

Partnership agreements: tools & guidance

Guidance

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Intro

As you continue the discussions with partners, now is the time to draw your discussions together towards the basis of an agreement.

We will use UNGP specific terminology as outlined in our dictionary, you may choose to adopt or adapt it to fit your own.

- Partnership Agreement: The legal agreement of the partnership .
- Partnership Concept Note: Internal UNGP doc to submit to the Steering Committee (our decision making body body) before moving forward.
- Partnerships Design doc: Joint doc to build with your partner/s, complements the legal agreement. See section #4 below.

Light touch guide to building a partnership agreement

For engagements that do not need formal agreements or legal processes: here are some tips to create your own partner design document:

It is worth reiterating: ensure you maintain focus on the nature of the partnership, not only the project/activities that you may do together—to set you up for success as you deliver on your project, and also to create the opportunity to sustain the relationship beyond any particular project or activity.

The following steps will help you do that with your partner(s):

1. Create an overarching **purpose (or vision)** for the partnership—what is our big ambitious goal that has brought us together? And some objectives that show the changes/outcomes we hope to see.
2. Articulate the **benefits** each partner is seeking to achieve, beyond those shared objectives.
3. Explore and define a set of principles or values that reflect the nature of the relationship you want to build, which you could use to monitor how things are going. Describe the behaviors you would expect to see for each principle/value.
4. Identify the **nature of the contributions** each partner will make—both financial and non-financial resources.
5. **Ways of working:** identify some high level ways you will work together, for example, who will communicate with whom, what kind of meetings will you establish, who will make which decisions and how, what technology systems will support your collaboration?
6. **Governance:** Consider how the partnership will be overseen/accountable? Is there a need for a senior authorizing body (Steering Committee/Advisory Board?); should Senior leaders in each organization meet regularly? What reporting arrangements will be suitable? How will you approach managing risk jointly? How will changes to the partnership arrangements or activities be agreed? How will differences be navigated and resolved? How will you manage staff turnover so the partnership does not suffer?
7. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL):** how and when will you reflect on the work, and undertake a 'health check' of the partnership?. Check out our reviewing & revising guidance which outline **indicators** you could include from the onset of your partnership.

Tips:

- Use plain language that is used by you and your partners. This does not need to be written in legal jargon.
- Work hard to make this a reciprocal / mutual document, reflecting the perspectives of all partners.
- This does not need to cover everything. There will also be a legal contract in most cases; and separate documents for planning and managing projects.
- Try the [Power Awareness Tool](#), which helps you identify the range of decisions you will need to make throughout your partnership and how/how you will make them.

Partnership Principles

A starting point to explore and decide upon principles or values with partners can be the set of principles from the Partnership Brokers Association, known to successfully address common challenges experienced in partnerships. They are:

1. Embracing diversity
2. Building Equity
3. Creating Openness
4. Ensuring mutual benefit
5. Being courageous

Ask each other ‘what would it look like to live up to this principle?’

The main priority is to ensure that you establish a principled basis to your partnership, to set up a clear culture and expectations of the desired way of behaving together to which you will hold each other accountable.

Template: Partnership Concept Note (internal use)

- A Partnership Concept (downloadable template [here](#)) Note is an internal document outlining the main features of a partnership.
- It helps your organization decide whether to move forward with the partnership itself, and can be used to support decision making (see guidance on deciding to partner or not).

Partnership Lead	Indicate the name and surname of the staff member accountable for the management of the entire partnership journey
Partnership Lead contact details	Provide the official email address and official phone/mobile number
People involved Partnership Team	Indicate the name, surname and department/team of the other staff members who are part of the core team of people managing the relations with the partner/s. Please specify the roles of the team member
Programme	If applicable, indicate the Programme the partnership will be associated with. In case the partnership will be contributing to more than one Programme please explain.
Reach across your org.	Indicate the Office leading on the partnership and other contributing Offices as applicable Indicate the name of the Project/s in case the partnership is associated with any existing or prospective project
Geographic reach	• Global • Regional • Multi-country • Country-specific Please provide details of geographical regions/countries of applicability of the partnership

Name of prospective partner/s organizations	Indicate the official name of the prospective partner organization
Partner main focal point	Indicate name, surname and contact details (email and phone) of the partner main focal point
Partner other contact points	Indicate name, surname and contact details (email and phone) of other contact points. Briefly describe their role as applicable (e.g. administrative support, thematic expert, communication specialist)
Partner profile	• Private sector (please specify the type of: MNEs, start-ups, accelerators, MSMEs, individual entrepreneurs) • Civil society sector • Public sector (please specify if governmental or other public body) • Academia • Multilateral organisations (including Multilateral Development Banks, Regional Organisations) • Foundations • UN entities
Role of partner organization	• donor (cash) • technical expert • client • broker/enabler • data provider • Pro-bono goods and services • Other: please specify Provide a brief description of the role of the partner based on the above categorization
Result areas	• Resource mobilization (cash and in-kind) • Knowledge creation and transfer

	• Innovation (i.e. creation of a new service or product) • Policy dialogue (incl. standard setting) • Awareness raising • Data exchange/access • Other: please specify Provide a brief description of the result areas of the partnership based on the above categorization
Strategic alignment	Describe how the partnership will contribute to the achievement of your strategic goals.
Expected legal agreement	Indicate which legal route is expected to be taken for the formalization of the partnership
Timeline	Indicate the expected timeline for the development of the partnership and its execution
Financial and other resources requirements	Describe if any financial and other resources (goods and services) will be required for the implementation of the partnership
Purpose	Briefly describe the main purpose of the partnership
Partnership activities/work plan	Provide an overview of the activities/work plan of the envisaged partnership
Additionality and internal readiness	Elaborate on your organization's unique added value and contribution to the specific partnership (additionality) Elaborate on the resources and commitment underpinning your organization's engagement in the partnership (internal readiness)

Opportunity cost	Provide an overview of the resources from your organization required for the development of the partnership Consider the amount of time, effort and resources needed to responsibly build a partnership, against the anticipated added value and benefits of engaging. In the spirit of innovation - please factor in potential need for prototyping, experimenting, testing-failing and learning.
Scalability, sustainability and impact	Integrate consideration on the longevity & sustainability of the partnership. Both in terms of any environmental, social and human rights impact of the prospective partnership as well as in terms of the potential to scale of the partnership (e.g. grow to other regions, broaden impact, client partners etc). Any implication on the gender impact of the partnerships should also be made here.
Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL)	Define potential indicators against which the partnership will be monitored and evaluated, and integrate reflections on how lessons learned will be incorporated for the improvement of the partnership and shared across the network.
Comments from core group (if applicable)	Make a summary of the comments received by the core group and highlight any needed follow-up action
Recommendations from Partnerships Team (if applicable)	<i>This space is to be used by the Partnerships Team for the recommendations to be made to the Partnerships Steering Committee</i>

Template: Partnership Design Document (External use)

- The Partnership Design Document (**downloadable template [here](#)**) is a non-legally binding document, complementing the partnership's legal agreement (and will usually be annexed to it).
- It should be treated as an external document- and should not contain any sensitive information.
- It represents the key document underpinning the relationship with a partner, and describes the basis of the discussions and conclusions partners have reached as they move towards formal agreements.
- **It is best created in collaboration with respective partner/s.** To maximize buy in, trust building and ownership (and consequently may vary in form/structure to this example).
- As the legal agreements between partners may be rigid, this is a good place to align on joint partnership principles and commitments.

Your organization's Lead	Indicate the name and surname of the staff member accountable for the management of the entire partnership journey at the moment.
Your organization's Lead contact details	Provide the official email address and official phone/mobile number
Team	Indicate the name, surname and department/team of the staff member who are part of the core team of people managing the relations with the partner/s. Please specify the roles of the team member
Reach across your org.	Indicate the Office leading on the partnership and other contributing Offices as applicable Indicate the name of the Project/s in case the partnership is associated with any existing or prospective project
Partner/s	Indicate the official name of the prospective partner organisation/s
(Partner) main focal point	Indicate name, surname and contact details (email and phone) of the partner main focal point
(Partner) other contact points	Indicate name, surname and contact details (email and phone) of other contact points. Briefly describe their role as applicable (e.g. administrative support, thematic expert, communication specialist)

Purpose and goals	Briefly describe the main purpose of the partnership. It is recommended to also indicate specific shared goals, and anything important to specific/individual partners.
Partnership activities/work plan	Provide a detailed overview of the activities/work plan of the envisaged partnership. It is good practice to agree with the prospective partner about the preferred format for that. The level of details of the work plan will ultimately depend on the level of complexity of the partnerships. Please refer to Annex 1 for a template. If this partnership relates to a project- briefly describe the project and link relevant scoping documents.
Expected legal agreement	Indicate which legal route is expected to be taken for the formalization of the partnership- if any (please refer to the Legal Guidance)
Partnership principles	Define and scope with the partner/s key principles which will guide your engagement. You can use this as the basis to review your partnership later, as well as pivot if needed the specific outcomes/projects/tasks of the partnership.
Timeline	Indicate the expected timeline for the development of the partnership, its execution and its termination (if applicable)
Role and contributions of your organization	Describe the role of your organization in the partnership
Role and contributions of (Partner(s)) <i>Please add one section for each partner involved</i>	Please describe the role of the Partner in the partnership and the resources/contributions they bring to the partnership.
Governance	Please describe the governance structure of the partnership. This is particularly important in the case of multi-stakeholder partnerships, coalitions, networks. When the creation of steering committees or other governing bodies may be needed, please define the composition and role.

Communication among partners	Please define clear communication procedures among partners
Communication with the public	Please define how the partners will jointly or individually communicate with the public about the partnership
Risk management	Please describe any major risk associated with the partnerships and elaborate on the roles of the partners in offsetting, mitigating or minimizing the identified risks. This should be based on the risk assessment developed as part of the concept note. Only non-sensitive information should be shared with the partner as part of the partnership proposal.

Risk Assessment Framework for Partnerships

Accepting a certain level of risk represents a fundamental aspect of innovation processes. Risks are to be assessed and mitigation measures should be in place as applicable. Risks should never outweigh the benefits that an innovation partnership can bring. In some instances it may be advisable to discuss risks with the prospective partner in order to agree about a joint framework for risk mitigation and related roles and responsibilities. **If useful you can use this template below:**

Risk description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation measures	Roles and responsibilities
<i>Example of types of risks:</i> • Reputational • Partnership governance • Outcomes delivery plan • External risks (political, socio-economic, security, etc.) • Impact on innovation development and uptake • Impact on human rights • environmental and social impact • Impact on your org's stakeholders (e.g., hosting communities, public authorities, peer organizations)	<i>High/ Medium/ Low</i>	<i>High/ Medium/ Low</i>	<i>There are two aspects to mitigation:</i> <i>1) what to do to minimise/offset the risk from materialising</i> <i>2) what to do to minimise the impact of the actual risk once it materialises</i>	<i>What could your org do? Which specific departments/colleagues would be the key players?</i> <i>What are the roles of other stakeholders in the partnerships?</i> <i>How could your org leverage its role to prevent or respond to risks?</i>

Annex: Work Plan template

As you build out your partnership you may want to complement your legal agreement or partnership design document with a simple work plan like below. You may build separate detailed work plans for big projects or activities.

Activity/Task	Role of your org	Role of partner	Timeline	Success indicators	Assumptions