

# Effective Approaches to High-Level Isolation Unit (HLIU) Twinning



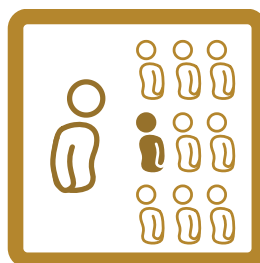
What is Twinning?

Why twin?

Who to twin with

Effective  
approaches

Appendix



## Purpose

This guideline document on Effective Approaches to High-Level Isolation Unit (HLIU) Twinning will provide HLIUs interested in the activity with a roadmap of ideas and options to design and facilitate a Twinning experience that will provide the most benefits to their units. Content in this document was informed by an evaluation of two 2023-2024 Twinning pilots via observation of Twinning activities, anecdotal stories, and a participant survey.

NETEC International Partnerships & Programs (IPP) was created in 2022 to strengthen collaboration, networking, and knowledge sharing among international special pathogens programs.

The IPP team would like to thank the Twinning pilot teams for their participation in this activity and for providing feedback for the development of this document.

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## What is Twinning?

Twinning involves the voluntary contributions of knowledge, time, expertise, and materials between two or more high-level isolation units (HLIUs).

### Twinning is<sup>1</sup>:

- Based on reciprocity
- Facilitated relationship-building
- Dynamic and flexible
- Cross-cultural

### Twinning can take many forms based on participating HLIUs' interests. These could include:

- Regular meetings to share information and protocols
- Training exchanges
- Exercise observations
- Information exchange
- Technical exchange
- Rapid information-sharing during emergencies
- Partnering of operational positions (e.g., medical directors, coordinators)



*“Building collaborative relationships and a network of high-consequence infectious disease clinical partners is a critical component of global readiness for emerging infectious diseases. The relationship-building aspect of Twinning and other in-person partnership activities cannot be replicated. Our national health security depends on these robust international relationships that can be leveraged in emergencies.” – Twinning pilot participant*



### Why should we twin?

#### Benefits of Twinning:

- Building relationships that can be leveraged during emergencies
- Sharing experiences, lessons learned, and best practices
- Getting feedback on processes and standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- Gaining new perspectives on HLIU practices
- Expanding awareness of global approaches for high-level isolation

100% of surveyed pilot participants agreed that Twinning is a good way to connect and build relationships with global peers.



*"It's not about making the other team work in the same way we do. It's about diversity and seeing how what we do works in a different way with different healthcare delivery systems. There are times when we can learn." – Twinning pilot participant*



### Who should we twin with?

#### Would your unit like to twin with a unit that is...

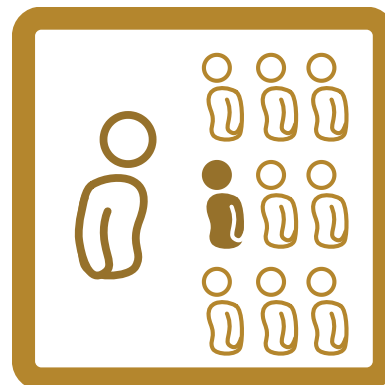
- Similar or different?
- Brand new or experienced?
- Familiar or new to you?
- Near or far?
- Culturally similar or different?

#### Pilot participants on what makes a good Twinning partner:

- Willingness to learn and change
- Understanding and accepting differences between units
- Commitment to the activity and mutual, reciprocal engagement

#### How do I find my Twinning Partner?

- Ask other units or NETEC IPP who they recommend
- The NETEC IPP team can help facilitate an introduction



*“Bringing teams together allows organic conversations to happen where there are often rich nuggets of information and ideas that can be grown. Twinning matches you with a team that you may not have a peer-to-peer relationship with yet, therefore, a new opportunity to network is able to be explored.”*  
– Twinning pilot participant



### Effective approaches to Twinning

**How should we start Twinning? Once your teams have agreed to twin, a kick-off meeting is helpful to:**

- Introduce key members from both teams
- Review what Twinning is
- Discuss broad expectations
- Identify primary points of contact
- Establish how long and how often to meet
- Begin to draft goals and priorities

\* [See Appendix 1 for the "Get to Know You" resource](#)



**At the beginning, Twinning Partners should consider the questions:**

- What do we want to learn from our partner?
- What are our strengths that we can share?
- What outcomes do we want to see from Twinning?

\* [See Appendix 2 for a Twinning Background resource for more questions to consider](#)

**How long does Twinning last?**

- Twinning can last as long as it needs to
- Pilot participants recommend quarterly meetings for 1 year
- Important to note: the end of Twinning meetings doesn't mean the end of the relationship!



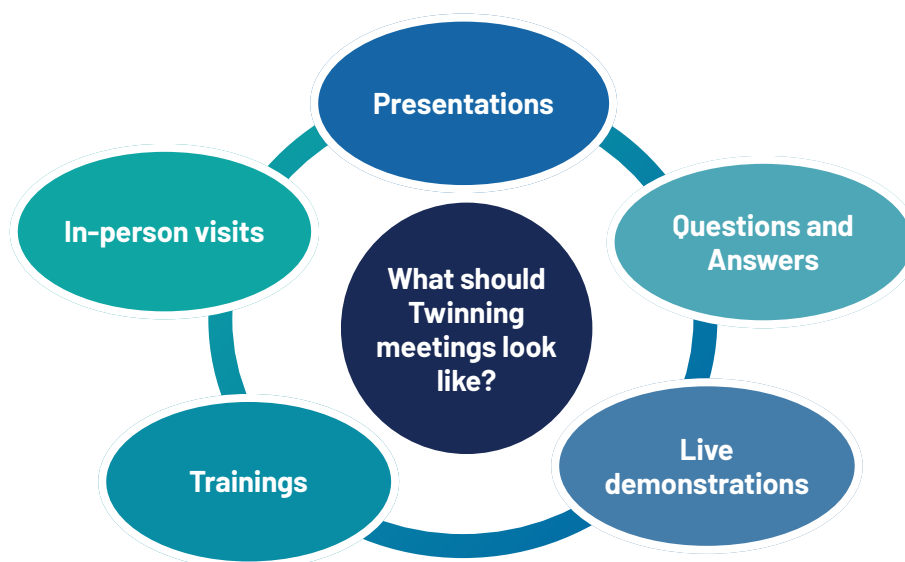
### Effective approaches to Twinning

#### Twinning meeting topic ideas:

- Areas of excellence
- Lessons learned from activities and exercises
- Challenges or areas of improvement
- HLIU operations, such as staffing models, research, and infrastructure
- Other topics such as transportation, governmental collaboration, and local healthcare worker training
- Location-specific topics, such as regional emerging special pathogens and national healthcare systems
- Tip: Pilot participants recommend having a meeting agenda with topics that are decided ahead of time.



*"It would be helpful for each facility to visit the other during the twinning process to gain a better understanding of each other's capabilities and processes. I think this will enhance the learning for each facility."*  
– Twinning pilot participant





### Appendix 1. Twinning Partnership Introduction Document

#### Purpose:

To share information between the Twinning units to set the foundation for the one-year Twinning partnership.

#### Instructions:

- Meet with your internal biocontainment unit team and respond to the questions below.
- Share best practices and challenges with your Twinning partner unit.
- Meet with your internal team and review your partner unit's introduction document.
  - This introduction document will be used to identify specific interests and areas each unit would like to learn from their partner's knowledge, experience, skills, and existing programs, as well as to inform goals, objectives, and priority activities for the Twinning Exercise.

#### Facility:

For the following section, answer the question by briefly describing your hospital/facility and your biocontainment unit.

1. Where is your biocontainment located (e.g., in main hospital facility, in a standalone facility, an extension of another unit in the hospital)?
2. Provide a brief history of your biocontainment unit. When and why was it established? When and for what diseases has it been activated for either suspected or confirmed cases?
3. Is the unit used for purposes when not activated (e.g., used for standard patient care, challenge studies, research, training)?
4. What is the capacity of your unit (i.e., number of isolation rooms, number of beds)? Please indicate if the capacity is different for different pathogens.
5. What special pathogens are your biocontainment unit ready to provide care for?
6. Does the unit have any required capabilities that must be maintained for that designation? If so, please describe.





### People:

For the following section, please describe the professionals who will be actively participating in the Twinning exercise.

1. Does your unit have a leadership team or a group of individuals responsible for management duties? If so, please list their names, professional titles, and roles.
2. Please list names and titles of members of your team who will be most closely involved in the Twinning Partnership (e.g., primary points of contact, those who will contribute to goal setting).
  - a. Who will be the main point(s) of contact on this project, and how can they best be reached? Provide their names and preferred contact information.
3. Please provide details of your team and staffing model. For example, is staffing volunteer-based or required? What is the approximate number of staff currently trained to work in the isolation unit, and what are their various professions and specialties (e.g., critical care nurses, respiratory therapy, infectious disease physicians)?
4. How frequently do your staff train? Do all staff who would be involved in caring for a patient during an activation train at this frequency?
5. What types of exercises does your biocontainment unit perform in preparation for an activation, and how frequently are exercises conducted?
6. What else would you like your Twinning partner to know about the faculty and staff who work at or are involved with your biocontainment unit?

### Relationship Setting:

1. What else would you like your Twinning Exercise partner to know about how you form and maintain professional relationships? Are there cultural customs/preferences they should know about? Is there jargon used in your biocontainment unit that you would like them to know, such as the name of your unit?
2. Does your team have preferred means of communication with your Twinning partner (e.g., Zoom meetings, emails with a large group, emails to a central point of contact)? If so, please describe.
3. Does your biocontainment unit have any conflicts of interest that would inhibit its participation in the Twinning Exercise? If yes, please explain.





### **Twinning Exercise Information and Priorities:**

1. What are topics or areas your biocontainment unit does well that you would want to share with your Twinning partner? For this question, think about the knowledge, materials, programs, experiences, etc. that your unit could share with the partner organization. These could be both internal to the unit, as well as involvement in regional or national efforts.
2. What are the specific interest areas/topics that you would like to learn from your partner unit? Things to consider for this question include areas of opportunity for gaining knowledge or skills, areas where your unit could use guidance or expert advice, knowledge/skills/information that would be valuable to your team, or activities your unit has wanted to undertake but hasn't because of gaps in knowledge/lack of experience.
3. What are your biocontainment unit's goals for the 1-year Twinning? What would you like to accomplish by the end of the Twinning in the next year?
4. Is there anything outside of biocontainment practices that you would like to learn about from your Twinning partner organization? For example, the national structure/approach for special pathogens care, and other capabilities of your Twinning partner organization.

### **Other:**

1. What other information would you like to provide about your organization or your biocontainment unit that you think would be helpful for your Twinning partner unit to know?
2. What other questions do you have for or information you'd like from your Twinning partner unit that wouldn't be covered in the questions above?



## Appendix 2. High-Level Isolation Twinning Background Information

### Purpose:

To facilitate relationship-building, networking, and best practice sharing between two partnering high-level isolation programs, and to learn from each other's experiences and expertise. This Twinning could include sharing of practices, information, and experiences for both high-level isolation operations as well as coordination with other national infectious disease programs and hospitals in the region.

### Background:

- Twinning involves the voluntary contributions of knowledge, time, expertise, resources, materials, and other contributions.
- Four distinctive attributes of Twinning have previously been noted<sup>1</sup>:
  1. Is based on reciprocity
  2. Entails the building of personal relationships
  3. Is a dynamic process (flexibility for spontaneous development)
  4. Is between 2 or more organizations across different cultures
- Twinning can take many forms (interested facilities will determine these), but could include:
  - Training exchanges
  - Exercise observations
  - Information exchange
  - Technical exchange
  - Rapid information-sharing during health emergencies
  - Partnering of subgroups (e.g., lab workers, medical directors, coordinators)

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<sup>1</sup> Cadée, F., Nieuwenhuijze, M.J., Lagro-Janssen, A.L.M. et al. The state of the art of twinning, a concept analysis of twinning in healthcare. Global Health 12, 66 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-016-0205-5>.



### Benefits of Twinning:

- Relationship building
- Networking
- Sharing of resources and best practices, knowledge
- Advancing knowledge base for staff related to operational and clinical practices
- Lessons learned from experience, coordinating/collaborating in national system
- Academic value/publications

### Approach:

Twinning will start off with a Kick-off meeting to introduce key personnel from both teams, overview the Twinning activity, discuss broad expectations, identify primary point(s) of contact for each Twinning partner, and begin to draft collective goals and priorities.

Following the kick-off meeting, an introductory stage will commence for the teams to better understand history, organization structure, capabilities, strengths, target areas for advancing, and interests of the partner facility. This could include a series of virtual meetings and/or exchanges via email. The NETEC Twinning Toolkit includes a template, “Get to Know You” informational sheet, for programs to complete, if helpful.

Through these meetings and email exchanges, Twinning partners will identify specific interests and areas they would like to learn from the other facility’s knowledge, experience, skills, and existing programs, as well as strengths from their own facility’s programs that they can share with the other team. In tandem, Twinning partner leadership will discuss and work to better define expectations and time commitments for the Twinning partnership.

Questions for Twinning partners to consider at this stage include:

- Specific interest areas/what they would like to learn from partner:
  - What are areas of opportunity for gaining knowledge, skills, or experience? Where could we use some guidance or expert advice?
  - Are there some activities we’d like to undertake but haven’t because of gaps in knowledge/lack of experience? What knowledge/skills/information could we use?



- Areas of strength that can be shared with the partner unit:
  - Related to high-level isolation operations, but also coordination and networking within a national network/program (e.g., clinical research, education, and training).
  - Where do we excel? What knowledge, materials, programs, experiences, etc. could we pass on to the partner organization?
- Overall, what can the facility gain from this partnership, and what can they give to this partnership?

When Twinning partners have the necessary introduction to/level of understanding of the partner, teams may wish to:

- Collectively draft and agree on specific goals, objectives, priority activities, and expectations
- Discuss anticipated timelines and outcomes
- Review, revise, and approve success indicators for ongoing monitoring
- Agree upon monitoring and reporting strategy

### **NETEC International Partnerships and Programs (IPP) Support:**

NETEC IPP has created a Twinning Toolkit, which includes templates/resources as well as best practices from facilities that participated in a 1-year Twinning Pilot. The Toolkit will be shared with Twinning partners to facilitate goal setting and planning. Additionally, NETEC IPP can facilitate or support communications, where requested by Twinning programs. If Twinning partners agree, NETEC IPP would like to occasionally check in with teams (e.g., quarterly) to see how the Twinning is progressing and track accomplishments of the Twinning program. If the Twinning partners are amenable, NETEC IPP will discuss with Twinning teams the appropriate cadence and format for these updates.