

Designing Comprehensive Partnering Agreements

An Introduction to the Partnering Agreement Scorecard



THE PARTNERSHIPS
RESOURCE CENTRE

ROTTERDAM SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
ERASMUS UNIVERSITY



the
partnering
initiative

Designing Comprehensive Partnering Agreements

An Introduction to the Partnering Agreement Scorecard:

A tool for co-creating and reviewing partnering agreements



Foreword	6
Why Do Partnerships Need Agreements?	8
Challenges in Drafting a Partnership Agreement	10
Partnering Agreements in Practice: Insights from Dutch Development PPPs	12
Asking the Right Questions	14
The Partnering Agreement Scorecard	17
Interpreting the Scorecard Score	20
Partnering Agreements in Practice: Insights from the World Food Programme	28
Taking Steps towards Comprehensive Agreements	29
References	30
Colophon	31

The Partnerships Resource Centre is an open centre where academics, practitioners and students can create, retrieve and share knowledge on cross-sector partnerships for sustainable development. The centre does (or commissions) fundamental research, develops tools, knowledge sharing protocols as well as web-based learning modules and executive training. Most of these activities are open to the general public and are aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of partnerships around the world. The centre's ambitions are to have a high societal as well as scientific impact. It should function as a source of validated information regarding cross-sector partnerships, a platform for exchange of information and a source of inspiration for practitioners around the world.

<http://www.partnershipsresourcecentre.org/>



THE PARTNERSHIPS RESOURCE CENTRE

ROTTERDAM SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
ERASMUS UNIVERSITY





The Partnering Initiative (TPI) is dedicated to driving widespread, systematic and effective collaboration between civil society, government and companies towards a sustainable future. TPI has been supporting cross-sector and multi-stakeholder collaborations for over 20 years, promoting partnering standards and improving partnership innovation, reach and impact. TPI works with all sectors to promote and develop effective collaboration, providing organisational development services, including strategic advice and partnership evaluation, as well as training and capacity building programmes which promote new standards of professional practice. Further TPI works at the systems level - building the enabling environment and creating platforms to promote and support partnerships to deliver transformational change.

<http://thepartneringinitiative.org/>

Foreword

In the past twenty years, cross-sector partnerships have become an essential mechanism in the process of tackling complex problems of social and economic development. The recognition that no single sector can independently address issues such as climate change, child malnutrition or job creation has given rise to a multitude of partnerships between governments, business and civil society.

As the number and complexity of partnerships has grown, so has our understanding of the principles and processes by which they work and can become successful. While partnering theory has been developed directly from practice, it is rare for that theory to be backed up by evidenced academic research.

This publication demonstrates an effort to do just that – to bring academic rigour to partnering good practice guidance. It addresses a key factor in the creation of successful partnership: the purpose and content of partnership agreements. Time invested in designing

and negotiating a detailed agreement between partners will not only create a more effective framework within which the partners can work, but will lay a foundation of sustained co-operation through enhanced mutual understanding. Good partnership agreements can make a significant contribution to shaping good partnerships – and ultimately define their success.

This guide includes both an overview of the nature and value of agreements and a new tool for their construction and review – the Partnering Agreement Scorecard. It will be of value to any organisation that contemplates setting up a new or reviewing an existing partnership. It provides a shorthand of the most critical questions that should be addressed when developing a partnership. In so doing, it offers a structure for generating and assessing an agreement which should fit the initial needs of most partnerships. It is our experience that addressing these questions in a more systematic manner seriously increases the chances of success – by ensuring all partners are on the same page, that the

partnership has been set up correctly, by helping to keep a partnership on track and by providing guidance also in difficult times.

This booklet is itself the product of a partnership between the Partnerships Resource Centre at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University and The Partnering Initiative, an independent non-profit institution supporting the practice of partnerships. It draws on insights from academic theory and practitioner learning, offering the user a basic practical tool grounded in sound analysis and experience.

Prof Dr. Rob van Tulder

Director Partnerships Resource Centre

Dr. Darian Stibbe

Executive Director The Partnering Initiative



Why Do Partnerships Need Agreements?

A good agreement will:

- define the problem addressed
- specify the mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities
- articulate the commitments which partners must live up to
- formalise the relationships between partners
- provide a reference point for the collaboration that is to follow
- support the partnering process by ensuring partners have correctly developed answers about all aspects of the partnership
- reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings and disputes
- serve as an overall framework to manage the partnership and guide decision-making
- help maintain focus on the original activities and objectives
- allow partners to keep track of project performance and review progress
- allow for flexibility.

Partnership agreements provide mechanisms to cope with relational, performance and situational risks that characterise inter-organisational relationships. Research into business alliances shows that contracts are multifunctional agreements, which aim to safeguard appropriation concerns, coordinate partner's roles and responsibilities and allow for adaptation in the face of uncertainty.¹ Partnership agreements share these characteristics but are also characterised by critical relational elements.

¹ Mellwig, T., Decker, J.D.C. & Eckhard, B. (2012). What drives contract design in alliances? Taking stock and how to proceed. *Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft*, 82:7, 120-140; Schepker, D.J., Oh, W., Martynov, A. & Poppo, L. (2014). The Many Futures of Contracts Moving Beyond Structure and Safeguarding to Coordination and Adaptation. *Journal of Management*, 40:1, 193-225.

Safeguarding function

Relational risk is concerned with the likelihood that a collaboration partner does not comply with the spirit of cooperation and seeks self-interest. Agreements serve as safeguards of investments and property against misappropriation by a partner through e.g. assigning rights to individual partners.

Adaptation function

Situational risk emerges from unforeseen changes external to - and within the partnership. Such changes often force partners to adapt the project. Agreements help partners adapt to these situations by specifying guidelines for addressing and allocating risks.

Coordinating function

Performance risks are inherent in alignment challenges of actions of partners in a partnership. Agreements clarify partner's mutual expectations. An agreement's coordination function becomes evident as it defines roles and responsibilities, delineates reporting procedures, specifies interfaces of partner interaction and communication, and foresees project schedules and milestones. Agreements facilitate coordination by motivating partners to establish norms for collaborative implementation of the partnership project.

Challenges in Drafting a Partnership Agreement

Even when partners are aware of the importance of drafting strong agreements to support their collaborations, they may still struggle with making these comprehensive enough to fulfil their full potential as safeguarding, coordinating and adaptive mechanisms. Challenges for developing comprehensive partnership agreements include:

A incorporating relational principles;

B accounting for organisational differences and

C keeping agreements flexible.

A Partnerships are more than transactional interactions

If a partnership is treated simply as an opportunity to engage in transactions (reducing it to mere resource exchange and asset transfers) then the potential power of collaboration is lost. Agreements drafted with this view, focus on minimizing transactional costs and fall short of accounting for other risks arising from relational issues. Partnering is characterised by a number of relational principles such as mutual benefit, transparency and equity. Incorporating these principles into agreements pushes partners beyond setting up a purely transactional interaction.

B Different organisational boundaries

All parties involved in a partnership operate according to specific organisational boundaries. While the public sector must be accountable to government-wide policies, the private sector safeguards the interests of a diversity of involved stakeholders (e.g. shareholders, members or suppliers), favouring efficiency gains and decision-making based on the bottom line. Organisational identities, interests and cultures may create an obstacle during the negotiation phase of the collaboration when partners are just starting to compromise on their preferences. Partnering agreements, which are ultimately the outcome of initial negotiation phases, are shaped by such cultural differences but can also play a part in overcoming them.

C Completeness not possible

It is impossible for partners to accurately and exhaustively foresee all situations that may translate into risks related to partner relationships, performance or external circumstances. Therefore, agreements cannot be expected to cover every possible scenario, limiting the degree of completeness partners can aim for in their agreements. However, if partners are able to specify as much as possible a framework for how they will interact and relate to each other, good agreements will prove to be a valuable tool for unexpected situations. Incorporating a number of rules not tied to a particular task or activity but rather guiding the general interactions can allow as well for longer-term relationship building that is not specific to particular situations.

In drafting comprehensive partnership agreements partners experience the challenge of nailing down the basis for collaboration at the outset and at the same time ensuring such basis is flexible enough to allow for changes

Partnering Agreements in Practice: Insights from Dutch

How do partnership agreements safeguard appropriation concerns on the one hand and facilitate mechanisms enhancing collaboration such as equity, transparency and mutuality on the other hand? A look into 23 partnership projects facilitated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands provides insights.

The partnerships under review presented a complex set of partnering documents including (a) a grant agreement between the development agency and the lead-partner and (b) collaborative agreements such as project proposals and Memoranda of Understanding. The latter mainly coordinate the collaborative project and entail provisions controlling the relationship. They are specific on the shared objectives and on the vision statement; offer detailed descriptions on the timeframe in which the partnership will accomplish its objectives; make clear the contributions of partners and describe the partnering organisations in detail.

In practice, these collaborative agreements hardly mention relational elements such as whether the partnership has developed a relationship management protocol, whether the partners have decided on what happens when the partnership is finalised and whether a health check/review procedure on the relationship is incorporated in the partnership. It is anticipated however that when agreement specification increases, relationships can become stronger. Ultimately, greater specification serves as a necessary foundation on which actual relationships are built and improved.¹

In the partnerships under review, collaborative agreements are required for setting up grant agreements. The advantage of such a construction is that each type of document defines functions of specific relationships. The practice of such a tandem construction, however, carries the risk that the individual agreements are not effectively used for governing the partnership, but governing one-on-one relationships instead.

Development PPPs

The practice of Dutch PPPs highlights that designing comprehensive partnership agreements requires considering agreements as multifunctional: they are not merely a mechanism for safeguarding partner contributions but essentially should become the framework for navigating productive collaborative interactions between all partners involved.

¹ Amirkhanyan, A.A., Kimw, H.J. & Lambright, K.T. (2012). Closer than 'Arms Length'. Understanding the Factors Associated with Collaborative Contracting. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 42(3), 341-366.



Asking the Right Questions

The ideal partnering agreement is never simply a means of exercising control but an expression of the vision, aspirations and hoped-for results from the perspective of both the partnership as a collective and of the individual partners. Therefore, comprehensive partnership agreements are multifunctional and clarify how appropriation concerns are safeguarded, how partner's roles and responsibilities are coordinated and what to do in case of uncertainty. These elements can be decided upon by reflecting on a series of questions about the partnership to be formed:

1 Who are the partners?
It is important to clarify who the members of the partnership are, who will act as a representative and what each member commits to the collective. A partnership's strength lies in its ability to bring together all relevant partners (public, private and non-profit) that can collectively address an issue. Agreements should therefore include a definition of the partner organisations and their missions as it raises internal and external awareness of the expectation on each partner. Identifying representatives and their position within the partnership clarifies roles and responsibilities, thereby supporting coordination.



2 What is the nature of the problem and why do we partner?

Partners may have diverse perspectives and objectives on how to address the common defined problem or opportunity. Partnership agreements which record the objectives from individual partners (as well as those in common) facilitate the acknowledgement that next to the joint objective, partners may have divergent reasons for participating in the partnership. Incorporating clarity on vision, shared objectives and divergent expectations in the partnership agreement facilitates the creation of unity in diversity.

3 What does the partnership want to accomplish?

Partnership agreements should also include an outline of the proposed project and activities, delineating what will be done, by whom and with what resources. Provisions on resource commitments and roles and responsibilities provide clear and complementary

boundaries yet enable flexibility. Moreover, provisions on risk management may help partners foresee potential challenges to a project's implementation. Specific project activities and exchange of resources may be governed by separate conventional contracts.

4 When will the partnership do what?

Partnerships should include a formal timetable and define milestones that encompass both the implementation and the management level. This helps deal with expectations of who is responsible for what and when, as well as coordinating activities between partners. In addition, timeframes and milestones also have a safeguarding function, because they account for delivering services and/or outputs within a certain defined end-point.

5 **How will the partnership be implemented?** Partners must decide on the mechanisms to be used for project implementation, describing the way they will work and develop governance mechanisms and procedures, which clarify, for example, how decisions are made. Agreements should also include provisions on quantitative and qualitative results-measurement for monitoring and evaluating progress. Complementary guidelines on review procedures and periodic health checks help identify partner limitations, build trust and strengthen partnering capacity.

6 **How will the partnership communicate?** Communication between partners and with external stakeholders is essential. Partnering agreements should reflect the communication needs of the partners, thus it should define the communication strategy, systems and styles. Particularly in terms of external communication, agreements clarify what can and should be published, by whom and through which

channels. Similarly, agreements should incorporate rules on intellectual property and confidentiality. By doing so, agreements safeguard partners' rights and at the same time facilitate trust building through communication.

7 **What if something does not go as planned?** Although the question of 'what if my partners do not do what is agreed?' may not align with the good-will spirit with which partnerships are formed, unexpected conflicts can put strain on the relationship. Therefore, agreements should define response measures for breaches by any partner. Similarly, partnerships can be faced with other types of pressures for change or termination, and agreements need to reflect the policies in place to address or adapt to those pressures. This means describing what is needed to review and make changes, and the process through which a partner can change its role or the conditions under which a partner can (or even should) leave the partnership.

The Partnering Agreement Scorecard

An effective partnering agreement is one designed to capture an agreed collaboration that has been co-created rather than imposed by one or other partner. Often, such an agreement can be split into an overarching Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which defines the partnership, alongside a contract for the delivery of specific activities or resource transfers. Ideally, the agreement represents an expression of the vision, aspirations, and outcomes of the partnership both collectively and from each partner's perspective. It should be an embodiment of the partners' commitment and a guide to action rather than, as in the case of a conventional contract, a means of regulation and control. By attempting to embed the core partnering principles of equity, mutual benefit and transparency into the agreement, the process itself can help push a transactional relationship towards one that is based on genuine partnership.

In order to navigate partners through decisions on the content of their partnership agreements, The Partnering Initiative and the Partnerships Resource Centre have developed the Partnering Agreement Scorecard. It comprises seven main categories of essential elements which partnership agreements should contain. These categories are further split in 28 sub-categories, each including prompting questions² which allow partners to reflect on whether, and to what extent, the required partnership principles are present in the respective partnership agreement.

² Several questions are sourced from Evans, B., McMahon, J. & Caplan, K. (2004). *Structuring Partnership Agreements in Water and Sanitation in Low Income Communities*. Building Partnerships for Development: London.

The list of elements and categories aims at being comprehensive. However, it is recognised that not every partnership will require such a detailed agreement – especially where previous agreements or over-arching statements of intent might already exist. The Scorecard can, therefore, be used in different contexts. When creating a new agreement the Scorecard structure allows partners to review possible content and select those elements which are appropriate to their partnership. In the situation where a partnership agreement already exists, the questions will help the partners to decide whether (and to what extent) good partnership principles have been embedded in their current agreement – and how they might improve it.

Above all, the Scorecard is intended as a detailed resource to support and guide discussion and decision-making between current or potential partners. The Scorecard encourages users to assign a numerical score to each of the Essential Elements. The intention is to support partners in the design of partnership agreements by identifying the level of clarity and specificity of each element in a way that is easily understandable.

Partners can assign a score to each variable identifying the level of clarity and specificity of each variable in a way that is understandable for every partner. The purpose of the scoring system is twofold: it produces an overall score so that different agreements can be compared or changes in an agreement can be reviewed over time; it provides an indication of the balance of the agreement in terms of the attention devoted to different elements. The scoring system doesn't have to be used when first constructing a document - which will be guided by the elements and the reflection questions - but it offers partners an additional tool in analysing and refining their agreements. A proposed interpretation of the scoring system is given below but could be adjusted by partners to suit their needs.

Level of specificity	Assigned score
Not included	0
Minimal and short reference	1
Vague, non-specific reference	2
Incomplete but descriptive and able to be understood	3
Complete, detailed description, able to be well understood	4



Interpreting the Scorecard Score

The Partnering Agreement Scorecard is a developmental tool that is best used to inform, strengthen or review the process of creating a strong partnership agreement which is 'fit-for-purpose' for all partners. The score is not intended to be a precise measure: it should be seen as an indicator of the agreement's scope and completeness.

The total possible score from the Scorecard is 112. A simple way of interpreting the score is to think of it as indicating the extent to which the agreement is comprehensive and meets the partners' needs. To assist this interpretation we suggest a 'traffic light' system which offers a rough initial guide to how comprehensive the agreement might be.

Total score 100 or higher

The partnering agreement is comprehensive enough to account for both transactional and relational aspects inherent in cross-sector collaborations. Partners can assume that the agreement they have co-created may fulfil its function to coordinate partnership activities and

partner responsibilities, safeguard partner preferences and investments, and represent a basis for easy adaptation in view of potential risks and unexpected situations.

Total score between 60 and 99

There is concern that some aspects leading to comprehensive agreements are not properly addressed. It may be that the agreement is currently unbalanced towards one particular aspect of the partnership, which might lead to the partnership evolving either into a purely transactional relationship or remaining too vague in terms of resource commitments, responsibilities and expectations. Partners might thus want to reflect on the following:

- Can we identify those categories which have scored significantly lower?
- How important are those categories for the particular partnership or project?
- What would be a desired score considering the partnership's priorities?

- In what way can we further specify clauses related to this category in order to achieve a more desirable score?

Total score 59 or lower

The objective of achieving a comprehensive agreement has not been met. Several categories may be inadequately addressed. In its current state, the partnering agreement might fail to serve its purpose as a coordinating and safeguarding mechanism for successful partnership implementation. Partners might want to reflect and take action on the following:

- Can we identify categories which have scored particularly high? Why were we able to specify those more than others?
- Can we identify categories which are particularly important for the partnership/project but are still scored low? In what way can we further specify clauses in this category to resemble those that scored particularly high (if any)?

Essential Elements	Reflection Questions	Score (0-4) or n/a	Comments
--------------------	----------------------	--------------------	----------

WHO?

Description of partner organisations	Who are the partners? Which sector/industry do they belong to? What is their organisational mission and scope of operation? Does each partner possess sufficient capacity for its intended role in the partnership? Which important stakeholders are not included?		
Identification of the representatives and their status	Who will represent each partner in the negotiation, planning and implementation of the partnership? In what capacity do they work for the organisation? Do they have the backing of senior management? Do they have the knowledge and skills for their role?		

WHY?

Definition of problem or opportunity	What issue has the partnership been created to address? What identified challenges will the partnership target? What opportunities does the context provide for the partnership to make a contribution to wider development issues? Why is partnering an appropriate course of action? Why is this specific partner configuration appropriate?		
Vision statement	What is the overall aim of the partnership? What is drawing the partners together in a shared commitment to a common goal?		
Objectives	What motivates each partner to engage in the partnership? How dependent is each organisation on its partners to achieve its individual goals? Which objectives do partners have in common? How do partner objectives relate to, and complement, each other?		

WHAT?

Proposed activities	What specific actions will the partnership undertake to accomplish its objectives and fulfil its mission? What project phases will be defined and how will they be distinguished?		
---------------------	---	--	--

Essential Elements	Reflection Questions	Score (0-4) or n/a	Comments
Work plan	Is there a clear, well-defined plan of work showing these proposed activities, their timing and the partners' respective roles and responsibilities? Will additional agreements or contracts be required to cover specific projects or activities?		
Resource commitments from each partner	What will each partner contribute to the partnership? Are these contributions financial, technical, knowledge-based etc? In which phase of the partnership (or towards which activity) will these commitments primarily be made?		
Roles and responsibilities	Which partner will be in charge of implementing which activity? Will there be joint responsibilities? How will the responsibilities be distributed and will they change over time? How clear are responsibility boundaries and how do these relate to each partner's recognised capabilities?		
Risk management	Has a risk assessment been carried out? Is there provision for responding to identifiable risk in the environment, the target population and the planned outputs? What are the risks associated with each partner's background?		

WHEN?

Timeframe	What will be the timeframe of the project? When will each phase of the project start and finish? Is the priority of activities established? What procedures will be put in place if the timeframe needs to be adjusted later in the process?		
Milestones	Which accomplishments will be defined as intermediate-goals through the process? Which events will mark a new phase in the project?		
Sustainability	How will the partnership maximise the likelihood that the results and outcomes accomplished will endure over time? Which mechanisms will be put in place for the continuation of activities after the original partnership has met its targets? What resources might be dedicated to this? Will partners monitor long-term sustainability?		

Essential Elements	Reflection Questions	Score (0-4) or n/a	Comments
--------------------	----------------------	--------------------	----------

HOW?

Relationship management protocols	Have partners co-created ground rules to support considerate behaviour between the partners? How will partners ensure their duties and loyalty to each other and the partnership? Who will lead the processes?		
Governance arrangements	Are there structural asymmetries or imbalances of power between partners that will affect how they collaborate? How will this be dealt with in an equitable way? What governance system will be put in place and how will this ensure mutual accountability?		
Decision-making procedures	Which issues will be brought up for collective decision-making? Who should be involved in decision-making at which level and who should lead the process? In which spaces of interaction will different types of decisions be made (e.g. face-to-face meetings)? How will decisions be made (e.g. majority vote, consensus)?		
Funding arrangements	Do partners have similar views about financial management? What are the procedures for authorising utilisation of funds? What is the structure of the financial management? (e.g. will financial resources be pooled into one fund and one partner designated as manager or will each partner take responsibility for the deployment of its own resources?)		
Measures to strengthen partnering capacity	How can partner organisations' internal structures and capabilities be supported in their ability to partner effectively? How can the partners together be supported throughout the process to learn from their experiences and enhance their partnership (e.g. provision of training, involvement of external broker)?		

Essential Elements	Reflection Questions	Score (0-4) or n/a	Comments
Monitoring and Evaluation	How will performance be evaluated? What kinds of information do individual partners need? What metrics need to be established to measure performance? Will they be based on inputs, outputs or impact? Is there an agreed benchmark which the partnership can use? How will the partnership define a baseline for measurement? Who will carry out the evaluation (internal or external actors)? What is the frequency for reviewing? Which processes for collecting information are needed? How is the information presented, will there be a standard format for reports? What will be done with the findings (within the partnership; within partner organisations; towards stakeholders)?		
Health check/review procedures	How often will partners meet to evaluate the progress of the activities and their participation in the partnership? What form will these meetings take? Will there be reports prepared in advance and what should they contain? Will partners review the progress of their relationship by themselves or ask an external broker for help?		
COMMUNICATION?			
Internal communications	What information is required in order to deliver the outputs of the partnership? What barriers to communication might exist and how will they be addressed? Which channels of communication will be used? Who will be responsible for managing the interactions and how frequently will these take place? Have sufficient resources been allocated to meet the partnership's transaction costs?		
Rules for branding	What rules will be put in place for the use of logos of the different partners? When can the identity of other partners be used, in which instances? Who needs to be consulted? Will the partnership have its own unique brand? What identity should the partnership develop? How formal will this identity be (e.g. for internal motivation purposes only, or for public branding)? What will the rules be for using this identity? Can partners assume ownership of the partnership identity or will it be confined to joint communications?		

Essential Elements	Reflection Questions	Score (0-4) or n/a	Comments
--------------------	----------------------	--------------------	----------

Intellectual property and confidentiality rules	Are there agreements for the protection of intellectual property (IP)? What type of information will be defined as confidential and how? Who may have access to project documents? What is the scope for partners to share such information in their respective circles?		
External communications	What needs to be communicated to external parties and through which channels? How will the partnership use communication to gain legitimacy among its stakeholders? How frequently will the partnership communicate externally and to whom? Who needs to be consulted before a partner can make public statements?		

WHAT IF?

Dispute resolution	How will partners respond to unfulfilled commitments of others? Have sanctions been determined in case of breach of commitment? What actions are needed to deal with misunderstandings, disputes and conflicts? Is this a clear part of the overall governance system?		
Procedure for adapting to contingencies	How can commitments be adjusted to meet new and unexpected challenges (e.g. adding resources or reassigning responsibilities)? What is the best way to allow for changes in external or internal circumstances?		
Rules for individual partners to leave or join	What is the procedure for a partner wishing to leave the collaboration? Do the partners agree that the partnership can continue to exist if any member seeks to withdraw? What is the agreed procedure for admitting new partners?		
Exit (“moving on”) strategy for partnership as a whole	What happens with the collaboration when the project objectives have been met? What are possible routes for successful closing, for scaling up or for institutionalizing the partnership? How and when will decisions been taken for the possibility of moving on?		



Partnering Agreements in Practice: Insights from the World Food Programme

The World Food Programme (WFP) has recognized partnerships as a crucial approach to its food aid and assistance efforts within its current strategic plan. A 2011 evaluation of its partnership activities highlighted the importance of developing partnering agreements as a mechanism to lay out expectations between the WFP and its local partners to enable good partnering practices, leading to successful collaboration.

The need for dedicating specialized attention to the design of agreements became evident after realizing that the understanding of partnership varied widely among WFP staff and its partners. In fact, for many, any type of collaborative effort was defined as a partnership. This approach risked confusing collaborative and contractual relationships and could hamper the

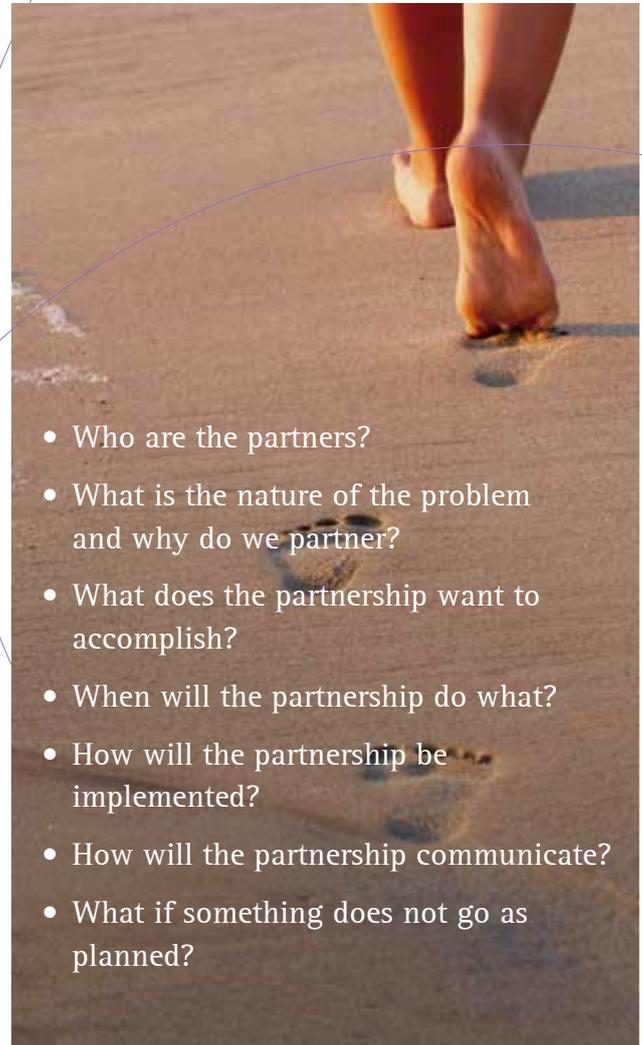
identification of the unique value of true partnering. Ambiguities as to what a successful partnership entails could lead to uncertainties and risks for WFP's projects whereas a well-defined relationship offers the basis for collaboration and growth. Designing partnering agreements comprehensively represented an opportunity for WFP to overcome the challenges of unclear communication on the activities of its partnerships and the limited understanding of what real partnership entails.

Source: WFP (2012) From Food Aid to Food Assistance - Working in Partnership: A Strategic Evaluation.

Taking Steps towards Comprehensive Agreements

Partnership agreements are embedded within their partnership context. Determining the purpose of the agreements is linked to understanding the partnership background, for instance, what is the nature of the partners involved and what are the selection and negotiation processes that resulted in the agreement. They are much more than just a tool for protecting individual partners and ensuring enforcement of an exchange of resources: they provide overriding structure and a framework for managing the collaboration. Agreements have the potential of strengthening relationships to the extent that they include and specify a series of key elements of the partnering process that address the crucial questions of a successful partnership formation:

- Who are the partners?
- What is the nature of the problem and why do we partner?
- What does the partnership want to accomplish?
- When will the partnership do what?
- How will the partnership be implemented?
- How will the partnership communicate?
- What if something does not go as planned?



References

- Amirkhanyan, A.A., Kim, H.J. & Lambright, K.T. (2012).** Closer than 'Arms Length'. Understanding the Factors Associated with Collaborative Contracting, *The American Review of Public Administration*, 42(3), 341-366.
- Bryson, J.M., Crosby, B.C. & Middleton Stone, M. (2006).** The Design and Implementation of Cross-Sector Collaborations: Propositions from the Literature, *Public Administration Review*, 66(1), 44-55.
- Evans, B., McMohan, J. & Caplan, K. (2004).** *Structuring Partnership Agreements in Water and Sanitation in Low Income Communities*. Building Partnerships for Development: London.
- Googins, B.K. & Rochlin, S.A. (2000).** Creating the Partnership Society: Understanding the Rhetoric and Reality of Cross-Sector Partnerships. *Business and Society Review*, 105(1), 127-144.
- Mellewigt, T., Decker, J.D.C. & Eckhard, B. (2012).** What drives Contract Design in Alliances? Taking Stock and How to Proceed. *Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft*, 82(7), 120-140.
- Meyer, K.J. (2006).** Designing Interorganisational Contracts: the Role of Detailed Task Descriptions. In: Arino, A., Reuer, J.J. 2006. *Strategic Alliances: Governance and Contracts*. PalgraveMacmillian: Basingstoke.
- O'Reagan, K.M. & Oster, S.M. (2000).** Nonprofit and For-Profit Partnerships: Rationale and Challenges of Cross-Sector Contracting. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 29(1), 120-140.
- Pfisterer, S. & Payandeh, N. (2014).** *Unity in Diversity. Mechanisms and Practices of Cross-Sector Development Partnerships to Create Mutuality*. Partnerships Resource Centre: Rotterdam.
- Schepker, D.J., Oh, W., Martynov, A. & Poppo, L. (2014).** The Many Futures of Contracts Moving Beyond Structure and Safeguarding to Coordination and Adaptation. *Journal of Management*, 40(1), 193-225.
- Stöteler, I., Reeder, S. & Van Tulder, R. (2012).** *Cross-Sector Partnership Formation: What to Consider before you Start*. Partnerships Resource Centre: Rotterdam.
- Tennyson, R. (2009).** *The Partnering Toolkit*. 2nd Edition. The Partnering Initiative: Oxford.
- World Food Programme. (2012).** *From Food Aid to Food Assistance - Working in Partnership: A Strategic Evaluation*. The World Food Programme: Rome.

Colophon

Use the following citation:

Pfisterer, S. , Payandeh, N. and Reid, S. (2014). *Designing Comprehensive Partnering Agreements: Introduction to the Partnering Agreement Scorecard*.
The Partnerships Resource Centre: Rotterdam.

©2014, The Partnerships Resource Centre and The Partnering Initiative

Postal address

Burgemeester Oudlaan 50
3062 PA, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

This publication is prepared by Stella Pfisterer and Nasim Payandeh (The Partnerships Resource Centre) and Stuart Reid (The Partnering Initiative) and with assistance of Frans Deelen (previously at the Partnerships Resource Centre). It presents the Partnering Agreement Scorecard, developed by The Partnering Initiative, as a tool to assess partnership agreements and guide partners in drafting agreements that are conducive towards successful collaborations.

The images contained in this publication are exclusive property of the authors.

For more information please visit:

www.partnershipsresourcecentre.org
www.partnerinit.org

© The Partnerships Resource Centre
The Partnering Initiative