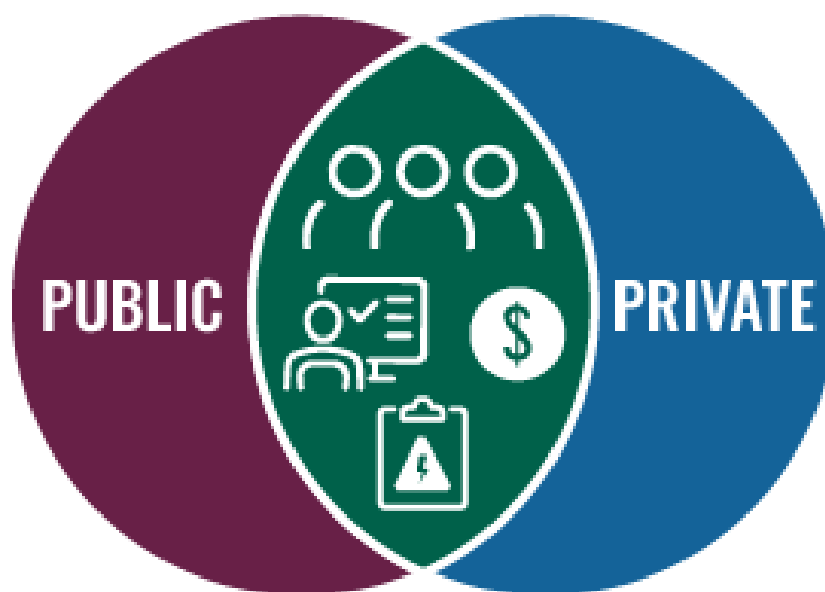


4 Building Meaningful Relationships With Disability Partners

Disability stakeholders and disability-led organizations are important partners in a combined effort to increase health equity in vaccination programs, public-facing services, and disaster response. These partnerships are the result of shared goals and mutual understanding. Effective communication, awareness, and establishing trust are the precursors to building beneficial sustainable partnerships.

Importance of Understanding Public and Private Community Partners

It is important to understand your community partners. This includes shared demographics, overlapping missions and goals, funding streams, and emergency preparedness priorities.



Initial Approach and Outreach

The initial stages of an organizational relationship can often set the tone for future engagement. To establish a mutually beneficial foundation for collaboration and partnership, consider the following:

- Establish two-way accessible communication and be proactive about information sharing.
- Understand and apply appropriate consideration to an organization community's history and cultural sensitivity.
- Clearly articulate benefits to both community partners and organization.
- Obtain leadership buy-in and support for partnership or workgroup goals.
- Identify purpose, short- and long-term goals, and initial scope of activities.
- Establish a timeline that allows time for relationships to develop, and opportunities to come to fruition.
- Value the relationships for the sake of the relationship, beyond the benefits to the program.
- Identify additional opportunities to link partnership activities across other department or program activities.

Build trust with community and disability partners by committing to accessibility and sharing authority and decision-making responsibilities. By ensuring accessibility, your organization is demonstrating that engagement from the disability community is needed and valued.

Strengthening and Sustaining Relationships

Disability-led organizations bring a wide variety of benefits and value to the planning table, including:

- Disability-specific expertise across various topics and situations
- Information about how community needs are met on daily basis
- Hard assets, like accessible transportation resources or assistive technology
- Networks and contacts in niche disability areas
- Better understanding of community demographics and unmet needs
- Potential untapped source of volunteers
- Relationships and partnerships are not built during events or disasters. They are built through everyday exchanges and identifying shared values.

My agency and I value relationships with disability-led organizations and disability stakeholders for the following reasons:

Relationship value 1:

Relationship value 2:

Relationship value 3:

Other Supporting and Mutually Beneficial Relationships

State and local health departments and Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are two of several resources with common goals and missions related to equity, health, safety, independence, resilience, and well-being for people with disabilities. Finding and connecting with other agencies, points of contact, and allies in your community creates a community of practice that includes both the public and private sectors.

When agencies, organizations, and corporations work towards a common goal, the benefits are compounded and include the following:

- Consumers and communities receive a common, consistent, and clear message.
- Agencies reduce rather than replicate workloads.
- Existing ideas and strategies are improved, and new ideas are generated.
- Agencies and organizations can better support their jurisdictions.
- Other community members are inspired to engage in shared goals.

Every state, county, and municipality is unique. However, there are certain entities that can be found across the nation. Similar to connecting with CILs and other disability-led organizations, the greatest challenge can be where to begin. Building the community of practice begins by knowing **who** is in your community.

In addition to disability stakeholders and disability-led organizations, other entities that can become agency partners and force multipliers include the following:

Agency/ Organization	Contact Information	Disability or Disaster Related Goals/Pillars	Mutual Mission Areas
World Institute on Disability	510-225-6400 / wid@wid.org	Disability rights and policy, inclusive and accessible programs	Disability accessibility, inclusive disaster planning and response
Department of Education			
Developmental Disabilities Council			
Agency Organization			
Agency Organization			
Agency Organization			

CDC Statement

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