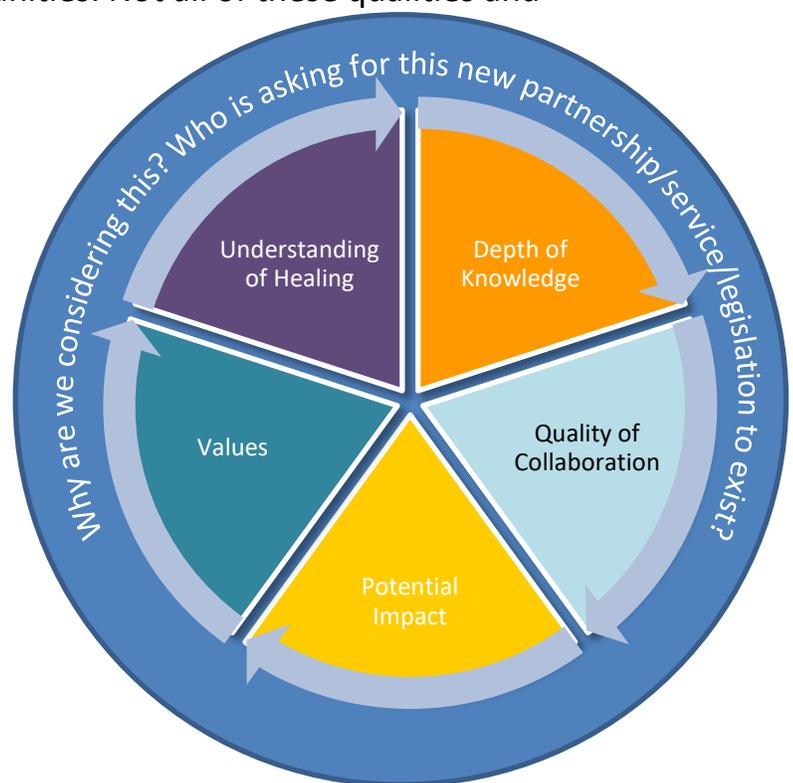


Assessing Partnerships: Qualities and Questions

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Sexual assault survivors are not a monolith. They each have different wants, needs, and beliefs, so it can be hard to figure out whether new opportunities or partnerships for sexual assault services are worth pursuing. The following qualities and questions are gleaned from sexual assault coalitions' experiences to help assess new partnership opportunities. Not all of these qualities and

questions will carry equal weight at all times. Depending on the context and invitation for partnership, some qualities and questions may be more relevant than others. For example, a coalition may ask one set of questions when evaluating a potential partnership with a culturally specific group to do community engagement and a different set of questions when evaluating a potential partnership with a national advocacy group to co-sponsor statewide or territory-wide legislation.



Depth of knowledge

It is part of a sexual assault coalition's job to understand the landscape of services and survivor needs in their state or territory. When partnering with new people or groups, it can help for the partner to have a similar level of expertise or willingness to learn. Some questions to consider include:

- Whose perspectives and experiences did the person/group listen to when developing the idea for their project or legislation?
- What does the person/group know about how and why sexual assault service provision is set up like it is? How much are they willing to listen to the coalition's experience and perspective on this?
- What does the person/group know about what sexual assault service providers have previously done to address the gaps/needs/challenges their project addresses?

Quality of collaboration

Groups reach out to sexual assault coalitions for many reasons. Some want the coalition's help gaining legitimacy, some want to help spread awareness, and others want to propose new solutions to addressing sexual violence. Regardless of motivation, it can be important to consider how collaborative the person/group is before agreeing to partner. Some questions to consider include:

- Why is this person/group reaching out right now? What do they want?
- How far along is the person/group in developing their idea?
- How much decision-making power does the coalition have in the partnership, even in the exploratory phase?

- How does this person/group respond to questions, feedback, and critique from the coalition?
- Who would end up doing the bulk of the on-the-ground work?
- How seriously would the person/group consider stopping their project if the coalition asked them to?

Values

Project partners may not always share values, but it is important to know what the person's/group's values are so coalitions can make informed decisions about how, and to what degree, they want to partner with each other. There are many ways to identify a person or group's values. This can include looking at their marketing, reflecting on how they interact with the coalition, analyzing staff composition, and evaluating past collaborative partnerships. Value differences can lead to delayed implementation of timelines at best and harm to survivors at worst. Some questions to consider may include:

- How does the person/group practice anti-oppression?
- Whose expertise would this partnership lift up? Survivors? The coalitions? The potential partner's?
- How does the person/group value the lived experiences and history of the coalition and local programs?
- How transparent is the person/group about who is involved in the project, where its funding comes from, and its long-term goals?
- What is the person/group's approach to confidentiality?

Potential Impact

Potential partners reach out because they see a clear benefit to working with the coalition. A good invitation will often be quick to outline how the coalition would benefit from working with them, too. However, unintended consequences are just as important to think about. Some questions to consider include:

- What may change as a result of the coalition working with this partner?
How might that impact...
 - The coalition?
 - Local programs?
 - Survivors?
 - Funding relationships?
 - Relationships with legislators?
- What are potential negative consequences of this partnership (both intended, and not)?
 - For the coalition?
 - For local programs?
 - For survivors?
 - For funding relationships?
- How is the project currently funded? How sustainable is the existing funding model?

Bigger Picture

In addition to the sets of questions above, before embarking on any new work, it can be important to look at the bigger picture and do a quick organizational self-check-in. Some questions to consider include:

- Why consider taking on this new project? How does it fit in with the coalition's mission, vision, and goals for the year?
- How will taking on this project affect the coalition's capacity to meet its other goals?
- Are survivors asking for this? Which survivors?

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