

# Social Doc in Real Time: Parenting Your Partnerships

Posted by [Eva Harder](#) [1] on February 07, 2013

After four months together, they told her it wouldn't work. Professor Brigid Maher is working on a documentary called "The Mama Sherpas," a film that explores collaborative care models in the US --- where hospitals and midwives work together. One of the hospitals she planned to feature in the film became unable to participate due to legal reasons, despite months of hard work. So what were her options?



Luckily, Maher already had partnerships in place to help her figure out what to do next. The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), a professional organization Maher decided to collaborate with before she began filming, put her in touch with practices that wouldn't be tied up in the same legal battles as her first one, granting her access into the community. Because of partnerships, Maher said, "Participants may be more open to working with you and giving you the access you need." Community partnerships can determine the success of your film from start to finish. So how do you get them?

## Who They Are and Why You Need Them

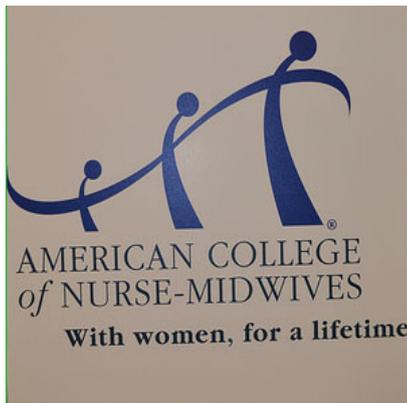
Partners are organizations that can offer expertise on the issue you're filming, because their profession revolves around it. So Maher talked to her midwife about her film idea. And she said "Go to ACNM," and she wrote a letter of introduction for Maher to help facilitate the partnership.

ACNM proved invaluable when Maher ran into legal battles, but they were there from the start. "[Partners] can be critical for research purposes," she said, urging filmmakers to seek out partnerships before they even begin filming. They can help you narrow your focus and find active participants.

They can also help you gain access to those participants. Since filmmakers are sometimes seen as outsiders to their subjects, Maher points out that partnerships can help bridge the divide. "Especially if you are not coming from the community."

## Meeting in the Middle

Maher said that it can be challenging to make stories that take place on the middle ground interesting to outside audiences. Since both she and her partners have a vested interest in the same issue, they were able to combine their outreach and target multiple audiences.



“By partnering with community organizations, they see the benefits of bringing awareness to these issues.”

Maher’s work benefits from the added exposure, but ACNM finds an additional outlet to campaign from. “We are also releasing additional footage that we were able to capture while making this documentary that our community partners can use,” Maher said. “So the longer format documentary is used to educate the general public, and these shorter documentaries are meant to be utilized by our outreach partners.”

Maher pointed out that this is another reason to create partnerships before you even begin filming. You can get an understanding of which footage will be useful to your partners, ensuring that both you and your partners get what you need.

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