

How to support...

Collaboration for communities: Giving power to partnership



Acknowledgements

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Further resources

Success stories: a collection of case studies from the programme on understanding the benefits, lessons and challenges of collaborative working.

Collaboration e-bulletin: a monthly source of top tips, resources and advice about collaborative working.

The online resources bank: a wealth of ideas, templates, case studies, guidelines and more on collaboration.

Go to www.bassac.org.uk/collaborationbenefits

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If you would like to develop your skills in supporting collaboration, bassac provides a range of information, updates, seminars and training courses that could help.

For more information or further copies, please contact us via: info@bassac.org.uk or call the communications team: 0845 241 0375.

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Foreword

For many years, bassac has supported our members and the wider community sector to initiate and engage in collaborative working. We believe it strengthens the power of individuals, organisations and communities at a local neighbourhood level. And from this position of strength, communities can create a critical mass to challenge, influence and participate confidently in local decision-making and service delivery.

But collaborative working is not always easy: there is a spectrum of approaches, motivations and outcomes, and often it is the people and power dynamics that can determine whether a collaborative venture succeeds or fails. An independent person who can work with individuals and organisations involved to explore some of these issues can be hugely helpful. However, these people require a wide range of skills and knowledge to navigate some of these complexities.

The Collaboration Benefits programme was conceived to identify effective models of support, to enable access to useful resources and, crucially, to learn from, develop and disseminate skills in supporting collaborative working. This publication is the first attempt to produce a comprehensive guide for anyone in a position to support collaborative working that involves community and voluntary groups.

It is worth noting that the programme of work has developed against the backdrop of an increasing interest in the breadth of collaborative working arrangements across the voluntary and community sector. The shift from grant funding to contracts, commissioning and procurement, the aggregation and greatly increased sizes of available contracts, and the commonplace requirement from funders to provide services in partnership have become incentives to collaboration. Government policy continues to highlight the importance of engagement and involvement of the sector in both shaping and delivering public services.

More recently the greatly changed economic situation has meant community and voluntary organisations are actively seeking innovative ways to provide services and make money go further, to develop partnership bids, form consortia, share buildings and back office services.

This backdrop provides a range of opportunities and challenges for the voluntary and community sector and now more than ever we believe it is through collaboration that communities can take control and lead new innovative models for service delivery such as the development of mutuals, and different forms of cooperative and collective ownership.

Nigel Newton Sawyerr
Collaboration Manager, bassac

Introduction

This resource has been developed to guide facilitators of collaboration through the several stages of supporting a collaborative venture. It sets out the key issues you will face and provides a framework for organising and planning your support.

Resources and practical tools

This is a tried and tested toolkit, borne out of the experience of practitioners and what has worked for them when supporting collaboration in its broadest sense. There are practical tools for you to use and we suggest further resources for collaboration support that requires specialist skills and knowledge; merger and consortium development being obvious examples.

Top tips

Comments and tips can be seen throughout the text. These come from people involved in training and development provided by the Collaboration Benefits workstream, who want to share what they have learnt and help others to avoid the pitfalls they may have experienced along the way.

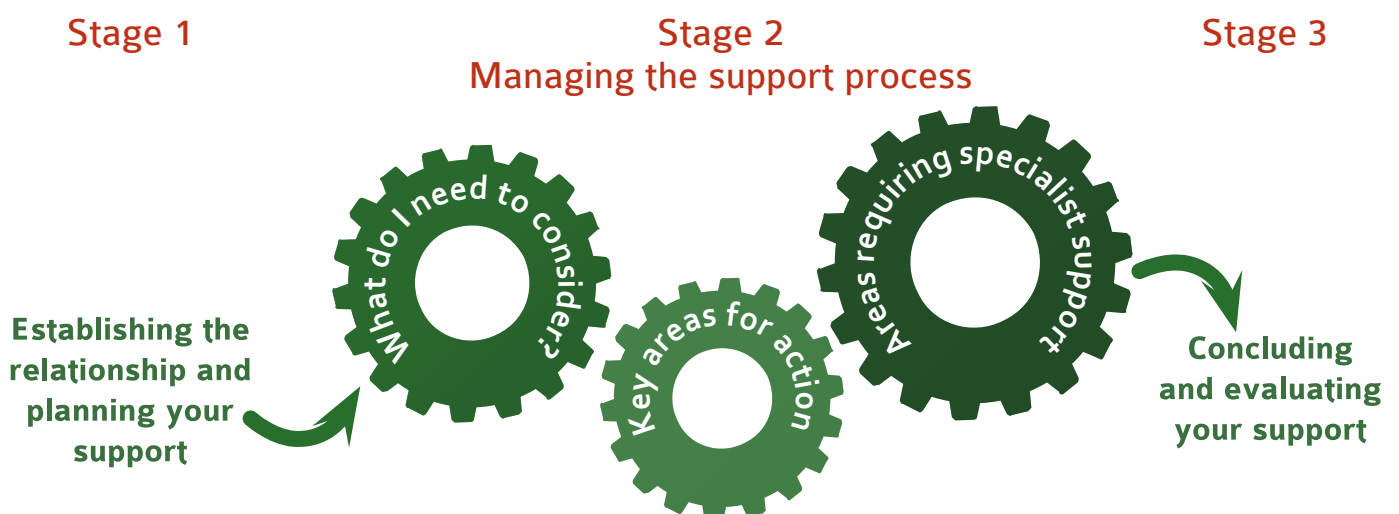
A guide for any point on the collaboration journey

You can use this guide at whichever point you become involved in supporting a collaboration. We have found that 'clusters' of organisations can present themselves for support at any point along the journey of developing or managing collaborative working arrangements. They may be at the early stages of partnership formation or be an established partnership with an agreement in place. The common theme is that they have expressed a collective desire and commitment to taking forward a collaborative initiative.

Terminology

We view collaborative working, or collaboration, as encompassing all forms of working together, whether formal partnerships or less formal arrangements. In this guide we use the words 'cluster' and 'partnership' to describe the group of organisations involved in any kind of collaborative venture.

Overview of the guide



Establishing the relationship and planning your support

Being clear about your role and what you can offer

Before you embark on establishing a relationship with a cluster it's important that you have a clear understanding of the principles that underpin collaborative working and the role you play, whether you're supporting an emerging collaboration or improving the performance of an established group.

You might find this simple set of principles useful:

1. Collaborative working is essentially an arrangement that should enable those taking part to deliver their mission more effectively and make service improvements. Your role is to facilitate this process.
2. There need to be clear and measurable benefits desired by each organisation that will lead to service improvements. These benefits are not necessarily the same for each partner, but should be acknowledged and understood by all.
3. Collaboration aims will relate to a shared operational activity, delivered on behalf of the collaborating group.
4. The partnership must develop and set a strategic direction for its shared operations in order to deliver individual service improvements for partners.
5. Individual organisations will need to satisfy themselves that the benefits are worth the investment in the collaboration and are in line with its mission.

Your added value

Your key strength lies in being positioned outside the process and helping to 'unlock' it.

The added value you bring to such a process is your independence. You are able to take the role of an honest broker/ critical friend, bringing an impartial, objective perspective to the process and to the collaboration.

Facilitator not owner

As a facilitator of a process you should remember that it isn't your job to be a 'fixer' of problems. Effective facilitation offers options, questions and challenges, rather than providing answers and solutions. You cannot and should not take ownership of the process or the project.

Whilst you might at times challenge decisions or decision-making processes, or make recommendations, your main role is one of helping partnerships to solve problems, to define and reach goals in a way that is appropriate, relevant, timely and acceptable to those participating, providing them with regular feedback on progress throughout the process.

Being clear about your role as a facilitator of the partnership's strategic planning process, and the limits of this role, is an important foundation on which to build an effective relationship with individual partners and with the partnership as a whole, and to start planning your support.

A facilitator of collaboration:

- Manages mutual expectations
- Clarifies and helps build consensus around the relevant drivers for collaboration
- Facilitates the partnership in setting a direction
- Supports the development of a business case for the collaboration
- Helps to establish a single shared purpose and vision.



Stage 1

Finding out what you need to know to provide effective support

One of your first important tasks is to establish certain factual information about each partner and about the potential or existing cluster. You can start with desk research: looking at each partner's website, their annual reports, or the Charity Commission and Companies House websites.

Establish the role of the lead partner

In practical terms, during the early stages and immediately following a request for support, you will need to establish the role of the initial contact person – the 'lead' partner – who is seeking support. This will be the main contact for the cluster for administrative and communications purposes (although the cluster might agree that these two tasks are split). This person can tell you more about each individual partner organisation and the particular organisations involved in the cluster.

Gathering information from all perspectives

Tool 1 contains two checklists which set out a systematic approach to establishing profiles of each partner organisation and of the partnership. These may be used to gather relevant factual information about each organisation; importantly, they can also help you explore partners' perceptions of the collaboration. It's critical to unearth any inconsistencies or incompatible perspectives relating to the leadership, membership, drivers, and proposed or agreed aims of the collaboration.

Finding the right approach

The best way to find out more is to arrange a meeting with each partner independently, preferably at their premises. If this isn't possible, arrange a telephone interview. This will enable you to develop your relationship with each organisation and get a feel for what partners really want out of the collaboration and the support process.

The following tools offer a useful prompt for undertaking interviews on the day.

Prepare in advance

If you can send out and review any completed questionnaires beforehand, this will save both you and your interviewees time and effort in gathering together detailed factual information on the day, and enable you to focus your attention on clarifying and expanding important qualitative issues. It will also help you to assess partners' support needs and level of commitment to the current process, and their capacity to collaborate.

Meeting representatives of each organisation face-to-face will give you an opportunity to explore boundaries around your offer of support and negotiate mutual expectations (see page 9). It's also a chance for you to request sensitive data or documentation such as recent strategic reviews of individual partner organisations or existing/ draft partnership agreements.

“ The sign of a good facilitator is if the people you are working with don't think you've done anything! It's not about coercing or forcing but plainly setting out the options for them to make the decisions. ”

Rob Charlton, Sunderland CVS

TOOL 1

Framework for establishing organisational and partnership profiles

Checklist 1: Organisational profile

- Name, organisation, role and contact details for applicant
- Legal structure and charitable status of organisation
- Organisation aim; and objects (from constitution or Memorandum and Articles)
- Main areas of work
- Main beneficiaries
- Main activities and services
- Geographical coverage
- Staffing structure
- Current funding streams and timelines
- Annual turnover
- Existing partnership agreements
- Date of most recent strategic review and current strategic objectives
- Extent and type of any recent organisational development support
- Driver/s for collaboration (ie what prompted it? Why now?)
- Perception of shared benefits for collaboration (ie shared by all partners)
- How such benefits will lead to service improvements for your users?
- Extent, range and date of any stakeholder consultation about current collaboration or current activities or services.

Checklist 2: Partnership profile

- Name of cluster (if relevant)
- Type of collaboration (ie voluntary and community organisation (VCO) collaboration or cross sector – VCO and public sector, VCO and private sector, VCO and public/private sector)
- Proposed geographical coverage for collaboration
- Stage of partnership development and date established
- Organisations involved
- How long each organisation has been involved
- Leadership – how does/will it work?
- Any existing supporting documentation, agreements and/or business plan for the partnership?
- Generic areas where support is required for the collaboration (see Tool 2)
- Specialist areas where support is required (see Tool 2)
- What is the partnership seeking from external support in terms of 'added value' (see Tool 3) and what would demonstrate that this had been achieved?
- Potential areas of conflict for the partnership
- Extent and type of any recent collaboration support for this partnership.

Purpose:

To establish the organisational profiles of individual partners and a partnership profile for the cluster.

Outcome:

You will have an initial profile for each organisation and for the cluster overall that will enable you to start interrogating any apparent inconsistencies and make an initial assessment of the collaboration.



Stage 1

Identifying support needs

It can be difficult to establish any clear or accurate support needs for clusters during this initial phase. This may be because neither you nor the cluster is likely to have a clear, shared purpose and vision for the collaboration. Partners may identify a range of areas in which they would like support – and you may uncover other needs during the support process. Nonetheless, helping the cluster set a strategic direction for its activity by facilitating a strategic planning process is likely to be the central aspect of the support plan you develop.

Asking partners to identify what type of support they're looking for will however give you an idea of what type of support they believe they need. This will help you gauge each partner's awareness of the developmental stage the partnership has reached, and of the work they need to do.

Tool 2 is a checklist which you can use to identify support needs. It can also prompt partners into thinking early on about issues that may ultimately prove critical to the successful formation, development or even disbandment of a partnership – as well as identifying any technical areas where they are likely to need additional specialist support.

At this early stage you must be prepared to take a flexible approach. Often, it's only once you start implementing a support plan that you get a clear picture of any steps that you or the partners have failed to take. It's only then that you're able to work out the direction of travel necessary to help the cluster get back on track or progress to the next stage.

TOOL 2

Framework for identifying initial collaboration support needs

In which of the following areas are you seeking support for the collaboration?

Tick all that apply but please indicate the three most important areas

- Developing and clarifying partnership aims/ identifying potential collaborative advantage
- Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the collaboration
- Making the business case for the collaboration
- Undertaking a risk assessment for the partnership
- Identifying and developing an appropriate legal structure for the partnership
- Developing partnership agreements
- Developing membership criteria
- Developing partner roles and responsibilities
- Developing a communications strategy for the collaboration
- Dealing with different organisational cultures
- Dealing with conflict within the partnership
- Other (please specify).

Please indicate if there are specialist areas for which you are seeking support

- Undertaking merger negotiations
- Building a consortium to deliver commissioned work
- Collaborative campaigning and influencing
- Managing shared resources: staffing/ ICT/ buildings/ equipment/ skills (please specify which)
- Staffing collaborative projects
- Asset transfer and asset development in partnership with others
- Collaborative trading and social enterprise.

Purpose:

To identify partner perceptions of collaboration support needs and where specialist support might be required.

Outcome:

You will have a better idea of areas where partners think they need support and areas where the partnership is likely to need specialist support.



Stage 1

Getting the right people involved

Involving the right people is vital: there must be sufficient levels of authority (or delegated authority) represented at the collaboration negotiating table. This reduces the likelihood of a participant having to refer decisions back to senior managers or boards for endorsement and the project stalling with fatigue and frustration.

But equally (if not more) important when it comes to involvement is the need to develop buy-in from those leaders holding the greatest influence over the success or otherwise of the project – senior managers, trustees or user representatives from each partner organisation.

Unless such key stakeholders develop a commitment to the collaboration they're unlikely to commit resources to realising the aims of the partnership. It's essential that they acknowledge at this early stage that they will have to commit a significant amount of time to working with you, and to invest time in the tasks and preparation required for collaborative working.

Consultation

At this stage, your role is to find out the extent and breadth of consultation that has taken place already with key stakeholders in relation to this particular collaboration. Some form of consultation by cluster members is likely to be a key part of developing the business case for collaboration.

Key stakeholders may need:

- To be convinced of the benefits of the collaboration for their own organisation
- To be satisfied about its strategic alignment with their own organisation's mission
- To understand how decisions will be taken for the partnership
- To understand how reporting structures will work
- To understand how partnership activity will be managed
- To understand how risks will be identified and managed.

Source: N2 Consulting, 2008

The four keys to collaboration success are to:

- Clarify the purpose
- Let form follow function
- Involve the right people
- Get it in writing.

Source: Carol Lukas and Rebecca Andrews

Tackling 'board buy-in' "Involve the chairs of boards of partner organisations as a kind of virtual steering group. They don't come to the meetings, but know (or have the opportunity to know) everything that is going on by email."
Hazel McKenzie, Mind

“ Make sure people are aware of what their responsibilities are. I have worked with groups who haven't been told from the start what will be expected of them and what the implications are of being involved. Workers shy away from being up front, thinking it may put people off, but it will only do damage later on in the process. ”

Rob Charlton, Sunderland CVS

Negotiating mutual expectations

In your initial contact with the lead partner, you should establish their expectations of you in terms of:

- Your role
- Your responsibilities
- Your accountabilities
- The level and type of confidentiality they might expect from you.

It's important to set down some markers during your initial consultations with all the partners, to prevent any misunderstandings from developing later on. You'll need to find a way to communicate the added value that you bring to the process, to ensure that your skills, knowledge and objective positioning are put to best use and you remain in a facilitative role.

Though detailed expectations around the level, extent and type of support you are able to offer will depend on your assessment of the support needs of the partnership as a whole, it's important to establish some boundaries from the start.

The approach you take to negotiating expectations with clusters will vary. You might want to combine such discussions with your fact finding research or to set out your 'offer' of support in some type of flyer, followed by a meeting or phone call. Alternatively you may prefer to have initial telephone conversations with each partner, outlining what level of commitment is required and what might be expected from you in your support role.

You will also need to be clear with individual partners about your expectations of them and of the cluster overall.

Tool 3 offers a structure for framing these discussions. Use this as a prompt, and follow up by drafting a standard email to all the partners.

You may wish to formalise such expectations in the form of an agreement that is signed by all partners.

In a lead role by default

If you do find yourself leading the process during the early stages because no one else is yet in place, you should:

- Put in place a plan to establish an effective structure, such as a formal steering group, to take over your leadership of the process as soon as possible. This structure is likely to continue long after your support is complete
- Avoid taking on the coordination of the project as this fails to put your skills to best use. It will put you in a position where you might undermine buy-in from partners to the process and the project, which comes partly from partners taking (or sharing) responsibility for this coordinating role
- Avoid taking ownership of the project itself (ie taking decisions or adopting a strong advisory role). Remember your role is to facilitate a process, not facilitate or take forward a project. Once again if you start to do this you will be likely to undermine buy-in from some (or all) partners.

"Right from the start be clear about what you are offering, and what you are and are not prepared to do. For example, I make it clear I am not prepared to take lengthy meeting minutes or notes – I will write up and circulate a record of the meeting from the flipchart and post-it records we generated, but if they want anything more formal someone from the group has to take that responsibility on."

Marion Rayner, Community First, Wiltshire Rural Community Council

"Be realistic about what you are promising, and deliver what you do promise."

Jane Hart, Community Council of Northumberland

“ Try to resist the urge to be like a 'helicopter parent' hovering around all the time. If you succeed in empowering the group and building their capacity throughout the process, and leave them in a gradual and organised fashion, you have done all you can. ”

Development worker interviewed for research



Stage 1

TOOL 3

Checklist for establishing mutual expectations

- a) Who will be the recipient of support? (Individual partners or the whole cluster?)
- b) The type of /approach to support you will provide (ie taking a facilitative and consultative role rather than an administrative or coordinating role, or a management and/or leadership role)
- c) Your accountability (to the whole partnership via the 'lead'/key nominated contact rather than to individual partners)
- d) Confidentiality (What approach to confidentiality can partners expect from you?)
- e) What level of support they can expect? (Weekly, monthly, bimonthly?)
- f) The extent to which this will be time limited
- g) What methods you will use to deliver support (eg direct face-to-face work – one-to-one or whole partnership? Report writing? Desk research? Accessing specialist support for the partnership? Telephone or email support?)
- h) Level of commitment required of individual partners to working with you and with the partnership overall
- i) Attendance at partnership meetings (ie will partners attend regularly and will attendees have the necessary authority?)
- j) Give examples of tasks and the extent of commitment required; emphasise the importance of deadlines
- k) Communications with you and the partnership (Who will be responsible for undertaking administrative tasks and communications with you and for the coordinator role? What response rate is required from partners in terms of responses to emails, phone calls etc?)
- l) Timekeeping (Importance of avoiding time wasting for you and other partners)
- m) Your own evaluation of the support offered (How will it be done? What will this require from partners?)
- n) Ending the relationship (Reasons for terminating the support? Exit strategy for ending the support? Suspending/postponing the support programme until a later date).

Purpose:

To establish mutual expectations between individual partners and the collaboration facilitator.

Outcome:

You will have established mutual expectations for the delivery of your support.

Developing a support plan

You should now be in a position to develop an initial support plan. The plan needs to:

- Set out broadly what areas of support you hope to cover with the partnership
- Outline what you hope to achieve, given the (possibly limited and unclear) information you have at this point
- Be flexible enough to accommodate changes of objectives and address issues that arise as the partnership develops
- Be robust enough to allow you to measure progress towards outcomes
- Be designed in such a way that it can be adapted if necessary at a later stage.

The main focus for your support is likely to be in helping to develop a clear, shared purpose and vision for the collaboration, or reviewing the purpose of an existing collaboration. Or it may be focused on a specific area such as identifying an appropriate structure, reviewing the partnership business plan or developing a communications strategy; this is more likely to be the case with established partnerships.

Sharing the plan

You may choose to share this support plan with the partnership at this point, or draft it solely for your own purposes to record your initial intentions and/ or monitor progress. However you choose to use it now, the support plan you draft is likely to identify some very different support needs from those identified by partners!

This is because – unlike you – partners may not have access to the information you have gathered from the whole cluster, and may lack an overview of all the issues from the perspective of each partner; you will be able to identify any inconsistencies in responses and assess overall needs. Unless they have been involved in collaborating before, they may not understand the importance of the strategic planning process to the shape and direction of the partnership.

Tool 4 is a simple template for planning cluster support. Some 'overall' and 'specific' aims have been inserted to provide you with an example of where most support plans are likely to start.



Stage 1

TOOL 4

Framework for an initial plan for collaboration support

Name of partnership (if relevant):			
Date formed:			
	Partner X	Partner Y	Partner Z
Initial partnership aims for collaboration identified (specify which ones)			
Main partnership aim for collaboration identified			
Organisational aims for collaboration			
Main organisational aim identified for this collaboration			
Areas of support needs identified			
Main areas of support need identified			
Overall aim for partnership support:			
To support the partnership in establishing a shared vision and purpose for the collaboration			
Specific aims			
Aim 1: To help the partnership identify its key stakeholders			
(Outcome: partners are clear about who the key stakeholders for the whole partnership are and how and why they are important to the success of this collaborative project)			
Aim 2: To help the partnership identify where collaborative advantage lies and identify a clear set of shared partnership aims			
(Outcome: partners are clear about what they are trying to achieve collectively)			
Aim 3: To help each partner and the partnership as a whole identify how this will deliver service improvements for existing or potential users for each partner organisation			
(Outcome: partners are better able to align strategic aims of the partnership with strategic aims of their organisation. They are clear about each partner's respective organisational aims)			
Aim 4: To undertake an environmental analysis for the partnership as a whole			
(Outcome: shared understanding of various drivers for collaboration)			
Proposed methods for delivering support:			
(one-to-one, facilitated workshops, telephone interviews etc)			
Timeline and timescale: (state how long and how many direct sessions you think this piece of work will take to complete)			

Purpose:

To draft an initial plan for collaboration support.

Outcome:

You now have an initial plan to start to plan your support programme.

Resources round up

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Pre-support questionnaire	To gain a very initial insight into what each partner wants out of the collaboration and from the support process	www.bassac.org.uk/node/885 bassac (2009)
Framework for establishing organisational and partnership profiles	To highlight apparent inconsistencies and make an initial assessment of the collaboration	Tool 1 – page 5 bassac (2010)
Framework for identifying initial partnership support needs	To get an idea of the areas where partners feel they need support and where specialist input might be required	Tool 2 – page 7 bassac (2010)
Checklist for establishing mutual expectations	To understand and clarify everyone's expectations of your support role	Tool 3 – page 10 bassac (2010)
Framework for an initial plan for collaboration support	To draft an initial support plan and start to plan your work	Tool 4 – page 12 bassac (2010)
Health check for identifying aims set and partner perceptions of progress made to date	To help collaborations reflect on their aims and achievements to date and how satisfied they are with how their partnership is progressing	www.bassac.org.uk/node/896 bassac (2010)
Support agreement – sample contract	To formalise expectations about the level and type of support on offer	www.bassac.org.uk/node/897 bassac (2010)
Four keys to collaboration success	Practical background reading – tips and questions to reflect and move forward	www.fieldstonealliance.org Carol Lukas and Rebecca Andrews, Fieldstone Alliance
A practical guide to working with partnerships	Practical step-by-step building blocks for establishing an effective partnership	http://www.n2-consulting.com/partnerships.html N2 Consulting for Nottingham CVS (2008)
Collaboration factors inventory	To help assess how the collaboration is doing on a variety of success factors	http://wilderresearch.org/tools/cfi/index.php Wilder Research

"When I first started out on my journey as collaborative working officer I was in a fog. Now it's just a mist with the occasional dense bit of cloud. The way through is to keep each collaborative goal crystal clear in your mind and then work on the next step and then the next until you get there. If you can't think of a solution to a problem you meet on your journey then someone in your collaborative working group will. Two plus two equals five!"

Ian Curtis, CVS Mid and North Bedfordshire

Managing the support process

A: What to consider at this stage

By now:

- You will have some factual information on each organisation and on the partnership
- You will either have had a face-to-face meeting with the 'lead' partner (ideally), or will have talked to them on the phone
- You may have met with other partners individually
- You may have met with the partnership as a group
- You will have developed and agreed a support plan and established some mutual expectations, on the basis of an initial needs assessment.

You are now ready to embark on the next stage. This may be a first session or perhaps some desk research or other preparatory work, depending on what has been agreed. As you move into the delivery phase, there are some key points you should bear in mind.

Be ready to review and adapt the support plan

The support plan you have so carefully developed may now have to be abandoned. Often, issues emerge during the process that weren't evident at the beginning. The reasons for this can vary; it's not usually that information has been deliberately withheld! It may be that the impact of certain events or arrangements may not initially have been clear, either to the collaboration or to you.

Change management is challenging

You may be asked to do a very limited piece of work, or you may have to facilitate a process that will take a considerable length of time. Whichever area of support you're working on, you will essentially be facilitating part of a strategic planning

process which involves change for all concerned. It may feel messy at times. It may also feel pretty challenging: you will almost certainly be involved at the 'storming' stage, which can be uncomfortable.

Tool 5 explains a theory of group dynamics – including the concept of 'storming' – which you may find useful for your own reference or as a resource to use with the partnership.

Enlisting a mentor can help. It's useful to have someone as a sounding board to help you reflect on situations, to understand what may have happened and why. A mentor may also be able to provide extra support on technical issues (eg advising on appropriate legal structures).

However well supervised your work is, it's unlikely that one person will be able to support you in all the challenges you're likely to face. Organisations such as the Charity Commission, IVAR, Charities Evaluation Services (CES) and NCVO, as well as bassac, can offer assistance.

“ I was asked by a partnership to facilitate some sessions around conflict resolution, which had been flagged up as largely to do with the personalities involved. I was also asked to review their draft Memorandum of Understanding, which partners had been reluctant to adopt. I discovered that they had a lead body that was managing a contract with a funder, which paid for a worker who was employed by another organisation, and that worker was supervised by someone from yet another organisation, with no formal agreements between any of them. Apart from being very risky, the unclear roles and responsibilities were causing unnecessary disagreement. When these were sorted, relationships improved – they weren't perfect but were felt to be manageable. ”

AC, bassac

TOOL 5

Forming/ Storming/ Norming/ Performing (and perhaps Adjourning)

This useful theory is likely to be familiar to group facilitators. It was developed by psychologist Bruce Tuckman in 1965. Further information can be found at: www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm.

The theory maintains that groups or teams go through a staged process as follows:

1. **Forming:** usually fairly calm, with members positive and polite; there may be anxieties but these are likely to be hidden; people may hold back on expressing views and feelings, especially if they might be seen as contentious. Discussions may focus simply on how the team/collaboration will work (which can feel frustrating to those who are more task-oriented). This stage is unlikely to last very long.
2. **Storming:** as roles are clarified, there may be some jockeying for position; not everyone may be happy with the direction that the collaboration is taking or the way that roles and responsibilities are shared; members may feel unsure about what is expected of them and unclear about what others are contributing. Without established relationships and protocols for working together it can feel pretty rocky at times! It's at this stage that members can start to question the value of their continuing involvement in the collaboration.
3. **Norming:** as roles are established, the collaboration will start to move into this stage (although there's often an overlap between this and the storming stage and it's possible to revert to the storming stage at any time, especially when there are changes in focus and/or tasks). This is a more constructive stage with team members starting to work towards common goals and to support each other in doing so.
4. **Performing:** this is where real progress is being made towards common goals, supported by agreed structures and processes. The collaboration is strong enough to withstand changes, for example members leaving or joining.
5. **Adjourning:** recognising that all projects exist for a fixed period and once they've achieved their goals (or if they're unable to do so) partners will benefit from formally concluding (or 'adjourning').

Understanding this process can be helpful to you in understanding why there appears to be conflict (at the storming stage) – and that it's almost certainly not because of anything you've said or done. It may also explain an apparent lack of progress in the early stages of partnership formation. For the same reasons, it might be helpful to explain this to the collaboration, and to recognise that this is normal group dynamics taking place.

Purpose:

To help partnerships understand the links between group dynamics in relation to how their collaboration is functioning.

Outcome:

An improved understanding and, most importantly, acceptance of the stages of development that a partnership is likely to progress through.

“ You are dealing with people going through change, and anger might surface. ”
Ian Curtis, CVS Mid and North Bedfordshire

Unintended outcomes are possible

The outcomes of intervention are not always what you – or the partnership – expect. There may for example be cases where the best course of action is to question whether or not the partnership should continue.

Sometimes those around the table have inherited the partnership from predecessors

and struggle to see its value to their work. This can be a good opportunity to refocus: by explaining to new members the aims of the partnership, what it's trying to achieve and its success so far, partners can demonstrate how well the collaboration is performing. This may lead the partnership to decide that the collaboration has served its purpose and is no longer needed.

Resources round up

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Forming/ Storming/ Norming/ Performing	To understand the stages of partnership progress and group dynamics	Tool 5 – page 15 bassac (2010) www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm
Useful website links and organisations to turn to for support	To get specialist or technical support or mentoring from an organisation with expertise in the relevant area	www.charity-commission.gov.uk/misc/useful-websites.aspx The Charity Commission



One facilitator of collaboration in the bassac network had to challenge a partnership on its continuance. Although the group was really struggling, there was a reluctance to let go and to agree that the partnership had gone as far as it could. By asking the right questions, the facilitator of collaboration helped everyone understand that it wasn't a failure on their part, but a strength to recognise when they'd done all that they could usefully do. As one member said, it feels like a millstone around our necks has been removed.

Not all was lost: individual organisations started considering new alliances with others from the disbanded partnership and were able to use the lessons from this experience to build a clearer framework for future work.



AC, bassac

B: Key areas for action

Developing a shared purpose, a clear vision and a strategic plan

Clarifying aims/ mission

This is arguably the most important area for support when it comes to developing partnerships; getting this right will underpin any other work that you do. Many partnerships struggle with this task, but an unclear purpose and vision of what the collaboration is trying to achieve will inevitably derail progress.

Well-established partnerships may also need support with this. They may wish to revisit their aims due to a change in operating environment, or because existing aims aren't clear enough or agreed by all partners. In fact, this is an issue you're likely to encounter with most, if not all, the partnerships that you work with.

In the case of registered charities, the Charity Commission urges facilitators to help charitable organisations in partnerships to be sure that what they plan to do is in line with what the charity is supposed to do.

You should bear in mind that there are probably two sets of aims here:

organisational aims and aims for the collaboration. You will need to recognise and work with both.

Getting agreement on the partnership's broad aims is relatively easy; the challenges emerge when partners start to get down to the detail. It's surprising how often this detail is ignored though this is where the potential for future conflict is likely to lie. If details can be negotiated and agreed at an early stage, there's more likely to be shared ownership.

If no agreement can be reached at this stage, this may be a sign that the collaboration is not ready, or not likely to be successful.

There are pros and cons as to who to involve at this stage of the support process. Bringing all partners together has advantages in that it encourages an open sharing of issues and can help to build commitment and a sense of common ownership. Tool 6 provides the structure for a 'visioning session', which can be a highly effective approach. In other cases, however, you may feel it's more appropriate to consult with partners individually then use your findings to highlight areas for discussion by the group.



"In all cases, trustees must be confident that the collaboration furthers their charity's objectives, is an appropriate use of charitable funds and that any private benefit is incidental to the furtherance of the charity's purposes. Where there is any doubt, charities or trustees should contact us for advice."

Collaborative working and mergers (CC34), Charity Commission (2009)

“ I was asked by one collaboration to interview each partner separately and ask them what they hoped to gain from being in the partnership, how well it was functioning at that point, what they were able to contribute and so on. My report highlighted some of the issues that needed dealing with. The advantage of doing it this way was that people felt free to say exactly what they thought, knowing that their comments were not going to be attributed to them. It flagged up some important issues that might have remained hidden. ”

AC, bassac

Identifying key stakeholders

Any strategic planning process has to include a stakeholder analysis, and this is no different. The exercise may however expose potential issues that are specific to collaborative working and need to be addressed. As a facilitator of collaboration, you can encourage partnerships to think about the implications of working across organisational boundaries.

The first stage is a practical one: partners should list all those who may have a view and/or some kind of influence on the collaboration. These may include:

- Service users
- Volunteers
- Members
- Funders
- Members of the public
- Staff
- Trustees.

The next stage is challenging the partnership to think about the implications. The greater the number of organisations involved, the bigger this issue is likely to be as it can be harder to understand the values of each and the complex range of influences.

Understanding the operating environment

Your role here can be to help partners to think strategically and beyond the parameters of their everyday operations.

In reality many voluntary sector trustees and managers are forced into a 'fire-fighting' mode due to lack of proper resources; they become reactive rather than proactive. You can ask the questions that others may not be asking, for example:

- So what happens when the current funding runs out in two years' time?
- How important is it to retain the identity of the organisation?
- What impact will it have on your service users if services are delivered differently, through a collaborative venture?
- How much does this matter?

Making the business case

The importance of establishing the business case for working in partnership cannot be emphasised too strongly. It's central to the strategic planning process and must underpin the partnership strategy.

The business case should demonstrate evidence of the potential efficiency savings which may be achieved by working collaboratively, leading to better service provision. Much of this may of course be speculative: benefits may take time to materialise – though they require an investment up front – or may not materialise at all if, for example, funders decide not to support the partnership.

You will need to support partners in making the business case at both the organisational and the partnership level:

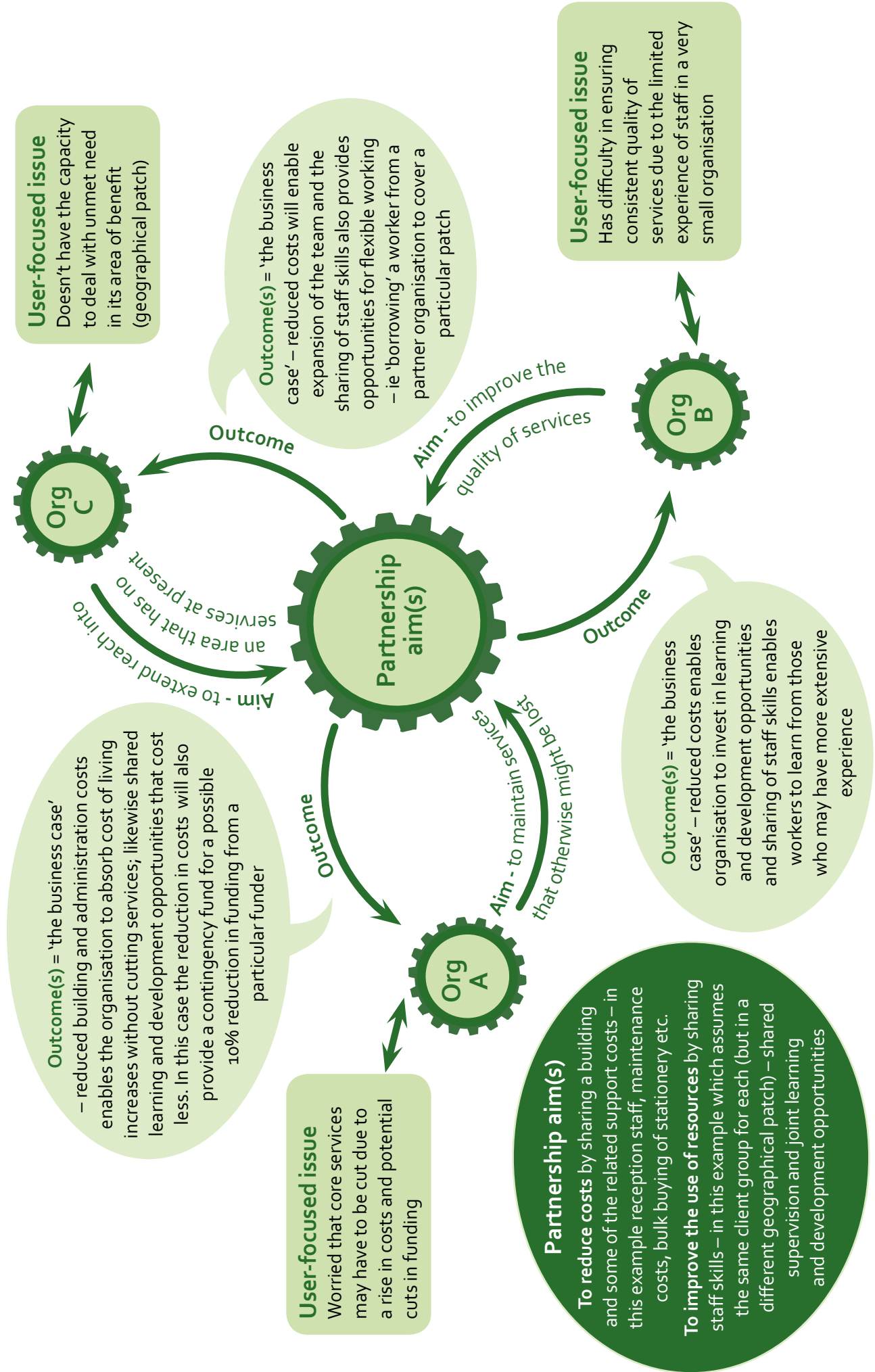
- Each organisation working independently to establish how the partnership will benefit its service users
- Information relating to the above to be communicated across the partnership and with key stakeholders so that there is a shared understanding of what each hopes to gain for its users
- Using this information the partnership can now consider the business case for collaborative working.

A business case is the presentation of an argument for a considered course of action in terms of its impact on the success of the enterprise.

In the private sector this will almost invariably involve ascertaining the implications for costs and/or revenues; in the public sector it will probably be costs and/or service levels. The argument is usually designed to show why a particular course of action is better than the present or other alternatives.

A charity presented a business case to its funders showing the costs of delivering better services to clients and the benefits in terms of client satisfaction.

Source: *Making the Business Case* by James A Cannon, Chartered Institute of Personal and Development (CIPD) (2005)



During this process, you will need to consider the following:

- **Options** – a consideration of the range of options available to address perceived issues, both for each partner organisation (where collaboration may be one of a series of options) and for the partnership as a whole
- **Evidence** – for the above in both cases
- **Resources required** – financial resources and time, in relation to both the organisation and the partnership
- **Benefits** – to service users of each organisation, and the collaborative advantage identified: what can be achieved collectively that couldn't be achieved independently.

The language used here may be off-putting to smaller organisations or less formal partnerships, but the same principles apply whether, for example, the collaboration is a support network for key workers or a joint venture that aims to bid for commissioned work.

Simply helping the partnership to focus on comparing the potential benefits with the resources required is valuable. This is often overlooked: many workers and/or trustees continue their involvement in collaborations at significant cost despite there being little evidence of any tangible benefits.

Collaborations may only produce 'soft' outcomes, but these are valuable and should be measured. They can be measured by asking participants about the changes that have taken place as a result of the collaboration. If an isolated key worker feels able to deliver quality services better as a result of feeling supported by others, then this could be a good business case for continued involvement in a support network.

Translating vision into action

Your role here may be to help move the collaboration on from the theoretical to the practical: from strategy to action.

There's a very fine line between allowing enough time to sort out the strategy and clarifying potential benefits, and spending too long strategising – thereby failing to get down to delivering those benefits. One way of avoiding this is to embed monitoring and evaluation systems into work plans or action plans right from the outset, based on the agreed organisational and partnership aims. (See **Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework** on page 28.)

Encouraging partners to work to an agreed delivery plan can help. (A template is available from the bassac website, [www.bassac.org.uk/delivery plan](http://www.bassac.org.uk/delivery-plan)) The plan should include objectives which are SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Resourced
- Time-focused.

You can really add value to the partnership by using this plan as a resource for checking progress. As a neutral 'outsider' you have a valuable role in supporting the partnership to understand how its actions are helping to deliver the aims.

This process could include looking at obstacles to progress and you may be in a better position to help identify these than individuals who are closer to the situation. Careful questioning can tease out the issues – your advantage is that you're not seen as having a stake in the outcome.

TOOL 6

Visioning exercise

This is a suggested structure for a facilitated session.

1. The external environment – why now? What are the issues we're trying to address by working collaboratively? (*partners working together – flip-chart responses*)
2. Partnership aims or 'collaborative advantage' – what could be achieved by working collectively that we couldn't achieve on our own? (*working in own organisation groups – feedback to whole group – flip-chart responses under each heading*)
 - Reducing costs
 - Increasing and/or diversifying income
 - Increasing influence (raising public profile)
 - Improving the use of resources (building, staffing, ICT, equipment, skills etc)
 - Reducing duplication of services
 - Improving co-ordination of services.
3. Be specific – eg if you want to meet more need, how do you know what that need is? What is the likely demand? How can it be resourced? Who are your target beneficiaries? What will change as a result? etc (*working as a group*)
4. Organisational aims: How will this help each organisation to deliver service improvements? (*working independently – feedback to whole group – flip-chart responses under each heading*)
 - Increasing services or maintaining services (that otherwise might be lost)
 - Improving the quality of services
 - Extending reach (either into new geographical areas, or reaching a new service user group)
 - Developing new or specialised services.
5. Be specific – eg. which services could be lost? Why? When? How will efficiency savings from partnership working enable you to maintain these services? To what extent? (*working independently*)
6. Risks/ costs/ and benefits (financial and social) matrix with weightings for each organisation (*working individually and then together to review results*). See also **Undertaking a risk assessment** on page 27.

It is recommended that you write up the notes of the day – you, the neutral facilitator, can present the information in a balanced way. The information presented should now show:

- Clear aims for the partnership
- Information about the external environment
- Drivers for collaborative working
- A cost/benefit analysis
- A risk assessment for each organisation and the partnership.

All of which can be used as a basis for a strategic plan for the partnership.

Purpose:

To establish (or clarify) aims and outcomes for a potential collaboration.

Outcome:

Partners will have discussed and agreed clear aims for their partnership that can be used as a basis for a strategic plan and be monitored and evaluated over time. This will ensure that the partnership is achieving added value for partner organisations' beneficiaries.

TOOL 7

Identifying key stakeholders – two different approaches

Purpose:

To establish who may have an interest and/or influence in the collaboration and how to work with them constructively.

Outcome:

An understanding of the key stakeholders relating to the partnership, what their relationship is, or is likely to be, and a plan for how to work with them most effectively.

1. Power-interest matrix:

Having identified those with a potential interest or involvement in the partnership, consider where each belongs in the power-interest matrix below.

Power relates to how much influence an organisation can bring to the partnership to help it achieve its objectives. Influence could be effected through funding, statutory regulation or other forms of more informal lobbying or persuasion. Interest relates to how much of a stake or concern an organisation or group may have in the outcomes being worked towards.

		INTEREST	
		LOW	HIGH
POWER	LOW	A. Non-partners	B. Those to keep informed
	HIGH	C. Consultees	D. Key decision makers

- Key decision-makers – the organisations that are centrally involved in decision-making about strategies and spending. Consultees – the organisations who should be consulted for their advice or views but who do not need to be centrally involved in all decision-making
- Informed parties – other observers or interested organisations who should be kept informed but who are unlikely to have strong views about the decisions being made.

Source: Working in partnership: a sourcebook, New Opportunities Fund

2. The 'chapatti diagram'

"Different sizes of circles of card are used to represent each organisation; perhaps even overlaid on a large map of the area. Start with a brainstorm of all the potential partners, and then write each onto a circle of card deciding as a group how influential or important that organisation is and selecting the size accordingly. Representing this visually stimulates discussion about potential allies or competitors, and can also be used to explore linkages between organisations." Marion Raynor, Community First (Wiltshire and Swindon)

Following on from either of these exercises, as a facilitator of collaboration you can encourage the partnership to decide how best to involve and/or communicate with those identified.

Source: Adapted from ActionAid's REFLECT methodology

TOOL 8

Give-Get exercise

This is a very simple tool where each organisation is asked to draw up a list in two columns:

- What does it have (or what is it expected) to GIVE to the partnership (time, skills, financial resources, premises for meeting in etc)?
- What does it hope to GET (see also **Clarifying aims/ mission** on page 17)?

This is best done face-to-face with all partners present. Organisations are encouraged to be SMART in their aspirations:

- Be specific – if they want a greater voice, what does this mean in practice? What will it look like in the future and how is that different from now?
- Are the benefits measurable? It should be possible to do this even if they seem fairly intangible – for example an informal network should be able to assess whether participants are benefiting from meeting even if it's simply to give each other mutual support
- Is it achievable and realistic? It's easy to get carried away with dreams of what might be achieved and your role as facilitator of collaboration may be to keep asking for reality checks – after all it's more encouraging to be successful in making small steps and then go on to make bigger ones, rather than fall at the first hurdle
- Be specific about resources needed (in the GIVE column) and don't forget staff time, but acknowledge that there may be some investment needed up front which may not be returned in the long run (particularly in the case of bidding for funding if the bid is unsuccessful)
- And finally ask partners to place what they want to get from the partnership within a reasonable time frame.

As a useful follow-on to this, bring this information together and share it with the whole partnership, showing the relative positions of each partner. This can help in addressing conflict issues.

You may also wish to encourage partners to identify what others have to contribute and stand to gain, and most importantly risk losing.

Source: Getting started on collaboration – a toolkit, JH Consulting (2007)

Purpose:

To support partners in making the business case for working collaboratively.

Outcome:

Partners will be able to assess whether the amount of investment is worth the potential return(s), and will have a list of criteria (see below) that will need to be in place to make it worthwhile. This list can be used as a benchmark in the future for regularly checking whether there is benefit in continuing, and to communicate with existing and future members.

TOOL 9

Template for drafting a partnership strategic plan

- Name of partnership
- Partner organisations
- Key stakeholders: including the results of any stakeholder analysis
- Key drivers: the reasons for working collaboratively
- Partnership aim/s: what is the partnership trying to achieve? What is the collaborative advantage of working together?
- Partnership values: any agreed principles underpinning how the partnership will operate
- Planned outcomes of collaboration: what will change as a result?
- Budget: to include details of how you arrive at your costs
- Communications strategy: how and when you will communicate with key stakeholders including any plans for consultation with stakeholders, and how you will address issues such as branding and publicity on behalf of the partnership
- Partnership objectives: those partnership activities needed to achieve the desired outcomes
- Partnership outputs: all partners
- Each partner's contribution: in terms of resources – financial, people, buildings etc.
- Key risks: to include plan for managing them – see **Undertaking a risk assessment** on page 27
- Overall implementation timetable for strategy
- Monitoring and evaluation: how progress against aims will be monitored and reviewed.

Purpose:

To provide a framework that can be used by the partnership and that can be communicated to key stakeholders.

Outcome:

Partners are able to use a framework for recording key decisions that can be used to communicate with others and to monitor progress.

Resources round up: Strategic planning

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Visioning exercise	To establish and agree clear aims for the partnership	Tool 6 – page 21 bassac (2010)
Useful website links and organisations to turn to for support	To get specialist or technical support or mentoring from an organisation with expertise in the relevant area	www.charity-commission.gov.uk/misc/useful-websites.aspx The Charity Commission
Identifying key stakeholders	To establish who may have an interest in the collaboration and plan how to work with them most effectively	Tool 7 – page 22 bassac (2010)
Give-Get exercise	To assess the benefit and help make the business case for the partnership	Tool 8 – page 23 bassac (2010)
Template for drafting a partnership strategic plan	To provide a strategic framework that can be shared with key stakeholders	Tool 9 – page 24 bassac (2010)
Partnership delivery plan	To agree and understand how everyone's actions feed into the overall aims and to monitor progress	www.bassac.org.uk/delivery-plan bassac (2010)
Making the Business Case	To highlight what is needed in the business plan and the need to examine options, risks and benefits	www.cipd.co.uk James A.Cannon, CIPD (2005)
Working in Partnership: a sourcebook	Guidance with practical ideas and suggestions for both new and existing partnerships	www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_eval_working_in_partnership_sourcebook_uk.pdf New Opportunities Fund (NOF)
Getting started on collaboration - a toolkit	Guidance and checklists for developing partnerships	www.bassac.org.uk/node/499 J H Consulting (2007)

Resources round up: Strategic planning

<p>Tools for tomorrow: A practical guide to strategic planning for voluntary organisations</p>	<p>A range of strategic planning tools that can be adapted for use by a facilitator of collaboration working with partnerships. Popular tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEST • SWOT • Stakeholder analysis • Core competencies • Cost benefit analysis • Market share and competitor analysis • Scenario planning • Risk analysis • Mind mapping • Balanced scorecard • Strategy mapping • Project or outcome evaluation. <p>Also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic options • Other player analysis • Force field analysis • Break even analysis • Ansoff matrix. 	<p>www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/products-services/publications/tools-for-tomorrow</p> <p>Tools for tomorrow can be purchased from NCVO, price £35 (£24.50 for NCVO members)</p> <p>See also www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/strategy-impact/learn/tools-and-techniques/tools-for-strategic-planning for the popular tools for strategic planning</p> <p>NCVO and the Centre for Charity Effectiveness (2008)</p>
<p>Working together to achieve your mission</p>	<p>Outlines good practice for organisations working together highlighting a range of key issues to consider in the planning stages</p>	<p>www.bassac.org.uk/node/282 NCVO (2006)</p>
<p>Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis</p>	<p>To enable the calculation of the net cost or benefit associated with the collaboration</p>	<p>http://interactive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/survivalguide/skills/ao_cost.htm The Strategy Unit (2004)</p>
<p>Third Sector Foresight</p>	<p>Strategic insight and planning tools for the voluntary and community sector</p>	<p>www.3s4.org.uk/ NCVO</p>
<p>KnowHowNonProfit</p>	<p>Tips to build expertise in the strategic development process</p>	<p>www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/strategy</p>
<p>Action Planning</p>	<p>Some key strategic planning tools</p>	<p>www.actionplanning.co.uk/news_business_strategy_tools.html</p>
<p>Businessballs</p>	<p>Free exercises, tools, templates for organisational development</p>	<p>www.businessballs.com/</p>

Undertaking a risk assessment

Risk assessment may form part of a facilitated business planning process or may be a stand-alone piece of work which partners ask you to support. In many cases it may not form part of the support plan but may arise as you work with the partnership and evidence of risk emerges; your role may be to flag this up if partners are unaware.

Smaller more informal partnerships are unlikely to feel that they need to do a formal risk assessment. But in all cases, asking 'what if?' in relation to partnership plans can produce results.

The Charity Commission has clear guidance on risks for charities which identifies the following main areas:

- Governance risks
- Operational risks
- Financial risks
- External risks
- Compliance (legal).

(Charities and Risk Management (CC26), the Charity Commission (2010) - see web address below.)

A more formal partnership is likely to be able to identify risk across most if not all of these areas and should be encouraged to take the following steps:

- Identify risks under each heading
- Assess risk for potential impact and likelihood of it occurring
- Evaluate what action needs to be taken
- Monitor and re-assess risk periodically.

Further information on establishing a risk log and a template can be found at www.bassac.org.uk/node/565

Taking the example of a partnership that aims simply to improve referrals between partner organisations so that users get a better choice of services:

What if...?

- Service users get confused about who delivers what? (Does this matter and if so how can we prevent it?)
- There are different ways of doing things between partner organisations, and perhaps different levels of quality? (Does this matter?)
- Funders decide to reduce our funding as a consequence? (Is this likely to happen?)
- We're not sure about the services we're referring on to? (How can we make sure this doesn't happen?)
- And so on....

Resources round up: Risk management

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Developing a risk register	To records details of all the risks identified for the project and grade them in terms of likelihood of occurring and seriousness of impact	www.bassac.org.uk/node/565 bassac (2009)
Charities and risk management (CC26)	Highlights the basic principles and strategies that can be applied to help charities manage their risks	www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc26.aspx# Charity Commission (2010)
Risk and uncertainty	A general overview of how to undertake a risk assessment, includes a step-by-step guide to managing risk	www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/strategy-impact/learn/change/what-kind-of-change-can-you-expect/risk-and-uncertainty NCVO

Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework

You may sometimes be asked to provide support on this as a stand-alone issue. But you may find that the aims of the partnership are unclear, making progress difficult – if not impossible – to measure. In this case, you may need to revisit **Clarifying aims/ mission** on page 17.

Partnerships should build an outcomes framework into their strategic planning process. They should gather baseline information on any performance indicators at the start of the collaborative project so that it's possible to gauge progress.

For example: if the aim is to reduce costs, what are the current costs? If it is to increase influence, what happens at the moment in terms of how users' views are being represented, to whom, etc? It's likely that the partners began collaborating before you were involved; they may have to check back to where they thought they were at the start. On the other hand, it may be just as useful to do an assessment of the current situation.

Organisations will need to monitor and evaluate their own involvement in the partnership separately. They are responsible for assessing the extent to which the partnership has enabled them to achieve their mission, and specific aims relating to:

- Increasing services or maintaining services (that otherwise might be lost)
- Improving the quality of services
- Extending reach (either into new geographical areas, or reaching a new service user group)
- Developing new or specialised services.

Your role is to support the partnership in developing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating its success, for example, in:

- Reducing costs
- Increasing and/or diversifying income
- Increasing influence (raising public profile)
- Improving the use of resources (building, staffing, ICT, equipment, skills etc)
- Reducing duplication of services
- Improving co-ordination of services.

Tools 10 and 11 set out two approaches to evaluation and developing an evaluation framework. You can also download a template for monitoring activity and evaluating effectiveness within a recognised framework from our resource bank at www.bassac.org.uk/monitoringframework. This includes a worked example highlighting aims, outcomes, objectives and outputs as well as key questions, performance indicators, data sources, collection methods and timelines.

TOOL 10

A simple evaluation session

This very simple evaluation framework can be used to take a snapshot of how effective the partnership thinks it is. It is not intended as a robust and comprehensive evaluation but can be used as a starting point for a more detailed piece of work, or by smaller and/or less formal partnerships.

This is most useful if done face-to-face with all partners together. Ask each partner to fill in their evaluation independently before sharing it with others and perhaps reaching a shared view. The discussion that follows will indicate where the partnership needs to develop.

1. What were the three or four key aims or objectives you set out to achieve?
2. To what extent have you achieved them? (Fully, mostly, partly, not at all)
3. Has the collaboration delivered any other achievements or benefits you had not expected? YES/NO

If YES please list them

4. Has the collaboration delivered any negative outcomes that you had not expected? YES /NO

If YES please list them

5. Where you are not satisfied with the achievements of the collaboration, can you identify the key factors that held you back or stood in your way? YES/NO

If YES please list up to three

6. Which of these feelings best expresses your feelings today? (Please tick the appropriate box)

- I am very satisfied with what we have achieved and happy to continue, if appropriate, with the kind of collaboration in which I am involved.
- We have made progress and there is more that we could achieve together.
- I had hoped to achieve a great deal more but, having learnt a great deal from the experience, I feel it would be worth trying a different approach.
- On the whole I am not satisfied with what we have achieved and feel that collaborative working is not worth the effort.

Purpose:

To enable partners to make a general evaluation of the partnership's effectiveness.

Outcome:

Partners will have a broad idea of how well the partnership is functioning, any barriers to progress, and key areas for development.

TOOL 11

Workshop to develop a more detailed monitoring and evaluation framework

1. What is the issue that's being addressed? (aimed at individual partners) What challenges (needs/gaps in service etc) do your service users currently face that will be helped by working in partnership with others? (This could be different for each partner.)
2. How do you know this? Reports/user feedback/consultation exercise etc
3. What are your aims as a partnership? (aimed at the whole partnership)
4. Which of these are priorities? Describe here the aspects you are particularly focussing on, which will relate to activities you are currently engaged in. You should highlight no more than four or five. What difference are you making as a partnership (and what would be missed if the partnership folded)?

For example:

- To enable users to access appropriate services by improving referrals between professional workers
5. What are the possible outcomes for the partnership?
For example:
 - Improved access to funding
 - 10% reduction in stationery costs
 - 15% increase in referrals between partners
 - County-wide availability of services, with an increase in opening times.
 6. What are the objectives that will enable you to deliver these aims and outcomes?
List and describe your objectives here. For example:
 - Mapping and improving existing processes by reducing waiting times and increasing footfall
 - Introducing a 'gateway' system for enquiries
(This can be broken down further into specific outputs/ targets).
 7. What are the indicators or 'clues' that will demonstrate how well you have achieved your aims?
For example:
 - Numbers of referrals between professionals
 - Levels of satisfaction in...
 - Extent and type of working relationship with other agencies
 - Numbers receiving services
 - Extent to which policy reflects....
 - Number of enquiries...
 - Level of knowledge
 - Levels of attendance
 - Level of understanding.

Purpose:

To enable an established partnership to monitor activity and to evaluate effectiveness within a recognised framework. Please note that the first part will be familiar by now as this tool is designed for a collaboration that has a clear shared purpose and well established aims.

Outcome:

An understanding of how the partnership will assess its effectiveness and information that can form the basis of monitoring and evaluation reports.

Resources round up: Monitoring and evaluation

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
A simple evaluation session	To gain a broad idea of the partnership's effectiveness, any barriers to progress and areas for development	Tool 10 – page 29 bassac (2010)
Workshop to develop a more detailed monitoring and evaluation framework	To monitor activity and evaluate effectiveness within a recognised framework (for established partnerships)	Tool 11 – page 30 bassac (2010)
Template for recording a monitoring and evaluation framework	A framework to organise the systematic collection and recording of information on partnership outputs and outcomes	www.bassac.org.uk/monitoringframework bassac (2010)
Performance improvement: A handbook for mentors	To help facilitators of collaboration offer performance support to frontline organisations covering strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, quality, and benchmarking	Available from CES (price £70) www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=394 CES (2006)
First steps in monitoring and evaluation	A practical, five-step, easy-to-follow approach to evaluating your own project, developed particularly for small voluntary organisations	www.ces-vol.org.uk/downloads/firstmande-15-21.pdf CES (2002)
Monitoring and evaluation – information and resources	Key questions, topics and resources and a list of free downloadable publications from CES	www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=40 www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=112

Identifying and recommending an appropriate legal structure

There are a number of possible operating models for partnerships.

The main options are:

- Network with shared responsibility (This may be less likely to be supported by funders.)
- New independent body, where a jointly-owned separate organisation is set up
- Lead agency model, where one partner enters into contracts on behalf of the others. (This can move from one lead partner to another within the cluster, for different contracts.)
- Existing managing agent, for example a local infrastructure organisation, that manages contracts on behalf of the partnership but does not deliver services.

It's a good idea to familiarise yourself with the pros and cons of each model as this issue is more than likely to crop up in your collaboration support work. (See the HACT worksheet, Legal issues, opposite.)

In most cases you're unlikely to recommend a structure, as your role is to present the partnership with the options, and pros and cons of each, and to let the partnership decide. But given your knowledge – especially of potential risk – you may find yourself in a position where you do recommend a course of action, or at least point out the possible consequences of an inappropriate structure.

On occasion it may be useful to commission an expert in this area to check over documents on behalf of the collaboration. Some charge quite reasonable fees which may be passed on to the partnership if appropriate.

Where partnerships are involved in entering into contracts, the lead agency model is the most widely used. In these cases there needs to be a carefully negotiated and worded written agreement between partners.

Resources round up: Legal structures

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Models for collaborative working around commissioning	Sets out the partnership structures commonly used by voluntary organisations working together with case studies and specimen documents	www.bassac.org.uk/node/580 bassac (2009)
Structures for consortia delivery of public services	Summarises and explores different aspects of three models of consortia delivery of public services by voluntary and community organisations	www.bassac.org.uk/node/281 NCVO
Legal issues	Common structures for consortia are discussed (covering contracts with commissioners, special purpose vehicles, traditional sub-contracting and consortia) alongside key issues to address when developing legal agreements between partners	http://hact.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Collaborate_worksheet6.pdf HACT (2008)
Working in a consortium: A guide for third sector organisations involved in public service delivery	Guidance highlighting practical considerations of working in a consortium. Appendix D discusses the key features, implications, advantages and disadvantages of three models – Steering Group, Lead Contractor or Prime Contractor	www.bassac.org.uk/node/382 Office of the Third Sector (2008)

Developing partnership agreements

This section assumes that there has already been discussion and agreement on the aims of the collaboration. There may be occasions when you're asked for support in developing written agreements, but the preliminary work has not yet been done. In these cases, you'll need to go back to **Developing a shared purpose, a clear vision and a strategic plan** on page 17.

Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are written descriptions of roles and responsibilities in relation to specific arrangements. There is unlikely to be a specimen document that can be pulled off the shelf and applied to the partnership without careful negotiation and some modification. Even if you manage to find one that seems to fit the bill perfectly, partners should discuss and agree each point before signing it off.

There is a range of specimen documents available; have copies available and ensure you understand the broad parameters of each as part of your support toolkit. They cover the range of types of collaboration: from small or informal collaborations to complex working and contractual arrangements. The NCVO guidance is useful as a checklist for ensuring that all the main areas are covered.

When developing a partnership agreement, it's useful to discuss some worst case scenarios (which may have been flagged during risk assessment), for example:

- What if a key person is off sick?
- What if one party becomes unhappy with something that has reached the press about the partnership?
- What if one partner gets a contract from the local authority to deliver services that the partnership wants to deliver collectively?

Discuss ways of avoiding these situations, but also how to deal with them if they arise. Build any agreed ways of working into the document.

Advisers are often wary of drafting 'legal' documents in case they breach some unknown legal rule and cause catastrophe. In some cases, usually where large sums of money are involved, such wariness may be justified. But for many agreements (such as the specimens on the bassac website), all that's required is common sense, clarity and a degree of foresight. If all parties understand and are happy with what they have agreed, and the document adequately covers the major issues that are likely to arise, then it will probably do its job.

“ Build rules of engagement around competition and confidentiality in right from the start – it makes a lot of the latter stages of the process work better. ”

Jo Henderson, freelance consultant

TOOL 12

Framework for developing a partnership agreement

1. Establish the purpose of the agreement (see Joint working agreements, NCVO, 2006) *(discussion with lead partner)*
2. You may wish to check at this stage how trustee boards will be involved. Are they sufficiently represented on the partnership board? Will they be involved from the beginning in creating the agreement(s)? Or will they be presented with a finished document for approval?
3. You may need to support the partnership in carrying out a risk assessment (see **Undertaking a risk assessment** on page 27) before deciding what type of agreement is needed and how formal it needs to be. *(face-to-face with all partners together)*
4. If appropriate make some initial modifications to a specimen agreement on behalf of the collaboration, so that it starts to look relevant (for example, inserting names where appropriate, deleting questions that clearly don't apply) *(desk-top research and provision of resources)*
5. Circulate a first draft (you may want to include options to choose from; for example more/less formal and detailed specimens) *(email to partners)*
6. Go through each section, discussing and amending as needed *(face-to-face with all partners together)*. This process may be relatively straightforward but often throws up issues that may need further exploration, for example, how will potential competition be managed (for bidding partners)? Will partners be able to bid independently as well as through the consortium? And if so, what should the communication protocols be? Should partners be informed before or after the event, if at all?
7. Undertake further amendments following this meeting, and circulate a second draft to partners, who may want to circulate more widely (all trustees for each organisation should agree the document before it is signed off). Following this the partnership should be in a position to sign off the agreement or MOU.

NB It's possible that the collaboration may need more than one agreement to cover different eventualities, especially in relation to collaborating for commissioned work.

Purpose:

To agree protocols for joint working and to negotiate and agree a written agreement for collaborative working between named partners.

Outcome:

An appropriate written agreement endorsed by all members of the partnership that specifies roles and responsibilities and covers contingencies for identified risks.

Resources round up: Partnership agreements

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Framework for developing a partnership agreement	To negotiate and agree a written agreement for joint working	Tool 12 – page 35 bassac (2010)
Specimen partnership agreements	Template agreements that can be tailored to suit particular needs and circumstances	www.bassac.org.uk/node/582 Charlie Cattell, www.catwool.co.uk
Joint working agreements	Guidance for drawing up a partnership agreement including a checklist of important questions to consider	www.bassac.org.uk/node/278 NCVO (2006)

“ You need a process to let the early innovators get on and get going, but allow the door to remain open to those who are going to join in. ”

Jo Henderson, freelance consultant

“ Legitimate resistance is expressed by some organisations when new organisations want to come in once the work has been done, or funding secured. It’s about weighing up the advantages and disadvantages. ”

Supriya Horn, Women’s Resource Centre

“ There should be clarity from the outset about what a charity wants from its partners and vice versa. When approaching partners, charities should consider compatibility with them in terms of charitable objects, culture, governance arrangements, funding, organisational structures and decision-making process. Where there is compatibility, the process will be much more straightforward. Areas that are thought to be incompatible should be highlighted and charities should consider whether differences can be overcome. Particular attention should be given to cultural differences and working styles. ”

Choosing to collaborate: Helping you succeed, Charity Commission (2009)

Developing membership criteria

Membership of a cluster often happens in a fairly informal and unplanned way, starting with discussions between people who already know each other about how they might work collaboratively. At some point, however, it's likely that partners will want to review their partnership's membership to ensure that they have the right people involved. If the collaboration is new, partners may wish to agree criteria in advance. (**The Give-Get exercise**, see Tool 8 on page 23 may be useful for organisations at the early stage of identifying partners.)

Formal consortia may develop a membership prospectus and have strict rules about who can join and how. Less formal partnerships are likely to be more fluid, but there should still be some definition of which parties are involved and how new organisations are recruited or allowed to join.

Your role is to emphasise that any discussions about membership criteria should be based on the aims of the partnership and what it is trying to achieve. You can support partners in assessing the following:

- Does the current membership have the skills needed to deliver the aims?
- Does it have the necessary capacity?
- Does it have the commitment?
- Can any gaps be filled by bringing in new partners?
- Are there roles that organisations/ individuals outside the core partnership may be able to perform?

Clearly some partnerships may include the public and/or private sector as well as the voluntary and community sector, but the important issue is fundamentally the same: collaborative working should enable organisations to fulfil their aims by making service improvements.

Partnerships are likely to evolve over time. Long-term partners may sometimes be reluctant to invite new members in, feeling that they've done all the groundwork, but it can be important to keep the process open – new partners can bring new strengths.

There may be capacity building issues for potential members that need to be addressed before they join the partnership. Whether you undertake this developmental work yourself or set such tasks as 'homework' to be undertaken between partnership support sessions will depend on your remit.

Tool 13 on page 38 may be useful in helping you support the partnership in developing membership criteria.

It's important to get people's fears and perceived risks on the table and discuss them openly. An early session should look at the impact of collaboration on the individual organisations. Jo Henderson, freelance consultant, suggests looking at risks and fears and turning them into a work point. "This fear – 'I'm a small organisation and I'm likely to get swamped by these larger organisations' – becomes the practical discussion on 'How are we going to set up a membership brochure or partnership agreement so that all organisations have a chance to have a say?'"

TOOL 13

Checklist for reviewing membership and identifying potential partners

This is best achieved at a facilitated meeting (*face-to-face with all partners together*). Alternatively, send the checklist to partners and ask them to complete it independently before the meeting.

Review:

1. What are the agreed aims for the partnership?
2. Who is the target group? (eg older people living in Hackney)
3. What is the partnership offering to the target group? (eg a streamlined referral system)
4. Who else works with the same target group?
5. What could they bring to the partnership to help deliver its aims?
6. What is known about the potential compatibility of those organisations with the partnership (in relation to charitable objects, culture, governance arrangements, funding, organisational structures and decision-making processes)?
7. What role could they have within the partnership?
8. How do we relate to those that may not become members but who may have an interest in the partnership? (See also **Identifying key stakeholders** on page 18)
9. In the light of the above, what criteria can we use to admit members?

A useful clause on membership that can be used as part of a written agreement could read as follows: 'Membership of the Partnership shall be open to voluntary and community organisations that have shared aims and an interest in the purpose of the Partnership and have been admitted to membership by a unanimous vote of the Partnership Board.'



Purpose:

To establish criteria for membership of the partnership.

Outcome:

Clarification of who should be members and why, that could form the basis of a statement on membership criteria and/or membership prospectus.

Resources round up: Membership

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Checklist for reviewing membership and identifying potential partners	To clarify and establish criteria for membership of the partnership	Tool 13 – page 38 bassac (2010)
Give-Get exercise	To help in the early stages of identifying partners	Tool 8 – page 23 bassac (2010)
Choosing to collaborate: Helping you succeed	Practical help for charities considering collaborating with a focus on some of the key legal and process aspects	www.bassac.org.uk/node/735 Charity Commission (2009)
Collaborative working and mergers (CC34)	Guidance for all charities who may be considering working in partnership or merging with other organisations	www.bassac.org.uk/node/240 The Charity Commission (2008)
Developing positive relationships	To explore who should be in the partnership and establish compatibility	http://hact.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Collaborate_worksheet4.pdf The Charity Commission (2009)
Consortium toolkit	Developing consortium processes and documentation including a membership prospectus	www.bassac.org.uk/node/743 Voluntary Action Sheffield (2008)

Agreeing roles and responsibilities

Having clear roles and responsibilities is a key component of effective collaboration. Partners should understand what roles are important to make their partnership function well, in the context of what they plan to do. Encourage them to consider:

- What do you need people to do to make this happen?
- Who is best suited for this within the partnership?

In some cases there may need to be formal processes for making decisions – for example, the election of the chair's role for a consortium. These should be specified in the partnership agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. In many cases these decisions can be taken informally, but they should still be taken using objective criteria. This is where you can help.

One of the most common causes of conflict is differing levels of input from partners, ie some being perceived as not pulling

their weight. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and an acknowledgement that partners' contributions and influence may not be equal, will go a long way to addressing this issue. (**The Give-Get exercise**, Tool 8 on page 23 might be useful in this context.)

If it is a funded project you should specify the responsibility of each partner in relation to:

- Outputs and outcomes
- Recruiting beneficiaries
- Marketing
- Quality standards
- Collecting evidence for monitoring purposes
- Producing reports
- Sub-contracting (if this is allowed)
- Insurance requirements
- Health and safety
- Data protection
- Equal opportunities
- Payments.

Tool 14 sets out a framework for a facilitated session to explore partner roles and responsibilities.

TOOL 14

Session on roles and responsibilities

(Facilitated session with all partners present):

- What is expected from each partner in relation to both outputs and partnership involvement?
- Are there any expectations in relation to quality standards?
- How will decisions be made?
- Can one organisation make a commitment on behalf of others?
- When must partners be consulted – are there any decisions that require all partners to agree?
- Are all partners equal (and what does this mean?), and if not what is the rationale for this?
- What is the role of the lead body (if there is one)?
- How much management time is each partner expected to give? Will this be resourced in any way?
- Who is the point of contact for the partnership? How does this work in practice?
- How will communications work?
- What are the expectations for each role? For example is the chair expected to simply chair meetings, or are they expected to represent the partnership at external meetings? If the latter, how can this be achieved to ensure partners' views are taken account of?
- How will potential conflicts of interest be dealt with?
- Will anyone employ staff on behalf of the collaboration, and if so how will they be managed?
- How will time be shared fairly between partners?
- If there is a steering group, who will sit on it?
- What will their role be, and how will they make decisions?
- What role will trustees have? How much time are they expected to contribute?

NB Make sure that decisions taken are recorded and form part of the written agreement or Memorandum of Understanding.

Purpose:

To explore and agree roles and responsibilities within the collaboration.

Outcome:

Partners will understand the significance of roles and responsibilities within the collaboration. They will have agreed the principles upon which decisions will be made in relation to them.

Resources round up: Partnership agreements

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Session on roles and responsibilities	To explore and agree roles and responsibilities within the collaboration	Tool 14 – page 41 bassac (2010)
Give-Get exercise	To acknowledge differences in partners' contributions and influence, and work towards clearly defined roles and responsibilities	Tool 8 – page 23 bassac (2010)
A framework for identifying partners' roles and responsibilities	To work out the roles and responsibilities of all the partners involved in the collaboration and map these against the tender or delivery plan	www.bassac.org.uk/node/561 bassac (2009)

"I came across one situation where a lead organisation was trying to impose its own performance improvement framework in the way that it monitored information from its partners. Clearly it's important to ensure that funders' requirements are met but a negotiated and agreed framework that allows flexibility and takes account of the differences in size/ resources etc of partners is more likely to be successful. Partners need to feel a shared 'ownership' of any such arrangements."

AC, bassac

Understanding different organisational cultures

Organisational 'culture' – or the 'personality' of an organisation – can be hard to define but is nonetheless important to understand when supporting collaboration. Usually, organisational culture is expressed in terms of values, assumptions and norms of behaviour. Differences are often obvious – for example, you can easily distinguish between the cultures of a large private corporation and a local school. But even organisations that may look similar from an outsider's perspective (small VCOs, for example) can demonstrate considerable cultural differences.

The extent to which this needs to be explored depends on the nature of the collaboration. In the case of a potential merger, reconciling different cultures is critical to the merger's success. Where less formal collaborations are concerned it can be useful simply to set some ground rules about behaviours.

When you explore organisational culture with partnerships, ask 'How much does this matter?' Organisations may have a very different approach to how they support their

staff, but this may not have much impact if the work they're doing collaboratively is delivered fairly independently – for example, if a lead partner for a piece of work sub-contracts to another partner. If partners are happy that each can deliver against agreed aims and targets, and there are processes for ensuring that this happens, then there may be no need to explore organisational cultures in any depth.

It's important when facilitating discussions about organisational culture that you encourage partners not to make judgements about each other. You might instead want to ask them to say what they like about their own and each others' working practices and what doesn't work quite so well for them. This will help partners to understand how others tick, where the rub points might be, and the changes that might support the collaboration. Tool 15 sets out a possible approach to a facilitated session.

Flexibility around different approaches can help. Larger or lead organisations should not try to impose their own systems on other partners. Instead, the partnership should develop approaches and systems which are appropriate to the partnership and agreed by all.

TOOL 15

Exercise to explore different organisational cultures

(Face-to-face with all partners together) This will be achieved more effectively if you can have as wide a range of representatives of each organisation as possible, to try and get different perspectives on how the organisation 'ticks'. A larger group should be broken up into small groups of ideally no more than six people.

- On postcards or post-it notes, ask participants to describe their organisation's characteristics *(one characteristic to one postcard or post-it)* and structure *(using a different colour for each organisation)*. It's useful to give some examples: eg 'entrepreneurial', 'trusted', 'user-led', '10 years old', 'good (or bad) at supporting staff', 'hierarchical', 'relaxed (or strict) attitude to time-keeping'. You may also want to prompt participants to describe:
 - Attitude to risk
 - Flexibility and acceptance of change
 - Decision-making approaches
 - Level of participation by staff and beneficiaries
 - Management style
 - Involvement of trustees
 - Remuneration and reward systems.
- Then ask participants to place their post-it notes on a flip-chart – grouping them under appropriate headings.
- On a flip chart or wall, draw two overlapping circles (or as many circles as there are organisations involved in the collaboration).
- Where it seems as though there's a mix of coloured post-its under a certain heading, place these in the overlapping part of the circles, and those that appear to be different, place in the 'outside' part of the circle, grouping them by organisation. What you have now is a visual 'map' of where there is synergy and where things are done differently.
- With the group as a whole, explore the significance of the differences that have been identified. Do any specific actions need to be taken? Will working practices need to change? Are there examples of good practice in one or more of the organisations that others would like to adopt? Or indeed bad practice that needs to be improved?
- Agree an action plan with the group on how this is to be taken forward and by whom – and whether the issues identified need to be explored further.

Purpose:

To develop an understanding within the collaboration of each others' organisational cultures and the impact that this may have on collaborative working.

Outcome:

Partners will have developed their understanding of each others' working practices and style, and the significance of these. They will have identified measures that could minimise any negative consequences.

Trust is promoted as being one of the critical success factors in collaborations. This is true to some extent, but you may need to question what is meant by 'trust' in the context of the collaboration. Trust develops slowly, over time - and partnerships don't always have much time.

More important than trying to achieve this type of 'trust' is a) confidence that others will deliver and b) effective relationships that enable this to happen. A more realistic - and less emotive - question than 'Can I trust this person/organisation?' is 'Can I work with them?'

Dealing with conflict and building relationships

This is a critical aspect of collaborative working: collaborations can succeed or fail depending on relationships between partners. Clarity of purpose, clear roles and responsibilities, and agreed procedures will help develop stronger relationships. Your role here is to ensure that problems in the way that the partnership operates are not getting in the way of effective working relationships. You may find that the problem the partnership presents as being the highest priority may be masking another problem that needs dealing with first.

You can play a valuable role as a neutral, honest broker - this is where your facilitation skills will come to the fore! There's no denying that some personalities are challenging to work with and that some people just don't get on. You can help by encouraging people to focus on the issues and to articulate exactly what they perceive the problem to be, sticking to facts, not personalities.

It's sometimes easy to overlook positive contributions. You can play a valuable role

in pointing these out by reflecting back to others, eg 'Joe Bloggs has made a good point/ a valuable contribution here', or 'A N Other has compromised on this issue...', etc.

It's unlikely - and probably undesirable - that you'll be asked for specific support around building relationships. But this will underpin the work you do on systems and procedures: focussing on these will ensure the best environment for effective relationships.

You may be asked for support in resolving conflict, or perhaps for a sample conflict resolution procedure (see the resource table on page 46 for a template). The same principle applies: look to the operating framework first as this is most likely to be where the root of conflict lies.

In some (hopefully rare) cases you may feel that the collaboration needs more help than you are able to give, and that the potential consequences of the conflict are serious enough to warrant mediation services.

Tool 16 is an exercise designed to help partners acknowledge and own any resistance to change they might be experiencing and to take appropriate action.

“ I was working with a particular partnership where one member was very keen to point out that he didn't think the partnership was 'fair' and that he (or his organisation) was not getting their 'fair share'. This was a long-running complaint and was causing bad feeling within the partnership. We used the 'Give-Get' exercise to show what partners were putting in and getting out of the partnership and documented it very clearly. An important part of this was to show that although the bigger organisations were getting more out of it, as well as putting more in, they were carrying a far higher level of risk. ”

AC, bassac

TOOL 16

Participant, passenger, prisoner?

This exercise can be used flexibly within different contexts, eg as a stand-alone piece of work or as part of a facilitated session on visioning. Here, it's presented as part of a visioning exercise. *(Face-to-face with all partners together)*

- At the beginning of the session, start by saying that you're going to do an exercise called 'the 3 Ps' to establish where each person stands in relation to the process of collaboration (note that it's each person and not organisation – you may have more than one representative from an organisation present and it's important to get all points of view)
- Ask participants to say 'which P are you?' and then on a flip chart write: 'Participant', 'Passenger' and 'Prisoner'. As you write give no more than a very brief explanation (people will always engage with this question) eg 'engaged in and committed to the process', 'along for the ride', 'bludgeoned into taking part'
- It's very important to describe the 3 Ps in the following order:
Participant, Passenger, Prisoner
The prisoner position must be seen as the outsider to a mainstream process; and a choice that is 'owned' by those who make it - it's somehow easier to choose an outside position when it is offered last
- Make a note of each person's name against each heading and (in this case as it's part of a longer session) leave to one side to return to later.
- At the end of the session and after you've covered the planned agenda ask participants if they've moved their perception (in either direction)
- Explore the results further with the group if necessary – if they've moved, why? What could influence their position in the future? Are there any issues that have emerged from this exercise that need addressing? Are there any actions they want to agree to ensure full participation? This is especially relevant for those who may join the partnership later on behalf of their organisations, but who weren't involved at the beginning and may not understand its purpose
- Note that this exercise is about issues of choice, commitment and leadership – in reality no-one is a prisoner and partners can leave if they wish to if the benefits are not sufficient in relation to the investment.

Further work may need to be done to either convince those present or to make a case for continued involvement (or not) to others. It's also very important to note that those taking part are likely to have a strong leadership role within their own organisation. Whether they're leaders by their position (CEO, trustee etc) or by influence (as representative of the partnership within their organisation and vice-versa) this matters. 'Prisoners' and to a lesser extent 'passengers' can have a significant negative impact and the support worker must help the collaboration to address this issue before progress can be made.

Purpose:

To explore partners' commitment to the collaboration; develop an understanding of levels of engagement and the rationale behind this; and to ensure constructive leadership within each partner organisation is established.

Outcome:

Partners will better understand their own commitment and that of others and will have identified ways of ensuring clarity of purpose, including communications with new members if appropriate, as the partnership develops.

Resources round up: Conflict resolution

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Participant, passenger, prisoner?	To explore commitment and levels of engagement in the partnership	Tool 16 – page 45 bassac (2010)
Give-Get exercise	To show and clearly document what partners are putting in and getting out of the partnership	Tool 8 – page 17 bassac (2010)
Sample conflict resolution procedure	To provide support in resolving conflict as this arises in the relationships in the collaboration	www.bassac.org.uk/conflictresolution bassac (2010)
Tips for managing conflict in collaborations	Discusses the four steps to resolving conflict: 1. Expect conflict 2. Clarify the issues 3. Create a conflict resolution process 4. Resolve the unresolvable	www.fieldstonealliance.org/client/tools_you_can_use/07-23-08_collab_conflict_res.cfm Taken from Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey, Fieldstone Alliance (1994)

Concluding and evaluating your support

Ending the relationship

Depending on what has been agreed with the collaboration, the conclusion of your support may come at the end of an agreed amount of time; after the completion of a specific piece of work; or for other reasons, including a change in focus or key staff for the collaboration which may affect expectations of your support. Ideally you will have planned your 'exit' right at the beginning of the relationship, but this plan may well have been adapted in response to events. It's quite possible at this stage to drift towards an ending and sometimes it's finished before you quite realise.

There is however value in some formal ending, or 'closure', which enables the collaboration to:

- Reflect on how they have used and benefited from the support
- Understand the critical success factors that have enabled them to move forward
- Understand the barriers that may hinder progress in the future
- Have access to information on where they might find further support and information if needed.

And which enables you to:

- Reflect on your practice and if necessary make changes to improve it
- Develop your understanding of 'what works'
- Understand any learning and development needs you may have
- Report back to funders or other stakeholders on the effectiveness of your programme of support.

This process may also help the collaboration to appreciate its strengths and the progress made towards its aims, by reflecting on 'then and now'. (Remember that you are likely to be involved for only a small part of the collaborative journey.)

If it feels as if the collaboration has gone backwards during the period of your support, there may be a very good reason for this! There is a recognised theory in relation to 'learning curves' that indicate four main stages as follows:

- Unconscious incompetence
- Conscious incompetence
- Conscious competence
- Unconscious competence.

(See www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLSS_g6.htm.)

Getting to stage 2, where people start to recognise that perhaps there is more they need to know and understand before they can make progress, can feel like a backward step. But it's an important one and it demonstrates real progress.

You may have a role here in taking the long view and reassuring partners that progress is happening as it should. If the ending of your involvement happens to coincide with the collaboration reaching stage 2, this needs to be acknowledged and information provided that will enable the collaboration to move to the next stage and beyond without your direct support.

Evaluating your support

At the beginning of the support process you will have set aims for your support (see **Stage 1: Establishing the relationship and planning your support**), which you may have had to revise during the relationship. You may have a written agreement with the collaboration that they will take part in a formal process to evaluate your support; you should at least have discussed and agreed with partners the need to evaluate your support.

How this is done will depend on a range of factors including funders' requirements and your own organisation's requirements. In many cases a simple conversation with the key players in the collaboration is likely to be sufficient to give you the information you need.

Partners should consider the following:

- To what extent have the original aims for the support been met?
- What has been particularly helpful in enabling this to happen?
- What, if anything, has hindered progress towards those aims?
- How clear were you at the beginning of the support about how it would be delivered?
- Can you identify anything that would have been useful (that you didn't receive)?
- Were there any unexpected outcomes that happened as a result of the support (positive and/or negative)?

They may also be asked to assess:

- Effectiveness of types of support (eg face-to-face, group facilitation, online support, telephone, email, signposting, coaching/mentoring)
- Clarity/ usefulness of any written reports/ material
- Appropriateness of referrals for further information and/or support
- Timeliness of interventions, including the time allowed between meetings and any agreed actions
- Appropriateness of sample or model documents provided or any other resource material (ask partners to specify).

Ideally this exercise should be carried out by an independent evaluator, but you may not have this luxury. An anonymous questionnaire could help but you may feel that you will get better information from a direct conversation. Allowing some time to pass – say three to six months – before the evaluation takes place can be helpful in giving time for any learning to take place, and for the collaboration to get some perspective on the value of the support. However, key staff can leave in this time and it may be difficult to re-engage, so a quick snapshot right at the end of the support is not only useful, but may be the only practical way of getting the information you need.

Our questionnaire for evaluation support is available at www.bassac.org.uk/evaluationquestionnaire.

"Smooth the transition by ensuring that you have tied up as many ends as possible", advises Hazel McKenzie. "Make sure all the reports and plans are available, and that each organisation has everything that has been produced. Do a mini risk assessment with the group, helping them look at what they need to be aware of, specific to their collaboration."

Hazel McKenzie, Mind

Reflecting on your practice

Your own personal development is clearly important and, in order to improve your practice and identify any learning and development needs, it's useful to reflect on your own practice. It can be useful to write your thoughts down, and perhaps revisit

them later when some time has passed. If you are able to do this with a colleague, mentor, or with your line manager so much the better. Tool 17 provides a structure for reflection.

TOOL 17

Reflection pro-forma

Source: Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring (2002)

- Exactly what happened and why did it happen this way?
- How did you behave, think and feel as it was happening?
- What were the main learning points from this experience?
- So how will you apply that learning to your future behaviour?
(Should these be SMART goals?)

Purpose:

To provide a 'prompt' for recording events and reflecting on them in order to learn what has worked well and how to improve working practices .

Outcome:

- Understanding of issues related to a specific event, and/or the overall experience of providing support
- Understanding of how certain behaviours and feelings can influence events
- A strategy for dealing with similar situations in the future.

Resources round up: Concluding and evaluating your support

Resource	Description – what is it particularly useful for?	Link/ location
Conscious competence matrix	To understand the stages of learning that your collaboration might go through	www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newISS_g6.htm
Reflection note pro-forma	To understand and reflect on the overall experience of providing support	Tool 17 – page 49 Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring (2002)
Questionnaire for evaluating support	To gain feedback from the partners and their views on how useful your support was for the collaboration	www.bassac.org.uk/evaluationquestionnaire bassac (2010)



Areas requiring specialist support – resource directory

We have selected a few key resources for each of the areas below where specialist input and support might be required. For more comprehensive resource listings please go to the Collaboration Benefits resources database at www.bassac.org.uk/dms/cat/36.

1. Undertaking merger negotiations

- Facilitating merger negotiations, bassac, 2010. Download at www.bassac.org.uk/node/908
- Making mergers work: Helping you succeed, Charity Commission, 2009. Download at www.bassac.org.uk/node/736
- Charity Mergers Guidance, Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators, ICSA, 2007. Access a series of guidance documents at www.bassac.org.uk/node/745
- Due Diligence Demystified: What it is and how you manage it, NCVO, 2006. Price £15. www.bassac.org.uk/node/279
- Nonprofit Mergers Workbook Part I: The Leader's Guide to Considering, Negotiating, and Executing a Merger, Updated Edition, David La Piana, Fieldstone Alliance, 2008. (see also Nonprofit Mergers Workbook Part II: Unifying the Organization after a Merger, La Piana Associates, Fieldstone Alliance). Further details at www.fieldstonealliance.org

Case study examples:

- Community Action Southwark. Merging to meet user needs, www.casouthwark.org.uk. Download the case study at www.bassac.org.uk/node/909, bassac, 2010.
- Further case studies at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/collaborative-working/case-studies/merger

2. Building a consortium to bid for commissioned work

- Consortium Toolkit, Voluntary Action Sheffield, 2008. To request a copy of the Toolkit (£25), please email info@vas.org.uk or call 0114 253 6600
- Working in a consortium: A guide for third sector organisations involved in public service delivery, Office of the Third Sector, 2008. Download the guide at www.bassac.org.uk/node/382
- Collaborate for commissioning, bassac, 2009. Access a range of tools and templates at www.bassac.org.uk/node/539

Case study examples:

- Consortico Ltd. Enhancing financial sustainability and building capacity by developing a formal consortium, www.consortico.com. Download the case study at www.bassac.org.uk/node/665, bassac, 2009
- Lancashire Third Sector Consortium for mental health. Presenting a professional, united front to commissioners, www.ltscmentalhealth.org.uk. Download the case study at www.bassac.org.uk/node/670, bassac, 2010.

3. Influencing and campaigning

- Campaigning in Collaboration, NCVO, 2008. Download the summary at www.bassac.org.uk/node/249
- Skilling Up for Stronger Voices: A skills framework for third sector representatives, from the Improving Local Partnerships project at NAVCA, 2008. Download the summary at www.bassac.org.uk/node/381

4. Managing shared resources

- Sharing back office services, NCVO, 2006. Download at www.bassac.org.uk/node/250
- Sharing without Merging, bassac 2005. Download at www.bassac.org.uk/node/244
- ICT tools to support collaborative working, NCVO, 2006. Download at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/ICT_Tools_Collaborative_Working.pdf

Case study examples:

- Lutterworth One Stop Shop. Shared accommodation and service delivery, www.onestopshop.org.uk/ Download the case study at www.bassac.org.uk/node/752, bassac, 2009.
- A sustainable model for community centre co-operation. Sharing skills and resources to raise standards. Download the case study at www.bassac.org.uk/node/894, bassac, 2010.

5. Managing an asset transfer

- Asset Transfer: A Partnership Routemap. Asset Transfer Unit, 2010. Download at atu.org.uk/Support/toolkits/Partnership
- Further sources of information, guidance, tools and templates to support community asset transfer are available from the Asset Transfer Unit at atu.org.uk/Support/toolkits

6. Trading and social enterprise

- Building your cluster: A workbook for third sector organisations to help them develop clusters to deliver public sector services, i-Social Entrepreneurs, 2009. Download at www.bassac.org.uk/node/737

7. Staffing collaborative projects

- Staffing a collaborative project, Guidance for voluntary and community organisations, NCVO. www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/What_we_do/Collaborative_Working_Unit/Information_and_advice/Staffing_a_Collaborative_Project_PDF.pdf

Collaboration for communities: Giving power to partnership

This is a guide for anyone in a position to support collaborative working that involves community and voluntary groups.

It will guide you through each stage of a collaborative venture – from establishing your role in the early phases, to concluding and evaluating your work at the end of the project. It sets out the key issues you'll face and gives you a clear framework for your support.

Filled with top tips, resources and practical tools, this guide will be indispensable for anyone working to support and facilitate collaboration.

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