COVID-19:
Partnering to Address COVID-19 in Under an Hour

During the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals and health systems are challenged with a limited supply of screening/testing kits as well as a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff, ventilators, respirators, space, etc. Hospitals cannot adequately respond to these challenges alone. You will need to collaborate, and quickly, with stakeholders in the health care field and beyond to leverage your collective resources, skills and expertise.

This three-step guide provides strategic considerations to form partnerships during the COVID-19 pandemic. In less than an hour, think through what you should be collaborating on, who your partners should be, and how you can work together to combat COVID-19.

STEP 1 | Understand your goals, assets and gaps. (10 minutes)

Assemble a diverse team from across your hospital to discuss your goals and assets, as well as what gaps will need to be filled. Partnerships should be informed by a clear understanding of your hospital's goals and challenges. Consider:

- What do we want to accomplish during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are our strengths, assets and weaknesses at this time?
- What assets are available in our community to support our goals?
- What resources are we lacking (e.g., health care workforce, equipment, financial resources, medical supplies, PPE, etc.)?
- What do we have today that might not be accessible tomorrow?
- What do we need to prepare for? How is that going to impact our assets?
- How are we communicating with our existing partners and the public health department?

View page 26 of [A Playbook for Fostering Hospital-Community Partnerships](#) to gain a better understanding of developing goals.

STEP 2 | Identify partners and establish roles. (10 minutes)

Based on the goals and gaps identified in Step 1, you may need to expand the scope of your partnerships to include some non-traditional partners. Based on the need, potential partners could include:

- **Community-based organizations** – social service organizations, food banks, unions
- **Educational organizations** – early childhood care centers, primary schools, colleges and universities
- **Faith-based organizations** – churches, temples, mosques
- **Housing and community development organizations** – homeless shelters, supportive housing
- **Government** – local, state or national
- **Local business** – chambers of commerce, grocery stores, restaurants, manufacturers
- **Public health departments** – county and state

- **Service organizations** – United Way, YMCA, Rotary International
- **Other health care organizations** – FQHCs, physician practices, ambulatory centers, other hospitals
- **Philanthropy** – local or national foundations

Which of these organizations do you already have a relationship with? Given the urgent need to address COVID-19, start by leveraging resources from existing partners. For example, if you are already partnering with your state hospital association or state health department, determine if they are working with external parties to acquire resources such as funding, supplies, etc. to support hospitals.

Which of these organizations could help you achieve your goals and help fill in your gaps? Explore how other community stakeholders can be deployed to combat COVID-19. What functions do they fulfill with their assets and resources? How can they address your identified needs? Asset mapping, both internally and externally, can help your organization hone in on the resources you need to achieve your goals and fulfill any gaps. View pages 12-17 of the A Playbook for Fostering Hospital-Community Partnerships to learn more. Once you have determined who you would like to pursue a partnership with, reach out to them to set up an action planning call.

STEP 3 | Create and implement an action plan. (30 minutes)

To bring the partnership to life, hold a 30-minute virtual action planning call with your potential partner. Come prepared to explain your goals, challenges and gaps and why you think your organizations should collaborate to address COVID-19. Discuss the following as seen in Figure 10 of A Playbook for Fostering Hospital-Community Partnerships:

- Your goals and current challenges;
- Propose a partnership goal, of what you want to accomplish and the resources you need to be successful;
- Finalize your common goal;
- Define roles and tasks of partners to maximize your efforts within the limited time you have; and
- Settle on frequent check-ins to quickly update partners on progress and challenges.

Partnerships in Action to Address COVID-19

Hospitals are engaging in innovative partnerships to meet their goals. Below are a few examples from the field:

Partnering with Manufactures to Produce PPE
- Providence St. Joseph Health in Washington partnered with a local furniture factory to produce PPE with Providence's designs and materials. Over 5,000 masks were sent to health care workers in the Seattle area, and many more are in production. This collaboration led to a national movement, the 100 Million Mask Challenge, for other hospitals and manufactures to adapt designs and produce PPE on a larger scale.
- In Michigan, Ford is working with 3M and GE Healthcare to manufacture face masks and ventila-

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tors. The first 1,000 face masks will be distributed to Detroit Mercy, Henry Ford Health Systems and Detroit Medical Center, and Sinai-Grace Hospitals for testing.
- General Motors is partnering with Ventec Life Systems to rapidly produce ventilators.

Partnering with Other Hospitals
- Faced with fluctuations in caseloads, Holy Name Medical Center in Teaneck, N.J., transferred patients to Hackensack Meridian Health's ICU one day and on another loaned a ventilator to Valley Hospital. The hospitals are in constant communication to support each other's needs during the pandemic.
- Senior leadership from regional hospitals in Pennsylvania, such as UPMC and Washington Hospital System meet frequently to discuss and operationalize COVID-19 preparedness in the area.
- Leaders of Baptist Memorial Health Care, Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare, Regional One Health and St. Francis Hospital-Memphis are working together to ensure testing and medical supplies are available for health care workers and the Memphis, Tenn., community.
- Universities in Michigan are helping hospitals by converting space to host beds for low-acuity patients.
- Nursing schools in Milwaukee are donating unused PPE to local hospitals.

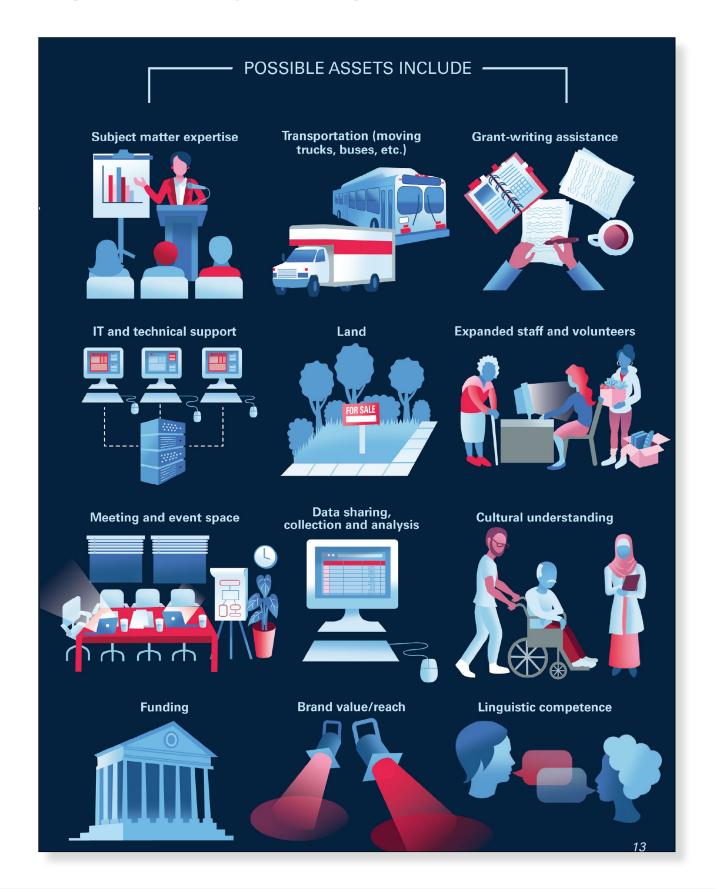### Partnering to Spread Awareness of Risk Factors, Symptoms and Prevention
- Physicians are using social media to share knowledge about COVID-19 treatments in their community and answer any questions.
- Emory Healthcare partnered with the developers of Mint.com to produce C19check.com, a free self-triage tool for anyone to self-evaluate their symptoms and risk factors, preventing the burden of unnecessary health care visits.
- Hospitals are leveraging a variety of digital tools and technology to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Collaboration with traditional and non-traditional partners can spur innovation and enable hospitals to support COVID-19 patients, equip care providers with necessary tools and reduce burden on the health care system. Existing partnerships will evolve as the needs of your hospital and community change during this crisis, while new partnerships will be agile and grow as they learn from each other's skillsets.

Are you already working with a partner to combat COVID-19? AHA invites you to share your story here so others can learn from your experience.

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Appendix: Worksheets from A Playbook for Fostering Hospital-Community Partnerships

POSSIBLE ASSETS INCLUDE

Subject matter expertise

Transportation (moving trucks, buses, etc.)

Grant-writing assistance

IT and technical support

Land

FOR SALE

Expanded staff and volunteers

Meeting and event space

Data sharing, collection and analysis

Cultural understanding

Funding

Brand value/reach

Linguistic competence

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Act

Forming a community collaborative is an important step to filling gaps in resources or skills to achieve the goals of a health improvement initiative. Complete the *Building a Culture of Health: Potential Partner Worksheet* (Figure 3), listing organizations in your community to seek commonality, identify existing relationships and determine potential partnerships. Also list the assets the organization can offer to the collaborative. Ask colleagues, friends and family to complete a worksheet to provide additional ideas. Combine the worksheets of organizations into one comprehensive list. This list will be used in Step 2 to select organizations to form a collaborative.

Table 1.

Tips to Identify Potential Partners and their Assets

Tips to Identify Organizations in your Community	Tips to Identify Organizational Assets
Use the organizations from Figure 2.	Use the assets listed on page 13.
Ask the following questions: Where do you go to school? Where do you work? Where do you buy groceries? Where do you eat out? Where do you shop for nonfood items? Where do you socialize or get together with friends? Where do you get involved in community issues? Where do you go for arts and recreation? Where do you go for health care? Where do you worship?[3]	*Ask the following questions:* What skills do their employees bring to the table? What are their internal resources? Who is their market or audience? How do they reach their market? Who are their partners and what are their assets?[4]

Source: Health Research & Educational Trust, 2017.

Figure 3. Building a Culture of Health: Potential Partner Worksheet

Instructions: List organizations in your community that could be potential partners and list their assets.

	Organizations in your community	Organizational assets		Organizations in your community	Organizational assets
Community organizations			**Local businesses**		
Educational organizations			**Public health organizations**		
Faith-based organizations			**Service organizations**		
Housing and transportation services			**Health care organizations**		
Government			**Funding organizations**		

Source: Health Research & Educational Trust, 2017.

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Appendix: Worksheets from [A Playbook for Fostering Hospital-Community Partnerships](#)

Figure 10. Building a Culture of Health: Community Collaborative Action Plan

GOAL _____

STRATEGY _____

Actions	Resources Needed	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measures	Progress Report
What steps do you need to take to achieve the goal and objective for this strategy?	What kinds of funding, facilities and expertise are needed to carry out the action? Where will resources come from?	Who from each organization will take the lead or provide key support?	By when should the action be completed?	How will you know the action succeeded or is complete?	What is the current status of this activity?

Source: NACCHO, 2017. Used by permission.[12]

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