

## Chapter 6

### Partnerships

#### *Case Studies*

##### **Case Study #1: Public Sector Manager's Perspective**

As the manager of the Park and Recreation Department in Sherylton, Michigan, a community of forty thousand residents, you know there is a serious need for additional programs and a facility for the town's adolescents. Last year, Kay Kelsey, the recreation director, approached you about the problem. You agreed with Kay about the need but you were at the beginning of the budget cycle and you told her to wait until it was time to prepare the budget for the next year. In your discussion with the recreation director you assured her that the need was real and that you would do everything in your power to obtain a facility and allow her to program for teenagers.

Unfortunately, when you meet with the city manager and the city council you are informed not only that there will be no additional funds for the upcoming year, but, as a matter of fact, there will be a 10 percent "across the board" decrease in the budgets for all departments for the following year. You go back to the proposed budget and look at it as carefully as possible. You muster all your creativity and energy and reduce the budget by 10 percent. You make some difficult decisions, but they have to be made. But what about the teen center and programs for teens?

You call for a meeting with the city manager and the council to inform them of your budget preparations and the desperate need for adolescent facilities and programs. They agree with you — yes, this community needs something for teenagers. In the same breath they also tell you that their projections for city revenue for the next five years are not good. But they add, "There must be private, nonprofit organizations and other local public agencies that are willing to help with such a worthy issue." One of the council persons remarks that, "Over in Lamar they were able to build a recreation center for kids. Somehow they did it, and now they have a really great program. You're the manager and you ought to be able to do something like that. But we sure don't want another fiasco like we had with the sports bar."

He is referring to the cooperative arrangement the Parks and Recreation Department had with the Lakeside Sports Bar. It had started well, with the sports bar providing beer and snacks in the park after softball games. The sports bar had made some money, and in return, the Park and Recreation Department had received free use of the restaurant area of the bar for special events. You had heard some rumors about a few problems at the park but hadn't really had time to check things out. Then, at the end of the softball season, the sports bar had a big celebration. Unfortunately, some of the ball players became intoxicated. This led to a large fight and vandalism to the restrooms in the park. The police department was called and the Park and Recreation Department received bad press because they were partners in the event.

As you sit in your office the next day, you wonder about cooperating with other organizations and companies in the community to provide a teen center with a wide range of programs. You must take into account the following facts:

- The largest employer in the community, a medium-sized university with approximately

- ten thousand students, continues to downsize.
- The second-largest employer, a commercial producer of various plastic products, is considering moving to another location where they believe they can operate more cost-effectively.
  - The school has been affected by the downturn in the economy as much as the Park and Recreation Department.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Where do you start if you hope to build the teen center and provide recreation programs through partnerships?
2. Can you use the downturn in the economy and its negative effects on the businesses in the community in a positive way?
3. How do you ensure that you don't have another sports bar fiasco?
4. Are there partners with a stake in the situation that haven't even been considered? If so, who are they?
5. What does your department "bring to the table" for partnering? Why is your agency an attractive partner?
6. If your agency is not currently an attractive partner, what can you do to change the situation?
7. How can you overcome the bad publicity?

### **Case Study #2: Commercial Sector Facility Owner's Perspective**

As the owner/manager of a Primo Fitness Center in Sherylton, Michigan, you have made a major investment of time and money to increase the membership in your fitness club. Four years ago, you purchased the facility from the bank after the previous owners had to foreclose. The place was pretty run-down and had virtually no clientele. You spent a full year renovating the facility with new fitness machines, an aerobics room, a whirlpool, and a sauna.

Two years ago you decided to hire Logan Ford as assistant manager. It has turned out to be one of the best decisions you've made in quite some time. Ford is a young man who has designed and implemented a marketing plan to attract new customers — especially teenagers and young adults. His efforts have resulted in an increase in the sales of memberships, most of which have been to the younger set.

You've heard that people in the community are interested in developing a teen center. They don't think teens have enough to do and believe such a facility would reduce the amount of teenage crime and other youth-related problems in the community. One of the things that you have heard through the grapevine is that the new facility, if it becomes a reality, would have a fitness area. Many people seem to think that your facility is just too expensive for a large number of kids who really need and would like to get involved in a fitness program.

As you sit in your office, you ponder the effects of a new teen center. You can't forget the following facts:

- The fitness center is the sole source of income for yourself and your family. The new teen center could draw some of your hard-earned younger customers from Primo.
- Your business is unlike some of the other businesses in town. Most of them have

experienced a significant decrease in sales. Primo Fitness Center has grown because you have had the energy and resources to make it grow.

- You have heard stories about the Park and Recreation Department's relationship with the Lakeside Sports Bar. Apparently, the two groups agreed to a partnership, but after only a short time the arrangement was discontinued because someone did not follow through on what they were supposed to do.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What are the benefits to you of joining in a partnership for a teen center?
2. How can you partner with other groups who are not interested in making a profit?
3. What unique contribution can you make to a partnership for a teen center?
4. If you were to get involved in a partnership, how could you make sure that others did what they said they were going to do?
5. How can you determine the potential partners' perceptions and expectations of you and your business for such an undertaking?

### **Case Study #3: Nonprofit Sector Executive Director's Perspective**

You are the executive director of Sherylton Grassroots, a nonprofit association whose primary concern is enhancing the quality of life in Sherylton, Michigan. Five years ago you were able to obtain grant money from the state to get the association off the ground. Since that time, you have developed other revenue sources to supplement the initial grant money, which seems to be waning. Over the course of five years, you've been successful on approximately 30 percent of your grant proposals.

There is growing concern in the community about teenagers and young adults. Recently, three well-known teens were killed in a terrible car accident. The reports indicated that the young people had been drinking at a party in Lamar, a neighboring town, had run a stop sign on the edge of town, and were killed in a collision with a semi-truck. This was only the most visible of several unfortunate situations involving teenagers from your community.

You know that some community members are interested in building a teen center. You also know the city's park and recreation department is the driving force behind the idea, because you've had several informal conversations with Kay Kelsey, a good friend who is the recreation director for the Sherylton Park and Recreation Department. Kay has mentioned that some of the people behind a partnership have suggested that you be contacted about being a part of a teen center.

As you contemplate the situation, you consider the following:

- Although you have had little involvement with programs involving teenagers, you are convinced that teenagers' greatest needs are in finding and holding worthwhile jobs — not recreation. You are not convinced a teen center is a worthwhile community investment.
- Over the past five years you have developed considerable knowledge and skills in raising funds through grants. Unfortunately, most people (including the manager of the park and recreation department) know little about the amount of work necessary for developing successful grants.
- Your organization, Sherylton Grassroots, has a very good image in the community. The image of the park and recreation agency is not nearly as good.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What are the benefits to you of joining with the groups in a partnership for a teen center?
2. How can you partner with other groups who do not share your feelings about the best solution for the teen problem?
3. What unique contribution can you make to a partnership for a teen center?
4. How can you determine the potential partners' expectations of you for such an undertaking?
5. How can you protect the image of Sherylton Grassroots if you sacrifice some control in a partnership?