

Quick Guide

for

Nurturing Partnerships

This tool is for use in the *Foster, Facilitate and Reflect* phase of the CEIH partnership process.

Purpose of this tool:

This guide provides suggestions to support the building and nurturing of productive partnerships. The suggestions are often also helpful when you are starting off a partnership.

As you read this quick guide, you should get a sense that it takes time and commitment to establish and maintain trusting relationships, therefore you will likely need to navigate the enabling partnership conditions and attributes throughout the partnership journey to maximise success and impact.

Get to know each other

Consider ways you can foster positive relationships and create visibility for the partnership, such as:

- Ensuring all key staff have an opportunity to meet each other
- Getting to know your partner's skills, knowledge and sphere of influence to understand where collaborative advantage lies and how the partnership can be best positioned to flourish
- Distributing short summaries of the partner organisations and/or biographies for all team members
- Following your partners on social media; like and share their work, learn more about their business
- Getting to know the days of importance for your partner (e.g. international days of recognition)
- Keeping in touch with current events in the context of your partners (e.g. changing organisation structure)

Keep connected

Open communication to support information sharing and transparency between partners is key to maintaining strong relationships. Consider how and how often you plan to connect with your partners.

- Use partnership governance structures and processes to support transparency and keep all partners informed
- Think of different ways you could engage with your partner
- Balance scheduled meetings and informal catch ups
- Ensure the right people are involved in conversations to sustain commitment from leadership and build visibility of the partnership
- Be clear on the purpose for checking in
- Use the right type of communication at the right time (it doesn't always need to be a meeting)
- Schedule reminders to make sure you check in regularly
- Identify ways to keep partners up to date about the work of your organisation, including:
 - Adding partners to your organisation's distribution list so that they receive newsletters and other important information (keep it concise to avoid spamming partners)
 - Inviting partners to events relating to the work of the partnership

Maintain momentum

Continually endeavour to progress the work of the partnership by developing sustainable processes and mechanisms for collaboration.

- Develop a collaborative action plan to detail activities for shared project implementation
- Follow project approval processes to keep leadership and executive informed and enable continued endorsement for collaborative action
- Maintain connections with organisational leadership for continued buy-in as contextual factors or the authorising environment changes
- Build awareness of relevant grant and other funding opportunities that can support the partnership
- Consider research opportunities – can the partnership contribute to building new evidence?

Build partnership capability

Establish an environment for building capability, enabling partners to contribute effectively to the partnership.

- Develop partnership champions as change agents to support cultivation of the partnership
- Determine the skills needed in the different phases of partnership work

- Recognise the current skills and expertise of each partner and identify any gaps in skills for the partnership
 - Is training required? Would it be beneficial to identify additional potential partners to create the right mix of skills? Can elements of the agreed work be outsourced (i.e. specific project activities related to the partnership)?
- Identify opportunities to learn from each other through knowledge sharing and consider prospects for co-learning

Celebrate collaborative value

Take the time to recognise efforts and promote the work of each partner and/or the partnership.

- Create photo opportunities or media releases for major partnership milestones (e.g. signing the partnership agreement)
- Update each partner's social media profile and website, highlighting the collaborative efforts
- Provide regular newsletter updates from each organisation to keep stakeholders informed
- Send a thank you/end of year acknowledgements to your partner
- Develop case studies or publications to highlight the collaborative action and experiences
- Find ways to share your story such as conferences, showcases and networking events

Course-correct as needed

It is important to maintain transparency, integrity and build mutual respect to ensure the partnership is adaptable to shifting priorities and circumstances, and to support open communication if things go awry.

- Create an environment where any issues are recognised early and addressed respectfully with partners
- Maintain ongoing communication to encourage mutual understanding of each partner's perspective
- Where possible, attempt to resolve conflict informally, and refer to any agreed processes in formal partnership agreements if needed
- Utilise and adapt governance arrangements to foster shared decision-making, avoid power imbalances and support conflict resolution
- Discuss and work through conflicts and learn from what has worked well in the partnership, maintaining a clear vision and purpose for working together

Keeping track

Monitoring and evaluation of each partnership ensures work is aligned with the current strategic directions of each organisation and has continued accountability to deliver collaborative advantage.

- Build an ongoing review to make sure the partnership is well supported for collaborative work to progress in a timely manner
 - Use the partnership pulse check to monitor the health of the partnership
 - Use the collaborative action plan template to map out shared work, key deliverables and implementation timeframes
 - Maintain awareness of reporting and review timelines
 - Ensure governance arrangements continue to meet the needs of the partnership
 - Are partners delivering against the partnership agreement? Are resources being best shared and leveraged?
 - Be clear about how risks to the partnership are being reviewed and mitigated
 - Consider external factors that may be necessary for change (e.g. new legislation)
- Discuss each priority area and the positive experiences or challenges around it
- Determine potential future directions of the partnership

The bottom line

It takes commitment to nurture partnerships. Partners must be willing to dedicate time, resources and energy to make the partnership work. Remember, partnership action is not a linear process – agility and adaptability throughout the life of a partnership will help to ensure ongoing success.