

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA'S ARCHWAY PARTNERSHIP

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Abstract

This article describes the University of Georgia's Archway Partnership—one of the university's community outreach efforts based on its land grant mission—and the process that it uses to develop and sustain a community partnership. In particular, the article focuses on Archway's use of a neutral, professional facilitator as a means of creating and sustaining the characteristics associated with successful, sustained university/ community partnerships, particularly cooperative goal setting, shared power, group cohesion, and partnership management. Using administrative data on the Archway Partnership and qualitative survey data from Archway faculty, the article highlights critical success factors associated with the Archway Partnership's relationship building, thus helping to unpack the black box of how to develop a successful university/ community partnership.

Keywords: university community partnerships, sustained engagement, land grant universities.

1. Introduction

In an era of unpredictable resource environments (Zusman, 2005, pp. 6–10), universities are actively working to solve public problems and strengthen their relationships with practitioners and communities as means of gaining greater public and governmental support (Weerts and Sandmann, 2010, pp. 633–636). This renewed interest in university/ community partnerships has sparked a host of research to develop evidence-based strategies and interventions that can yield successful and enduring partnerships (Davis, Kliever and Nicolaides, 2017, p. 37; Holland, 2006, pp. 14–16; Hoyt, 2011, pp. 273–280; Liederman *et al.*, 2003, pp. 6–7; McNall *et al.*, 2008, pp. 325–329; Sandy and Holland, 2006, pp. 39–40; Schulz, Israel and Lantz, 2003, pp. 256–258).

Typically, the goal of university/ community partnerships is a sustained engagement (Hoyt, 2011, pp. 273–280; Davis, Kliever and Nicolaides, 2017, p. 37) where both the university and community partners continue to interact with each other as equals over a prolonged period of time. Research has identified four characteristics of successful sustained engagements: cooperative goal setting and planning; sharing power, resources, and decision-making; developing strong group cohesion; and actively managing the partnership (Davis, Kliever and Nicolaides, 2017, p. 37; Hoyt, 2011, pp. 273–280; McNall *et al.*, 2008, pp. 325–329; Sandy and Holland, 2006, pp. 39–40). While there is agreement in the literature about the characteristics of successful partnerships, there is a need for research on the best ways to develop these conditions.

Land-grant universities are particularly interested in developing successful, sustained partnerships because of their mandate to serve the citizens of their state. The University of Georgia fulfills its land-grant mandate through the Cooperative Extension Service and through eight, unique units embedded in the Office of Public Service & Outreach (PSO). One of these units is the Archway Partnership, which ‘connects Georgia communities with University of Georgia and other higher education resources to address critical, locally-identified needs and opportunities.’

In this article, we describe the Archway Partnership and the process that it uses to develop and sustain a community partnership. Our research question is: what elements of the Archway process, particularly its use of a neutral, professional facilitator, are associated with the development of the factors associated with successful, sustained partnerships (e.g., cooperative goal setting, shared power, group cohesion, and partnership management)? Using administrative data on the Archway Partnership and qualitative survey data from Archway faculty, we highlight critical success factors associated with the Archway Partnership’s relationship building. In essence, we derive important ‘lessons learned’ from the Archway Partnership and discuss how those principles and lessons might be transferred to other universities and the communities they serve. This study contributes to the wider literature on university/ community partnerships by exploring the role of university public service faculty in nurturing these partnerships, thus helping to unpack the black box of how to develop a successful partnership.

2. Literature review

University and community partnerships are characterized by diverse levels of community engagement. Hoyt (2011, pp. 273–280) proposed a theory of engagement that proceeds in stages. The first stage is pseudo-engagement, which is characterized by the university providing expert advice to clients with no expectation of sustained engagement. The second stage is tentative engagement, and it represents a two-way flow of information and people across campus and the community. In the third stage, stable engagement, continues the two-way flow of information from the prior stage, but that flow occurs continuously through a variety of activities. Authentic engagement is the fourth stage. In this stage, engagement between the university and the community has developed into a more complex and dynamic system of inter-relationships, information sharing, and integrated practice. The final stage is dubbed sustained engagement. In this stage, the complex system of the prior stage has sufficient power and clout to influence community policy and the community-university relationship.

Davis, Kliever and Nicolaides (2017, p. 37) built upon Hoyt's (2011, pp. 273–280) theory of engagement by mapping Rowland's (1997, p. 13) manifestations of power onto each stage of engagement. In their model, pseudo-engagement is characterized by the university's power over the community and ability to control the terms of the engagement. Tentative/ stable engagement accommodates a power relationship that is more collaborative, where the university shares power with the community. Authentic engagement matches with a creative power—the power to connect and contribute to the overall engagement. The final stage, sustained engagement, is characterized by a power structure of agency, where community partners are empowered to make decisions, set a direction for the engagement, and then produce the desired result.

Hoyt (2011, pp. 273–280) and Davis, Kliever and Nicolaides (2017, p. 37) stress that a sustained, meaningful relationship between a university and its community is built upon strong relational dynamics within the system. Hoyt (2011, pp. 273–280) asserted that one of the primary keys for developing sustained engagement is to invest deeply in the human relationships within the collaboration through consistently showing up, talking and listening to others, and developing trust across many mutual, repeated interactions. Davis, Kliever and Nicolaides (2017, p. 37) build upon this by arguing that shared power arrangements between the university and community support the generative reciprocity necessary for successful repeated engagements.

In essence, a shared power dynamic between the university and the community forms the bedrock for a sustained university/ community partnership. The wider research literature supports this. Within the literature on university-community partnerships, there is agreement on several important characteristics shared by sustained partnerships. McNall *et al.* (2008, pp. 325–329) summarize these four qualities based on prior literature (Holland, 2006, pp. 39–40; Liederman *et al.*, 2003, pp. 6–7; Sandy and Holland, 2006, pp. 39–40; Schulz, Israel and Lantz, 2003, pp. 256–258). First, effective relationships focus on cooperative goal setting and planning, meaning that all participants in the partnership have

the opportunity to voice their own goals and priorities and to influence the overall direction of the project. When power is truly shared across the university and the community, then both parties work together to agree on a mutually determined outcome that meets the needs of those involved. The second characteristic is shared power, resources, and decision making. In sustained collaborations, decisions are not made from the top-down; decisions are arrived at through many repeated, open conversations among the interested parties. Group cohesion comprises the third characteristic, representing a focus on developing strong relationships. Group cohesion develops through many repeated interactions in a safe environment. Finally, the fourth characteristic is partnership management. This includes incorporating conversations about how the partnership is going to determine whether the shared goals and decision making are on track.

While there is agreement on the underlying foundation necessary for successful, sustained university-community partnerships, scholars also acknowledge the challenges of creating those arrangements. Typical challenges include unclear boundaries, problems of organization and management, disparate goals, different priorities, and suspicion and resistance (Denner *et al.*, 1999, pp. 11–12). Interviews with community partners revealed four additional challenges (Barnes *et al.*, 2009, p. 25). The first was human factors, such as the needs of individual partners (like picking up a child from school). Second, partners responded that the university bureaucracy was a hindrance because they did not know how to access the right decision makers and navigate a large and complex organization. Third, the cultural differences across organizations made partnership tricky; differences in terminology, timelines, and how work is typically accomplished across organizations complicated the partnership. Finally, partners lamented when the university did not value the dynamic nature of the larger partnership and instead focused on disparate projects.

3. The Case: understanding the Archway Partnership

At the University of Georgia, a unique model for university engagement with communities entered the higher education landscape twenty years ago. Today that model, the Archway Partnership, is a national-award winning program that involves four key activities: '(a) facilitation of a collaborative working relationship among stakeholders within the community so that community priorities can be identified and prioritized; (b) formation of a mutually beneficial relationship between the community and the university; (c) development of strategic partnerships between the Archway Partnership and the vast faculty and student resources across UGA and with other higher education institutions; and (d) managing the delivery of relevant and appropriate higher education resources to the community to address critical real-world community-based challenges' (Gordon, 2018, p. 2).

In essence, the Archway Partnership was designed based on the best practices for developing university/ community partnerships. The Archway Partnership has garnered national recognition as a proven example of universities increasing economic opportunities

for a community by leveraging university resources (Gordon, 2018, p. 2). The Archway Process involves three key elements: an Archway Professional, a community Executive Committee, and community Issue Work Groups. We briefly overview each of these three elements before describing the Archway Process itself.

3.1. The Archway Professional

The Archway Professional embeds in the community and engages daily with community partners. The Archway Professional is a university employee who has an appointment as public service faculty—a unique, non-tenure track faculty career for faculty members interested in public service (University of Georgia Public Service and Outreach, 2024). The Archway Professional’s serves as a neutral facilitator for the process, meaning that they avoid allowing their own biases to impact the goals selected by the community. This Professional is the manager of the project timelines and works closely with the Executive Committee and its Chairs to keep projects moving. The Professional is the main contact for Archway in that community and works closely with university faculty and students on specific community-based projects as they are created. ‘When asked to describe the Archway Professional, Executive Committee members use words such as ‘vital, neutral, articulate and positive’ (AP Unbound, 2017, p. 6).

Garber and Adams (2017) found that Archway Professional engaged in daily, on-site activities to facilitate relationships among committee members, issue work groups, university faculty, and university students. ‘Although embedded in the community like the Cooperative Extension county agent position, the Archway Professional was not represented as a content expert but rather as a skilled organizational facilitator. This allowed the Archway Professional to perform the critical role of neutral third-party facilitator in the community, and to focus on mobilizing resources to address community-identified needs and issues’ (Garber and Adams, 2017, p. 11). The Archway Professional meets with the executive committee monthly while continuously seeking community input and tracking progress of the work plan. They also work to connect resources for work product development and results (Garber and Adams, 2017, p. 11). They serve as the main point of contact between the university and the community.

3.2. The Executive Committee

The community Executive Committee serves as the local governing body, and it works to identify community priorities through engagement of community members. The Executive Committee for each Archway community includes representatives from local government, the K-12 school system, and hospital or healthcare organizations. Some communities also include the chamber of commerce, development authority, higher education institutions, utility providers, business or industry leaders, non-profits, or the media. The community itself decides the organization of its Executive Committee and that group can be updated or modified at any time during the process (AP Unbound, 2017). The Executive Committee selects a chair and co-chair to provide guidance, manage

meetings, and facilitate the process. These two leaders are also critical to ‘keep the Archway Professional protected so that they can remain neutral throughout the Archway process’ (AP Unbound, 2017, p. 4).

3.3. Issue Work Groups

Once the Executive Committee sets priorities, the community organizes Issue Work Groups to address each priority. The Archway Professional connects Issue Work Groups with university faculty with relevant expertise. The structure of Issue Work Groups allows more community members to engage in the Archway process and work alongside the Executive Committee on the common issues and goals. Community members can be identified from listening sessions, direct personal invitations, or they may self-select into an Issue Work Group (Jackson, 2017, p. 8).

Due to the volume of work required and the need for community buy-in, it is important to recruit many community members representing diverse interests to participate in the Issue Work Groups. ‘The Archway Professional and Executive Committee members play a large role in recruiting Issue Work Group members from throughout the community. Like the Executive Committee, the strongest Issue Work Groups consist of people who are interested in working hard toward a common goal and taking ownership of projects and change in the community. The Executive Committee often depends on the expertise of Issue Work Groups in developing a work plan and deciding on projects to pursue. Issue Work Groups are typically chaired by a local champion and meet regularly, often monthly’ (Jackson, 2017, p. 8). Because so much of the work of the entire process centers on the Issue Work Groups, it is crucial that the Archway Professional and Executive Committee work together to identify individuals who are willing to work in this role.

3.4. The Archway process

The community must demonstrate support from the city, county, and school system and other key stakeholders before Archway Partnership will begin work. Without demonstrated commitment, the Archway Partnership will decline to work in that community until it has garnered sufficient support (Jackson, 2017, p. 5). Archway faculty visit prospective communities to evaluate their readiness and their willingness to come to the table to work together. Most communities enter the Archway Partnership with a collaboration commitment of three years, although some communities have remained engaged for up to 15–20 years (Jackson, 2017, p. 5). Additionally, the Archway Partnership wants to maintain geographic diversity among its selected communities to reflect more of the state of Georgia, so the community’s location is also important (Jackson, 2017, p. 5).

The funding for Archway Partnership is two to one, with UGA providing approximately two-thirds of the funding and the community providing the other one-third. Most often, the members of the Executive Committee, including city and county governments and the K-12 educational system, provide the funding on behalf of the community (AP Unbound, 2017, p. 4). This financial investment from the local community

creates additional commitment and investment. The Executive Committee decides how the funds are allocated.

The university and community then create a written memorandum of understanding, and the funding partners engage with the university to formally begin the Archway process. An Archway Professional is hired or selected to be dedicated to the community. The university's share of the funding supports graduate assistantships, student and faculty research, and other academic opportunities within the partner community (Jackson, 2017, p. 1).

A key element of the Archway Partnership is listening sessions that engage large groups of community stakeholders beyond the Executive Committee. Many of these listening sessions will have hundreds of local stakeholders (Jackson, 2017, p. 12). The stakeholders come together to share their insights and opinions on the most pressing issues or opportunities for their community. The Archway Partnership provides facilitators for the listening sessions and ensures that the process allows for all voices to be heard and recorded for consideration on community priorities.

After the listening sessions are complete, the Executive Committee and the Archway Professional enter into a Work Plan Retreat to 'focus the priorities identified by the broader group of stakeholders into a functional work plan ... [that] serves as the guiding document for the partnership' (Jackson, 2017, p. 12). After this Work Plan Retreat, the Executive Committee sets goals, identifies local champions, and develops more collaborative relationships among the committee itself (Jackson, 2017, p. 13). Issue Work Groups are then created based on the key priorities and projects identified at the retreat. The Issue Work Groups begin to engage with other university representatives including faculty and students.

Issue Work Groups and the plan's priorities are regularly and continuously evaluated by the Archway Professional. A larger, more formal evaluation is completed every two to three years. This evaluation includes analysis of local data and a work plan retreat, which results in potentially new Issue Work Groups to address newly identified issues. As these Issue Work Groups engage and work together alongside the Executive Committee, the community begins to see increased collaboration among community stakeholders. While these improvements may first be facilitated by Archway Partnership, they are soon taking place outside of and beyond the Archway Partnership priorities for the community.

The Executive Committee and Issue Work Groups meet monthly. The Archway Professional participates in these meetings and serves a critical role to ensure that resources are coordinated to address priorities, to facilitate completion of projects through citizen engagement, and full implementation of results.

3.5. University engagement

Once community needs are prioritized and become part of the community work plan, the Archway Professional and the Executive Committee look for connections back to the University of Georgia campus and its faculty research and students. Faculty and students may work directly with an Issue Work Group on a community priority.

As the Archway Partnership engages in a community, university faculty often discover a pipeline into a new community for future research, outreach, and student engagement. The community expects to benefit from the university's engagement and the university faculty expect to benefit from access to the community (Franklin, 2008, pp. 18–48). Benefits to the university may include increased visibility with the state legislators, especially in rural and underserved communities, and increased research opportunities. 'Linking the right faculty member to the right community partner yields work that is optimally beneficial to both the community partner and the faculty member. The results improve life within the community while furthering the teaching and research mission of the university' (Garber *et al.*, 2010, p. 78).

4. Data and methodology

Data were collected through an email survey in September and October 2024. The research team emailed an invitation letter to current and former Archway Professionals. Archway Professionals were identified based on the research team's relationships with the Archway Partnership. In the email, participants were asked to respond to four open-ended survey questions about their role, including a discussion of the strengths and challenges of the role, needed training, and the effect of the departure of the Professional. We received completed surveys from ten Archway Professionals. The data were analyzed using a simple content analysis to identify themes in the responses.

5. Results

5.1. Strengths of the Archway Professional

The responses highlight four common themes regarding the strengths of the Archway Professional role in the Archway process: facilitation and coordination, neutrality and trust, relationship building, resource access and technical support.

5.1.1. Facilitation and coordination

The Archway Professional is essential in facilitating local meetings and coordinating resources from UGA to support Archway projects. This includes acting as a project manager and ensuring community leaders stay on track with their goals. 'The local community leaders appreciate me because I act as the project manager on all student projects and I keep them on track with their Archway goals.'—Archway Professional (A)

5.1.2. Neutrality and trust

The Archway Professional is highly valued for their neutrality, serving as a neutral-third party, convener, and facilitator. This neutrality helps build trust within the community, allowing people to set aside agendas and work towards common goals. 'As we all know, the fact that this [Archway Professional] is neutral is really the secret to success because it allows people to be vulnerable by setting agendas and egos aside.'—Archway Professional (H)

5.1.3. Relationship building

The Archway Professional plays a vital role in cultivating relationships within the community. By connecting local organizations, residents, and stakeholders, they enhance the community's engagement with UGA. They also understand community dynamics, which is critical for successful community engagement. 'I think that one of the greatest offerings the Archway Professional brings to any Archway community is the personal touch of being 'specific' to that community. As the Archway Professional is 'on site' and in the community, they certainly become a well-recognized community leader and equally come to be recognized as someone that community leaders and residents go to for information and facilitation. The strength of being present in the community on a daily basis develops strong relationships and works equally well both for the community itself and for the University.'—Archway Professional (I)

5.1.4. Resource access and technical support

The Archway Professional provides access to technical support and expertise that might otherwise be out of reach for the community. This includes higher education resources and support for large, capacity-building projects. 'Frequently, the [Archway Professional] can connect individuals or organizations that would not have otherwise interacted. This results in stronger community bonds, while enhancing the community's engagement with [the university].'—Archway Professional (F)

These themes indicate the importance of having a person dedicated to the management of the partnership between the university and the community. This person's neutrality and attention to the relationships being developed are a key strength of the process.

5.2. Challenges facing Archway Professionals

When asked about the greatest challenges facing Archway Professionals, the Professionals identified three primary challenges: maintaining neutrality, isolation, and bringing new faces to the table.

5.2.1. Maintaining neutrality

The balancing act of being engaged in the community while also maintaining neutrality is a recurring challenge. Archway Professionals must remain neutral and avoid developing biases, which can be difficult when building relationships and working closely with community members. 'In an effort to build those relationships, the [Archway Professional] can feel as if they are beholden to a certain group and naturally align with a certain group. It's an incredibly delicate balance, and it takes a unique person to keep harmony and perspective so that the process isn't compromised.'—Archway Professional (H)

5.2.2. Isolation due to neutrality

The requirement to maintain neutrality can lead to feelings of isolation. Archway Professionals need to be constantly aware of their words and how they are perceived by the

community stakeholders. This constant neutrality was described as isolation and was felt more heavily if the Archway Professional lived within the community. ‘When you have to be constantly aware of your words and your neutrality, that can be a lonely place. When you don’t have a space in which you can openly talk, vent, share struggles, etc., it can be a bit isolating.’—Archway Professional (G)

5.2.3. Bringing new faces to the table

One of the significant challenges is involving new people in Issue Work Groups. Often, the same local leaders and community movers and shakers are seen repeatedly, making it difficult to bring fresh perspectives and new participants into the process. This can reduce overall community buy-in to the process. ‘Often, I see the same faces—the movers and shakers in the community, the same local leaders. We’ve had a little success ... with bringing new people to Issue Work Groups, but getting new people involved is always challenging.’—Archway Professional (A)

Archway Professionals shared that their role, while rewarding, can be difficult. The role requires a great deal of self-awareness and excellent people skills. The Archway Professional cannot do the community’s work for them; they can merely serve as a facilitator and convener.

5.3. Training for Archway Professional

To help us identify what skills an Archway Professional needs to effectively manage a university/ community partnership, we asked the Archway Professionals what type of training or onboarding new Archway Professions would need. The respondents indicated four areas that should be addressed: shadowing, clarifying the role and expectations, how to build relationships and engage the community, and opportunities for mentorship. ‘For me, the initial training is all about indoctrinating the new employee into our process. Archway is all about relationships. Facilitation is an important skill we try to develop fairly early on, but much more important than any ‘hard skills’ are the ‘soft skills’ of building relationships and maintaining neutrality.’—Archway Professional (J)

5.3.1. Comprehensive training and shadowing

The Archway Professionals saw the importance of comprehensive training and shadowing experienced Archway Professionals. This includes observing meetings, understanding the Archway process, and learning from established Professionals to gain practical experience.

5.3.2. Understanding the role and expectations

Ensuring new Archway Professional understands their role as community-based faculty members and the expectations that come with it. This includes responsibilities to faculty and students, as well as their embedded role in the community.

5.3.3. Building relationships and community engagement

New Archway Professionals need to learn how to engage with local organizations, build trust, and manage expectations to prevent stress and frustration. They need to develop relationships constantly with community members. ‘In short, the greatest challenge becomes that of just good old fashioned managing people.’—Archway Professional (I).

5.3.4. Support and mentorship

New Archway Professionals need access to established Archway Professionals for support and mentorship. They also want to encourage new Archway Professionals to seek advice and have regular check-ins to reduce feelings of isolation while increasing their feeling valued and supported.

The Archway Professionals indicated a high need to learn their role through interactions with other Archway Professionals. Given the differences across communities, it is impossible to provide new Professionals with a standard playbook. Instead, they learn from what other Archway Professionals have done.

5.4. Departure of the Archway Professional

To better understand what the Archway Professional brings to the Archway Process, we asked how the departure of the Archway Professional might affect the ongoing partnership. The Archway Professionals identified three potential drawbacks—loss of momentum, decreased engagement, and increased workload for colleagues—and one benefit – the potential for positive change. ‘I think it creates a bit of an identity crisis if there is a gap for too long. Some of our communities recover well ... others terminate their relationship’—Archway Professional (C)

5.4.1. Disruption and loss of momentum

The departure of an Archway Professional can be disruptive, especially for new partnerships. The hiring process can take months, causing delays and a loss of momentum in community initiatives. The absence of a local Archway Professional can lead to a lack of facilitation and coordination, meaning that the Issue Work Groups and Executive Committee might not stay on track with their work plans.

5.4.2. Impact on community engagement

The Archway Professional is the central link between the community and UGA, and their departure can affect the community’s engagement with the Archway process. Communities expect the Archway Professional to be present regularly and not seeing that connection for months can be discouraging and lead to an erosion of trust. The relationship-building process has to start over with a new Archway Professional.

5.4.3. Increased workload for colleagues

The duties of the departed Archway Professionals often fall on other colleagues until the position is filled. This can mean increased travel to the community, managing several projects, and maintaining communication with students. The additional workload can strain the remaining team members who are based on campus or in other Archway communities.

5.4.4. Potential for positive change

While the departure of an Archway Professional can be challenging, respondents shared that this can also bring positive change. A new Archway Professional can bring fresh energy, new perspectives, and new relationships, which can enhance and impact the work already happening in the community. A new Archway Professional might be able to connect with new groups of people and bring more new voices into the process. ‘The role is so critical that a departure serves as sort of a hard reset on the partnership in the community. It allows the community the opportunity to take a step back and reevaluate their commitment to the partnership. Sometimes, this leads to a graduation, but other times it leads to a major revitalization for the partnership.’—Archway Professional (J)

The Archway Professional serves an important role in the partnership. They are like the glue in the whole process, and the loss of that Professional can be disruptive to the entire partnership.

6. Analysis: understanding the success factors of the Archway Process/ Archway Professional

Our results show that the Archway Professional is a crucial manager for the university’s engagement in a community. To better understand the importance of this role, we map the Archway Partnership’s best practices and the Archway Professional’s role onto the four major characteristics of successful university/ community partnerships (see Table 1).

The analysis shown in Table 1 illustrates that the Archway Partnership’s process is built upon the four characteristics of sustained university/ community partnerships (Davis, Kliever and Nicolaides, 2017, p. 37; Hoyt, 2011, pp. 273–280; McNall *et al.*, 2008, pp. 325–329). Additionally, it shows that the Archway Professional actively manages and develops those important characteristics. Many of these characteristics are dynamic, such as group cohesion, and can grow or wane over time. The Archway Professional is a dedicated person to pay attention to and invest in healthy relationship dynamics over a sustained period of time. In essence, the Archway Professional serves as the person who continually monitors whether these characteristics are present and who tries to take action to shape these dynamics in positive ways.

Table 1: Mapping Archway to Characteristics of Sustained Community Partnerships

Characteristics of Sustained Community Partnerships	Archway Best Practices	Archway Professional's Role
Cooperative Goal Setting and Planning	<p>Archway requires an Executive committee that is committed to working together and key stakeholders from local government including K12 must be present.</p> <p>Archway begins with community listening sessions and inviting interested stakeholders to participate.</p> <p>Archway provides skilled facilitators and a professional to guide processes.</p>	<p>Archway Professional works full-time in the community allowing them to be seen as one of the community while facilitating.</p>
Shared Power, Resources, and Decision Making	<p>Listening sessions lead to a work plan retreat to prioritize the community issues. This work plan becomes the basis for university engagement through faculty.</p> <p>Listening sessions are held every 2-3 years to update plans along with another work plan retreat.</p> <p>Archway's Executive Committees and Issue Work Groups meet monthly to keep progress moving.</p>	<p>Archway Professional guides the process for listening sessions that lead to issue work groups being created.</p> <p>Archway Professional meets regularly with Executive Committee on progress from Issue Work Groups engaged with the university.</p> <p>Archway Professional bridges the issue work group priority to university faculty interested in that area.</p>
Group Cohesion	<p>Archway provides a neutral facilitator allowing for conversations to be honest and transparent while remaining productive.</p> <p>Archway's retreats and listening sessions provide space for group dynamics to grow as well as familiarity.</p> <p>Archway's regular monthly meetings also contribute to increased group cohesion.</p>	<p>The Archway Professional serves as a neutral facilitator by creating a regular platform for various community organizations to work together and as an accountability partner by organizing and facilitating regular meetings to follow up on commitments community members make to each other in the Archway process.</p>
Partnership Management	<p>Archway's commitment to engaging the community through the Executive Committee and Issue Work Groups in regular evaluation efforts provides feedback on shared goals and decision making.</p> <p>Archway's annual community listening sessions and work plan retreats allow for decision making and goals to be adjusted.</p>	<p>The Archway Professional role primarily brings the strength of facilitating local Archway meetings and coordinating resources from UGA to help with Archway projects. They also act as the project manager on all student projects and keep the community on track with its Archway goals.</p>

7. Discussion

In this article, we described and analyzed the Archway Partnership's process for working with communities, focusing on understanding the role of the Archway Professional and how that individual contributes to and supports the overall Archway process. By design, Archway's process includes many of the 'best practices' from the research literature. The Archway Partnership focuses on cooperative goal setting and planning; sharing power, resources, and decision-making; developing strong group cohesion; and actively managing the partnership. These characteristics of university/ community partnerships have been supported by the existing research literature as being critical for the success (Davis, Kliewer and Nicolaides, 2017, p. 37; Holland, 2006, pp. 14–16; Hoyt, 2011, pp. 273–280; Liederman *et al.*, 2003, pp. 6–7; McNall *et al.*, 2008, pp. 325–329; Sandy and Holland, 2006, pp. 39–40; Schulz, Israel and Lantz, 2003, pp. 256–258).

We have found that one of the key features of the Archway Partnership's process is the inclusion of the Archway Professional. The Professional's role centers on partnership management (McNall *et al.*, 2008, pp. 325–329). The Archway Professional essentially manages and shapes the group dynamics inherent in these partnerships by serving as a gatherer, a neutral facilitator for meetings, and a broker for building relationships between the community and representatives of the university. Because Archway Professionals are embedded within the communities that they serve, they develop personal relationships with the individuals involved—key components of relationship management (Hoyt, 2011, pp. 273–280). This shared power arrangement builds trust and goodwill (Davis, Kliewer and Nicolaides, 2017, p. 37).

The Archway Professional's neutrality is also essential for their success, building the community's trust in the Professional while avoiding too much dependency. Community members come together to solve community problems; the Archway Professional is invested in helping the group arrive at some type of outcome, but is neutral about the substance of that outcome. This helps community members to maintain ownership of the process and to stay invested.

While university/ community partnerships are often initiated and led by university academic faculty, Archway Professionals are public service faculty. In this role, Archway Professionals are expected to conduct research, but it is intended to be a product of their work with the community. Archway Professionals do not have any teaching responsibilities, meaning that they are not bound to an academic calendar and do not have weekly teaching commitments that would take them out of the community. This is critical for the success of Archway's model—that the Professional can be embedded within the community being served instead of being pulled back to a university campus every couple of days for teaching or other commitments.

Prior research has identified two community frustrations when working with a university—the difficulty of navigating the university bureaucracy and universities' focus on smaller, disparate projects rather than a larger dynamic relationship (Barnes *et al.*, 2009, p. 25). The use of the Archway Professional overcomes both of those difficulties. The

Archway Professional navigates the university bureaucracy on behalf of the community by identifying faculty and students that are best suited to do research and service-learning projects in the community. As the process facilitator, the Archway Professional helps to ensure that all faculty projects fit within the Executive Committee's overall goals and workplan. Thus, instead of having several disparate projects, all faculty projects work toward achieving the overall goals of the partnership.

8. Conclusion

While the Archway Partnership's overall process for engaging in and sustaining community partnerships is developed on the basis of solid principles for community/ university partnerships (Davis, Kliewer and Nicolaidis, 2017, p. 37; Hoyt, 2011, pp. 273–280; McNall *et al.*, 2008, pp. 325–329), the use of the Archway Professional is an important success factor for these university/ community partnerships. Universities can benefit alongside their community partner as needs are identified by the community and facilitated through the process that the Archway Professional guides. These added benefits include connecting the university's resources in faculty, research, and students to work with the community on addressing their need. The neutral facilitator continues to monitor the process, giving heed to the relationships and uniqueness of that community as they guide the partnership management through shared power with their executive committee and the university where they work. A model such as the Archway Partnership, with its investment in a dedicated public service appointment faculty member focused on facilitation, allows a community and university to work together on a sustainable partnership for many years.

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