

Frame Your “Ask”

Partnerships are more likely to succeed if your partner knows exactly what you want them to do, as well as how they will benefit from the effort. In beginning your partnership, there will come a time when you need to make an “ask”—in other words, request a commitment from your potential partner to do something. Because this request needs to be compelling and precise, such an ask is often presented as an “elevator pitch.” Imagine you only have as much time to make the request as an elevator ride takes to get to your floor. As [this resource](#) from the Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies outlines, an effective pitch will succinctly describe:

1. The **three W’s**: the “who,” “what,” and “why” of your message and request
2. The **benefits** of collaboration, for both you and your partner, as well as any **barriers** the partner may foresee and how they will be addressed
3. **Your ask**: a call to action that clearly identifies what steps your potential partner should take if they say “yes” to your ask

Of course, you hope your pitch will be part of a broader conversation—a dialogue between you and your potential partner. Still, it is important to make sure that you address these key elements in framing your request. Be upfront about whether or not you have funding to support the ask and your relationship.

This chart can help you to frame your ask as you begin to engage with potential partners. In the example provided, Jan, a state suicide prevention coordinator, is working on improving care transitions for patients at risk for suicide when they are discharged from EDs. After gathering information about a large hospital system in her state, she determined that the ED administrator would be the best person to engage.

Key Elements	Leading Questions	The Pitch
The 3 W’s: Who What Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are you and whom do you represent? • What do you or your organization do? • Why is your organization doing this work? What need are you serving? 	<i>“I’m the state suicide prevention coordinator with the Department of Mental Health. One priority in our state’s suicide prevention plan is to improve care transitions for patients at risk for suicide when they are discharged from an ED.”</i>
Benefits & Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the potential partner’s participation benefit you and your organization? What is the value-added to the potential partner of collaborating with you? • What are the potential barriers to working together? How will you address these barriers? 	<i>“As you know, suicide risk is highest for at-risk patients within 30 days of discharge from an ED. And patient supports, like follow-up calls or caring contacts, can significantly improve health outcomes and reduce the potential for future hospitalizations and attempts. I know you see patients experiencing mental health crises frequently and often they end up readmitted. But we have proven programs that can help mitigate these issues and reduce readmissions without significantly burdening your work flow.”</i>
Your Ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specifically are you asking the potential partner’s organization to do? • What are the immediate next steps that you would like the potential partner to take? 	<i>“Our partnership has the potential to improve health outcomes for at-risk patients that visit your ED. Could we find a time to meet with you to discuss how we can support your efforts to engage these patients? We can offer resources and training to help your ED build follow-up programs and other protocols into your current workflow to support at-risk patients at discharge and reduce readmissions.”</i>

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<p>The 3 W's: Who What Why</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who are you and whom do you represent?</i> • <i>What do you or your organization do?</i> • <i>Why is your organization doing this work? What need are you serving?</i> 	<p><i>Who:</i></p> <p><i>What:</i></p> <p><i>Why:</i></p>
<p>Benefits & Barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How will the potential partner's participation benefit you and your organization? What is the value-added to the potential partner of collaborating with you?</i> • <i>What are the potential barriers to working together? How will you address these barriers?</i> 	<p><i>Benefits:</i></p> <p><i>Barriers:</i></p>
<p>Your Ask</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What specifically are you asking the potential partner's organization to do?</i> • <i>What are the immediate next steps that you would like the potential partner to take?</i> 	<p><i>Call to action:</i></p>