Strengthening partnership and networks in agricultural research for development

a learning module

(Version 1.0)
Strengthening partnerships and networks in agricultural research for development

A learning module (Version 1.0)

Session 5: Partnership design: Key steps and tools

Ponniah Anandajayasekeram and Ranjitha Puskur
Trainer’s guide

Session 5:  Partnership design: Key steps and tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>To enhance the capacity of agricultural researchers to forge effective and efficient partnerships with other relevant stakeholders in the agricultural innovation system for achieving greater impacts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>At the end of this session participants will be able to:</td>
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<td>Resources</td>
<td>• Flipcharts</td>
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<td>Time needed</td>
<td>Two hours</td>
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<td>Method of facilitation</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Distribute handout 5.1 (Presentation slides) before you start your presentation&lt;br&gt;Give a presentation on partnership design: Key steps and tools&lt;br&gt;Allow some time for discussion to make sure that participants understand what is presented&lt;br&gt;Distribute handout 5.2 (presentation text) to supplement your presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Distribute handouts 5.3 for exercise 5A, 5B and 5C&lt;br&gt;Ask a volunteer to read the exercise&lt;br&gt;Ask participants to answer the questions in the exercise in group&lt;br&gt;Remind them the time allotted to the exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Make closing remarks and transit to the next session</td>
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Session 5: Partnership design: Key steps and tools: Summary of overheads

5.1 Partnership design: Key steps and tools

5.2 Session objectives

- Understand the relationship between a project cycle and partnership cycle
- Understand the processes and issues in research partnership design

5.3 Project-based partnerships

Project-based partnerships—mostly donor-funded
- closest to the classic partnerships between researchers and development-related partners with a very clear function of getting things done on the ground
- main function is to generate the project outputs, outcomes and impacts outlined in a project document
- function and contribution of each partner is defined by the function they have to play within the innovation system and impact pathways
- In most cases the partnership is limited to the duration of the project, but longer-term partnerships can also arise from good collaborations at this level
5.4 **Approach to partnership management**

- Organization in question is acting as the ‘contractor’, i.e. where the project is initiated and led by the organization or where it has the convening role of the partnership in a different arrangement
- Focus is limited to external partners who would be directly involved in implementing activities

5.5 **Project cycle**

1. Diagnosis
2. Concept Note
3. Proposal Development
4. Pre-implementation start-up
5. Implementation
6. Evaluation

5.6 **Project and partnership cycles**
Partnership cycle

- Partnership formation and implementation are an integral part of the project processes
- Means to an end
- Partnership and project cycles are intertwined and are parallel/simultaneous processes
- Partnerships go through various stages during their evolution and operations
- Each of these phases has a specific set of activities/steps that have to be undertaken
- These require specific sets of skills and tools

Partnership cycle

- Pre-partnership phase
- Partnership initiation phase
- Partnership formation phase
- Partnership nurturing and monitoring
- Partnership assessment
- Partnership wind up

Diagnosis stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project cycle phase</th>
<th>Partnership cycle phase</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Skills and tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>Pre-partnership Phase</td>
<td>Context/needs analysis</td>
<td>Rich pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea/concept note</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder identification</td>
<td>Stakeholder/actor analysis tools</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership readiness questionnaire</td>
<td>Partnership readiness questionnaire</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>assessment</td>
<td>Preliminary partnership analysis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
It is important to define the problem that the organization is embarking on addressing and understand the context around it. This would lead to defining the needs whether and what kinds of partnerships are required.

Contextual thinking is a method of diagnosis in which the practitioner evaluates a problem as an individual segment in a complex continuum rather than an effect of a specific cause or influence. This includes the analysis of the environment – internal and external (including political, policy, demographic, socio-economy, technology amongst others) in which the innovation system is embedded.

This allows the researchers to gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses and also the opportunities and threats posed by the environment in which they operate.

A Rich Picture would be a useful tool to provide a visual of the problem context.

'Rich pictures' were developed as a tool for exploring a complex situation in soft systems analysis. They are called 'rich' because the idea is to gain the 'richest possible picture of the problem situation.

It shows:
- Important actors and their relationships (but it is not just an actor or Venn diagram)
- Elements of structure and process, (but it is not just a system model or flow chart)
- Relationships between problems, (but it is not just a problem-causal diagram)
- Influences on the situation, (but it is not just an influence diagram)

All these other sorts of diagrams try to clarify the situation, and it is precisely the lack of clarity that can be important at an early stage of exploring the situation.

Anything that seems relevant can be included in a rich picture and it should include subjective information such as:
- Stakeholder perspectives, prejudices, concerns and conflicts (without trying to represent a 'truth')
- Questions and uncertainties that seem relevant to the problem situation.
5.13 Rich pictures

Rich pictures can be useful to:

- Keep an open mind, broaden your thinking, and think creatively
- Help understand and summarize a complex situation
- Unearth the critical issues—unearth the ‘real’ problem
- Build a common understanding of the situation within the team
- Help communicate your team’s understanding of the situation to others

5.14 Stakeholder/actor analysis

- Stakeholder and actor analysis tools would help identify the key actors and stakeholders, their objectives and interests, their attitudes and behaviours, their relative importance and influence etc.
- This would help in drawing up a long list of potential actors/stakeholders to partner with
- An intervention-based innovation system will help identify the key partners to be included

5.15 Pre-partnership phase

- Determine if a partnership is right for your situation
- Examine your strategic motives
- Determine if your organization is ‘partner ready’
- Conduct preliminary partnership analysis
Proposal development stage

- Ensure a common understanding or consensus is achieved on the objectives, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the research preliminarily conducted.
- Revisit the partnership analysis together with the partners, using it as a mechanism to clarify roles and expectations and ensure everyone is ‘reading from the same page’.
- In-depth partnership analysis.
- Clarify, to the extent possible, resource requirements in terms of human and financial resources needed for the desired achievements.
- As the budget proposal is being finalized, identify which partner is expected to be allocated or to administer which components.
- Propose and agree upon a governance mechanism.
- For each partner, identify and adhere to any internal review and approval processes normally required for proposal submission.

Partnership initiation phase

- Selection of partners
  - Criteria for selecting partners
    - Strategic fit—a common understanding of the business rationale among the partners
    - Capability—the necessary skills that go into enhancing the value of the partnership
    - Compatibility—the complementary strengths of the partners that is mutually beneficial, including the match of organizational cultures
    - Commitment—a strong motivation to sustain the partnership in terms of furthering its prospects and solving its problems
    - Control—potential for having an effective means of governing the partnership

Project pre-implementation and start-up

- Organize an initial team meeting of the main partners for planning and team-building.
- Before the team meeting, the following should be prepared:
  - draft CRAs
  - an appropriately adapted financial systems guide
  - adapted protocol forms, particularly those related to overall project management and data management
- During the team meeting, ensure that the following topics are addressed:
  - A review and reconfirmation of the visioning exercise
  - Agreement on a clear definition of roles and responsibilities
  - Identification of stakeholders and key non-core partners to be recruited into project activities
  - Outcome Mapping
  - Conduct a team-building exercise
  - Team health check questionnaire
### Partnership formation phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Skills/tools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop vision and strategic direction based on shared problem definition and approach</td>
<td>Conducting effective meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree on partnership principles (or code of ethics)</td>
<td>Facilitation skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop mutual understanding and knowledge</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement and understanding upon necessary leadership roles and responsibilities including resource commitment</td>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a partnership covenant or MoU</td>
<td>Management skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work plan preparation</td>
<td>M&amp;E tools (including process monitoring)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop governance structures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop M&amp;E systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish Communication linkages</td>
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<td>Sharing of rewards/benefits</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Setting direction
- Defining the problem
- Brainstorming solutions
- Identifying local allies
- Creating a partnership code of ethics
- Creating a partnership covenant

### Content of MoUs
- Partner organization details
- Goal and objectives
- Operating principles
- How conflict will be resolved
- How the agreement can be renewed, modified or terminated
- End date of the agreement
- Roles and responsibilities of partners
- Accountability
- Partnership governance
- Managing the partnership
- Developing and agreeing to a code of ethics or principles of partnership
- Holding key partnership meetings
- Monitoring and evaluating partnership performance
- Handling of authorship, IPRs etc.
- Handling conflicts, how decision will be made
5.22 Content of MoUs (cont’d)

- Building a work plan
- Developing governance structures
  - specific roles and responsibilities of partners as well of their relevant supporting units
  - key elements of governance such as frequency of meetings, decision-making processes, participants, need for working groups, outreach to stakeholders/beneficiaries, monitoring systems etc.
- how to resolve differences should these arise

5.23 Resolving differences

- Anticipate conflicts among partners
- In the interest of good governance it is appropriate to address the issue and identify, at a minimum, principles that should be followed in the event of disagreement
- Such principles include:
  - always proceeding with respect for the other party
  - clarifying underlying issues
  - identifying options for resolving the disagreement
  - being inclusive, not exclusive, of stakeholders who might be able to propose solutions
  - agreeing at the outset on a procedure for resolving the disagreement
  - agreeing on time limits with which the problem should be resolved

5.24 Thank you!
Session 5: Partnership design: Key steps and tools: Summary of presentation

5.1 Introduction

Given that we are focusing on project-based research partnerships in this module, this chapter looks at the design of partnerships in the context of the project cycle. Partnership formation and implementation are an integral part of the project processes. They are the means to an end and not an end in itself. The partnership and project cycles are intertwined and are parallel/simultaneous processes. Partnerships need to be nurtured and managed during the implementation of project activities.

Partnerships go through various stages during their evolution and operations. Each of these phases has a specific set of activities/steps that have to be undertaken. And these in turn require specific sets of skills and tools. This chapter describes these phases and steps in detail while identifying the skills and tools needed.

In this section it is assumed that the reader is familiar with the project cycle. The emphasis is placed on the aspects that should be considered in the design, nurturing, implementation and evaluation of partnerships as an integral part of project cycle.

5.2 Functions of project-based partnerships

One category of partnerships is project-based partnerships—mostly around donor-funded projects. Project-based partnerships are closest to the classic partnerships between researchers and development-related partners with a very clear function of getting things done on the ground. The main function of this type of partnership is to generate the project outputs, outcomes and impacts outlined in a project document. The function and contribution of each partner is defined by the function they have to play within the innovation system and impact pathways. In most cases the partnership is limited to the duration of the project, but longer-term partnerships can also arise from good collaboration at this level. Please note that in this context, partnership is a means to an end.

This chapter outlines an approach for design of project-based partnerships which will enable scientists as partnership managers to lead these processes successfully. It gives a structure for managing partnerships against the background of the project cycle (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. The project cycle.](image-url)
The different stages of the project cycle present different stages and issues in terms of partnerships, from initial partner identification though to various aspects of effective management of partnerships to achieve the objectives, and enhancing linkages for future collaboration. Figure 2 depicts the same.

Figure 2. Project cycle and partnership cycle.

The following guidelines for partnership management therefore follow the stages of the project cycle in international centres which compete for donor funds for research. The stages could be slightly different for research organizations in national systems as they rely more on core funding.

Approach to partnership management in the project cycle

This section outlines the approach to management of project-based partnerships in which the organization in question is acting as the ‘contractor’, i.e. where the project is initiated and led by the organization, or where it has the convening role of the partnership in a different arrangement. In terms of partnerships, the focus is limited to external partners who would be directly involved in implementing activities.

The main decision-making criteria for choosing to engage into such partnerships are:

- capacity to contribute effectively to a specific function in the innovation system and impact pathway as described by the needs of the project
- track record of capacity to deliver on promises
- track record in managing funds
- position to leverage collaboration in the setting of the project (standing of the partner, reputation, partner’s own networks of influence etc.)
- considerations from the financers of the project
- shared values and commitment to development and the desired outputs.
5.3 Instruments and processes

The suggested considerations, instruments and processes are intended to translate into action the principles in cultivating and maintaining healthy and productive partnerships with other organizations, including ensuring that partnerships are based on expected mutual benefits, promoting transparency and equipping staff with the needed competencies. This section outlines particular key considerations, questions and tools/skills required that should be considered at each stage of the project cycle and corresponding partnership cycle (Table 1).

**Table 1. Summary of considerations for project-based partnership management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project cycle phase</th>
<th>Partnership cycle phase</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Skills and tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Diagnosis) Idea and concept note</td>
<td>Pre-partnership phase</td>
<td>Context/needs analysis Stakeholder identification Determine if a partnership is right for your situation</td>
<td>Rich pictures for contextual analysis Stakeholder/actor analysis tools Partnership readiness questionnaire Partnership needs analysis Partnership analysis Visioning exercise: agree on goals and outputs, and work backwards to the activities Partnership analysis Facilitate discussion on budget and administration Purpose and facilitate discussion on governance Keep everyone informed of the evolution and fate of the proposal Lead post-mortem self-evaluation of the proposal development effort Repeat team-building exercise (Visioning partnership analysis) Conduct simplified outcome mapping to identify secondary partners Team health check to agree on behavioural values Conducting effective meetings Facilitation skills Interpersonal skills Leadership skills Management skills M&amp;E tools (including process monitoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal development stage</td>
<td>Partnership initiation phase</td>
<td>Selection of partners Cultivate shared understanding and ownership Assess motives and roles Establish transparency for budgetary expectations and arrangement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start up stage</td>
<td>Partnership formation phase</td>
<td>At the initial project planning meeting, a team building session should be held with core partners Develop/validate vision and strategic direction based on shared problem definition and approach, ownership motives and roles, agree on operating principles Promote transparency Agree on partnership principles (or code of ethics) Agreement and understanding upon necessary leadership roles and responsibilities including resource commitment Creating a partnership covenant or MoU Work plan preparation Agree on governance mechanism for monitoring and evaluation (M&amp;E) and conflict resolution Clarifies expectations regarding credit-sharing, data access and after project collaboration Establish spirit of self assessment, promote monitoring and self evaluation and agree on how poor performance should be handled Establish good communication practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation stage</td>
<td>Partnership implementation phase</td>
<td>Encourages regular proactive rather than reactive communication and feedback</td>
<td>A project newsletter</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Promote monitoring and self-evaluation</td>
<td>Team health checks or solicit feedback from partners</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognize contributions and achievements</td>
<td>Participatory review of progress and achievements relative to agreed work plan, possibly as an ongoing outcome mapping exercise</td>
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<td>Document lessons/experiences</td>
<td>Celebrate successes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winding-up stage</td>
<td>Partnership evaluation phase</td>
<td>Enabling partners to successfully meet project commitments</td>
<td>Conducting effective meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Promote continued self-assessment</td>
<td>Facilitation skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cultivate shared understanding</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Recognize contributions and achievements</td>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
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<td>Management skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M&amp;E tools (including process monitoring)</td>
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<td>Final team health check and self-assessment</td>
<td>Final outcome mapping session</td>
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<td>Discussion on next steps after the project ends</td>
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<td>Feedback to partner organization on collaborators’ performance</td>
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5.3.1 Idea stage/diagnosis

The project cycle begins with a researcher or research team wanting to contribute to agreed outputs by conceiving an activity that will achieve their objective, based on a systematic diagnosis. At this point, the activity is described in a brief idea note without details about the who, where or how, e.g. field trials in several countries to establish proof-of-concept. This idea note is then used by the research team and management, firstly to circulate for discussion and to identify possible collaborative opportunities within the research organization, and secondly to market the idea and seek either potential collaborators or donors.

a. Context/needs analysis

It is important to define the problem that the organization is embarking on addressing and understand the context around it. This would lead to defining the needs whether and what kinds of partnerships are required. A rich picture would be a useful tool to provide a visual of the problem context (in the tool kit). Contextual thinking is a method of diagnosis in which the practitioner evaluates a problem as an individual segment in a complex continuum rather than an effect of a specific cause or influence. This includes the analysis of the environment—internal and external (including political, policy, demographic, socio-economy, technology amongst others) in which the innovation system is embedded. This allows the researchers to gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses and also the opportunities and threats posed by the environment in which they operate.

b. Stakeholder identification

Based on the context analysis, the organization should identify the key stakeholders and actors involved in the problem context. Stakeholder and actor analysis tools would help identify the key actors and stakeholders, their objectives and interests, their attitudes and behaviours, their relative importance and influence etc. This would aid in drawing up a long list of potential actors/stakeholders to partner with (in the Toolkit). An intervention-based innovation system will help identify the key partners to be included.
c. Determine if a partnership is right for your situation

Partnerships are not a panacea to address all problems and might not be suitable for all contexts. So it is important to identify whether the situation/needs warrant partnerships. Usually organizations seek to form partnerships to:

- Access specialized resources, add or augment like resources, add complementary resources
- Reducing duplication
- Increasing service integration
- Improving access to the end user
- Expanding capabilities
- Gain legitimacy
- Foster or facilitate information exchange
- Spread risk
- Mutual learning
- Consolidating competitive position in the market

Although there are many reasons why partnerships could add value, prospective partners should carefully consider several issues before plunging ahead.

Firstly, examine your strategic motives.

Ask some important questions:

- Considering all that we know and have read about partnerships, why do we think this form of structure could be the best way to get the results we want?
- What are our strategic motives?
- What organizations might be a good fit for this partnership? (strategic fit can be defined by partners’ skill/knowledge contributions, their underlying motives, their ability and willingness to commit resources, and their organizational culture)
- What are the resource implications of forming a partnership?
- Is our own organization ‘partner ready’? Do we have the motivation and partnering skills to champion this partnership?

Secondly, determine if your organization is ‘Partner ready’.

Although partnerships offer compelling opportunities to achieve desired results, they also demand resources and require a good deal of leadership and management attention. Thus the decision-to embark upon a partnership is not one to be taken lightly. Ask a few questions before making such decisions.

- Does your organization have the resources (financial, human, and technological) the partnership venture requires?
- Does it have the willingness and ability to cooperate, share control, share credit/recognition, and collaborate with the other organizations making up the partnership?
- Does it have the commitment to devote the required resources to this effort? Would the effort be a valuable part of the organization’s portfolio? Would senior leadership be willing and able to provide necessary support and nurturing required for success?

Samples of partnership readiness questionnaire (provided in the Tool kit) can be useful to do this.

While not citing specific names of potential partners, the idea note should identify the type of partners that would be targeted. For example, ‘An ARI partner with specific expertise in... will be needed to help develop the diagnostic tool; NGO partners will be sought locally to help implement on the ground.’
Key partnership-related questions that should be considered at this stage, and included in the idea note include:

- What do we want to achieve and which functions in an innovation systems perspective are required to make the system work and achieve the desired output outcome?
- What capacities are needed or required for each of the identified functions and activities, which are either not present or limited within the research organization?
- How could poverty-reduction outcomes be enhanced by bringing in partners to work on the envisaged research?
- What generic types of partners will be critical to the envisaged research and what essential contribution is expected from them?

5.3.2 Concept note stage

If a specific opportunity for a research activity is identified, then the next step is to prepare a concept note that sketches out the purpose, contribution to organizational outputs, general approach, timing, location, partners (both organizations and individuals), research organization’s role and internal collaborators and the donor targeted. In many cases, the concept note will be the product of a very preliminary brainstorming with one or more key potential partners but often other potential partners will not yet have been approached. The purpose of the concept note is not only to present an exciting research idea, but also to provide an initial opportunity to critically review the proposed activity in terms of its fit within the organizational research agenda. This should also provide an opportunity to think critically about which partners are appropriate and to take advantage of existing intelligence within the organization (i.e. other researchers’ experiences or information about potential partners).

A key partnership-related activity that should be considered at this stage includes:

Conducting an initial partnership analysis from the organization’s perspective that identifies: (i) Contributions needed from different partners; (ii) candidate partners, their capacities and possible alternative suppliers; and (iii) the perceived benefit to the partner. This is not intended as a major exercise; it could be captured in a very simple table incorporated directly into the concept note to be circulated. At this point, depending on the context, the research team may want to make its own preliminary assessment without any consultation with other partners or alternatively may already want to open consultations with external advisors and potential partners.

Either way, the team needs to give some initial thought to the appropriateness of the proposed partners or how they will be identified, and provide an opportunity for others within the organization to offer their feedback or inputs. A possible approach for a preliminary partnership analysis is outlined in the toolkit in this module.

5.3.3 Proposal development stage

Selection of partners:

Once an organization makes a decision to partner and clarifies why it wishes to partner, the next key decision is to choose the partner(s) one would collaborate with.

Good partners have much in common. Mutuality and adaptability are central to the wellbeing of partnership relation. Willingness of the partnering parties to reach out to others in an effort to share competencies rather than imposing conditions on each other is vital for a healthy relationship.
Some questions to ask while selecting partners:

- Does this partner possess the resources (financial, human and technological) necessary to contribute to partnership?
- Does this partner overlap with our primary work or pose potential threatening competition?
- What are the weaknesses and/or strengths this partner might bring to the partnership?
- What do we know about this partner's previous experiences with partnerships? Did the organization meet its commitments? Was the work of good quality? Was the organization seen as a cooperative partner?
- How culturally compatible would this organization be with your own? Do we have goals, culture and values in common? Are our work practices and styles compatible?
- Will this organization be willing and able to devote the resources required for successful implementation? Will the organization deliver what it promises?
- Does this partner's senior management support this particular partnering effort? Will they give effort the attention it requires?

Seeking answers to these questions will require thoughtful information gathering. Partnership conversations must occur at several levels so that you and your potential partner have plenty of opportunities to discover if there is a strategic and compatible fit between you.

Medcof (1997) identified the following set of criteria for selecting partners:

- Strategic fit—a common understanding of the business rationale among the partners
- Capability—the necessary skills that go into enhancing the value of the partnership
- Compatibility—the complementary strengths of the partners that is mutually beneficial, including the match of organizational cultures
- Commitment—a strong motivation to sustain the partnership in terms of furthering its prospects and solving its problems
- Control-potential for having an effective means of governing the partnership

Bronder and Pritzli (1992) emphasized the importance of strategic synergy among the partners. They emphasize three factors in picking up a right partner:

- fundamental fit: complementary activities and expertise in a way that increases value potential
- strategic fit: harmony of business plans
- cultural fit: readiness of partners to accept the geographically and internally grown culture of the partner

The criteria noted above on how organizations choose a partner illustrate some of the difficulties inherent in establishing partnerships between public and private organizations. There is usually less strategic fit between public and private organizations than in the case of private–private or public–public couplings. This is because public organizations principally pursue production of public goods and private organizations pursue private goods. There are also major cultural differences between public and private organizations.

When a public–private partnership is a necessity, the challenge is to find a common objective that can serve as the backbone of partnership. If the fundamental differences between the organizations eliminate the possibility of reaching a common ground, the only option available would be to enter into an agreement using market norms or contractual engagements.

As the project concept moves into proposal development, contact is made with potential partners and respective roles and expectations become the key subject of discussion and negotiation. In some cases,
the partners will have the luxury of meeting in person for these discussions; more often, it will be done by email or telephone.

Key partnership-related considerations and activities during this phase include:

- Ensure a common understanding or consensus is achieved on the objectives, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the research. The process of drafting, circulating and reviewing a research proposal among partners contributes to developing a shared understanding. To achieve this shared understanding early on in the process, and to facilitate the subsequent discussions, a preliminary visioning exercise could be conducted. This will be especially useful when there is likely to be a wide range of different activities and partner types and can help to link all partners’ activities to the overall ‘vision’ or purpose. A possible approach to visioning is outlined in the toolkit.

- Redo the partnership analysis together with the partners, using it as a mechanism to clarify roles and expectations and ensure everyone is ‘reading from the same page’. In addition to identifying the main types of capacity needed and the contribution of each partner, this exercise will also list expected benefits for partners (including intellectual property [IP]) from their participation and could go further to explore strengths and weaknesses. In some cases, donor applications have a specific section requesting information on partner capacities and roles; the results of this exercise can serve as the basis for that section. A possible approach for a more in-depth partnership analysis is outlined in the toolkit.

- Clarify, to the extent possible, resource requirements in terms of human and financial resources needed for the desired achievements.

- As the budget proposal is being finalized, identify which partner is expected to be allocated or to administer which components. Constructing a proposal budget is often a very dynamic and iterative process and the expected allocation of budget can become confused. For the sake of transparency, it is therefore essential to make sure that budget components are identified by expected recipients in the near final version circulated among the partners, and consensus confirmed. For any partner that is expected to manage project funds, are there any particular requirements that must be met, such as overhead charges? If so, these must be reflected in the budget.

- Propose and agree upon a governance mechanism. Governance mechanisms are likely to vary depending on the type and scale of a project. For larger projects, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) formula of a steering committee has proven quite effective. The membership of the steering committee includes representatives from the participating partners together with external stakeholders and, if possible, the donor. This offers several advantages and functions, but especially a) an in-built monitoring and external review mechanism; and b) a conflict resolution forum (since it includes independent members).

- For each partner, identify and adhere to any internal review and approval processes normally required for proposal submission. This should be clarified early in the proposal development process to ensure that deadlines are met.

- In consultation with the Human Resource, Finance and Administration Section, identify what contractual arrangements with partners may be appropriate if the proposal is successful. Make sure that the partners are aware of the proposed arrangements. This information must be made available to partners before they sign off on the proposal submission.

- Briefly evaluate the proposal development process immediately after submitting the proposal. Asking partners to identify any lessons learned from the proposal development stage will help cultivate a spirit of self-assessment and internal monitoring within the project.
• Regularly communicate with partners to update them on the fate of the proposal, even if nothing has happened.
• If the proposal is not successful, ask each partner to evaluate the reasons why and to suggest next steps.

5.3.4 Project pre-implementation and start-up

Partnership formation phase

The first step after selecting your partners would be to convene them for an exploratory meeting. Generally the partner that is initiating the partnership will take this step. The goal is to build consensus, trust and commitment. When contemplating an initial meeting with the partners consider the following:

• Who convenes? It is important to identify an organization or individual that is well regarded by all parties. The convening individual or group needs to have credibility with all prospective partners.
• Who attends? It is also important that those with appropriate organizational responsibility and position attend the meetings. Oftentimes, such meetings require attendees possessing clear authority to speak on behalf of their organization.
• Where? The actual meeting location must be considered. For an initial few meetings, it may be best to identify neutral grounds. This prevents the meeting from being perceived as under one organization’s control, some circumstances may require that participation by one or more members are by teleconference or electronic conferencing.
• Who moderates? The convener often fills this role. If choosing a moderator for the initial meetings, find a facilitator who allows partners to raise issues without getting bogged down in unproductive discussions.
• What is discussed? An agenda for the first meeting might just focus on two things: personal and organizational introductions and a sharing of viewpoints about the common cause or issue that has brought an partnership together. If the organizations have not had a history of interaction, the meeting might appropriately end with only a summary of viewpoints written for distribution. If the meeting members already know each other, they might move directly to determining their collective vision of the problem and its solution. It would be important to discuss the following:
  • What is/are the problem/s to be solved, and what value added might we achieve if we worked together?
  • What would each organization want and expect to get out of a partnering effort?
  • What might be the downsides of being a part of this partnership for each organization?
  • What strengths do each of our organizations bring? What weaknesses?
  • What lessons learned do each of us bring from previous partnerships?
  • In what ways are our organizational practices and styles compatible? Incompatible?
  • How compatible are our organization’s longer term strategic ambitions?
  • How would the work of this partnership fit into the larger priorities of our respective organizations?
  • What roles do we see each organization playing? And what should be our next steps?

In many cases, other stakeholders may be invited to participate to initiate a process of engagement. If such a broader meeting is being held, an initial team meeting of main partners should be held before this.

Organize an initial team meeting of the main partners for planning and team-building. This meeting provides an important opportunity to carry out a number of activities and exercises in support of the partnerships. An approach and activities for the initial team meeting is outlined in Box 1.
Box 1: Approach for initial team meeting (pre-implementation stage)

Following a successful proposal stage, the initial team meeting provides an important opportunity to carry out a number of activities and exercises in support of the partnerships. During this meeting, the following activities should be undertaken, taking great care to record faithfully and as fully as possible the actions and principles agreed.

- Briefly review and re-confirm the outcome of the visioning exercise (goal and purpose of the project).
- Review the partnership assessment and agree on a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities, and, if relevant, how these might change over the life of the project. It may be appropriate to add a new layer that identifies the roles, expectations and perceived benefits to the individual researchers on the team as well.
- Identify stakeholders and key non-core partners to be recruited into project activities. At this stage, consider whether an **outcome mapping exercise** would be appropriate. If adopted, the outcome mapping would be used to develop a strategy for influencing and changing mindsets of key actors, including partners, and would also then be updated periodically as a measure of progress.
- Conduct a team-building **values exercise**, with questions such as: *Do you agree/disagree with the statement 'An email that starts simply ‘John, could you…. ’ is impolite.’?* This could lead to discussion and consensus on partnership and operating principles and could be particularly valuable for practices regarding performance evaluation, dealing with poor performance, conflict management and communication. Understanding ways of working, values and motivations of staff at various levels of the partner organizations will be critical for maintaining effective working partnerships.
- Propose a protocol-based project management system, explaining how it works and its advantages. Getting acceptance of such a system will be key to establishing a systematic use of annual work plans and activity budgets.
- Go over in more detail the overall project management and data management protocols to agree on communication, monitoring, data sharing and documenting principles. A team-building exercise may be a good way to solicit suggestions and agree on indicators, timing and mechanisms for periodic self-assessment (monitoring) of the project, including partnership dynamics.
- Present and allow discussion of administrative and financial arrangements, especially those related to Letters of Agreement (LoA), if relevant. Key commitments in the LoA should be highlighted, such as those regarding reporting requirements. A financial systems questionnaire should be distributed and explained to the partners who will be managing project funds.
- Even at this stage, it may be useful to facilitate and record a brief discussion of expectations after the project ends:
  - Are the partners’ expectations that the project will engender continued or related research projects based on the same partnerships?
  - Do the partners expect that their individual or collective partnership will evolve or expand to focus on collaboration in other research areas or topics?
  - If there are expectations for continued active partnerships, what steps need to be taken during the life of the current project to foster the additional collaboration?

Before the team meeting, the following should be prepared:

- draft collaborative research agreements
- an appropriately adapted financial systems guide
• adapted protocol forms, particularly those related to overall project management and data
  management. By having these prepared, they can be explained and discussed during the meeting
  rather than trying to explain them later via email.

During the team meeting, ensure that the following topics are addressed:

• A review and reconfirmation of the visioning exercise.
• Agreement on a clear definition of roles and responsibilities.
• Identification of stakeholders and key non-core partners to be recruited into project activities,
  including possible use of outcome mapping approaches. An approach to outcome mapping and
  its potential use in partnership management is outlined in the toolkit.
• Conduct a team-building exercise using a team health check questionnaire to reach consensus on
  partnership and operating principles, and in preparation for performance evaluation and conflict
  management.
• Negotiate and agree on how credit for project outputs and achievements are expected to be
  shared (e.g. authorship vs. ownership). This agreement should be detailed and be part of the
  written partnership agreement to avoid any later conflicts or disappointments. Credit sharing is
  one of the most critical points of a partnership and one that can easily destroy a collaboration if
  not handled with great care and mutual respect. Issues like authorship of papers, use of logos etc.
  are essential parts of this agreement.
• Facilitate and document consensus on what would constitute unacceptable partner performance
  and how it would be addressed.
• Agreement on project management systems and protocols, and data management and sharing.
• Agreement on administrative and financial arrangements, including the assets and their transfer to
  the partner should be formalized.
• Initial discussion of end-of-project expectations, i.e. do partners view their participation in the
  current project as an investment in future collaborative activities. Would they feel ‘abandoned’ if
  the organization did not ensure such follow-up?
• Great care must be taken to record fully and faithfully the actions and principles agreed during the
  meeting.
• Consider initiating an electronic newsletter or similar mechanism that establishes the spirit of
  regular communication and transparency. Especially in larger projects with three or more partners,
  such a newsletter is extremely effective for confirming and reinforcing agreed principles within
  the team, recognizing the contributions of partners—both institutions and individuals—while at
  the same time providing a mechanism to communicate plans and progress to others within the
  partner institutions and more widely. A first newsletter should be produced immediately following
  the first team meeting to highlight the principles agreed.

The next step would be setting direction. A subsequent meeting could be planned to help achieve
this.

Partnerships often encourage looking at old problems in new ways, bringing energy and creativity along
with shared solutions. This happens mostly if the members begin with a shared understanding about the
nature of the problem and ideas about possible solutions. The steps involved in setting direction are:

• Defining the problem: Successful problem definition involves identifying a meaningful junction of
  the interests and needs of partners. Bringing representatives of all interested parties to the table is
  highly desirable.
- Brainstorming solutions: Noting the importance of having the beneficiaries’ support, describe each member’s stake in the problem and identify solutions to it (without getting bogged down in tasks, resources, personalities and histories). This is the time to clarify the vision of the partnership, its goal and strategic objectives, and establish a climate of hope and a willingness to work together.

- Identifying local allies: There are often local level organizations already active in solving the problem. They may already be working in partnership with other public or private entities. In the public sector, different agencies at various levels of government often collaborate to address a particular issue, based upon their mandate, interests and resources. In business, joint ventures, trade associations, and federations are common and in civil society, NGO coalitions are often formed around common issues or relationships to more effectively utilize resources. Some questions to answer in this case are:
  - what are the local organizations active in solving the problem (and who are the key actors in these organizations)?
  - are these organizations with capacity to become implementing partners?

For advancing the partnership, in subsequent meetings, further develop goals and objectives. Key questions to be considered are:

- How should actions be implemented? Open lines of communication are vital, as are clearly defined planning rules. The implementation of major action plans may involve recruiting new implementing partners who may not have been part of the earlier problem-solving discussions.

- How will resource allocation take place? Each member has distinct financial, human resource and technology capabilities. This issue often becomes a sticking point during the implementation process. Partners need to discuss resources continuously—who’s providing what and when—in order to ensure that the issue remains well understood from the outset.

- How can partners implement detailed plans in ways that respect their particular interests? Action planning may bring out further points of difference between the partners. It is important to respect these differences at all times. Differences exist in every partnership and accommodating them is a necessary component of successful partnerships.

A note on joint planning:

There is no formula for a successful joint planning process.

- It can take place on-site or off.
- It can involve all partners or only key partners
- It can start with only the vaguest notion of what can be done, or with a well-articulated proposal developed by one or more potential partners.

- It can follow a systematic structured process or evolve in a more ad hoc fashion.
- The crucial ingredients are a willingness to consider a range of ideas, a clear-eyed view of each partners’ objectives, an ability to identify where there could be overlapping areas of interest, and time to allow for problem solving by and among partners as the process proceeds.

The following are the six foundation elements that have to be addressed during initial stages of partnerships formation. If dealt with successfully, a climate of openness and trust begins to develop.

1. Compelling vision—a compelling vision and a strong sense of purpose is the glue that binds the partnership. A clear vision:
   - Defines problems or change opportunities to be addressed and strategies to be used.
   - Defines the scope of work, clarifies boundaries, and helps the partnership to hold to its original intent.
2. Strong, participatory leadership
   - Demonstrate eagerness to develop a collaborative relationship and to build shared ownership of the problem and outcomes
   - Not only must leaders see the potential for the partnership; they must also communicate this in inspiring ways
   - Leaders need to understand and address the differing interests of all organizations the partnership comprises, and work to facilitate management of boundaries and resources in ways that are seen as fair and equitable.
   - Have to help members to understand and appreciate the different motivation, interest, skills, concerns and social/cultural norms of the individual members and home organizations
   - At the onset of relationship, they must model trust-building actions:
     - Involving others
     - Using the input or opinions of others and giving them credit
     - Demonstrate a willingness to exchange ideas as well as explore different or new ideas
     - Sharing feeling/opinions honestly
     - Exhibiting sensitivity, both cultural and emotional
   - Skilled facilitation is critical, either by leader or another group member, or an outside facilitator who is skilled in group process and understands the complexity of forming a collaborative process
3. Shared problem definition and approach
   - Agree on nature of problem(s) being addressed and the desired results
   - Achieve a shared definition of problem, by trying to understand the problem from other points of view
   - Reach agreements on analytical framework to be used and appropriate actions/strategies to be implemented
   - Doing this requires time and a commitment to learn (and value) how each partner approaches issues.
4. Power equity
   - For a partnership to be genuinely successful, it is vital for all parties to sense that other partners respect them and value their contributions.
   - Each organization needs to feel that it can influence the direction and focus of the partnerships’ vision and strategy
   - Not to be intimidated by others’ positions and affiliations
   - Important behavioural factors to create power equity, which can signal to partners how much status and power the others are accordinng them.
     - Active and full participation with input into decision-making
     - Frequent information sharing
     - Negotiated priorities
     - Clear assignment of roles and responsibilities
     - Fair and transparent distribution of funds and other resources
     - Win–win negotiation approaches
     - Consideration of all partners’ interests, needs and concerns during planning and decision-making
   - All organizations need to speak explicitly about why they are joining and what they expect to gain from the partnership. State clearly its own reasons for joining and listen carefully to
understand the needs and expectations of other organizations. Collective agreement on what each can expect from the relationship. This will make partners feel empowered and valued as legitimate contributors.

5. Interdependence and complementarity

- Complex challenge—requiring broad base of knowledge, new technology and diverse expertise.
- Each member needs to bring in skills, knowledge and resources to complement those of other members.
- Partnership should create a new value
- Organizations should choose to work together from a position of individual strength
- Organization that enters into a partnership because of weakness or to aid its own survival will put too much dependence on other partners and create unrealistic expectations

6. Mutual accountability and mutual respect

- Success depends on each member fulfilling its responsibilities and commitments in timely fashion
- Shared ownership and personal stake in outcome are two strong motivational elements for holding partners accountable
- Many times the only leverage partners have is the appeal of the vision and goodwill that has been developed
- Partnerships with agreed upon norms and sanctions, with enough power and authority vested in the group to exercise these sanctions are better able to hold members accountable than are those appealing only to goodwill.
- Other actions that can inspire, motivate, and sustain partner commitments:
  i. Establishing milestones
  ii. Developing short and long-term indicators
  iii. Setting quality standards
  iv. Identifying benefits
  v. Producing clear time frames
  vi. Monitoring for results
  vii. Celebrating small wins
  viii. According appropriate recognition and credit to all involved
- Accountability can be undermined in two major ways:
  i. Members fail to carry out their planned activities or do them poorly, leading others to believe that resources have been squandered
  ii. Partners are highly sought after and feel more independent than interdependent

Creating a partnership code of ethics

Many partnerships find it useful to agree upon a code of ethics or guiding principles to define a common vision of how partners will work together and interact with partners in order to capitalize on the respective strengths of the partners. Such guidelines can help to guide staff behaviour and address the inevitable misunderstanding and conflicts that arise during the life of the partnership. The guidelines can be used as a standard or best practice for the partnership and can be monitored and evaluated periodically. It is usually best to keep the guiding principles short, limiting them to no more than five to eight statements of intention.
Creating a partnership covenant or MoU or letter of intent

Whereas a contract focuses on ways to meet the independent needs and interest of each party, a covenant concerns the accomplishment of mutual purposes and a shared mission. These are legally non-binding, non-obligatory agreements. MoU describes the intentions of the partners to proceed with a given course of action. MoUs vary greatly in degree of specificity and no standard format exists.

Covenants or MoUs capture the intent of partnership, the commitment to stay with it through both good times and bad. Some times they are written and signed by the partners, at other times they are less formal. The typical contents of an MoU are presented in Box 2.

Box 2: Generic contents of an MoU

1. Partner organization details: name of each partner, contact person with contact details, and brief description of the organization
2. Goal and objectives: description of the problem the partnership was formed to solve and why the partnership is a good way to address the problem, what the partnership’s goal is in solving the problem and, what the partnership strategies are for reaching the goal.
3. Operating principles: partners must have a general understanding of how they will manage its program. This includes:
   • description of any special administration structure required by the partnership (including anticipated working groups and committees)
   • how decision will be made
   • how conflict will be resolved
   • how the agreement can be renewed, modified or terminated
   • end date of the agreement
4. Roles and responsibilities of partners: describe what each member gives to and gets from the partnership, provides a preliminary view of the resources that each member will commit—core resources, program and/or project resources (financial and non-financial) and sets out the partnership’s implementation timeline.
5. Accountability: notes how the program performance of the partnership is expected to be measured, whether an independent audit of the partnership’s financial arrangements will be undertaken, and how adjustments will be made.
6. Partnership governance: if there is a governing body, membership, roles and responsibilities are defined
7. Managing the partnership: how the senior leadership-individual or team—will be selected and the roles and responsibilities for these positions
8. Developing and agreeing to a code of ethics or principles of partnership
9. Holding key partnership meetings: how many, who attends and so on
10. Monitoring and evaluating partnership performance
11. Handling of authorship, IPRs etc.
12. Handling conflicts: usually through agreed-upon protocols.

In addition to setting out the operational framework for the partnership, an agreement of this nature can be an important document because it conveys the objectives and intent of the partnership and may be used to explain the partnership to others and potentially leverage increased resources. A generic MoU used by the International Livestock Research Institute is presented in Annex 1.
Building a work plan

While it is important for the partnerships to focus on process issues to establish clarity and agreement on how partners will work together, it is also important to focus on how the work will get done. Generally big picture work plans are best developed at partnership gatherings; however the more detailed work plans should be laid out at the level where the work is occurring. During the early partnership planning stages, it is important to balance the efforts towards planning the work and building an effective process for working together.

Organizing partnership

According to Killing (1988), two critical factors have to be considered while organizing a partnership: Organizational Complexity (OC) and Task Complexity (TC). OC is high when interaction among partners is non-routine (when task uncertainty is high and inputs from many partners are needed simultaneously) and the partners interact frequently. When OC is low, simple structures which require little co-ordination are sufficient. When complexity is high, there is a need for structures with complex co-ordination and integration components.

Factors affecting task complexity

- scope of the partnership activity: depends on partnership objectives, number of functions and products involved and the duration of the partnership
- degree of environmental sensitivity: stability and predictability of operational environment (markets, policies, technology, customer preferences etc.) in which the partnerships would function. This influences the degree of uncertainty attached to the tasks the partnership would carry out.
- relevant partner resources and skills: physical and technical assets that the partners bring. If there is mutual understanding of the comparative advantages and commitments of the partners, carrying out tasks jointly becomes more complex.

Organizational complexity depends on task complexity. Tasks requiring complex sequencing or coordination would call for organizational forms that would ensure efficient flows and integration arrangements. It also depends on:

- Number of partners: the more the members, the higher is the complexity. Ensuring participation while seeking simplicity of co-ordination is a perennial challenge in partnerships.
- Nature and frequency of interactions among partners: determined by nature of tasks and expectations/demands
- Level of trust: lack of trust results in dysfunctional interaction which complicates the relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of interaction</th>
<th>Non-routine</th>
<th>Moderate complexity</th>
<th>Great complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>Low complexity</td>
<td>Moderate complexity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency of interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Interactions and levels of complexity in partnerships.

There are also three organizational models proposed based on skills that partners bring and their contributions. This is illustrated in Figure 4.
The form the partnership organizational model would take should follow the function.

**Developing governance structures**

Management of a partnership will be greatly facilitated when the basic governance structure established by the MoU is clearly defined. It can be assumed that the partners have achieved a high level of trust and have a shared commitment to achieving results. They can maintain openness and accountability to one another by establishing clear agreements on governance procedures. At a minimum, it is desirable to address the following areas:

- specific roles and responsibilities of partners as well of their relevant supporting units.
- key elements of governance such as frequency of meetings, decision-making processes, participants, need for working groups, outreach to stakeholders/beneficiaries, monitoring systems etc.
- how to resolve differences should these arise.

Addressing governance issues in writing, at the outset of the partnership, will prove invaluable as partner personnel rotates during the life of the partnership, or as new partners are brought in. It should be a living document to be amplified or modified as the parties gain more experience working together.

While defining roles and responsibilities, the following key questions have to be asked:

- Who are the principal players? Who is authorized to make decisions, convene meetings, address implementation issues, and provide substantive technical information? It is a good idea to provide a formal list of names, contact information, and level of authority to all relevant participants.
- Who has a supportive role, and how should they be kept in the loop (and by whom)? Decisions should be made on the mode and frequency of participation in or information on partnership issues.
- Partners should agree on and practice direct communication on all aspects of partnership implementation, at executive and working levels. It may be important to inform each other on the relevant internal processes of each partner, and any changes therein.

Clear ‘rules of the game’ make it easier for partnership partners to focus on their role in implementation.

Other questions that could be addressed include:

- What is the frequency of meetings of the principal governing body of the partnership? Are teleconferences acceptable?
- Who convenes and who participates (actively or with observer status) in meetings? Should there be working committees (if so, what are their specific responsibilities)? Should periodic open

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equality of partner contributions</th>
<th>Equal</th>
<th>Split control</th>
<th>Shared decision-making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unequal</td>
<td>Dominant partner of split control</td>
<td>One partner probably dominates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-routine</td>
<td>Routine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity of partner skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4. Organizational models based on partner skills and contributions.**
meetings be convened for information sharing and gathering purposes with parties relevant to partnership progress (including beneficiaries)?

- Who is empowered to make binding decisions? Will decisions be made by consensus, by vote?
- Who is responsible for the agenda, preparing minutes and circulating them? Should minutes be signed by the principals?
- In partnerships, where partners are pooling their funding, what is the process for making funds available? The level and timing of funding needs should be discussed, as well as the likely burn rate of the activity.
- How will partnerships work with beneficiaries and potential new partners? To what extent will partners inform each other when they have separate contacts with such groups? A voluntary code of conduct is one way partnership partners signal commitment to partnership percepts.
- What kind of public outreach is relevant? Should the partnership develop a joint approach? Does each partner prefer to publicize its efforts separately? Should outreach be aimed at informing, garnering public support?
- How will partners monitor and report partnership progress? Is there a limited set of performance indicators, or ‘metrics’, that all partners are willing to adopt and use notwithstanding any additional indicators that they may wish to identify and track? Do partners have reporting requirements that the partnership can help them meet?

Resolving differences

Conflicts among partners in a partnership must be anticipated. In the interest of good governance it is appropriate to address the issue and identify, at a minimum, principles that should be followed in the event of disagreement.

Such principles include respect for the other party; clarifying underlying issues; identifying options for resolving the disagreement; being inclusive, not exclusive, of stakeholders who might be able to propose solutions; agreeing at the outset on a procedure for resolving the disagreement; and agreeing on time limits with which the problem should be resolved. The module includes a section on conflict resolution/management in another chapter, which deals with this topic in greater detail.

Key references

Amudavi DM. 2003. Advancing a partnership model of extension to support the Kenya National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Program (NALEP) in rural livelihood improvement. Proceedings of the 19th annual conference of AIAEE, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA.


Session 5: Exercise A: Partnership design: Key steps and tools

(Group exercise)

Phase 1. Group work (30 minutes)
1. Break into your project teams and have each group elect a rapporteur. (5 minutes)
2. In your group, please review how the partnership was formed in your project.
3. Based on what you learnt, what additional steps would you undertake to improve the design process.
4. Capture the summary of your group discussions on a flipchart (25 min).

Phase 2. Reporting and discussion (35 minutes)
5. Rapporteurs present the group responses using flipcharts (25 minutes).
6. Facilitator asks feedback on this exercise and closes the session (5 minutes)
Session 5: Exercise B: Partnership readiness questionnaire—A

Please use the following seven-point scale. 1 = low degree of confidence. 7 = highest level of confidence. At the end, total up your points. The scores reflect the degree of confidence in your readiness. Lower scores indicate a real concern, perhaps the partnership is not right for you right now; middle score says you have some concerns, but with special attention devoted to what concerns you most, you think you should proceed; and the higher scores—‘go for it’—it’s a winner.

(Circle one)

1. Does my organization have the resources—financial, people, and technology—needed to contribute our portion of the partnership being considered?

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA

2. Can we honestly say these resources can be accessed when required? (Meaning they have not already been committed to several efforts and are seriously overloaded.)

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA

3. If we cannot contribute our entire share of financial resources, do we feel we have a good chance of obtaining additional donor funds?

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA

4. Are we willing and able to work in collaboration and mutuality with the other organizations that comprise this partnership?

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA

5. Are we willing and able to share control and participate in shared decision-making?

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA

6. Are we willing and able to be flexible about how things get done and not to be too insistent that it be done our way?

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA

7. Have we in the past and are we now able to work with our less resourced partners with mutual respect, avoiding any sense of domination and superiority? Would these organizations give us a high rating in this regard?

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA

8. Is there support for this project within our organization, and would this partnership become a valuable part of our organization’s portfolio?

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA

9. Can we commit to devote the leadership and management time required of us in this partnership effort?

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA
10. Have we had sufficient experience in working in partnerships so that we can say that our ‘partnering’ competencies are good enough to carry out our performance commitments?

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–NA

Total: ________
Session 5: Exercise C: Partnership readiness questionnaire—B

Rate each of the eight items listed using the following five-point scale as a guideline. Place the appropriate number from this scale in the space located to the left of each item. Obtain a total readiness score by adding together you eight ratings.

Five Points Scale:

5 = Strongly agree

4 = Moderately agree

3 = Indeterminate

2 = Moderately disagree

1 = Strongly disagree

I. Efficiency and effectiveness
   1. Effectiveness. Our product or service could be offered on a greater scale if we were able to combine efforts with one or more organizations.
   2. Quality. Our product or service could be offered at a higher quality if we were able to combine efforts with one or more organizations.
   3. Cost. Our product or service could be offered at a lower cost if we were able to combine efforts with one or more organizations.
   4. Resources. Our organization needs resources that we do not currently possess that could be accessed through other organizations.
   5. Sustainability. Our products, product or service could be provided on a more sustainable basis if we were able to combine efforts with one or more organizations.

II. Personal fulfilment
   1. Gratification. Other members of this organization and/or I would become much more involved in, have more control over, and/or be more satisfied with the work environment if our organization were to enter into some form of partnership with another organization.
   2. Gratification. I believe that other members of this organization and/or I would find a partnership with one or more organizations a source of challenge, excitement, personal learning, and/or professional development.

III. Organizational culture
   1. Decision-making. Our organization has a culture of collaborative decision-making that would support a partnership with one or more organizations.
