Intermediary Development Series

Establishing Partnerships

Compassion Capital Fund

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The ideas and information in this publication should not be construed as an official Department of Health and Human Services position. This guidebook is published in the interest of technical information exchange.

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Introduction

Welcome to *The Intermediary Development Series*—a multi-volume series designed to outline the key steps and elements necessary to help intermediaries build capacity in the faith-based and community-based organizations (FBO/CBOs) they serve. This series represents more than the sharing of information. It represents a common commitment to an intermediary's ideals—providing the most effective services in a more efficient manner to the grassroots organizations that are reaching those in our country with the greatest needs.

Who is the audience for *The Intermediary Development Series*?
An *intermediary* is something that exists between two persons or things, or someone who acts as an agent or mediator between persons or things. An intermediary organization, then, exists between the people with the resources and the organizations needing the resources—namely finances or information.

   The Compassion Capital Fund, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, helps FBO/CBOs build capacity and improve their ability to provide social services to those in need. In this context, an intermediary acts as a mediator between the Federal government and grassroots organizations to help accomplish these goals. This series will prove useful to both existing and emerging intermediaries (those currently funded through CCF as well as an expanded audience of potential recipients) and the FBO/CBOs they serve.

What is The Intermediary Development Series?
Think of it as help when and where it's most needed—a ready reference for common priority issues and comprehensive answers to critical questions. It was developed as a key component of the Compassion Capital Fund in response to the questions and concerns consistently posed by intermediaries representing all areas of expertise and experience levels. The following titles are included in this eight-volume series:

   Acquiring Public Grants
   Building Multiple Revenue Sources
   Delivering Training and Technical Assistance
   Designing Sub-Award Programs
   Establishing Partnerships
   Identifying and Promoting Promising Practices
   Managing Public Grants
   Measuring Outcomes

How is *The Intermediary Development Series* used?
It is intended to be used as a practical guide for intermediaries to help FBO/CBOs in a variety of tasks including securing more funding, providing services more effectively or on an increased scale and also helping them operate more efficiently. As such, it's flexible—readers who wish to use it as a self-guided reference for specific questions are likely to keep it nearby. Key terms (bolded within the text) are defined in a glossary of terms included in the appendix of each

guidebook. It's also comprehensive—emerging intermediaries may find the volume, *Delivering Training and Technical Assistance*, especially helpful for more in-depth assistance. Finally, regardless of the audience, its user-friendly format makes it easy to share with the variety of organizations intermediaries serve.

Who developed *The Intermediary Development Series*?
This series was developed for the Department of Health and Human Services by the National Resource Center—an information clearinghouse designed to provide customized technical assistance, specialized workshops and other useful tools to help increase intermediaries' scale, scope and effectiveness. Expert practitioners were enlisted to develop and field-test each topic in *The Intermediary Development Series*, ensuring each volume would provide accurate and, most of all, *practical* answers to common questions.

Establishing Partnerships

By reading this particular volume in *The Intermediary Development Series*, intermediary organizations and the **faith** and **community-based** organizations they work with will learn the key elements involved in building **capacity** through effective partnership development including:

- How to increase the *quality* of outputs and outcomes
- How to increase the *quantity* of outputs and outcomes
- How to increase funding acquisition

This guidebook will help organizations answer these key questions:

- Why are effective partnerships important?
- What are the different forms that partnerships can take?
- What are key steps to establishing effective partnerships?
- What are key steps to managing effective partnerships in order to achieve mutually agreed upon outcomes?
- What tools and other resources can assist the intermediary organization in training FBO/CBOs for effective partnerships?

Establishing Partnerships Overview

Why Form Partnerships?

While there are many nationally recognized benefits and advantages to partnership development, the answer to why one seeks to establish partnerships is relatively simple. There is added value in working with other organizations including the sharing of staff and financial resources. Partnership development is not a new concept. Communities, organizations and individuals have been working together in partnerships to improve the quality of life at the grassroots level for a number of years. There are a number of multi-agency "stakeholder" partnerships both locally and nationally that manage and deliver a wide range of community development programs, as well as service development and strategic planning. However, the benefits of effective partnerships do not result overnight. Establishing effective and inclusive partnerships takes time, and it is important for you to create the right framework from the start and review the structure and process of the partnership on an ongoing basis to measure its success or failure.

As a result of the popularity of partnerships and their potential benefits, a vast array of information is available, including many websites dedicated to partnership development with self-assessment checklists, evaluation processes and benchmarking exercises. Also, an ever-increasing number of publications have surfaced to promote the benefits and advantages to partnership development.

What Is a Partnership?

A working definition of a partnership is "a collaborative relationship between entities to work toward shared **objectives** through a mutually agreed division of labor."[1]

While this working definition is not very precise, it does help distinguish partnerships from other forms of aid relationship. Partnerships are inherently complex vehicles for delivery of practical solutions on the ground and at the strategic level. Several studies of how partnerships operate indicate that practitioners manage the complexity by adopting a long-term, flexible and organic approach. Why organic? During the course of these partnerships, organizations often evolve as they learn more about effective management, build capacity and gain valuable experiences. In that sense, partnerships act as a learning mechanism that teaches you to be better at what you do and enables you to achieve your goals.

If you are considering a potential partnership, you should become familiar with several key components of the most common approaches to partnerships including:

- **Leadership**
  Partnerships imply a shared leadership among respected individual(s) who are recognized and empowered by their own organizations and trusted by partners to build consensus and resolve conflicts.

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[1] World Bank, 1998, p. 5.

■ **Common Understanding**
A common understanding of the framework, culture, values and approach of partner organizations needs to exist. Also important is a clear understanding of individual members' roles and responsibilities regarding the division of labor.

■ **Purpose**
A shared common **vision** and purpose that builds trust and openness and recognizes the value and contribution of all members needs to exist. Additionally, shared and transparent decision-making processes—extending the scope of influence and involvement over other services and activities—will prove essential to your partnership.

Shared goals and **aims**, understood and accepted as being important by each partner, leads to improved coordination of policies, programs and service delivery, and ultimately better outcomes.

■ **Culture and Values**
Shared "can do" values, understanding and also an acceptance of differences (e.g., values, ways of working) are all key components of a successful partnership. Having respect for the contributions of all partners, combined with an absence of status barriers, will lead to the active involvement of members who are identified as being effective, representative and capable of playing a valued role in the partnership.

■ **Learning and Development**
A healthy partnership promotes an atmosphere of learning. This may involve monitoring and evaluation aimed at improving members' performance. Investing in partner skills, knowledge and competence needs to be highly valued within the partnership. This open mindset and spirit of facilitation creates opportunities to shape each other's work and learn together. In this environment, members can more effectively reflect on both developmental successes and failures.

■ **Communication**
If a partnership is going to succeed in the area of communication, strong feedback loops are required. Effective communication at all levels within the partnership and within partner organizations, sharing and accessing all knowledge and information needs to exist.

■ **Performance Management**
Management practices and resources are required to achieve the partnership **goals** and complement the intended purpose of the partnership. Specifically, members must demonstrate both accountability for the actions they take and ownership for delivering the objectives and **targets** for which they are responsible.

At the same time, you must be equally aware of key barriers to a working relationship with a potential partner. Furthermore, as relationships evolve, partners must be aware of these barrier issues and work to resolve them if present.

On the right is a list of potential barriers to successful partnerships for you to consider.

Barriers to Successful Partnerships

❏ Limited vision/failure to inspire
❏ One partner manipulates or dominates, or partners compete for the lead
❏ Lack of clear purpose and inconsistent level of understanding purpose
❏ Lack of understanding roles/responsibilities
❏ Lack of support from partner organizations with ultimate decision-making power
❏ Differences of philosophies and manners of working
❏ Lack of commitment; unwilling participants
❏ Unequal and/or unacceptable balance of power and control
❏ Key interests and/or people missing from the partnership
❏ Hidden agendas
❏ Failure to communicate
❏ Lack of evaluation or monitoring systems
❏ Failure to learn
❏ Financial and time commitments outweigh potential benefits
❏ Too little time for effective consultation

Key Components of Partnership Development

As opportunities arise, intermediaries and the FBC/CBOs they serve need practical advice on whether or not to form **strategic partnerships**. Research and practitioner evidence suggests the following overarching **principles** of good practice with regard to partnership development, as well as specific issues you need to consider when evaluating the structure of a partnership. You may have questions ranging from, "Who should be involved in this partnership?" and "How will each member operate?" Some common themes among these critical success factors include:

■ Balancing requirements and flexibility within the structure and operation of the partnership
■ Developing a stable foundation for the membership, rationale and activities of the partnership while allowing sufficient flexibility for these components to develop and evolve in response to external and internal demands
■ Understanding that partnerships go through a life cycle of development from initial set up stages, through full scale implementation, to maturity

These principles were drawn from The Best Value Review of Commissioning and external Partnerships, as well as research carried out on Partnerships.[2,3,4] It is important to note that these principles can be applied across different levels and functions of partnership arrangements. However, existing partnerships or those organizations seeking to set up a partnership, should apply all of these principles, as they set the standards for partnership development as described in this guidebook. Following these standards will ensure that partnerships are working effectively and will successfully enable them to achieve their overall goals.

The first step in evaluating a potential partnership is to recognize and agree upon the need. A common approach in making this decision requires that you:

■ Identify principal desired partnership achievements
■ Identify the factors associated with successful partnership development
■ Identify any principal barriers to the partnership
■ Acknowledge and recognize the extent of dependency upon individuals to achieve goals
■ Focus on partnership added value. Ask yourself, "How can we achieve more or better results through collaboration?"

In a later section, this guidebook further addresses how to determine the need for a partnership. Once you have determined the need exists, you will want to consider the following fundamental principles and standards for partnership development:

Emphasize clarity of leadership
■ Whoever leads the development of the partnership needs to be recognized and empowered by his/her own organization and trusted by the partners

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[2] DETR, Developing Local Strategic Partnerships;

[3] Partnership Assessment Tool, Nuffield Institute;

[4] Partnership Arrangements, DoH guidance document.

Provide clarity in understanding

■ Framework, culture, **values** and the approach of partner organizations will in many cases need to be the subject of explicit discussion.

■ Partners need to be clear about and understand their roles and responsibilities, defining "who does what" regarding "delivery" of activities of the partnership.

Recognize and allow the differences in culture/practice that exist among partners

■ Do not adopt an approach that suppresses different cultures and practices, as it will lead to conflict. Recognize and accept that others have a diversity of skills and innovative abilities. For example, only address significant differences if the lack of coordination of different planning and decision-making processes within partner organizations prevents implementation of partnership strategies/activities.

Ensure clarity of purpose

■ Ensure the partnership is built on a shared and common vision, and mutually agreeable service principles.
■ Ensure all partners understand and agree on the purpose and outcome of the partnership. In other words, everyone must have a shared vision regarding why the partnership was developed and what it hopes to achieve. This will help build a common purpose and shared commitment.
■ Develop a shared decision making process where decisions are made through a recognized process with partners having equal power. Decisions should not be the result of consensus based on the lowest common denominator.
■ Define clear partnership aims and objectives, with objectives expressed as outcomes for users.
■ Ensure partnership aims and objectives are realistic.
■ Publicize agreed upon and understood common aims and priorities.
■ Acknowledge the existence of separate organizational aims and objectives and their connection to jointly agreed aims and objectives.

Ensure a level of ownership and management commitment

This commitment is required from the senior level in all partner organizations (e.g., Directors, Members and Trustees). Make sure the commitments are expressed through practical support for the partnership in terms of resources and cost implications. Do this as soon as the partnership is operational. You will also want to:

■ Agree to the appropriate/relevant partners.
■ Secure widespread ownership within and outside partner organizations.
■ Recognize and nurture individuals with networking skills.
■ Cascade decisions and encourage contacts/networks across partner organizations at intermediate and frontline staff levels.

Develop and maintain trust

Fairness involves the conduct of the partnership, affording equal status among the partners and equality regarding the distribution of partnership benefits or gains. You will also want to:

■ Ensure the partnership is able to sustain a level of trust when faced with external problems that inhibit the contribution of individual partners.
■ Ensure the right people are in the right place at the right time.
■ Ensure the trust that is built up within partnerships is protected from any mistrust that develops in parent organizations.

Finally, be open, honest and communicate. Exchanging information in an open network will help build shared understanding and values. The need for effective communication goes beyond the partnership itself.

Develop clear partnership working arrangements

An effective partnership's working arrangements result in a clear outcome and maintain value for the contribution of all partners, avoiding domination of particular members and/or organizations. The partnership must emphasize clarity in roles and responsibilities while valuing the separate roles and the different experience and skill levels required. You will also want to:

■ Ensure transparency and awareness in the financial and non-monetary resources each partner brings to the partnership
■ Distinguish single from joint responsibilities and accountabilities
■ Ensure the prime focus is on process and outcomes, not structure and inputs

Finally, following an agreement by the partners, ensure the purpose, role, responsibility of members, main aims, objectives and outcomes for the partnership are documented within whatever medium the partnership requires, (e.g., **Business Plan**, Terms of Reference or Constitution).

Account for performance management

All partners ought to agree at the outset regarding:

■ How they are to measure their success, and
■ How they are to incorporate the measurements into the Best Value requirements for continuous improvement

This measurement process must include arrangements for monitoring and reviewing how effectively the partnership itself is working. Additionally, you will want to consider and resolve outstanding accountability and governance issues.

Recognize the opportunity for learning experiences and sharing good practices
Remember, a partnership can be considered a work in progress. This means you will want to agree to a range of success criteria regarding your partnership. Additionally, you will want to:

■ Ensure feedback flows to and from parent organizations
■ Celebrate and publicize local success and root out continuing barriers
■ Reconsider and revise partnership aims, objectives and arrangements

Basics of Partnership Development
Need for Partnership
Clarity of Leadership
Clarity of Understanding
Different cultures/practices
Clear Purpose
High Commitment Levels
Trust
Clear Working Arrangements
Performance Management
SystemsLearning/Exchanges of Good Practices

Categories of Partnerships

Once you decide to form a partnership, the next step is to define what type of working relationship you want with the partnership. Following are some categories of partnerships that will help you determine what kind of working and management relationship works best given your specific situation. The key for you to establish and maintain successful partnerships is to find a way to build on the strengths of all partners in various categories. In recent years, there has been a significant increase at the Federal, state, and local levels in the number of institutional "sponsors" of partnerships focusing on community improvement. Examples of institutional sponsors for partnerships are:

• *Federal* - The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) grants to institutions of higher learning to create partnerships with neighborhoods and to develop multidisciplinary neighborhood interventions. (OUP, 2002)

• *State* - The Tennessee Association of Community Partnerships uses information technology to support economic development through public/private partnerships. Community partners can be individuals or institutions working toward community and workforce development. (TNAC, Association)

• *University* - The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Center for Community Partnerships is a fee-for-service resource for business development partnering with insurance, advertising and finance organizations. (UWO, CCP)

• *Corporate* - The Allstate Insurance Company's Model for Community Partnerships works on issues of crime, fire safety and abandoned buildings to prevent insurance losses in Philadelphia neighborhoods, viewing the neighborhoods not as social liabilities but as potential customers (McNeil, 1995).

• *National Nonprofit* - With funding from the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the National Civic League created a new division called Federal-Community Partnerships (FCP). The FCP serves as coordinator for the training and technical assistance program interventions targeted at young children in 11 cities around the United States. (National Civic League, FCP)

Partnerships Among Community-Based Non-profit Service Organizations

From a community development perspective, the test to determine if these partnerships are effective is whether they actually contribute to what will empower people for social and economic change.[5] Organizations linking community and institutional interests list the following components regarding the share of the work: close, mutual cooperation, common goals, shared involvement in decision-making, sharing risks as well as benefits, common interests, responsibilities and power.

These components focus on both the process of the partnership (e.g., shared decision-making, shared power) and the capacity of each partner to assume responsibility for a share of the work.

Capacity of Partnerships

A growing body of research calls attention to the role of social capital, or community social capacity, as the source of the ability to identify problems and needs, achieve a workable consensus on goals and priorities and work in partnership with other organizations to achieve goals.[6]

The Rockefeller Institute identified the following four attributes of social capital or capacity in the *Study of Urban Neighborhoods and Community Capacity Building*.[7]

■ *Attachment/identification* - Measured by such factors as the percentage of residents who feel stronger attachment to the neighborhood than to the city at large.
■ *Neighboring* - Measured by what neighbors report as the frequency that they visit one another, help one another with tasks or the proportion of respondents who report that a large share of their neighbors are friends.
■ *Organizational/associational infrastructure* - Measured by the number and type of organizations or groups present in the neighborhood, the proportion of residents who report the presence of groups that deal with neighborhood issues and the degree to which residents report having a sense that there are people in their neighborhood with whom to talk about and work together on issues.
■ *Political/civic engagement* - Measured by electoral registration, turnout or membership in lobbying or advocacy organizations.

5   Kilpatrick, S., Johns, S., Mulford, B., Falk, I., Prescott, L. (2002). More than an Education:Leadership for Rural School-Community Partnerships, Tasmania, AU: Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, No. 02/055, June 2002.

6   Mattessich, P., & Monsey, B. (1997). Community Building: What Makes It Work. St. Paul: MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

7   Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. (1997). *Research Statement: A Study of UrbanNeighborhoods and Community Capacity Building*. Albany, NY.

Let's look at another framework for community capacity regarding "Theories of Neighborhood Change."[8] This study suggested four fundamental characteristics:

■ A sense of community, portraying a degree of connectedness among members;
■ A level of commitment, investing time and energy in community well-being, often funneled into local organizations;
■ Mechanisms for problem-solving, addressing issues and taking collective action with external organizations; and,
■ Access to resources (human and financial) through commitments of institutional partners.

In the context of partnerships, without community capacity, neighborhoods are at risk of being merely the recipient of goods or services, rather than a true partner in revitalization efforts in their neighborhood. In addition to levels of social or community capacity, in order to function as a partner, each organization must have a degree of organizational capacity to manage projects and budgets and establish manageable objectives in order to keep people involved.

In other words, if only one side of the partnership is involved in actual project management, there is no assurance that it is representative of shared interests or that there is any capacity for sustainability.

Process of Partnerships
Along with the individual capacity of each partner, it is important for you to examine the process of the actual partnership. There are a number of properties that for you to assess when considering how the "community" and the "partnership" establish and sustain a relationship. The locus of control for these properties is critical to the sustainability of the partnership and the community development initiative.

Consider the following four categories of properties that are important in a community partnership:

1. **Leadership** – There are many styles of leadership in both formal and informal organizational structures. The key here is noting *who* is providing the leadership in the partnership.
2. **Primary Funding** – An institutional partner can bring resources to the table and limit discussion to those resources, can bring linkage to resources, or there can be a cooperative effort to secure unattached resources.
3. **Goals** – Goals can be set in the absence of resources. You can develop them through consensus decision-making or they can be accepted because one party in the discussion is the "expert."
4. **Process** – Decision processes in community organizations and community institutions can be either inclusive or exclusive. Important to community development is how actively, and deeply, was the community engaged.

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8   Chaskin, Robert, and Prudence Brown. 1996. "Theories of Neighborhood Change," in Core Issues in Comprehensive Community-Building Initiatives. Rebecca Stone, ed. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

An example of a community-based partnership is the Nebraska Continuum of Services, Inc. We'll discuss the details regarding the partnership and the organizational structure later in this guidebook in Examples of Effective Partnerships.

Partnerships Among Foundations

Foundations make grants to local FBO/CBOs for program delivery and organizational support.

- **Foundations can play a key role in building collaboration between organizations and governments.** This can take place at both the national and local levels and brings multiple benefits. First, it serves to bring innovative ideas and skills into government agencies in both the design of social policy and the delivery of services to the public. Second, it enables organizations to access information and resources that increase their effectiveness. Third, it ensures that both public and private institutions are working together towards common goals, avoiding duplication of effort and ensuring maximum impact.
- **Foundations, particularly corporate foundations, are well placed to facilitate cooperation between organizations and the business sector.** Such cooperation can benefit organizations by bringing in additional skills and resources in areas such as financial administration, credit management and marketing. The business sector benefits from the advice of the FBO/CBOs in strengthening the impact of their programs at the community level.
- **Board membership can be a critical factor in facilitating the building of partnerships with other sectors.** Those foundations that have leading representatives of different sectors on their boards are at an advantage when building collaboration and partnerships between sectors. They can draw on a wide array of personal networks to open up opportunities and build trust and confidence.[9]

Cross-sector Partnerships

Cross-sector partnerships are between community-based nonprofits and the business, government and/or academic sectors. External/community partnerships are relatively simple to initiate but are challenging to maintain, regardless of the goodwill of the participants. Two distinctly different institutional and organizational cultures must come together to create a productive environment. What initially might seem like the opportunity for misunderstanding holds the possibility for an opportunity for a successful partnership.[10] The key here is to find common ground and language that underscores the shared vision of the partnership organizations.

A case in point is the partnership formed between University of Hawaii Center on the Family, the Hawaii Community Foundation and the Hawaiian Islands' Ministries. As you can see, the partnership was formed between an academic institution, a foundation and an FBO. We'll discuss the details regarding the partnership and the organizational structure later in this guidebook in Examples of Effective Partnerships.

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9   www.synergos.org/globalphilanthropy/00/fbsprogram8.htm
10   Dennis Wright, Executive Director of the Northeastern University School of Law, Urban Law and Public Policy Institute.

Benefits to Partners

Why should potential partners participate in this relationship—what benefits will result in their favor? The answer lies in the very nature of FBO/CBOs; they are connected to the community and are able to build infrastructures that can create long term capacity. They are more representative of the community concerns.[11] And while FBO/CBOs are often required to provide certain geographic connections in order to maintain funding, these other organizations are not required to do so and can therefore enable access to greater funding resources. Moreover, the partnership between these organizations provides the FBO/CBOs with greater citywide/region wide connections and provides the other organizations with greater grass roots connections. Another benefit for the governmental/business/academic organizations is the positive public perception regarding the interest and commitment to the community and its development. It also enables the other organization to participate in community development without having to deal with political and legal regulations, permit issues, etc. The result of a cross-sector partnership is a win-win situation for all the parties involved.

Additional Types of Partnerships

Some additional, specific types of partnerships are also available for your consideration. With each type, you will see examples of how this partnership might be expressed under typical circumstances.

Collaboration

Characteristics: Greater autonomy; no permanent organizational commitment

Organizational Partnerships (example)
- Sharing information
- Coordinating efforts,
- Not including shared, transferred or combined services, governance, resources or programs
- Having no integration

Strategic Alliance

Characteristics: Decision-making power is shared or transferred

Joint Programming (example)
- Management of a program of mutual interest to participating organizations' missions

Administrative Consolidation (example)
- Being agreement-driven
- Ongoing partnerships involving joint management of one or more functions (e.g., administrative or program related)
- Partners still operate independently

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[11] Chaskin, Robert, and Prudence Brown. 1996. "Theories of Neighborhood Change," in Core Issues in Comprehensive Community-Building Initiatives. Rebecca Stone, ed. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.
Baum, Howell S. 1997. *The Organization of Hope: Communities Planning Themselves*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Integration

Characteristics: Involves changes to structure and control

Management Service Organizations (example)
- Established to provide some or all administrative functions (i.e., fundraising, accounting functions)

Joint Ventures (example)
- Two or more organizations creating a new structure to advance an administrative or program-related function

Parent-Subsidiaries (example)
- One organization—either new or a designated organization—overseeing functions of another

Mergers (example)
- Previously separate organizations completely combining program, administrative, and governance functions [12]

Funding Alliances established to provide share funds
- Separate organizations come together in a recipient/donor relationship or share a larger grant/donation
- Issues of fiscal and administrative management can be a great hindrance
- In order to mitigate issues, a separate body can be created to manage the funds and allocate them to each partner organization as determined in the original agreement

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Cost-Sharing/Grant-Match Partnerships
- Cost sharing occurs when one organization provides certain resources and the other organization provides different resources (e.g., the universities provide the facilities, faculty and the new environment in which the Federal government selectively invests)
- Grant match occurs when one organization provides a grant and the recipient provides a match in services, cash, maintenance, voluntary effort or supplies
- Both partners share the benefits; both share the costs [13]

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[12] Above information derived from: Connolly, Paul and Peter York (2002). *Pulling Together: Strengthening the Nonprofit Sector through Strategic Restructuring: The Conservation Company.*

[13] www.stanford.edu/dept/DoR/PIship/cs_paper.html

Partnerships in Action

We've established the key components and principles necessary to understanding a working definition of a partnership. At this point, you may still have some unanswered questions and concerns about how a partnership will potentially affect you and your work. Does a partnership imply we have to compromise our commitments in order to receive funds? Is a partnership just receiving money? In order to answer similar questions to these, partnerships may be better understood by identifying what they are not. Specifically:

- **A partnership is not a gift.** A partnership aims at taking advantage of what the recipient, as well as the donor, can bring to the relationship. This can include local expertise, on-site workers, and a better understanding of priorities, needs and constraints. Even more important, a partnership seeks joint "ownership" of the relationship and tries to build the capacity of the recipient government to undertake sustainable development.
- **A partnership is not a relationship based on if/then terms.** Meaning, donors cannot impose conditions to coerce FBO/CBOs to do things they don't want to do in order to obtain resources they need. Partnership recognizes that both sides must be involved in defining the terms of the relationship.
- **A partnership is not a principal-agent relationship between a donor and a recipient.** In a partnership, the donor cannot prescribe the terms of the relationship in the way that an employer can specify terms of employment when hiring a worker.
- **A partnership is not simply a "team" activity.** In an ideal sports team, everyone has exactly the same interest in winning, and everyone on the team either wins or loses. While the members of a partnership development certainly have strong interests in common, they are also likely to have some divergent interests as well. Finally, although the formal terms of a partnership may be expressed in a valid contract under international law, the donor and recipient usually have no intention to use courts to resolve their conflicts. Instead, like nations bound by treaties, partners rely mainly on each other's need to maintain a good reputation to secure future agreements.

In order to further understand the theoretical foundations of a partnership, it is helpful to illustrate the partnership using "Game Theory" where a relationship is defined by: (a) identifying the players, (b) specifying the choices they have, and (c) spelling out the consequences of these choices in terms of the payoffs to the players. Analyzing the strategies available to the players reveals what is needed to foster mutually beneficial outcomes. In the context of developing partnerships, the game can be specified as follows:

The players:
The players are the donor and the recipient. The donor might be a foundation, a university or a government agency. The recipient in a partnership is often a FBO/ CBO or a grass roots organization.

The choices:
The available choices can be quite complex, but for the sake of discussion, the choices can be reduced to just two: cooperate or defect. Choosing to cooperate at a given point in time means that the player

performs the agreed upon terms of the partnership promptly and fully. Choosing to defect means that the player fulfills its obligations less than completely or slower than agreed upon.

The consequences:
The consequences depend upon what each player has chosen. The basis of a partnership is that there is mutual gain to be had by working together. Thus, if both cooperate, both do well. However, there is typically a temptation to defect. Some reasons why a donor might be tempted to avoid some of its commitments include a desire to increase the amount of tied aid, a desire to reduce costs once it received credit for "flag raising" and a reluctance in practice to support leadership by the recipient FBO/CBO.

On the other hand, a recipient might be tempted to use some of its limited human and financial resources that were supposed to be devoted to the partnership for other pressing needs. In general, each side would typically prefer that the other fulfill its commitments but have freedom to choose which of its own commitments will be fulfilled. Finally, if both sides defect by ignoring their commitments, neither does well because neither side gets the advantages of the partnership.

Practical Steps to Forming and Managing Partnerships

Now that you hopefully have a better understanding of the key components and categories of partnerships, where should you begin the process of partnership development? There are four essential steps to making sure you get your partnership off to a successful start.

Step 1:   Defining the need for a partnership
Step 2:   Starting the process
Step 3:   Setting up and maintaining the partnership
Step 4:   Implementing evaluation and monitoring

Step One: Defining the Need for a partnership

The goal in partnerships is to achieve more than individual organizations can achieve on their own. In other words, the whole of the partnership adds more than the sum of the individual parts. Bear in mind that the partnership should not be the end in itself but a means to an end. Therefore, establishing a "partnership" may not always be the appropriate decision.

The following questions provide a checklist to test out whether forming a partnership is the appropriate choice.

❑ **Is there a need for a partnership?**
On what basis is the partnership being set up? Is there a group of like-minded people with a shared vision who have decided that developing a partnership is the only route to achieving a goal? Are potential partners willing to support this?

❑ **What benefits will be gained from setting up this partnership arrangement?**
Are there clearly identified goals that only a partnership arrangement could help achieve? What is the "added value" for potential partners? Are they willing to sign up to this? What exactly is the partnership trying to achieve? How will involving others help the partnership to achieve its goals?

Note the benefits and goals below and test with potential partners.

Benefits:

Goals:

❑ **Is someone else already doing something similar?**
Do other organizations have similar or the same goals? If so, have you considered approaching them to become part of their partnership arrangement to ensure work is not being duplicated? If this is not appropriate or feasible, think about incorporating lessons they have learned into the new partnership arrangements.

Note your research conducted on potential duplicate partnerships.

❑ **Is there a commitment from partner organizations to support the partnership?**
Have you approached partner organizations with the possibility of setting up a partnership? Was their response positive? Was such a proposal supported at a high level and a clear commitment given to this? (It is important that partner agencies understand and agree to such proposals in order to support and direct future decision-making processes.)

Note the outcome of any work carried out to identify potential commitments from partner organizations.

❑ **What strategies/local priorities will this partnership support?**
Consideration needs to be given to not only identifying the strategies and local priorities the partnership supports but also how the partnership will link to targets and strategies of partner organizations. If the partnership is divorced from any local strategic plan or priorities, you will want to monitor its existence as it will be totally isolated from any statutory/voluntary evaluation process.

List the strategy/plan/local priorities the partnership will be supporting here and test these with partners.

Once the organizations have agreed to set up a partnership, the terms of the agreement need to be worked out. Theoretical and empirical research suggests three aspects of an ongoing relationship to facilitate cooperation: clarity of obligations, promptness of feedback and the institutionalization of reciprocity. In setting up a partnership, you will want to ensure that these three conditions will be met throughout the partnership.

> **Tips for Defining the Need for a Partnership**
>
> ■ Consult with all relevant stakeholders to establish a clear need for the partnership
>
> ■ Check for any other partnerships doing similar work
>
> ■ Ensure commitment is there to form the partnership from senior managers in partner organizations

■ **Clarity of obligations** is needed so that a cooperative choice can be distinguished from a defection—referring to the Game Theory rules established earlier. If the partners are not able to agree on whether a given action was consistent with their obligations, they are likely to get into mutual recriminations. Unfortunately, clarity of obligations competes with the flexibility of implementation. Until a deep bond of trust develops between the two sides, it may be better to err on the side of clarity of obligations rather than flexibility in setting up a partnership.

■ **Promptness of feedback** means that each side can monitor the behavior of the other so that any problems can be addressed before they become major grievances. Promptness of feedback strengthens the future by allowing a timely response to a perceived problem. Thus, in setting up the partnership, the obligations of the two sides should be chosen so that their performance (or nonperformance) is observable as quickly as possible.

■ **The institutionalization of reciprocity** can help by specifying in advance what form of review and redress is open if either side has a complaint about the other. What may be needed is some kind of WTO agreement for aid administration.[14] In the absence of such agreements, even informal norms can help prevent problems from echoing out of control.[15]

Step Two: Starting the process

Partnerships have to be developed and nurtured in a manner that respects and recognizes each individual. Picture a group working as a team that ultimately wants to achieve the same goal no matter how or what it takes to achieve it. The process for building and developing relationships within the partnership is not just the responsibility of the person(s) who lead the group, but of everyone in that group.

The stages of developing a partnership could be based on stages of project management "team building"—*forming, storming, norming and performing. Forming* the group by bringing people together is part of the initial stages of starting the process of building the partnership. The next stage, when the group has met on two or three occasions, is when people start to question the purpose of the partnership, (i.e., "Why am I here and what is my role?"). It is important to

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[14] Maxwell and Riddell (1998).

[15] www.worldbank.org/html/oed/partnershipconference/images/robert-axelrod.pdf. See also (Axelrod and Keohane, 1985).

work through this stage of *storming* in order for the group to be open and honest about what their perceptions are regarding the various definitions of the overall goal/vision. *Norming*, the stage where the partnership is reaching shared agreements, is discussed in **Step Three: Setting up and maintaining the partnership**. *Performing*, the final stage, is discussed in **Step Four: Implementing evaluation and monitoring**.

It is also important at the initial stages to agree on a set of ground rules for the partnership. This may seem obvious, but very few groups perform this fundamental requirement necessary for valuing and respecting the individual partners.

❏ **Identify potential members:**
Who should be involved? Do we have all the right people together? How many members should be in the partnership and in what proportion? What is the appropriate level of involvement for members? This is sometimes referred to as "stakeholder analysis."

• **Determine how many members should be in the partnership and in what proportion from across agencies.**

Identify potential members:

❏ **Identify responsibilities, arrangements and objectives of leadership:**
Who will take the lead? Who will have responsibility for driving the partnership agenda forward? Is there a clear written statement of the partnership leader's objectives and responsibilities? What accountability arrangements are in place? Do all members agree to these procedures? You will want to devise a clear written statement of who will take the lead/joint lead, their main objectives and responsibilities and to whom they will be accountable.

Document how you will obtain member agreement on these procedures below:

❏ **Identify the shared vision and goals:**
Is there genuine shared vision and set of goals across the partnership? Is there a common understanding of and agreement to, the vision and objectives and are these documented? Do all partners understand how to achieve this? It is important that members are clear about the purpose and ultimate goal of the partnership.

Document the shared vision and goals:

❑ **Determine plans and priorities:**
Does the partnership have a **strategy**/action plan that clearly sets out why the partnership was set up, what it is going to achieve, who is going to do what and by when? Where does this strategy/plan fit into wider strategies, and how does it link into partner strategies/local priorities? The partnership needs to have a strategy and action plan that sets out a clear structure. The strategy needs to reflect how the partnership will manage change and evaluate how well it is doing.

Document the partnership plan, priorities and links to other relevant strategies/plans:

❑ **Determine the function and nature of the partnership:**
What is the nature of the partnership? Has this been established? It is important that members of the partnership are clear at what level and function this partnership is operating (e.g., **advisory, strategic, networking, joint working** or **project based**).

Document what members agree is the function and nature of the partnership:

❑ **Identify benefits for target groups:**
What are the benefits to target groups in establishing this partnership? Has the partnership agreed or identified outcomes for specific target groups? If not, why not? This is relevant when the partnership is setting outcome measures. Benefits to target groups need to be clearly established and agreed by partners.

Benefits for target groups include:

Outcomes include:

Tips for Starting the Process

❑ It is important to ensure members of the partnership participate from the earliest opportunity to help determine the entity's structure, process and priorities.

❑ Ensure aims and objectives are clear at the outset and that they link to targets/strategy of partner organizations and the main body of accountability.

Step Three: Setting up and maintaining the partnership

Research suggests there can often be ambiguity (or even conflict) regarding the division of responsibility between partnership and individual partners. The distinction between strategic and operational decision-making can often be the most difficult to resolve, with a reluctance by key partners to delegate authority to the partnership. Clear procedures are needed for everyone to understand how agreements on action will be taken and a sense of shared responsibility for achievements and failures of the partnership.

These procedures should be agreed upon in writing, setting out the key aims, objectives and outcomes of the partnership. These documents could take the form of a legal constitution or contract (sometimes referred to as Terms of Reference). It is also essential that this document reflects the Business Plan or Strategy that forms the basis of the partnership's work. This will give the partnership structure and boundaries to work within, allowing flexibility to change and grow.

Keep in mind that the partnership needs to constantly review its purpose, goals and targets. In order for members of the group to have an idea of what they are meant to do, an agreed work program/action plan must be promulgated. Again, the *storming* stage discussed in Step Two leads to the next stage in the partnership, *norming*. Here, the group will be reaching shared agreements, developing protocols, delivering synergetic responses and avoiding duplication. Otherwise, after the initial *forming* and *storming* stages, the group could reach a level of frustration and stagnation, leading the group to fail.

The group needs to take time out to answer the following questions, which could form the basis of a Terms of Reference or partnership agreement.

❏ **Is there a genuine shared vision and set of goals across the partnership?**
A common understanding of, and agreement to, the vision and objectives needs to be reflected in any project brief, Business Plan, Terms of Reference and/or work program.

Document the vision and agreed goals:

❏ **Are there clearly identified aims that all partners can articulate and agree to?**
The partnership's aims and goals need to be reflected in its actions and practices.

Document accepted aims:

❏ **Is the purpose of the partnership clear? Are members clear what their role and responsibilities are? Are members clear on the "added value" of the partnership?**

Members need to agree and understand what their role and responsibilities are within the context of the purpose and outcomes of the partnership. Members need to understand their role in collective decision-making, delivering activities and representing the partnership.

Document roles and responsibilities of members:

❏ **What skills and competencies do we need to manage and support the partnership? Has a full assessment been made of the skill and competencies required to support/manage the partnership?**

The partnership needs to understand what skills and competencies it will need to achieve the agreed goals, as well as to ensure processes are effective. Consideration will need to be given to making training resources available.

Document skills and competencies:

❏ **To whom will the partnership report? Is there a process to report on progress?**

Document the lines of accountability/reporting processes:

❏ **Is there an accepted process for decision-making? Who is the accountable individual for the partnership?**

The decision-making process needs to be understood by all members of the partnership. Decisions should be made through recognized processes with partners having equal power. Processes for decision-making need to define a quorum, how decisions will be recorded and arbitration processes.

Document processes for decision making:

❏ **Is there an accepted performance management framework? Are processes in place to monitor performance and act on results? Do defined criteria exist against which to benchmark achievements?**

Individuals responsible for delivery of the plan to the partnership need to be specified.

Document the performance managed framework:

Document the criteria to benchmark achievements:

❏ **Is there an accepted commitment to joint investment/resources to support the partnership by all the organization/individuals?**

Resources mean more than just money; they include time, knowledge, energy and personnel.

Document the accepted commitment to joint investment/resources:

❏ **Is there a robust communication strategy in place? Do partners know about each other's organizations and what the pressures and imperatives are? Do partners talk to each other about their own agency agendas and priorities?**

It is important to have an effective communication system in place at all levels within the partnership and within partner organizations, sharing knowledge and information.

Document the communication strategy:

❏ **Are there accepted ground rules for partnership work which include the reconciliation of different organizational cultures and ways of working?**

Being open and honest, communicating and exchanging information in open networks will also help to build trust within the partnership.

Document accepted ground rules:

❏ **Is there an accepted program for partners to invest time so they can identify and agree to the vision, goals and targets?**

It is important at the initial stages of setting up the partnership that members agree on the vision, goals and targets. The requirement for and stated outcomes of "away days" need to be documented in Terms of Reference or partnership agreements. It is important to repeat this exercise to review these goals and targets, checking that they are on track.

Document the process established to agree on vision, goals and targets and how these will be monitored and evaluated:

❏ **Is there a clear, measurable plan for administering the partnership? Is the plan clearly linked to partnership aims and objectives, and do all parties agree to this plan?**

Any partnership needs to have structure and processes so members clearly understand its purpose, aims, objectives and outcomes. The plan should also identify the process to review/update aims and outcomes when monitoring reveals it is out of date or reflects changing circumstances.

Document the administration plan:

❏ **Are there clear processes in place to ensure all new members of a partnership are well informed of its purpose, aims and objectives?**

As the partnership grows and existing members leave, new members will come on board. It is important that each new member has a clear understanding of the purpose of the partnership. Spend time to induct new members into understanding and supporting the partnership's plan.

Document the "orientation processes" utilized for new members:

Tips for Setting up and Maintaining the Partnership

❏ Agree on the structure, process and support mechanisms for the partnership

❏ Agree on the main purpose/priorities

❏ Agree on the performance management process

❏ Identify a work program

Step Four: Implementing evaluation and monitoring

All partnerships need to ensure they have an ongoing program of monitoring and revising aims and objectives. This relates to the *performing* stage in team development. This should also provide the opportunity to learn what has been successful and what was not, building these lessons into revised plans.

You will want to build in performance management processes that facilitate monitoring and evaluation. The plan should set periodic reviews to check whether its aims and objectives have changed and what is required to make the change.

As the term of a partnership increases, the original vision and goals may become blurred. Existing partnership members may leave and new ones join. The following questions provide a useful tool by which new members will better understand what the partnership is about, as well as reinforcing the partnership's original purpose and goals. Where there are negative responses to the following questions, the partnership needs to determine how it will take positive action to rectify the deficiencies.

❏ **Do partners still share a common vision? Are partners willing to make changes to achieve shared goals?**

Are the overall vision, purpose and goals still recognized by members? Have these key definitions changed? If so, how was this communicated?

Notes:

❏ **What is the mandate of the partnership? Why was the group established, and are members still clear about this (benefits and added value)? Do members understand and agree to the purpose and accept it as important?**

It is worth revisiting this to ensure members still understand the purpose of the partnership.

Notes:

❏ **Does the work of the group still link to overarching national/local policies and strategies?**

If the work of the group does not easily fit or link into any such policies/strategies, ask why the group is in existence.

Notes:

❏ **Does the group possess shared values and accepted principles? If these are in place, has everyone agreed to them? Is everyone aware of these principles? Does the group still meet the original need for its existence?**

Although these shared values and principles are mentioned throughout the process, you will want to revisit this whenever individuals leave the group and new members join. Also, government directives may change the focus of the group.

Notes:

❏ **Does the work of the group involve all relevant parties (i.e., users and carers)? If no, why not? Are users and the community involved in practice? If so, in what way?**

Notes:

❏ **Has the group agreed upon a set of outcomes? Is everyone aware of these? How has the group measured progress against these outcomes? Is this done on a regular basis?**

Notes:

❏ **Does the group work well together? How effectively does the group meet its aims and objectives? Do they agree on the aims and objectives? How are these reviewed and revised in the light of any new policy/priorities?**

Notes:

❏ **Is there a clear understanding of own/others roles and responsibilities? Have these changed? How is this monitored?**

Notes:

❏ **Is the purpose of the group known and understood outside the partnership itself? Is adequate information available about the partnership and its decisions? If there is a communication strategy, how effective has this been?**

Notes:

❏ **Is there adequate monitoring, evaluation and feedback? Does the partnership review its aims and objectives in the light of any changes/challenges to the outcomes?**

Notes:

❏ **What do individuals/organizations expect to receive from the partnership? Has the partnership been successful in achieving its accepted outcomes? Is this communicated across the partnership/externally?**

Notes:

❏ **Have any organizational improvements occurred after establishment of the partnership? What differences have resulted from the partnership?**

Notes:

❏ **Is there mutual trust and respect? Are relationships between members good? If not, what action was taken to remedy this?**

Notes:

❏ **Was the partnership supported by leaders/politicians (where relevant)? Were the aims/goals of the partnership clear to leaders/council members?**

Notes:

❏ **Do formal and informal communications take place? Is there regular communication, or conflicting values/poor communication? Does the partnership work in an open or closed way?**

Notes:

❏ **Does the membership of the partnership represent the right people? Does it fully represent target groups?**

Notes:

Key Questions for Evaluation and Monitoring

❏ Does the partnership still meet its aims and objectives?

❏ How well is it performing?

❏ What lessons can be learned?

Managing Partnerships

At this point, you will want to consider how the partners should behave in the relationship. Obviously, cooperation is the ideal. But what should you do if another partner does not cooperate by fulfilling its commitments in a timely manner? Not responding promptly to an inappropriate defection risks sending the wrong signal. The longer defections go unchallenged, the more likely it is that other partners will conclude defection is acceptable. Moreover, the more strongly this pattern is established, the harder it will be to break.

When others are observing the relationship who are or may become partners with any of the participants, managing the relationship well becomes even more important. In other words, reputation matters.

In one sense, this gives you as a recipient some leverage over a donor. For example, if a recipient is provoked, they may not only withhold part of their contribution to the partnership, but they can also threaten to criticize the donor in forums that are important to the donor's reputation and self-image.[16]

However, in another sense, provocability is also important for the donor. If, for example, a lending organization acquires the reputation of allowing its partners to ignore their commitments without consequences, it may be difficult to hold other partners accountable in the future. Reciprocity is an effective rule of thumb. It is important to restore mutual cooperation as soon as possible by being forgiving when the other side returns to cooperation.[17]

Structuring Partnership Management

Challenges and Barriers to the Sustainability of Partnerships

The structure of managing your partnership will typically fall into two categories—substantive issues and relationship issues. Business firms tend to carefully consider substantive issues, but few consider the primary factors of alliance failure, relationship issues.[18] The key, of course, is for a partnership to focus on *both* issues. Consider the following examples from the two categories:

Substantive Issues	Relationship Issues
Financial	Joint Problem Solving Capacity
Strategic	Compatibility
Technical	Conflict Resolution Ability
	Degree of Trust
	Egalitarian Perspective
	Openness
	Communication Quality

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[16] Fox, 2000.

[17] www.worldbank.org/html/oed/partnershipconference/images/robert-axelrod.pdf

[18] www.effingerassociates.com

There are a number of key challenges or barriers to sustainable partnerships. These include turf battles among stakeholders; burn out; clashes with different cultures reflected in institutional reward systems; rigid policies regarding intellectual property, startups, private sector engagement and other matters; maintaining an ability to learn from other participants; having the right people in the right place at the right time; and politics.

Common Characteristics

Successful partnerships often exhibit certain common characteristics in that they:

- Define how work will be accomplished to include addressing roles, responsibilities and ultimately organization structures
- Provide clear linkage between strategy, capabilities, structure and processes. Determine those organizational capabilities required to successfully implement a partnership strategy that facilitates the desired structure and process
- Achieve organizational buy-in. Internal advocacy is required to promote teamwork, which fosters employee satisfaction and in turn creates satisfaction
- Create and develop comprehensive and successful goals that include:
  a. Clearly defining objectives tied to partnership goals
  b. Clearly defining project plans and milestones
  c. Designing a complete involvement and communications plan to build commitment to and support the partnership
  d. Establishing a well-defined agenda that defines the need for and ability to change
  e. Implementing a plan that focuses on participation and involvement
  f. Planning for leadership involvement, including coaching and acquisition of change skills
  g. Utilizing a measurement approach for periodic review and evaluation of partnership efforts

Checklist of Effective Partnership Components

- ❏ *Organizational Issues.* How was the partnership formed? Is the leadership team in place? Is the leadership structure of the partnership settled? Can it be easily described to others so that they understand how the partnership is organized and how it works? Are the necessary administrative arrangements in place (e.g., budget, IP, support staff, etc.)? Are information, infrastructure, personnel, other resources integrated in the operation of the partnership (integration needs to be measured)? Are policies and rules sufficiently flexible?
- ❏ *Finances.* Have future funding needs been identified? Have sources of support been identified, including internal resources (including "skunk works"), grant funding (Federal, state and local), philanthropy and private sector funding (angels, corporate)? Have sales and other revenue sources been identified? Are budgets and finances transparent and able to be tracked? Is there flexibility in moving funds? Have processes been established for managing in-kind and matching funding, and for linking in-kind support to hard cash?
- ❏ *Plans.* Is there a project plan? Is there a business plan that assesses the market and the demand for the innovation? Have potential testing/beta sites been identified in the business plan? Is there a financial plan? Is there agreement regarding the processes for modification of these plans? Do the plans reflect reasonable expectations? Is there a risk analysis scheme?
- ❏ *Communications.* Are the partners actively engaged? Does the partnership hold regular meetings? Is there a process for communication? Are partners communicating well? Are there provisions for talking to top management to resolve problems? Have measures for outreach activities been established? Does the partnership produce products for dissemination?

■ Building Blocks of Success: Develop and maintain internal alignment and have a systematic process for identifying key decisionmakers and stakeholders and for informing, consulting or negotiating with each stakeholder, as appropriate. This helps to:
  a. Avoid partner confusion
  b. Enable planning by impacted functions/regions
  c. Ensure durable, value-enhancing decisions
  d. Increase likelihood of meeting commitments/not making commitments that cannot be kept
  e. Reduce time necessary for sound decision-making

■ Evaluate and consider how a relationship "fits" with potential partners and systematically evaluate differences in practices and previous culture, in addition to strategic compatibility. This helps to:
  a. Allow partners to anticipate and prepare for relationship challenges
  b. Leverage differences (often the driving force behind partnering) to enhance quality and creativity
  c. Prevent potential problems stemming from poor relationship fit and/or plan for ways to mitigate them
  d. Understand and consider relationship compatibility when evaluating a potential partner

■ Build a strong working relationship while negotiating an optimal agreement. During partnership negotiations, focus equal and separate attention on both the substantive aspects of the agreement and the working relationship necessary to implement it. This helps to:
  a. Build a collaborative foundation that facilitates a working partnership
  b. Create excitement and articulate the value of the existing and/or new partner relationship
  c. Enable negotiators to create an environment that enables the creation of value-maximizing deals

■ Establish common ground rules and develop a standard approach to conducting joint planning and partner management. This helps to:
  a. Agree on relationship goals
  b. Build understanding among partners about their cultural needs
  c. Enhance the ease of decision-making over time
  d. Jointly plan ways to achieve relationship goals in light of similarities and differences. Mitigate the likelihood that problems will arise and maximize the likelihood that problems will be effectively handled

■ Have a dedicated partnership manager. Enable a person to be specifically responsible for the partner's relationship management. This helps to:
  a. Coordinate communication between the partners
  b. Ensure effective implementation of ground rules and protocols for working together
  c. Ensure that relationship management is given focused time and attention
  d. Gauge and track the health of the working relationship over time
  e. Mediate disputes
  f. Spot potential conflicts

■ Maintain collaboration skills in alliance employees and routinely invest in maintaining, updating and instilling skills (e.g., joint problem solving, conflict resolution, difficult conversations) that enable all partners and employees involved to work effectively with team members. This helps to:
  a. Enhance the extent to which partners can truly maximize value realized during implementation
  b. Encourage partners to deal with conflicts and difficult issues in ways that enhance, rather than detract from, the working relationship
  c. Ensure collaboration skills exist at all points of interaction between partners, including at the working level

■ Have a collaborative mindset that requires thinking in terms of the partner's well being versus the organization's separate interests. This helps to:
  a. Enable alliance employees to remain collaborative when dealing with non-collaborative partners
  b. Ensure effective and consistent application of collaboration processes, tools, and skills
  c. Ensure that alliance managers are not the only ones taking a holistic perspective
  d. Underscore the importance of employing collaboration skills

■ Audit the partnership relationships. Monitor and report on the health of the working relationship between partners through use of a formal mechanism, process or standard procedure. This helps to:
  a. Identify simmering/underlying conflict, negative perceptions, or relationship risks before they undercut the relationship and ensure that they are constructively addressed
  b. Identify ways in which the strategy, management, or working protocols of the relationship identify conflict and provide a means for adjustments
  c. When applied across multiple relationships, identify organizational barriers to effective partnering

■ Manage changes that affect partnering. Have the ability to anticipate change as early as possible and discuss and plan, collaboratively, for the implications of such change. This helps to:
  a. Adapt to competitive or regulatory environment changes
  b. Collaboratively expand, contract, or shift the focus of a partner relationship, as appropriate
  c. Mitigate negative effects of downsizing, mergers, or strategic restructuring
  d. Respond to reorganization and/or departures of key personnel [19]

What to Look for in Alliances

Successful alliances are those that:

❏ Foster effective enterprise management

❏ Embrace responsible organizational stewardship

❏ Are cost-effective

❏ Are positioned to benefit from change

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[19] www.effingerassociates.com

Examples of Effective Partnerships

In order to understand the various concepts outlined in the guidebook including development and management of effective partnerships, take a look at the following three examples of current Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) partnerships.

University of Nebraska [20]

The University of Nebraska has effectively encouraged and helped to promote partnerships among agencies within communities. Sometimes these partnerships become an organization of organizations with their own 501(c)(3) status. These organizations work together to write grants, share resources and mentor beginning member organizations. One such example is the Nebraska Continuum of Services, Inc. (NCSI), which is a partnership between ten FBOs comprised of non-profit service providers and congregations. NCSI was loosely affiliated for several years prior to the establishment of the University of Nebraska's CCF grant—NEBHANDS. In the early period of development, the network met for informal sharing and mutual support. In March 2003, the network members began to develop more formal relationships, and the network was incorporated in June 2003. The mission of NCSI is to bring seamless services to the low income, homeless, substance abusers, and previously incarcerated populations and their families. The members of NCSI have committed themselves "to see that every person has an opportunity to live a quality life and to build stronger communities through meeting the needs of the whole man." NCSI is an empowering system of coordinated and networked organizations. It nurtures the development and maintenance of a grassroots community development process through the provision of resources, incentives and education. The University of Nebraska's CCF project—NEBHANDS—awarded NCSI $25,500 and provides assistance in the areas of infrastructure development, including preparation of a comprehensive operating plan, development of an active agency recruitment plan, establishment of a networking plan that will increase capacity to deliver services, and development of skills needed to increase fundraising capabilities. No funds were used for direct service delivery. The impact of this sub-award has been remarkable including the following:

1. NCSI developed a website: www.ncsi-inc.com
2. NCSI produced an organizational brochure
3. NCSI designed and created an exhibition booth, complete with PowerPoint presentation
4. NCSI's President was awarded the Best Practices award for New Creations from the Nebraska Center for Faith Based Initiatives
5. NCSI's Treasurer was selected to the Governor's Community Corrections Council
6. The Williams Prepared Place became licensed to provide residential treatment for substance abusers

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[20] Information received from Dr. Mark DeKraai, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.

NEBHANDS staff and government officials were able to see firsthand the impact of NCSI on their clientele. During an informational tour, one couple living at New Creations told their story. Both husband and wife had received treatment and support through NCSI and were now sober, working toward regaining custody of their seven children. Another success story came from the Catering Manager who served lunch for the tour and shared his story. This gentleman had been a client of an NCSI organization and now is gainfully employed and sober.

Primary funding sources differ for each organization in the NCSI collaboration. Some member organizations have experience with obtaining contracted funding from sources such as HUD. Many rely on private donations and funding from their sponsoring churches. Some members have client self-pay systems that are flexible enough to allow clients to pay as their capacity to earn money increases. Many rely on private funding and grants. Each member organization has a separate financial system

Another type of local collaboration fostered by the University of Nebraska is a grassroots community coalition that usually focuses around a specific issue. Project IMPACT, another of their sub-awardees, is a good example of this type of coalition. They have involved treatment providers, consumers, ministerial associations, law enforcement and concerned citizens to address methamphetamine use in their community. One of the strategies the University uses to promote community collaboratives is to hold meetings across the state to bring sub-awardees and others together.

Another level of collaboration is the NEBHANDS project itself. The University has brought together the University system, state and local government, faith and community organizations, service providers, consumers and families, advocacy organizations and community institutions from across Nebraska to work on the project. These partners are helping 1) guide the project and work towards sustainability 2) provide technical assistance to sub-awardees 3) make decisions about funding for sub-awardees 4) develop models of best practice 5) evaluate the outcomes of the project 6) disseminate information about the project.

While the University of Nebraska has had great success working with and as an intermediary, the lack of documentation has proved a challenge, which is why the University often takes on the management role. The University is very sensitive of the fact that their role could be misconstrued and does its utmost to include those that are critical to the mission and the conceptualization of the project from the outset of any discussions. In fact, when staff needs to be hired, the critical partners become part of the selection committee. By abdicating control over personnel, the University is able to gain greater buy-in from its partners.

Another lesson they learned was that every meeting must have an articulated objective with a timeline. This articulation ensures participation as well as buy-in and saves a great deal of time. The University emphasized that while they do have fiduciary responsibility for the grants, the process between the partners is consensus determined with significant participation from the various parties involved.

University of Hawaii [21]

The second example is the partnership formed by the University of Hawaii. The University emphasized that there are two types of partnerships—those that are "intensive" and those that are "not so intensive"! The partnership between the University of Hawaii Center on the Family, the Hawaii Community Foundation, and the Hawaiian Islands' Ministries is unique in its variety: a university, a philanthropic foundation and a FBO—all of whom came together and applied for their funding as a unit.

The Compassion Capital—Hawaii Moving Forward project is a multi-year inter-institutional partnership dedicated to improving the skills and performance of faith and community-based organizations as they meet the needs of low income and under resourced people in Hawaii. Compassion Capital—Hawaii Moving Forward provides training, grants and a fellows program to Hawaii-based FBO/CBOs. The three areas of focus are: homelessness, families of incarcerated and individuals transitioning from welfare to work. Activities funded include staff development, project planning, improvements to information collection and tracking, limited facilities improvements, outreach to target population and better use of technology.

The grant development process was very collaborative, though the University did take a lead role since they had the experience and the systems in place to mange the federal funds. The University only had access to limited funding so they looked for an organization that could help them complete their needs match. They turned to the Hawaii Community Foundation, which was able to meet the funding needs and furthermore had the skills and competencies that completed those of the University. The Hawaiian Islands' Ministries also had competencies that would further complement the University and the Foundation. Furthermore, since the University wanted to branch out into faith-based communities it was an ideal match.

These partners worked together to develop the conceptual design, philosophical stance and work plans. They budgeted for administration and hired a project coordinator who reports to the Director of the Family Center at the University and is in constant communication with the principals of the other organizations. Effective management is enabled due to the active role of the project coordinator as well as complementary skills and competencies that others respect as they emerge during the implementation of the project. They also spent time upfront discussing the project and working out each day of the work plan as well as aligning goals, values and the mission. Before the project began, the team knew every action, determined which members would be responsible and outlined the respective deadlines. They also developed a strong trust in each other and each other's capabilities. They continue to meet on a regular basis to enable communication and participation.

As a result, though they formed this partnership specifically for this project, they are looking to other potential collaborative opportunities. The University also emphasized that these partnerships will never end because they are all existing within the community.

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[21] Information obtained from Dr. Sylvia Yuen, Director, University of Hawaii Center on the Family.

Clemson University [22]

The third example is the multitude of partnerships formed by the Center for Grassroots & Nonprofit Leadership at Clemson University. The South Carolina Center for Grassroots and Nonprofit Leadership seeks to actively build capacity and enhance resources of community and faith-based grassroots groups, nonprofit organizations and individuals who are challenged to provide leadership and to improve community life. It does this through high quality, community-focused education and practical research, problem-solving, technical assistance and information dissemination.

They strive to formulate relationships with FBOs, foundations and sub-awardees through the compassion project to create future opportunities to serve the targeted service populations collectively by leveraging resources. They have created over 250 partnerships with nonprofit, grassroots, FBO/CBOs, state agencies, libraries, National Guard teleconferencing facilities (16), SC Educational TV, Technical Education Colleges and foundations to create a service delivery infrastructure to diffuse knowledge, information and services over the past four years. Their focus has included creating relationships with foundations that have a spectrum of services/needs. Relationships with these types of organizations provided the University with insight from those who knew the territory and could help in understanding the culture of the target populations.

Initially, they worked with three foundations (family & community) and United Way capacity-building grants using a targeted giving strategy that was directed at named service populations in the Compassion Project in order to obtain a match. In the second year, they selected foundations (three community and one statewide) that:

- Contributed $50,000 (as the University did);
- Provided statewide coverage; and,
- Would collaborate in solicitation, selection and award/distribution of sub-awards.

Clemson University also used other existing and recently developed relationships to enhance the work of the partnership. Examples include:

- Securing content experts for technical assistance
- Identifying infrastructure partners for service and information delivery
- Using United Way offices statewide to "get the word out"
- Providing technical & computing tools to focus on rural areas statewide (e.g., used educational TV downlinks to reach over 1,200 participants in live audiences with facilitators)

They also created by-products in the form of videotapes and content materials that were distributed statewide to libraries, foundations, United Way Offices and First Steps (46 county offices).

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[22] Information obtained from Richard J. Campbell Director, SC Center for Grassroots & Nonprofit Leadership

Clemson University created six video capacity-building kits with associated content materials, and they reinforced learning online by providing additional information and resources associated with content areas on their website.

In regards to management, they developed clear expectations in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by both parties as to activities and timing of those activities. Also, they created relationships with new partners that were previously competitive with the organization as they learned to work together for a common purpose. According to the University, the partnerships work because:

1. They clearly set up expectations
2. They are very firm about meeting these expectations
3. Quality service is delivered on time and within budget

One effective practice that enables these successes is the understanding that while organizations have different approaches, they can achieve the same results. Also, this common purpose breeds an effective practice of collaboration and cooperation. Finally, a partnership is a give and take relationship (much like marriage or other business commitments).

Summary

This guidebook has presented you with tools to help you establish effective partnerships and enhance your level of understanding regarding the need for and process of partnership development. When you are considering developing a potential partnership, examine your organization, as well as your potential partners, with the following key points in mind:

■ **Leadership**
Clear and focused leadership is essential, as one organization will generally take the lead on managing the process. You must have trust in their ability to lead effectively and honestly.

■ **Common Understanding**
A common understanding of the framework and approach of partner organizations, as well as individual members' roles and responsibilities, needs to exist.

■ **Purpose**
A shared common vision and purpose that builds trust, enhances openness and recognizes the value and contribution of all members needs to exist within the organizations and between the partners.

■ **Culture and Values**
Ensure that you discuss the values and the cultures of your organizations so you are able to identify strengths and weaknesses and work around them.

■ **Learning and Development**
Both individuals and organizations must promote learning within the partnership through flexible management, a spirit of facilitation, participation and the desire to invest in partner skills, knowledge and competence.

■ **Communication**
Outline strong feedback loops within the partnership from the beginning of the relationship to enhance communication on all levels.

■ **Performance Management**
Evaluation and assessment must ensure that those responsible for the delivery of established targets follow through and that the partnership structure meets the needs of your organizations.

Appendix

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Glossary

Advisory Partnership – Overseeing specific plans, acting in an advisory capacity to ensure strategies/operational policies and plans are achieved.

Aims – What you intend to do/accomplish during the course of the partnership.

Business plan – Sets out the operational and administrative aspects of the organization, as well as financial forecasts and supporting budgetary information. It will set out the broad developmental needs identified in a (long term) strategy and specify how these needs will be assessed and met.

Contractual Partnership – Partners working together to jointly purchase/commission development on an operational basis.

Goals – The desired outcome; long term, linking to targets.

Goals Based Coalition/Network Alliance – Partners working together to achieve agreed upon goals, share information and/or influence policy and strategy.

Intermediary – Something that exists between two persons or things, or someone who acts as an agent or mediator between persons or things. An intermediary organization, then, exists between the people with the resources and the organizations needing the resources—namely finances or information.

Joint Venture Partnership – Partners working together to set up, implement or manage.

Objectives – How you achieve your aims.

Principles – Fundamental rules, for example, on which services will be delivered. Standards should be based on outlined principles.

Project Based Partnership – Partners working together to monitor a specific project.

Quality – A degree of excellence. Approaches to quality should cover all customers/donors/providers, both internal and external.

Strategic Partnership – Partners working together to set out a specific joint strategy plan, with no specific operational role.

Strategy – Sets out the overall plan and direction. Also, the development of strategic plans are phased elements in the planning processes.

Targets – Targets are the focus of short-term measures taken to achieve long-term goals.

Values – Beliefs, standards.

Vision – Concepts, hopes; why an organization wants to do something.

Partnership Life Cycles

Partnerships have certain life cycles. From the exciting birth of a partnership to the satisfaction that comes from seeing real outcomes emerge from teamwork, community partnerships are constantly changing. No matter at what stage you find yourself now, your partnership can have a stronger future if you become aware of where you've come from and where you're likely to be going. Understanding the maturation process through all stages of the life cycle can help partnerships become more deliberate about their best opportunities for making strong progress in each stage of their growth. [23]

Stage One: Discussions
In this stage, organizations initiate discussions based on common interests.

Stage Two: Birth
If they can align themselves, they will form a partnership and document the relationship in some manner.

Stage Three: Growth
Once the partnership begins to exist, there is growth as policies and procedures are outlined and goals are structured.

Stage Four: Maturity
Next, the maturity stage marks when the partnership gets to work and aims to complete its agenda.

Stage Five: Expansion
After a period of growth and maturity, there is often some expansion as partners evolve in a flexible manner. While the goals may not expand, the relationships do as partners learn more about each other and compensate for each other so that they continue to be effective.

Stage Six: Effectiveness
Here, partnerships enter the sustainable stage where you must critically evaluate the successes to date and the ability to maintain the partnership. Potential sustainability will lead back to Stage Two discussions, the lack thereof will lead to eventual death and disintegration of the partnership.

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[23] www.richbogue.com
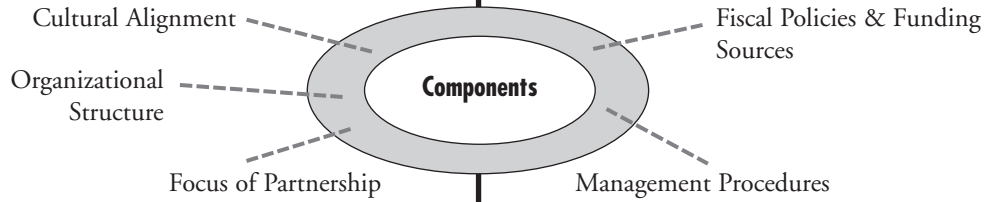
Partnership Life Cycles

STAGE ONE
Discussions between
various prospective
partners

| Organization 1 | ⟷ | Organization 2 | ⟷ | Organization 3 |

STAGE TWO
Birth of Partnership

Partnership Formation
• Documentation

STAGE THREE
Growth of
Partnership

Cultural Alignment

Organizational
Structure

Components

Fiscal Policies & Funding
Sources

Focus of Partnership

Management Procedures

STAGE FOUR
Maturity of
Partnership

Active & Effective Partnership
• Meeting Goals
• Effective Leadership
• Effective Administration

STAGE FIVE
Expansion

Flexible Growth
• Re-focus
• Communication
• Monitoring

STAGE SIX
Effectiveness

Sustainable
• Is it effective?
• Is it worth it for the organizations?

STAGE TWO + ⟵ **DISCUSSIONS**

DECLINE ⟶ **DEATH**
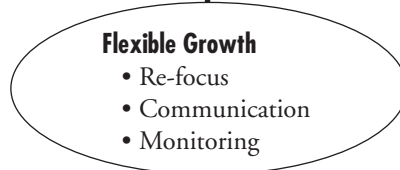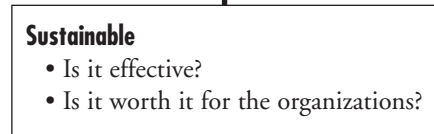
Questions and Answers About Partnership Life Cycles

How should our organization react in Stage Six?

Ask yourself, "Is it worth it for my organization to continue to remain in this partnership? Are we achieving our goals in a fiscally and culturally effective manner?" If you answer "yes" to both questions, then the partnership should continue. At that point, you may enter into a second round of big picture discussions to determine how the partnership should move forward well.

If the answer is "no," then the partnership will either fold immediately or gradually wind down as the project ends. Once the project is completed, there will no more discussions or reformulations, and the partnership will effectively die.

What is meant by the "death" of a partnership?

The death of a partnership does not mean that severing all ties. It simply means it is not efficient to maintain the partnership at this time. It is important to maintain a positive relationship so you can always revisit your options in the future.

Why should we examine our partnership's life cycle?

Since successful partnerships inevitably enter into a decline stage where community development and the value of the partnership decreases, it is important to act appropriately to prolong its success. Failure to act appropriately in a timely manner could lead to a premature decline stage and ultimately result in the disintegration of the partnership. However, timely intervention could lead to the redevelopment and restructuring of the partnership that evolves into a revitalized relationship.

How do we determine if we want to prolong the partnership?

In order to determine if a revitalization of the partnership is important, you should assess the impact of the partnership. Use the evaluative tools provided to determine if the goals have been met and if the partnership is evolving in a manner that is conducive to continued community growth.

Once you have determined if it is valuable to renew or conclude the partnership, develop a road map for the next phase so that the partnership can either evolve with a new focus or organizational mandate or gently dissolve, in order to cause the least amount of dissension and disenchantment.