Today’s Presenter

Audrey Barbakoff
Community Engagement and Economic Development Manager, King County Library System
Taking Community Partnerships to the Next Level

Audrey Barbakoff
Community Engagement and Economic Development Manager
King County Library System
albarbakoff@kcls.org
Shameless Self-Promotion

- Key Experiences:
  - Strategy for engaging the business and tech community
  - Year-long community assessment process
  - Librarian for adults, teens and kids; manager for adult, mobile and community engagement

"Adults Just Wanna Have Fun" by ALA Editions
Topics

- Why partnerships?
- What is a partnership?
- Examples
- Challenges and solutions
- Do it anyway

"Buddy the Elf" from memegenerator
Why partnerships?

“I eat socks - I supply the socks” from me.me
Why partnerships?

- Explicit alignment with community goals = relevance
- Our core values: Equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Align with your library’s mission
- Sharing and extending resources
- On the menu --> at the table --> be the table (library as platform)

"Libraries are for Everyone" by Hafuboti, Creative Commons Attribute/Share Alike
What makes a partnership?

She plants a seed, I dig it up!

She plants a bulb, I dig it up!

She plants a cutting, I dig it up!

It's called teamwork!
What makes a partnership?

- Mutual benefit
- Mutual contribution
- Shared goals
- Shared power
- Aligned values
- Clear roles

“My Little Pony” by Hasbro
What isn’t a partnership?

- Exchanging $ doesn’t create a partnership; it creates a transaction
- Partnerships can include money; they just can’t be only money
What isn’t a partnership?

Promotion

Engagement

“Minions” by Universal Pictures and Illumination Entertainment
Levels of engagement

"Make Do Share: Sustainable STEM Programming for and with Youth in Public Libraries" by Kitsap Regional Library
Levels of engagement

"The Dessert Spectrum of Public Participation
Developed by Hennepin County Library Staff *With Apologies to IAP2

Inform
- We are having cherry pie for dessert.

Consult
- I am thinking about bringing chocolate chip cookies for dessert. Is that ok? What do you think?

Involve
- Do you want a healthy or decadent dessert? Decadent. Do you want it to be sweet or savory? Sweet. Should it be hot, room temp or cold? Room temp. Do you prefer a pastry, baked goods, or custardy type dessert? Custardy. Ok, how about flan?

Collaborate
- Let’s discuss and decide together what to have for dessert. Maybe even shop or bake together.

Empower
- Whatever you decide you want for dessert, we will have. Maybe I’ll even give you the money to get or bake it. Or maybe you just have the responsibility to bring dessert.

"Make Do Share: Sustainable STEM Programming for and with Youth in Public Libraries" by Kitsap Regional Library
How do you build them?

Partnerships grow from relationships!

A few tools include:
- Community assessment
- Asset mapping
- Embedding
- Just showing up and listening

“You make a good point; we both hate the cat. I’m just not sure what it is you’d bring to a partnership.”
How do you build them?

• Begin at the end
  – Identify shared vision and goals
  – SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
• Identify structure, roles, milestones
  – Collective impact
  – OBPE and Theory of Change
  – Many others
• Communication plan
• Don’t assume!
• **Put it in writing**
Ferry Tales

• Started with a program idea initiated by library
• Between consult and collaborate
• Began simply; grew & snowballed
  – Book group
  – Author and publisher events
  – Cookbook club offshoot
  – eBookshelf
• Drew local and national attention
Reflecting on lessons learned

- Partnerships amplify our ideas and our reach
- Starting with an idea is harder than starting with a relationship
- Know your partner’s priorities and speak their language
- Be open and flexible, share power and control

Platteville Public Library (WI)
WorkSource Connection Sites

- Co-Design: Planned together completely
- Based on shared audience and goal
- Serendipitous opportunity
- Shaped by grant requirements
- Primary and secondary partners
- Benefit regardless of grant results
Reflecting on lessons learned

- Show up
- Talk about your values
- Know what you have to offer
- Lean in to ambiguity
- Know your priorities so you can move quickly
- Involve others
Asset Building Coalition

- Embedding
- Library as convener for outside efforts
- Complementary resources, expertise
- Shared goal unites gov, nonprofit, for-profit
- Multiple, ongoing results
  - Super Saturday/Financial Friday
  - Financial Education series
  - Access to space, resources
  - Referrals, warm hand-offs
  - What’s next?
Reflecting on lessons learned

• Show up! Be a regular presence, keep the conversation going
• Participate in broader community initiatives
• Figure out the library’s role supporting in community priorities
• Make things WITH, not FOR or AT people
It’s not always easy.
It’s not always easy

- Time-consuming
- You’re not in charge!
- Communication
- Money
- Disparities in resources, timelines
- Differences in expectations, culture, direction
- Service providers aren’t the people they serve
Solutions

Rick and Morty, Cartoon Network
Solutions

• Prioritize spending time on partnering
• Be proactive – partnerships take work
• Communicate clearly, often, and early
• Know your goals and values; stick to them and be flexible about everything else
• Know when to stop, or better yet, when not to start
Failure isn’t fatal!

"Food? Where!?" by Unknown, from I Can Haz Cheezburger?
Partnerships are worth it!

• Your library’s mission in action
• Collaboration leads to innovation
• Extend resources (yours and others) to fill gaps and meet essential community needs
• Amplify what’s already great in your community by empowering the people doing it
  – Especially marginalized voices
  – Especially because librarianship is heavily white
• Knock people’s socks off
Questions?

“Question Everything Why” from 99Covers.com