A GUIDE TO STRATEGIC PARTNERING

FORMING AND MAINTAINING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

January 2020

1. **First things first – Establish a common understanding**
   1.1. A common understanding of the culture, values, and approach of the partnering organisations needs to exist.
2. **What is a partnership?**
   2.1. Partnerships are a voluntary collaborative agreement between two or more parties in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose.
   2.2. Together they undertake a specific task and share risks, responsibilities, resources, competencies and benefits.
3. **Purpose**

A shared common vision and purpose that builds trust and openness and recognises the value and contribution of all members also needs to exist. Additionally, shared and transparent decision-making processes—extending the scope of influence over and involvement with other services and activities—will prove essential to your partnership. Shared goals and aims, understood and accepted as being important by each partner, lead to improved coordination of policies, programmes, and service delivery, and, ultimately, better outcomes.

4. **Culture and Values**
   4.1. Shared values, understanding, and an acceptance of differences (e.g., values, ways of working) are all key components of a successful partnership.
   4.2. 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.
5. **State and clarify the goals and expected outcomes**
6. **Set priorities**
7. **Define the approach**
   7.1. Integrated sectoral collaboration.
8. **Type of partnership**
   8.1. Partnerships can take many forms and characteristics, depending on the needs of the strategy and desires of the partners.
   8.2. Can be formal working towards the same goal, and may share a strategy or plan.
   8.3. Can be informal working towards the same goal but may not share a strategy or plan.
   8.4. Financial support or not: May be funded by the participating organisations or through external funding; or, partners can fund their own participation.
   8.5. Short-term vs. long-term: Partners may come together to implement a short-term goal or participate in a shared event; or the partnership may last over several months or years.
   8.6. Single stakeholder group or multi-stakeholder partnerships: Single stakeholder partnerships are formed by organisations or individuals who share a commonality. Multi-stakeholder partnerships include a diverse range of stakeholders such as civil society organisations partnering with the private sector, religious leaders, etc.
9. **Partnership level/type**
   9.1. There are four partnership levels: communication, Coordination, cooperation, and collaboration.
   9.2. Each level reflects increasing levels of interaction, sharing of resources, and inter-connectedness among partners.
   9.3. Stakeholder mapping and gap analysis will help to identify individuals, organisations, and/or groups who share your vision and goals and that could help you meet your objectives.
10. **Partner activities**
    10.1. Joint planning and strategising: Shared or mutually reinforcing plans and strategies to address similar challenges with mutual accountability.
    10.2. Mutual consultation: Exchange of ideas and thoughts to develop individual plans to achieve advocacy goals.
    10.3. Sharing information and data: Exchange of information and data based on contacts, knowledge, and learnings.
    10.4. Developing common messages: Aim for joint message development and dissemination.
11. **Composition - Partners – Intersectoral and integrated**
    11.1. Consider a Community Partnership Committee. The members should reflect the diversity of the community and represent various community stakeholders.

11.2.   The committee should focus on identifying prospective partners, reaching out to engage them in the initiative, and shaping the nature of the partnership.

11.3.   Identify the best people to invite new partners.

11.4.   Engage New Partner.

12. Leadership of the initiative

12.1.   Localisation is key.

12.2.   Role of community structures should be clear.

13. Roles and responsibilities

13.1.   Clear understanding of individual members' roles and responsibilities regarding the division of labour and resourcing.

14. Establish governance protocol

15. Clarify and document processes

16. Communication and information sharing

16.1.   Communicate the significance of partnering.

16.2.   Communicate regularly to ensure the shared vision and understandings are clear

16.3.   Share lessons learned.

16.4.   Advocacy, community mobilisation and civic education.

16.5.   Role of technology and chosen channels to promote awareness/relay messages (media ads, billboards, brochures, activations, rallies, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.).

17. Resourcing and assumptions (human resources, skills, funds, etc.)

17.1.   Where will the resources come from?

18. Benefits, opportunities and rewards of the partnership

19. Risks and threats

20. Assess, monitoring and evaluate

20.1.   What works, what doesn't,

20.2.   Assess performance of partnership and implemented programmes,

20.3.   Set the KPIs upfront,

20.4.   Decide on when to assess,

20.5.   Report on progress and achievement against set objectives,

20.6.   Share lessons learned.

21. Conclusion - Steps to build effective community partnerships

21.1.   Purpose must be clear,

21.2.   Define and prioritise goals,

21.3.   Solicit buy in/commitment (internally and externally),

21.4.   Connect with leaders at partner organisations to promote engagement,

21.5.   Build new partner relationships and strengthen long-standing ones,

21.6.   Ensure screening and referral protocols are seamless.

Examples of partnership development processes are included next.

Strategic Partnerships Framework

08 **Shared Governance**
01 **Shared Vision**
07 **Shared Risk**
02 **Shared Objectives**
06 **Shared Resources**
03 **Shared Rewards**
05 **Shared Information**
04 **Shared Processes**

Mutual Respect · Trust · Sustainability · Mutual Benefit

Adapted from: https://www.slidegeeks.com/business/product/strategic-partnerships-framework-presentation-powerpoint-example

THINK — Understand your context, the health and immunisation system in your country, and the people who make decisions or influence them.

PLAN — Develop your strategy, including goals and objectives, assessing your resources and understanding the opportunities and obstacles to success.

CREATE — Foster partnerships, craft messages, and identify key messengers and champions to reach your target audience.

ACT — Learn from others what has worked, and share creative ideas for advocacy.

ASSESS — Monitor, measure and evaluate your work so you know what is working and what is not, and you can prove the value of your efforts to others.

ASSESS

Adapted from: http://advocacy.vaccineswork.org/create/how-to-build-strategic-partnerships-relationships/

A. Successful partnerships are marked by…
1. Win-win for both sides,
2. Alignment of relevant stakeholders,
3. Clarity of objectives,
4. Value match,
5. Complementary skill sets on both sides,
6. Clear communication, and
7. Community commitment and involvement.

Success depends heavily on adopting a proper strategy, alignment (within the lead partner and between the partners) and seamless integration into the organisation's processes and operations.

It is essential to focus on sharing commitment and competencies to create value. Open communication lays the foundation for successful strategic partnerships, ensuring clarity of objectives, trust and strong relationships.

Creating special mutually accepted metrics or key performance indicators to assess the success of the partnerships is also important.

B. Failed partnerships are marked by:
1. Competing agendas,
1. Value mismatch,
2. Objectives not aligned,
3. Lack of governance,
4. Misalignment of stakeholders,
5. Lack of communication,
6. Lack of trust between the parties, and
8. Win-lose situation.

C. Research identifies three major reasons for failure of strategic partnerships:

https://www.imd.org/contentassets/8d81e92f7a5d4931805a0466143ea8c6/36---strategic-partnerships-final-20.05.14.pdf

- Underinvestment (disagreement on revenue and cost sharing, lack of resources, lack of executive sponsorship and commitment, etc.),
- Over-appropriation (co-opetition[1], ownership issues, intellectual property sharing, etc.), and
- Misalignment (conflicting goals and incentives, unclear roles and responsibilities, difficulty in communicating the joint value proposition, extension of the internal silo mentality).

To avoid such failures and effectively build joint capabilities, strategic partnerships should be based on trust.

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[1] The term is a combination of cooperation and competition and refers to the arrangement between competing entities to cooperate on specific projects or areas of business for mutual benefit.

References

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