

Establishing Shared Understandings with Your Partner

This worksheet and Collaborator Agreement template are intended as a resource to support your partnership building. We strongly recommend you take the time to lay the groundwork of shared understandings through this conversation guide. Please read the whole document in advance of meeting with your collaborator/s. We also urge you to peruse the SLS Principles for Project Based Partnerships as well as the Big Ideas linked here which offer key concepts, such as asset based community development and shared values.

SLS Contact Information for Community Engaged Affiliated Courses:

[Ruthie Yow](#), Service Learning and Partnerships Specialist

SLS Principles for Project-based Partnerships

At SLS we are developing principles for project-based partnerships. These principles arise out of the practice and scholarship of leading centers and practitioners (please take a look at Intellectual Foundations to find out more!) SLS affiliated projects strive to:

1. Advance broader social change efforts addressing systemic causes.
2. Incorporate technological expertise as one of many types of expertise.
3. Highlight community expertise and assets.
4. Prioritize equity.
5. Forward community visions and solutions.
6. Enhance human capital and self-sufficiency.

We also offer, in the “Serve” section of [the SLS Big Ideas](#), links to SLS affiliated courses and faculty whose subjects and approaches embody several guiding principles of strong partnerships, including: [asset-based community development](#); [collaborative problem solving](#); [mutually beneficial partnerships](#); [long-term relationships](#); [reciprocal teaching and learning](#); and [shared values](#).

SECTION 1: How to have a Fruitful First Conversation

This is a relationship building process, not just paperwork—so begin with a conversation that allows you both to talk through hopes, expectations, and goals.

- Make time! At least one hour—and try to go to your partner rather than vice versa.
- Get to know each other’s goals and values by sharing experiences and relevant documents (collateral, mission statements, syllabi, etc.) with each other.
- Use the questions provided as a jumping off point to stimulate a conversation that covers all the bases in terms of communication, deliverables, and timeline, but also allows both people to offer insight into past partnerships and perspectives on reciprocity and mutual benefit.

We recommend the ORID Guided Conversation format and have adapted it here, providing some suggested questions.

OPENING: *Let's talk about why we are here together.*

<p>OBSERVE</p>	<p>Taking a look at each others' documents—such as mission statements, syllabi, past project materials, and program collateral—observe where there are intersections and places of connection on topic, need, and interest. <i>Where do we have common interests and overlap? Where and how have we done similar work or pursued similar goals?</i></p>
<p>REFLECT</p>	<p>Discussing past experiences and collaborations, offer some candid reflections. <i>What worked well in past collaborations? What didn't? How might we reproduce the good aspects of those relationships? What principles have been most central to fruitful work in past collaborations? (If no previous course collaborations): What kinds of collaborative work have be both undertaken in other contexts that might positively inform this partnership?</i></p>
<p>INTERPRET</p>	<p>Listening to each others' observations and reflections, consider what the goals of and expectations for the collaboration should be. <i>Why are we doing this project/working together? Specifically: What do the students need/hope to achieve? What does the partner need/hope to achieve? What specifically constitutes our shared vision for working together?</i></p>
<p>DECIDE</p>	<p>Talking through the what-ifs, decide on mutually suitable parameters. <i>If conflict arises, do we want to mediate it ourselves, or do we want to meet with staff at SLS for their help in working out any issues? (If so, add SLS contact to the final agreement, and please share the agreement with SLS staff.) Will there be a deliverable that raises intellectual property issues? If so, what is our agreement on the ownership of resulting IP? (If the faculty partner's unit or department does not have procedures or guidelines, please contact SLS to point you to appropriate people and resources!)</i></p>

CLOSING: *Let's take a look at the template and using our conversation and notes, modify it to suit our collaboration.* If creating a written agreement with the template feels unnecessary then just make sure that you have compared notes through the course of your conversation to see that you have established parameters and goals—both in terms of logistics and values—that are feasible, clear, and mutually acceptable.

An Agreement on How to Work Together

This agreement reflects our previous conversation/s and is intended to create a smooth and fruitful path forward; it is no way legally binding. It is however, a demonstration that we have listened to each other and laid a foundation for reciprocity, joint decision-making, and continuous communication.

What is the project or deliverable? What are the shared expectations?

**Who are the primary points of contact? Basics of communication expectations?
(Ex. "When it is okay to call? Which numbers/emails are best?")**

What is our consensus on intellectual property (if relevant)? Place an X:

Students will cede IP to the partner. *If you would like templates for a document outlining details for this arrangement, please ask the Service Learning and Partnerships Specialist (ruth.yow@gatech.edu) to direct you to those resources.*

Students will retain the IP.

What do we do if we aren't both getting what we hoped to from the partnership?

(If Appropriate) Rough Timeline: Our work together begins on _____ and extends through _____ at which point the deliverable/project will be complete. We will have _____ check-in meetings during the _____-long duration.

Signature

Date

Signature

Date