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Community Engagement Institute

2016 Community Engagement Institute

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Initiating & Sustaining Partnerships

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Location

Richmond, Virginia

Disciplines

Higher Education

Initiating & Sustaining Partnerships

May 17, 2016

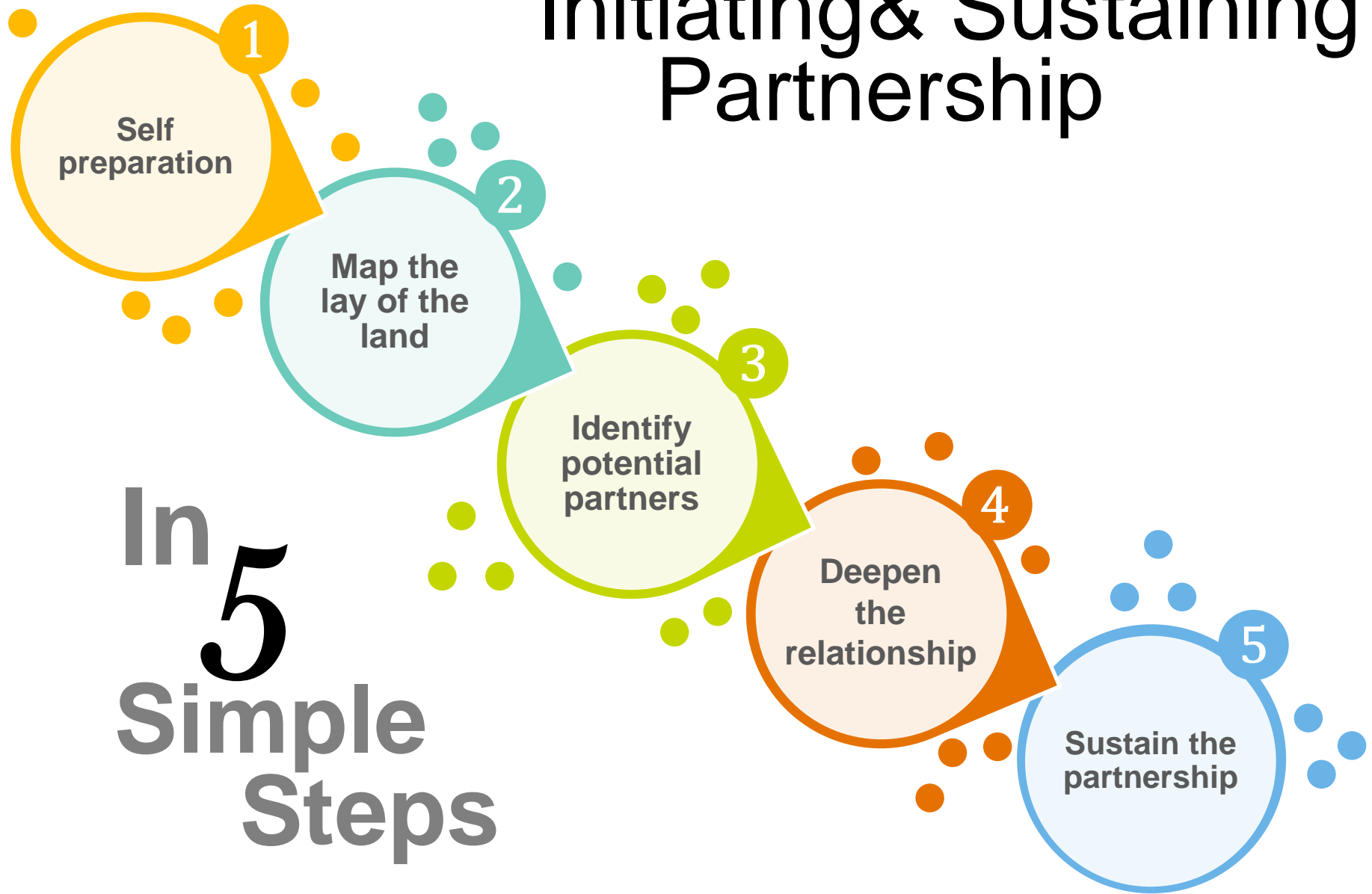
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VCU

Initiating & Sustaining Partnership



In **5**
Simple
Steps

1 Self preparation

Academics should spend a **considerable amount of time** getting to know communities and organizations **before** they approach individuals about partnering in specific projects
(Israel, et al. 2005)



1 Self preparation

Read the sample e-mail message from a service-learning instructor and discuss whether it is an effective way to engage a community partner.

YWCA Staff,

Thank you for agreeing to host the service-learning students in my class. They will begin coming next week and can help you with anything you need done. Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Professor X

1 Self preparation

Before you seek out a partner, ask yourself

1. Do I possess the patience needed to work with a diverse team?
2. Do I possess the patience needed to learn things I may not know and to teach others about my skills and experience?
3. Do I have a genuine curiosity about how others live and/or what their jobs entail?
4. Do I possess or am I willing to learn the interpersonal skills needed to build long-term partnerships?

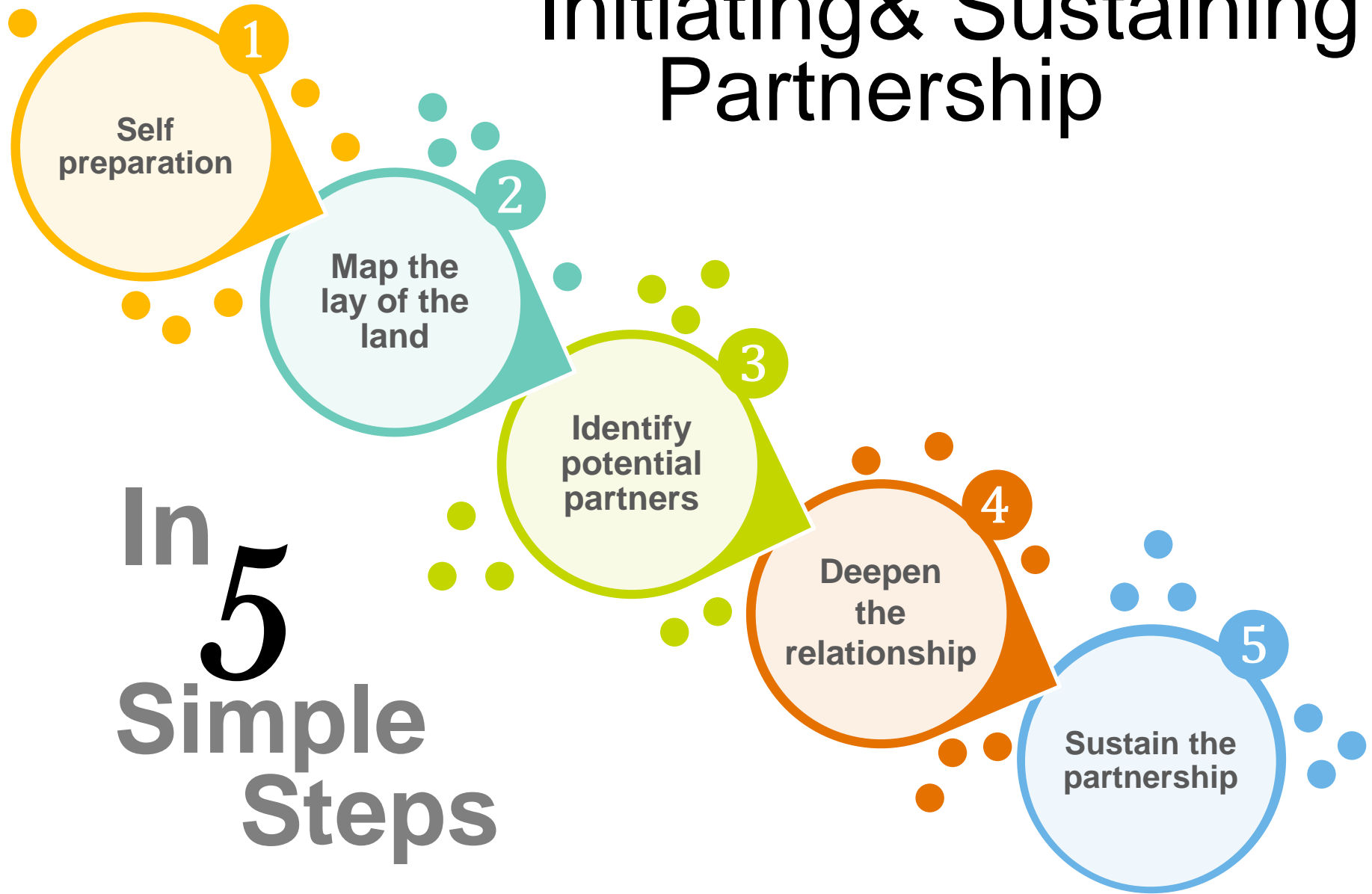
1 Self preparation

Before you seek out a partner, ask yourself

1. Am I willing and able to respect and inspire others?
2. Do I have the ability to share control, to lead and be led?
3. Do I want to make others' concerns the focus of my research?
4. As a researcher, am I able to supplement my scientific skills with humility?
5. Am I committed to self-evaluation, equal power distribution, and the development of mutually beneficial partnerships?



Initiating & Sustaining Partnership



In **5**
Simple
Steps

2 Map the lay of the land

“**Warm up**” the **community** by participating (or having your staff participate) in community events and activities.

- Attend community and cultural events
- Attend business and commerce events
- Visit local schools, churches, community and recreational centers

Show genuine interest!



2 Map the lay of the land

Contacting local non-profits and volunteering at their events or facilities can provide a greater insights about your stakeholders.

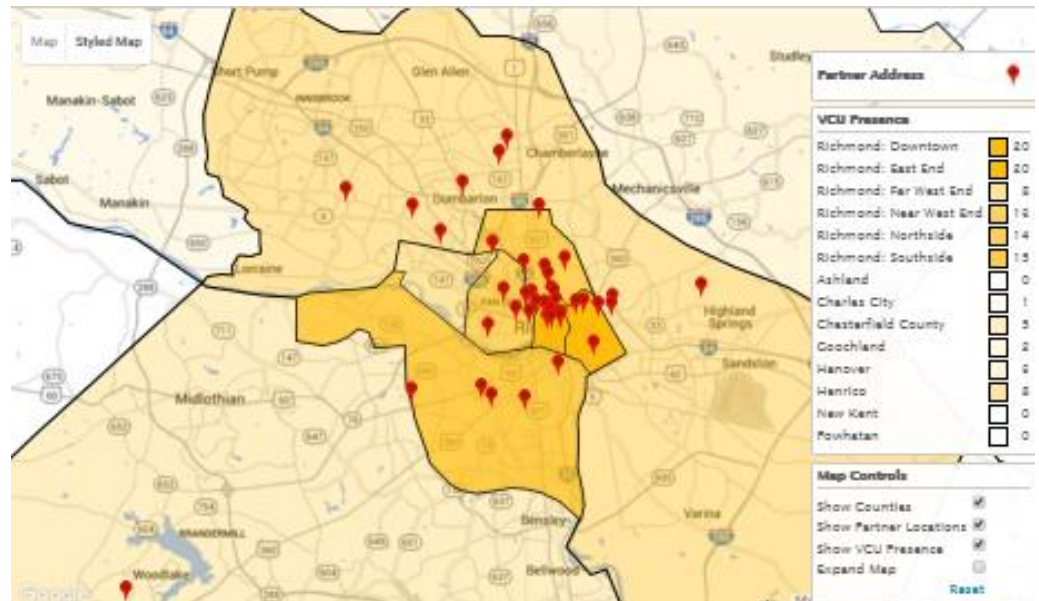
2 Map the lay of the land

- Find local community events, groups, and volunteer opportunities on-line
 - [Connect VA](#)
 - [HandsOn Greater Richmond](#)

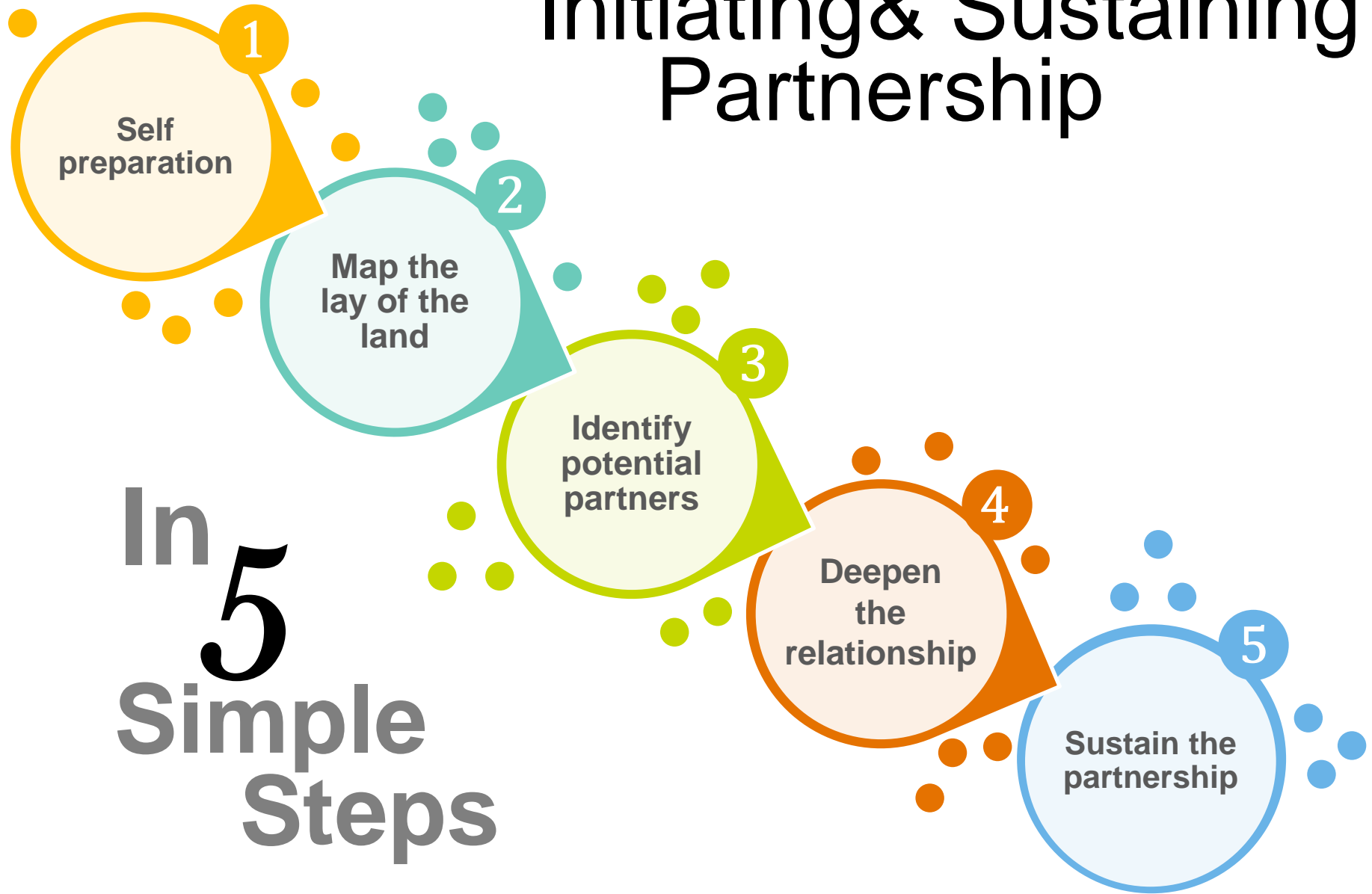
2 Map the lay of the land

It may be helpful to **identify other university programs and previous research collaborations.**

- Talk to other VCU researchers
- Utilize VCU's [Partnership Map](#)



Initiating & Sustaining Partnership



In **5**
Simple
Steps

2 Identify potential partners

Getting to know your stakeholders can also help you identify individual collaborators

- Spend time understanding
 - Leaders (formal and informal)
 - Gatekeepers
 - Workhorses
 - Other key players

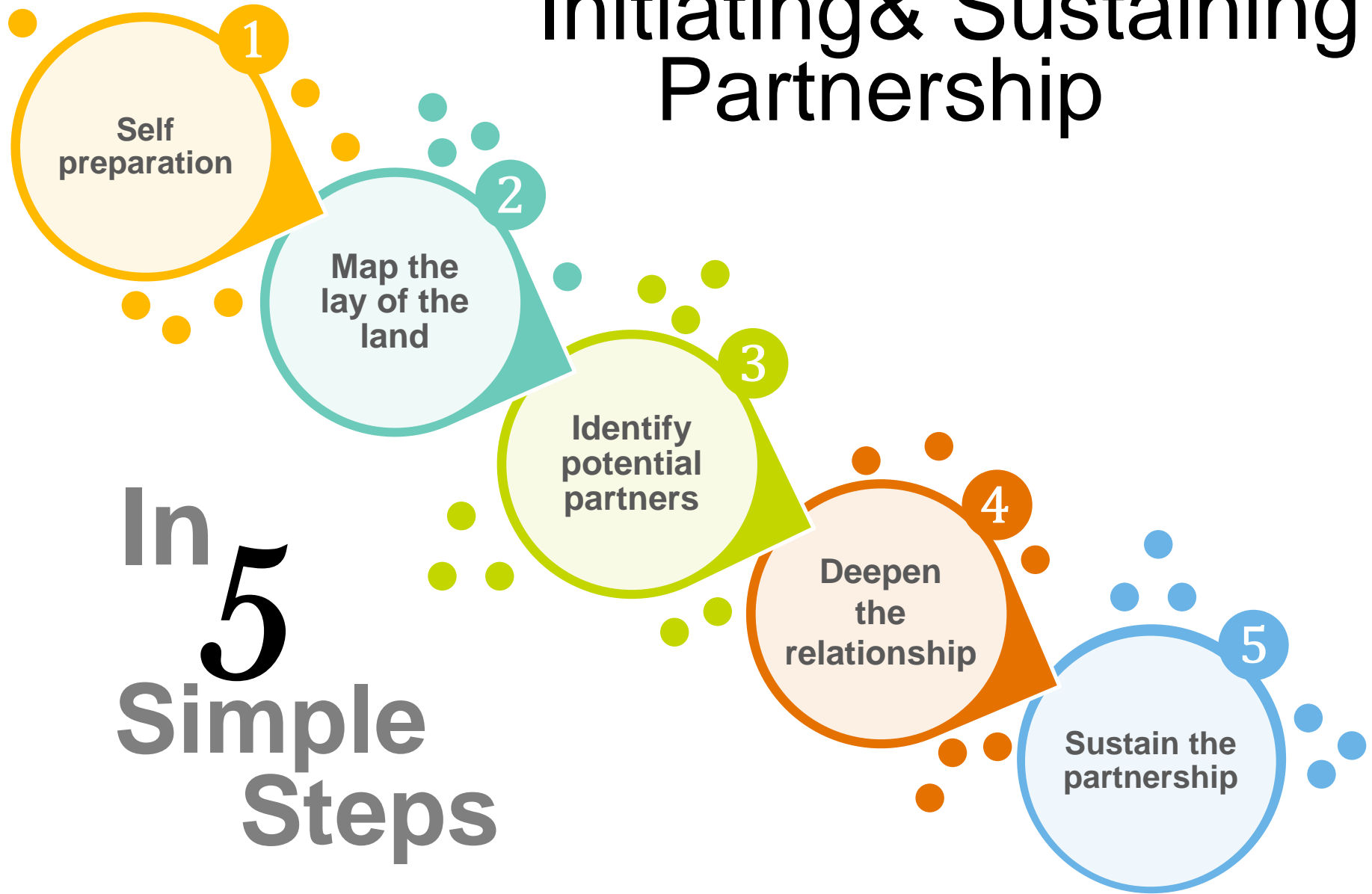
2 Identify potential partners

Understand the context & history (add gorilla slide)

A word of caution, not all partnerships are created equal.

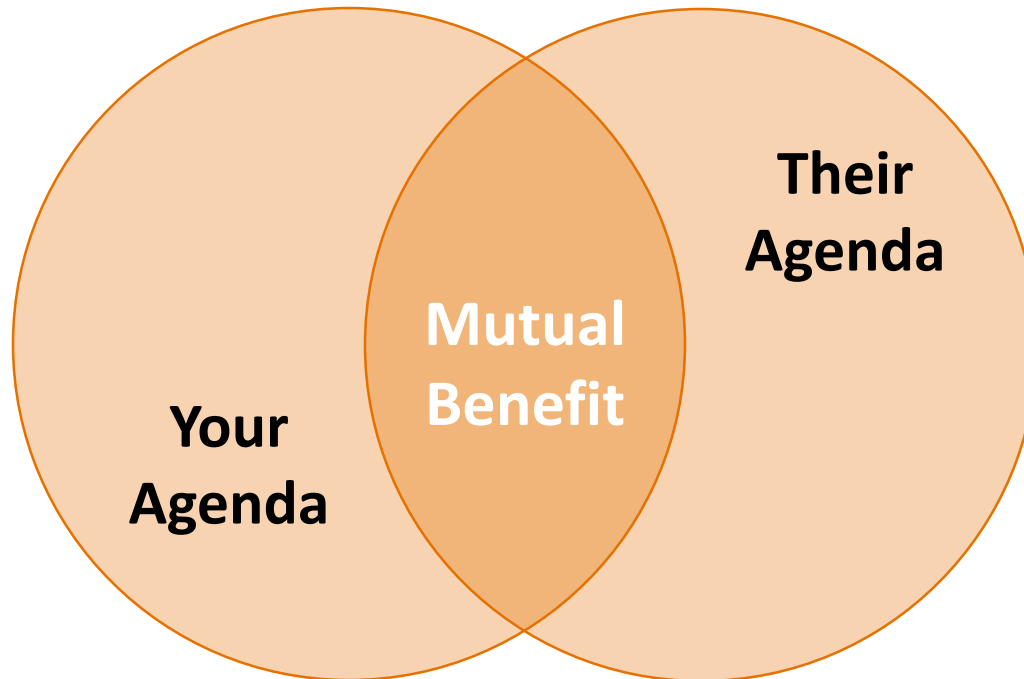
...partnership for a specific project may be easier if there have been previous positive connections between the potential partner and university (Israel, 2005)

Initiating & Sustaining Partnership



In **5**
Simple
Steps

4 Deepen the relationship



Developing **trust** among all players requires an initial investment but creates long-term efficiencies

4 Deepen the relationship



4 Deepen the relationship

Successful partners **deliberately and expressly explore** shared interests, recognize partner strengths and capacity, and establish standards of performance.

4 Deepen the relationship

Ask yourself & your partner,

“what is the mutual benefit?”

- Why do I want to work with **this particular partner**?
- What are the **benefits to me**, my research team, my research agenda?
- What are the **benefits to my partner(s)**?
- What is the **mutual benefit**?

4 Deepen the relationship

Ask yourself & your partner,

“what is the feasibility?”

- Does my partner have the **organizational capacity** to this kind of research project?
 - staffing
 - infrastructure
 - technology
 - capabilities

4 Deepen the relationship

Ask yourself & your partner,

“how can we build trust?”

- What kind of trust-building activities should we first do before jumping into the work?
- What are the power dynamics?
- Practice cultural humility---define

*“I don't care how much you know until
I know how much you care”*

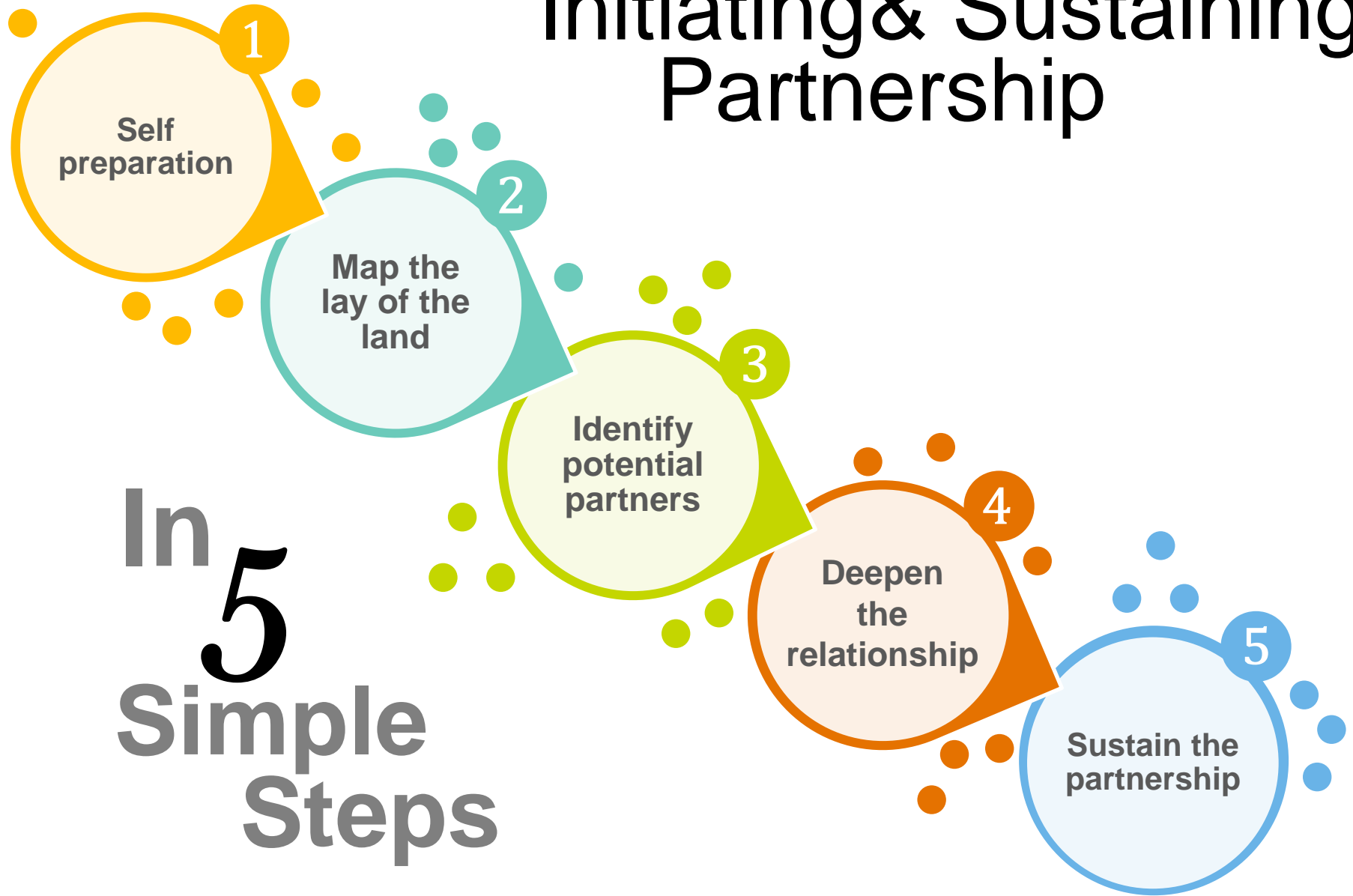
4 Deepen the relationship

Be prepared for give and take

- Partners are often most in need of **interventions** and **evaluations**, not research projects

Seriously, what is the benefit to your partner?

Initiating & Sustaining Partnership

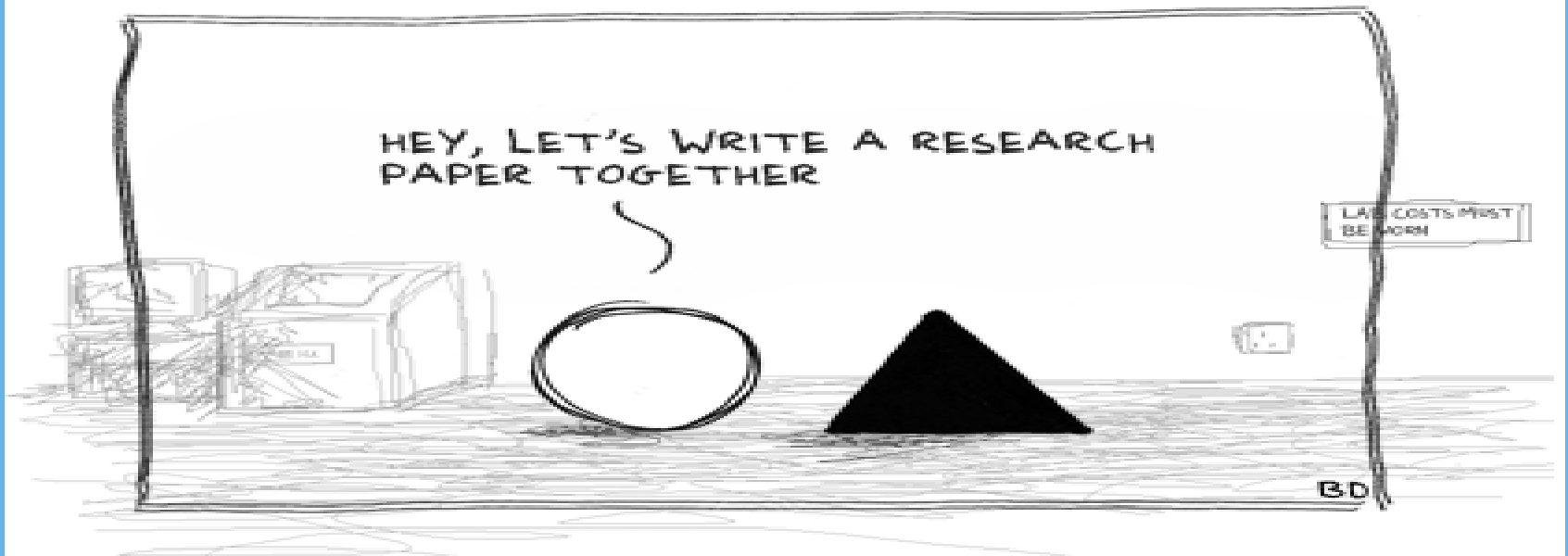


In **5** Simple Steps

5 Sustain the Partnership

WE'VE BEEN GOING OUT FOR MONTHS, WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR YEARS... THROUGH THICK AND THIN, WE'VE BEEN AND SURVIVED THROUGH IT ALL...

I THINK, I THINK WE'RE READY FOR THIS...



5 Sustain the Partnership

There is an assumption in the community engagement literature that sustained partnerships are the best. But different projects often have definitive start and stop times. **Why would sustaining a partnership be important?**

5 Sustain the Partnership

What if it's time to break up?

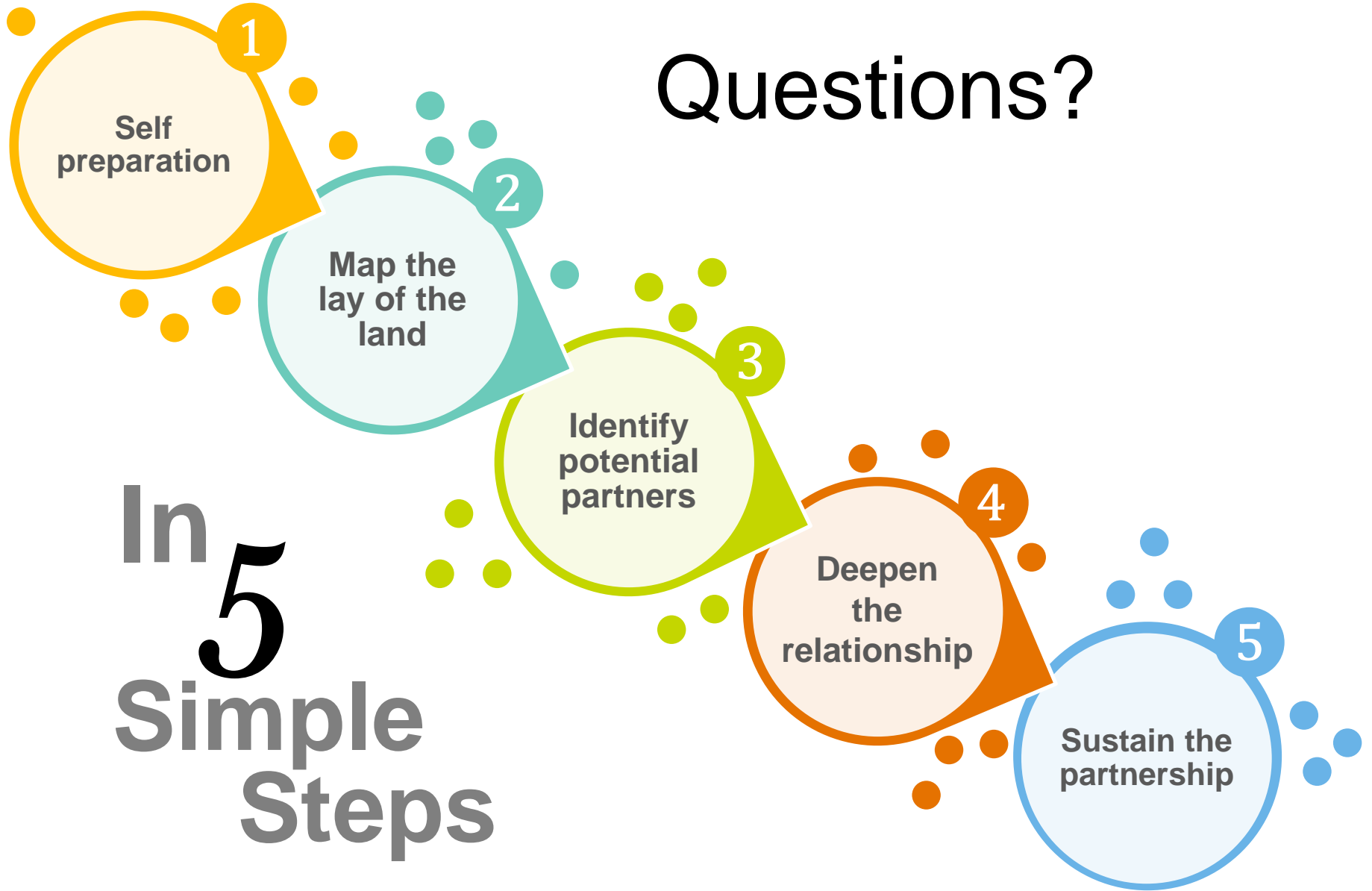
- Were goals and expectations met?
- Were outputs shared with all partners?
- Might you ever want to work again with this partner?

5 Sustain the Partnership

So you say you want to work with your partner again . . .

- How do you keep the relationship warm?
- How do you ensure reciprocity?
- What are the future goals for this partnership?

Questions?



In **5**
Simple
Steps