

## Insights

# 3 Keys for Engaging Extended Partners

Collaboration is the foundation of making substantive improvements in children's health. Every initiative, even ones that focus on a small community, seeks to create solutions for complex challenges with deep-seated roots.

This is why extended partnerships are important to transforming children's health. At NICHQ, we seek out organizations, experts and stakeholders who share our mission and have similar aims for every initiative. We know that working together and sharing our resources will allow for greater change and better health outcomes for all children.

The NICHQ-led Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network to Reduce Infant Mortality ([Infant Mortality ColIN](#)) recently convened all its teams at an in-person learning session to share strategies and develop new skills for strengthening their work. To help teams become stronger collaborators and facilitators, Gwen Webber-McLeod, president and CEO of Gwen Inc. and expert in leadership development, shared some of her key strategies for engaging extended partners.

1. **Assess Needs and Confirm Alignment** – Partnerships are external support, but to ensure that you're getting the right help, you need to look internally first. This means conducting a gap analysis to see what the current team and partners have produced, and where they have encountered some challenges. Finding gaps and opportunities for improvements creates a baseline for what should be sought in a new partnership. Beyond those elements, mission alignment is also a necessity for fruitful collaboration. "You can't be haphazard in who you invite to your project," says Webber-McLeod. "Be strategic and intentional about who you invite to partner with you. Assess the alignment of mission and goals to find a partner who adds value to your work."
2. **Prepare a Clear Pitch** – Once potential partners have been identified, there needs to be a strategy for reaching them. Any materials and resources developed as part of your pitch should be clear and concise on the aim of your organization, the purpose of the initiative and the mutual benefits of collaboration. This step is especially crucial when approaching prospects who are unfamiliar with you and your work. Create a presentation that engages people and inspires them to work with you.
3. **Have a Clear Purpose** – Have a specific reason for engaging a potential partner. This is someone who will likely provide great value and support throughout the course of your work, so there has to be a significant driver for reaching out to them. "The business question is, 'What's motivating us to invite this person or organization to the table?'" says Webber-McLeod. The answer to this question should be a direct benefit of a partnership.

But if there isn't a clear answer, then further assessment and evaluation are needed to determine who should be engaged.