

## Connecting with Collaborators Worksheet

*“The community really made the space come alive. They fanned the flames.  
Now they have ownership.”*

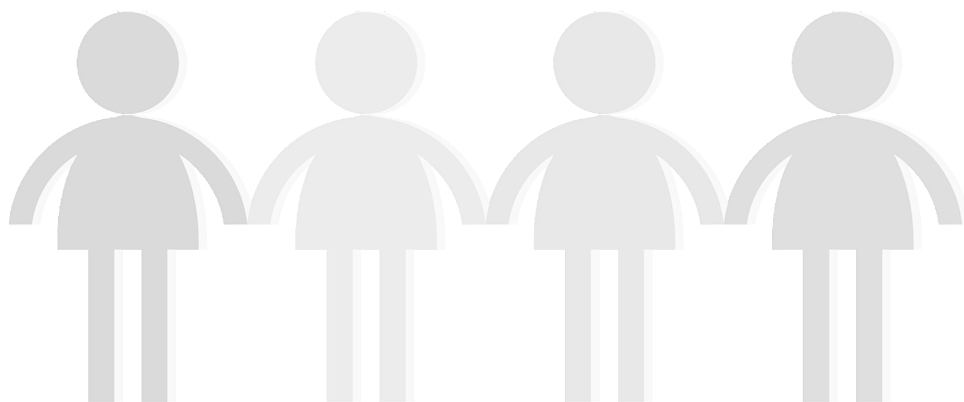
—Mary Lou Carolan, former director of Cornwall Public Library, NY

As you interact with many members of your community in a variety of ways, you are likely to encounter individuals and/or organizations who may be productive partners for the space and service transformations you envision. It’s not too early to cultivate relationships with these community members or organizations so they are primed to work with you when you’re ready to take action on your space transformation plans.

Keep in mind that valued collaborators are not necessarily associated with an organization. Every individual community member could have something valuable to contribute.

Who are your potential partners/collaborators? List names and potential strengths/skills.

- ◆ Think of all the individuals or organizations you may want to contact in the next few months as you formulate your ideas and put them into action.
- ◆ Make a note of anyone who approaches you with interest in the project. Listen for what skills they have and what they might be willing to contribute.



## Community Co-Creators

The attention to community partners and co-creators extends beyond the community discovery phase, continuing into the implementation phase. It is still vital to sustain those relationships with community members and to invite them to do more than participate in programs at the library—invite them to help construct the space and to design and deliver the programs. Remember, it’s not what the library is doing *for* the community; it’s what you’re doing *with* your community.

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### Collaborators in Construction

Undertaking the construction and remodeling of physical space seems particularly daunting on a minimal budget. Library staff are not likely to have the skills needed to layout the design, demolish and rebuild, or install carpet, lighting and furnishings. However, individuals in most communities do possess these skills. You might be surprised how many of them are willing to donate their labor to help make the library an even more vibrant hub of their community. It doesn’t hurt to ask.

Consider this example of community talent who co-created space for active learning:

For the [Cornwall Public Library](#) in Cornwall, New York, the enthusiasm of their advocates to jump in and do the “heavy lifting” was a core part of their success. Their project was to create a space for teens, a place they could feel they belonged and would stimulate them to connect and collaborate.

Once the library identified the underused reference desk area for a conversion, an impressive number of community members stepped up to contribute skills and energy—all pro bono. A local design firm planned the layout and chose the furnishings. An electrician wired the electronics and lights. Two talented teenagers painted a vivid, organic mural on the walls. A carpet layer made a 3-hour round-trip commute on a Sunday (his one day off) to install the carpet because “... libraries have been good to me in my life.”

Take away: don’t be reluctant to ask for help! Your fans will step up.



Above – teens engage in an escape box activity in the reimaged space at Cornwall Public Library (NY)

## Partners in Programming

You don't have to invent and deliver all of the programming yourself. Your community members are a source of programming ideas and talent. We saw this in action in the first round of Smart Spaces libraries, particularly in the three following examples.

### 1. Teens Take Over at Madison Public Library (SD)

Through the community discovery process, [Madison Public Library](#) learned that teens wanted their own space at the library, one where they could be creative, but also be “surrounded by books.”

Before the new space began to take shape physically, a group of teens took the initiative to produce a fabulous Harry Potter Holiday Party. They designed and planned all the details, including the entry to 9¾ through a brick (fabric) wall, a Hunt for Horcruxes scavenger hunt, and fabricating Little Snitches as prizes for the games. The party attracted participation from teens who rarely entered the library.

Their success with organizing the Harry Potter Party was resounding evidence that this teen group was ready to own and enjoy their new space and take the lead in creating programming. As the newly formed Madison Library Teen Advisory Board, they are going full steam ahead with their inspired programs.



Photos: Top—the 9¾ “brick” wall entry to the Harry Potter party;  
Lower—Little Snitches prizes for game participants

### 2. It's the *Community* Idea Space at Ignacio Community Library (CO)

The discovery process in Ignacio revealed that the community is particularly interested in DIY or DIT (do it together) types of activities. The [Ignacio Community Library](#) staff converted a “nondescript” and under-utilized room into an Idea Lab that would provide access to a variety of tech resources and learning opportunities.

Now the word is out in the community that this lab is shaped by their interests. The local artists group is using the space to shoot photos of their artwork and items they'd like to market and using the computer dedicated as an online selling station to create their own Etsy story. When local DJs heard that the space had recording equipment, they came up with ideas for programs they wanted to lead.



Best of all, people are spontaneously teaching each other, for example, kids teaching other kids (and adults) how to use the 3D printer.

Photo: Cross-generation collaboration to photograph craft items for sale in the online marketplace, using Idea Lab equipment

## Tracking the Collaboration

Whether it's a full-fledged partnership, local handypersons ready to hammer and wire, or community experts eager to deliver programs, this form will help you track what you need and who can deliver it.

Look at the list you made on Page 1:

- ◆ How have you connected with the people you encountered during the discovery process?  
How might you stay connected with them
- ◆ Who else could you add to the list?
- ◆ Who surprised you the most about their willingness to contribute their services?

Using the table below, organize these collaborators by the skill sets they can provide. Then fill in their contact information so you can follow up with them when they might be needed.

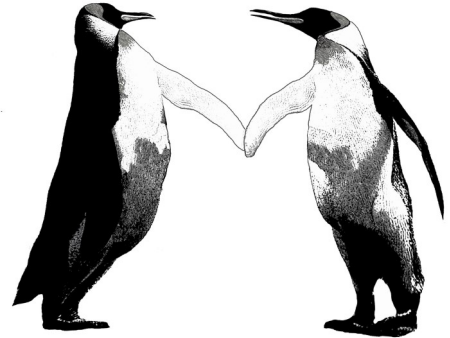


Image: penguin partners by [Dieter G](#) on [Pixabay](#)

Skill Set Needed	Individuals/Organizations/Businesses to Approach	Contact Information	When Needed