Strategic Priority: Fostering Mutually Beneficial and Respectful Relationships

Definition

Establishing, reconciling and nurturing relationships that result in mutual benefit, trust and shared understanding.

Research Shows...

Thriving cities are fundamentally based on mutually beneficial relationships. Mutually beneficial, or reciprocal, relationships are built on earned trust, and fostering such trust leads to improved overall health and well-being, increased equitable access to resources, and an effective and connected citizenry.[1] Flourishing cities advance all of their strategic priorities through reciprocal relationships, and in the process nurture important connections with businesses, civil society organizations, institutions and everyday citizens.[2]

Key Facts and Considerations

» When smaller cities like Owen Sound foster mutually beneficial relationships, individuals and institutions can confront problems and collectively solve them. Examples include:

>   » Owen Sound and Georgian Bluffs have teamed up on building services, leaf and yard waste management, and fire inspection and education.

>   » Bruce and Grey Counties partnered with 211 to develop an online service portal, making it easier for residents to access online services.

>   » Bruce Power supports Habitat for Humanity Grey-Bruce in building homes for low-income families in the community.

>   » Southampton Rotary offered their hall at no cost to the Coastal Conservation Youth Corps so their work could continue during Hurricane Beryl.

» Relationship building in cities is complicated by systemic constraints and resource limitations that generate barriers to access and social exclusion. Thriving, resilient cities build successful relationships around equity and inclusion, and in the process create opportunities and outcomes for all members of a community.

1 Lansing, A. E., Romero, N. J., Siantz, E., Silva, V., Center, K., Casteel, D., & Gilmer, T. (2023). Building trust: Leadership reflections on community empowerment and engagement in a large urban initiative. *BMC Public Health*, *25*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15860-z
2 O'Donnell, O. (2012, January). Strategic collaboration in local government. Institute of Public Administration. https://www.ipa.ie/_fileUpload/Documents/StrategicCollaboration.pdf

» [Mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations](#) are an integral aspect of building equitable, culturally enriching and prosperous communities for both cities and Indigenous peoples. The M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre in Owen Sound [reinforces this](#), saying that "developing and maintaining good relationships with municipal governments is essential to achieving a long-term positive impact on Indigenous communities."

Precedents from Other Communities

The following precedents may be aligned with current initiatives in Owen Sound and may be reviewed to assess local approaches and/or serve as inspiration for possible future initiatives.

» The City of Surrey in BC, along with other Lower Mainland cities, has partnered with Empower Me to deliver a [free energy-conservation program](#) designed for Canadian immigrants and underserved communities. Members of the community are trained to deliver multilingual education on energy efficiency and energy-saving measures, as well as help residents understand their utility bills.

» The Town of Cochrane [recently announced a plan](#) to stimulate population growth and increase its housing inventory by offering to sell serviced and unserviced lots for $10 a piece to developers and individuals willing to build in the northern town.

» The Town of New Tecumseth, through its accessibility advisory committee, has a [grant program](#) for local businesses interested in increasing accessibility. Eligible businesses can apply to receive a grant that helps offset the purchase of a portable ramp.

» The City of Brampton partnered with Toronto Metropolitan University to establish a new [School of Medicine](#) in the city. As part of the agreement, the city donated space for the school and supported its development with $20 million in funding.

» The City of Vancouver, through its Destination Vancouver tourism bureau, encourages [Indigenous tourism](#) by promoting the area's Indigenous museums, restaurants and businesses as well as cultural tours operated by local Indigenous communities.

» Sault Ste. Marie's [Economic Growth Community Improvement Plan](#) includes a grant program that offers support to eligible new or existing export-oriented businesses. Property tax relief is also offered for the development or rehabilitation of buildings and lands connected to the ventures.

» The Town of Huntsville created the [Physician Incentive Program](#) in order to recruit more physicians to serve its growing population. Eligible doctors receive up to $80,000 to set up a new practice in the town, as well as benefit from financial support and incentives offered by local community organizations and businesses.

Note: This brief is not intended to be complete or exhaustive. It is an informative community engagement preparatory tool. Special thanks to the students of URB432H in the Department of Urban Studies. Instructor: Daniel Fusca