**Step-by-Step Guide to Establishing Equitable Partnerships .**

1. **Step back.** Take a hard look at transport programs from a bird's eye view and acknowledge that historically transport partnerships have been far from perfect. Acknowledging that partnerships that are primarily transactional, with one organization with more resources dictating the terms over the other organization with less resources, is problematic and often demoralizing for the source shelter.
2. **Articulate core values.** Regardless of your available resources to provide resources back to your source partners, creating values and a mission statement for your transport program is free. Start with a paragraph that highlights the core values of your transport program. Main themes may include the importance of equitable partnerships, partnerships rooted in respect for both people and animals, importance of program innovation and constant improvement, honest and transparent communication that goes both ways, and that one partner is not inherently better than the other regardless of available resources.
3. **Gather feedback on core values**. Meet with your team about the core values statement. Discuss what may be missing and list examples of each of these values in action. Discuss what parts of this statement your team embodies well and also areas where the team can improve.
4. **Do an audit.** List all the ways in which you are currently giving back to your partner. Are you sending down supplies? Do you ensure you can take at least 2-3 dogs with medical challenges every transport? Are you sponsoring vaccines or more? If the answer is nothing yet, that is ok - it’s just time to set goals.
5. **Collect information.** Gather feedback from your source partners on where they need the most help. This can be as easy as jumping on a call and getting to know your partner; if you have the ability to visit in person, even better. Take notes on everything that is needed; your organization may not be able to check off the entire list but it gives you a place to start. Even if you cannot take care of everything on the list, who can you connect them to? Is there one thing you can handle?
6. **Share source shelter feedback.** Bring in other people from your organization to brainstorm ways you can provide added support and do an internal resource assessment. Start small and then think big. A few trays of vaccines, collecting donations (monetary and/or in kind from your community to assist the partnership). Identifying supplies that may be in excess at your organization that could be extremely valuable at your source shelter org. What program support can you assist with - from helping to setup a Cuddly.com pet pantry supply wishlist to ramping up foster recruiting to increase transfers, to give back more.
7. **Set goals.** Whether you currently contribute support to your source partners or not, goal setting is the next step. After you’ve completed your audit of what you may or may not currently provide, list out 3 mo, 6 mo, 9mo, 1 year goals for your organization. Start by focusing on small wins, and bring in the team to help brainstorm. Just because it hasn’t been done before doesn’t mean it’s not possible.
8. **Schedule regular partner check-ins.** It’s important to balance what you feel your partner could use support with while prioritizing listening to what your partner says they need.