

Linking with Churches and Faith-Based or Community Organizations

While the idea for a medical clinic typically has its roots with a single visionary leader or from a single entity, you will need partner churches or organizations to make a more substantial impact upon the needs of your community's uninsured population. The old adage "two heads are better than one" is still true: it can help people to recognize problems clearly and enable them to find the best solutions.

Partnership:

- Invites commitment
- Mitigates pessimism
- Encourages feelings of empowerment
- Encourages feelings of responsibility
- Encourages feelings of pride

A good starting point in searching for and building those partnerships is your church staff. They often already have relationships in the local faith community upon which your planning team can capitalize. They can also help the planning team connect with local and state denomination offices to explore involving other congregations. Don't limit your relational scan to church staff: encourage team members to discuss your vision with other church members across the denominational spectrum. Multi-church and multi-denominational partnerships have the potential to enrich our understanding of other's beliefs and encourage relationships with other faith communities.

Doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, and laboratory workers all have a unique perspective to bring to the Planning Team, especially when they represent multiple churches thus expanding the team's sphere of influence. Maybe a church can provide an entire team of volunteers that would allow your clinic to be open additional sessions each month. Ask them how being involved with the clinic can make their church more relevant in the community.

Your team should also scan the community for faith-based or other community organizations that could be potential partners, funders, or sources of referrals to or from the new medical ministry. Crisis ministries, food pantries, and homeless shelters are just a few examples of organizations with whom you may wish to discuss your church's call, and explore potential partnerships.

As potential partners or collaborators are identified, you'll need to establish a process to determine what areas of expertise, commitment, resources, or problems they might bring to the project if they are invited to participate.

Be able to answer these questions:

- What constitutes membership on the Planning Team and how should the Planning Team be structured?
- Is there a diverse representation of race, gender and opinions, or does everyone look and think alike?

By setting ground rules for participation early in the process, you can eliminate potential problems later.

The ultimate goal is to include as many organizations and individuals as possible in working towards fulfilling your vision.