

Good Practice Guide

Working With Others

Partnerships are often formed when a group of organisations/individuals have a common aim. They are all about sharing ideas and resources, and working together to reduce duplication. The productivity of a partnership should be higher than if each partner worked separately.

Should you get involved in a partnership?

There are many advantages to partnership working.

Possible benefits include:

- Get additional resources for your organisation
- Provide added appeal to funders and commissioners
- Increase likelihood of securing longer term contracts
- Improve your ability to identify needs and plan for the future
- Increase your organisation's skills and capacity
- Help you build relationships
- Improve the quality of services by making them more joined up and by getting new ideas
- Increase reach of services
- Improve long term sustainability of services
- Save time and money
- Avoid duplication

Possible risks include:

- Level of commitment to partnership might not be clear
- May pull your organisation in a new direction or affect current work
- Staff may feel loyalty to their particular organisation rather than the partnership
- Too much time involved or too much commitment

Partnership Models

Given the different size, scope and areas of work of a partnership there is no one model for making them successful. This good practice guide provides information on four main partnership models.

1. Separate Organisation

A longer term lifespan or large area of activity and the need to employ people might require a separate organisation to be formed.

Advantages of this are:

- A clear identity
- Freedom from restrictions of the individual partners groups
- A staff dedicated to that purpose
- Reduced risk of one dominating partner
- Setting up the new entity helps define roles and responsibilities

Disadvantages might be:

- Formal commitments may be required and off-putting
- There is a risk of the partnership losing touch with the original organisation

2. Virtual organisation

A separate identity but without a formal legal identity. There may be a separate logo, premises and staff who are accountable to the partnership, however one of the partner organisations actually employs them.

This model has the advantages of a distinct identity but without the potentially fraught legal issues. However just as the separate organisation model may clarify responsibilities as part of the set up process, these can remain blurred in the virtual model.

3. Co-locating staff from partner organisations

A less formal arrangement where staff remain in their original organisations but work together under a common agenda—perhaps as a steering group. If there is trust between partners then this can work well.

4. Steering group without dedicated staff resources

The activities/services are implemented through the partner organisations' mainstream staff and resources.

This coordinates service delivery across organisational boundaries. A key is that the steering group has sufficient authority to change the ways of working within the partner organisations.

It is less useful for partnerships which have a long lifespan or need a separate identity for resources and credibility.

Essential Elements for all Partnerships

All partnerships should have a Board or a Steering Group with recognised and mutually agreed authority, which meets on a regular basis. This Board/Steering Group should be the accountable body for the partnership and should ensure that the objectives are delivered.

Setting up a Partnership

If you are setting up a partnership please contact Ryedale Voluntary Action and we will be happy to advise you. Telephone: 01653 600120 or email: post@rva-cvs.org.uk

Things to think about before you set up your partnership

- Establishing clear roles—are the roles and responsibilities of all partners clearly defined and agreed?
- Have you thought about an appropriate structure?
- Does the partnership constitution and structure define how your partnership will operate?
- Is there a need for a lead partner?
- Who employs any staff?
- Who administers the day to day activity?
- Who contracts with delivery?
- Which body makes the final decisions?
- Who is responsible for financial control and auditing?
- Are the members of the committees, groups etc all defined?
- Are the meetings for the first six months scheduled?
- Is there a clear strategy to involve the wider community in the partnership?
- Are there clear written procedures to prevent conflicts of interest?
- Have you established common purposes for establishing your partnership?
- Has the partnership agreed a vision, aims and goals?
- Is the vision supported by the local community?
- Does the community know what the partnership exists for?
- Do any partners require training in technical skills to participate fully in decision-making?
- Do the partners know each other?