

ENGAGING FUNDERS IN COACHING CONVERSATIONS

Note: This tool is for nonprofit staff, directors or development staff, who are in charge of funding, engaging and building relationships with funders.

Finding coaching inclined funders is key to supporting the adoption and growth of coaching practices. To best use this tool, both the funder and organization should be somewhat familiar with the principles and practices of coaching and understand how coaching can improve client outcomes.

PREPARING:

Start by brainstorming answers to these questions individually or with your team.

1. How do your funders view coaching and/or innovation?
2. What other information do you wish funders knew about coaching?
3. What other resources or tools do you need to have these conversations?
4. What is one thing you'd like to accomplish in your conversations with funders?

Prepare and think about 1-3 bright spots as an example of something you're proud of in your work, or that illustrates how your organization approaches work. A bright spot narrative can demonstrate coaching practices, skills, and mindset. Answer these questions to structure your story.

What was the context?

How did you respond?

What did you learn?

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Why did it work well? How did you know or measure success?

How did this challenge an assumption or expectation you had?

What did you learn?

Synthesize your responses by circling key words or phrases that represent how your organization engages in coaching and delivers meaningful outcomes.

Consider which coaching qualities are most important to you and your partnerships.

- Listening and Empathy
- Collaborative and Transparent Relationships
- Respect and Humility
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Recognizes the impacts of historical and contemporary inequities on individuals' lives

DURING:

Use these questions to assess whether this is likely to be a coaching-led partnership and their readiness to enter into a coaching-led relationship. Note: It may be helpful to share the questions with funders ahead of the meeting.

- Tell me about yourself and your organizational goals for this year.
- Tell me about how you think about measuring progress and success.

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- What challenges and/or opportunities are you anticipating this year?
- Can you give me an example of a project you're proud of and tell me a little what you learned, how you responded, and why it worked well?
- In your work with other organizations, how do you know the relationship is going well?
- How have you moved past challenges with other organizations?
- If we partner together, at the end of year 1 (or year 2), how will you look back and know that this was a successful partnership?

REFLECTING:

Using the values that are most important to you (see below) use the questions below to reflect on the conversation:

- What is your initial gut feeling? What stuck out to you the most from your conversation?
- What is this funder doing that is different from most other funders?
- Did this conversation challenge any of your assumptions or expectations?
- To what extent is this funder listening and responding to the needs of their stakeholders?
- Do they have all the tools, people, and processes in place to achieve their goals?
- What questions do we still have?

VALUES:

- Listening and Empathy
- Collaborative and Transparent Relationships
- Respect and Humility
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Recognizes the impacts of historical and contemporary inequities on individuals' lives