments shift or need adjustment.

3. Relationships Need Care to Grow

- Don't let partnerships fade after the first project—check in even when there's no urgent need.
- Seek feedback and ask how you can continue to add value.
- Invest time in knowing your partners—their priorities, pressures, and preferences.

4. Stay Top of Mind by Adding Value

- Share useful resources, connect them to others, or offer insight
- —even when you don't need to.
- Be easy to reach and willing to help, not just when it benefits you.
- Your reputation as a "go-to" partner builds over time.

Tips for Cultivating Strong Partnerships

- ◆ At the Start
 - Be clear about expectations and commitments.
 - Take time to understand their needs, not just your own agenda.
- ◆ As You Go
 - Keep communication open, honest, and regular. Share progress—even small updates matter.
 - Address concerns early before they grow.
- ◆ For the Long Haul
 - Check in even when there's no immediate project or problem.
 - Celebrate shared successes.
 - Express appreciation for the partnership.

Quick Self-Check: Am I Cultivating Strong Partnerships?

- ✓ Do I follow through reliably?
- ✓ Am I approachable and easy to work with?
- ✓ Do I reach out before there's a problem—or opportunity?
- ✓ Am I adding value to the relationship, not just meeting needs?
- ✓ Do I express appreciation for my partners?

Partnerships and collaborations are **essential to Extension work** because they enhance reach, relevance, and impact. Here's why they matter:

1. Expand Reach and Resources

Extension doesn't operate in a vacuum. Partnering with other organizations, agencies, schools, businesses, and community groups allows us to:

- Leverage funding and staff
- Reach broader or underserved audiences
- Avoid duplication of efforts

2. Enhance Relevance and Credibility

Working with trusted local partners helps Extension:

- Stay in touch with emerging local needs
- Build programs that reflect community realities
- Gain credibility through association with respected partners

When partners advocate for and co-deliver Extension work, it strengthens our reputation.

3. Deepen Community Trust

Relationships matter. Collaborations show communities that:

- We value shared leadership
- We're here to listen, not just lead
- We're invested in long-term outcomes, not just one-time events

Trust builds when Extension becomes a reliable partner, not just a service provider.

4. Foster Innovation and Flexibility

New perspectives = new possibilities. Collaborative work:

- Sparks creativity in solving complex problems
- Helps adapt programs to diverse settings
- Provides a testing ground for new ideas

Extension thrives when we're open to co-creating solutions, not just delivering information.

5. Multiply Impact and Visibility

When Extension collaborates, we:

- Share credit and visibility
- Increase program success through shared ownership
- Create stories of collective impact that resonate with stakeholders and funders

More voices = more value seen by the public and decision-makers.

Extension's success depends on partnerships. They are the engine that helps us serve communities effectively, build resilience, and remain a trusted, innovative, and connected resource.