

Strong Relationship Indicators: A Guide for Student-Agency Collaboration

The goal of this checklist is to provide partner agency (PA) representatives and student representatives from FRN chapters with a framework for building **strong and sustainable partnerships**. Partner agency and student leaders are encouraged to strive towards these indicators, using the Strong Relationship Benchmarks to help your relationship thrive over time.

GOALS FOR COMMUNICATION

Often, dissatisfaction with a relationship boils down to miscommunication! For this reason, we begin with an outline of general goals for communication between student and PA representatives. Keep these goals in mind when approaching the following Strong Relationship Benchmarks.

1. CLARITY. Clear communication entails:

- Knowing primary contacts, best modes of communications, and best times for communication
- Determining clear expectations for all parties
- Thinking in advance about what to do when things do not go as planned, or when needs go unmet

2. REGULARITY. Regular communication entails:

- Knowing how often, and when, communication will happen based on recovery and personal schedules
- Establishing ongoing check ins to troubleshoot and reset goals and expectations

3. PROFESSIONALISM. Professional communication entails:

- Demonstrating awareness and sensitivity to one another's needs and capacities
- Seeking to build longstanding relationships
- Exhibiting investment towards a mutually-beneficial cause, and communicating in friendly, courteous, professional manners

STRONG RELATIONSHIP BENCHMARKS

WHEN ESTABLISHING THE RELATIONSHIP

- ❑ Confirm point(s) of contact. Ensure that the partner agency (PA) representative has the correct contact information for the student chapter and vice versa.
- ❑ Determine the best mode(s) of communication. Will you stay in contact and give updates over the phone? Email? Text? How often, and in what circumstances, will you communicate with each other?
- ❑ Get to know one another. What do your jobs and/or school entail? What are your schedules like?
- ❑ Establish a recovery schedule that is as consistent as possible. Students and PA representatives notify one another whenever drop-offs change or do not match the schedule. Ask one another:
 - ➡ What issues can you anticipate in advance? How will you respond when things do not go as planned?
 - ➡ How will you handle miscommunications or unmet needs?
 - ➡ If recoveries happen on a regular basis, will this be a time for exchanging any additional information, concerns, or ideas? If recoveries are not happening regularly, how will you ensure that communication is open and continuous?
- ❑ Complete the [Partner Agency Agreement](#) together (this is required before your relationship becomes official; for new FRN chapters, this is required before the chapter becomes official). Discuss and define what the expectations are for all parties.

DURING FIRST YEAR OF THE RELATIONSHIP

- ❑ Ensure that PA representatives (staff as well as guests) know who the FRN students are. Students introduce themselves as “[name] from Food Recovery Network” when they stop by, and PA representatives help with making introductions where applicable.
- ❑ FRN students and PA representatives greet one another in professional and friendly manners, by name.
- ❑ Set up a meeting time to check in about your relationship at least once a semester. Establish what’s working and what’s not, give feedback, and come up with a plan to address any needs/opportunities.
 - ➡ Specifically, discuss whether everything is working in terms of: the amount of food provided, the frequency of donations, the variety and quality of food, the procedures followed, any relationships being built, and the consistency and quality of communication.
 - ➡ Ask questions, brainstorm ideas for expansion and improvement, be open with one another. Involve more than one person from each organization when possible so that the relationships are team-wide.

- ❑ Show gratitude for one another, particularly during holiday seasons!
- ❑ In Spring, PA representatives complete the annual PA Survey (distributed by FRN National between March and May each year). Students encourage PA representatives to complete this survey and follow up with FRN National to receive any feedback after the survey period (note: PA survey responses will only be shared with students if PA representatives give appropriate permissions).
- ❑ If/when points of contact change (for students or PA representatives), all of this information and these expectations are passed on to the next students. Organize a meeting to liaise between old and new leadership.

DURING SECOND YEAR OF THE RELATIONSHIP - AND BEYOND

- ❑ Continue with regular (approximately once per semester) check-ins between PA and student representatives.
 - ➡ If PA wants or needs more food, or different types/varieties of food, students should strive to match these goals to the best of their abilities; PA representatives should also understand the limits of student provisions.
- ❑ In Fall, students ask FRN National for the feedback reported by PA through the annual PA survey, if available with appropriate permissions
- ❑ Students and PA representatives develop relationships beyond each party's point of contact (i.e. getting to know volunteers, guests, etc.)
- ❑ Students seek to incorporate a service learning mentality into their interactions with PA staff and guests. Learn more about [service learning on the FRN website](#).
- ❑ Student and PA representatives build partnerships around education, awareness, advocacy, and/or fundraising. See the [Events Catalog](#) for some ideas to get started.
 - ➡ Remember to take photos to remember these shared experiences! Hang them at PA and chapter sites.
- ❑ FRN student leaders engage (themselves or others) as volunteers to build additional capacities for PA. Some ideas for capacity building include:

➡ Computer literacy/social media/websites	➡ Fundraising
➡ Tutoring/mentorship	➡ Odd jobs
➡ Cooking/serving meals	➡ And more!
➡ Donation drives (food or supplies)	
- ❑ Implement summer recoveries, either by recruiting summer recovery volunteers or by connecting PA representatives and donor representatives with one another to coordinate.