

# How to start a partnership

From The CLEAR GUIDE v1, written by Les Robinson for Mission Australia March 2009

[www.enablingchange.com.au](http://www.enablingchange.com.au)

Sometimes it can be a good idea to run activities jointly with other groups or organisations. Combining resources, energy and reputations can make for much more effective efforts.

A partnership, even a short one, deserves a bit of thought. The partners need to be “on the same page” about their understanding of the purpose of the activity, and they need to know exactly what their roles and commitments are.

## **1) Decide whether to start a partnership**

Ask your group these questions:

- Will a partnership save us resources and time?
- Will a partnership increase our credibility with important audiences?
- Will a partnership make it easier to promote the activity?
- Will a partnership provide similar benefits to the other potential member(s) of the partnership?

If the answer to most of these questions is “yes”, then a partnership can be a good idea.

## **2) Meet the partners**

Make sure that the people who represent the partners are energetic, have time to give and are committed to making the activity a success.

Sit down with the representatives of the partners and make sure you all agree on the basics. Each side should honestly state:

- What are their motivations for entering a partnership?
- What do they define as success?
- What resources can they commit?
- How big is their network of members and supporters?

If you decide to run a joint activity, then move on to consider practical questions like:

- How will decisions be made?
- How often will the partners meet?
- Exactly how will roles be allocated?

- Exactly what are time, money, people and in-kind resources will each partner invest?
- What happens to assets or income when the activity is complete?
- When will the partnership begin and end?

The more time spent clarifying these questions, the less likelihood there is for “turf wars” down the track.

### **3) Agree on the purpose of the partnership**

Create a purpose statement for the partnership. The purpose should be concrete and succinct – meaning that an outsider would know exactly what you meant if they read it. For example. “The partners agree to work together to stage a Community Fun Family Festival and BBQ in Miller on 6 September this year.”

### **4) Put the agreement in writing**

Once you agree on the purpose, roles, resource commitments and other details, you should put this into a written partnership agreement and have both sides sign it. Include all the details you’ve agreed on. That way there will be less room for conflict in future.

### **5) Meet regularly to monitor the progress of partnership activities.**

Regular meetings allow problems or conflicts to be handled rapidly. Ideally, have someone acceptable to all the partners acting as a facilitator of these meetings. In case there are disagreements a facilitator can prevent them developing into bigger conflicts. A facilitator can also make sure everyone understands their roles and all tasks are actionable (ie. someone agrees to do them by a certain date).

### **6) Celebrate together**

A healthy partnership is like a healthy family. You need to socialise together as well as working together. As you move along with planning the activity, recognise your achievements and celebrate them together, over dinners, lunches and refreshments.

## **A checklist for setting up a collaborative venture or consortium**

The following is an excerpt from **The SNOW project: Tips and Tools**, Bradfield Nyland Group  
[www.cnet.ngo.net.au/dmdocuments/Snow%20Project.pdf](http://www.cnet.ngo.net.au/dmdocuments/Snow%20Project.pdf)

Steps involved in developing a partnership or consortium:

- 1) Identify and assess potential partner agencies
- 2) Conduct risk assessment on proposed venture with the partner/s
- 3) Develop partnership agreement

<b>1. Selecting partner agencies: assessment of</b> <i>[insert name of potential partner agency/ies]</i>		
<b>Item to consider</b>	<b>Item checked</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Activities or services are complementary to our activities or services		
Has similar interests and objectives to our agency		
Has similar values and ethics to our agency		
Provides high quality activities or services		
Is well regarded by clients, community and funding providers		
Would provide the following to our endeavours: - Expertise - Labour time - Credibility, profile or contacts - Physical resources - Funds - Administration/coordination resources - Other: .....		

## ***Useful resources***

### **Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight Step Guide**

[www.preventioninstitute.org/pdf/eightstep.pdf](http://www.preventioninstitute.org/pdf/eightstep.pdf)

### **Maintaining Effective Community Coalitions**

A Canadian guide with useful tips.

[www.cchealth.org/groups/health\\_services/pdf/maintaining\\_effective\\_community\\_coalitions.pdf](http://www.cchealth.org/groups/health_services/pdf/maintaining_effective_community_coalitions.pdf)

### **A Guide to Setting Up a Community Partnership**

[www.illawarraforum.org.au/Asset%20files/A%20guide%20community%20partnersh.pdf](http://www.illawarraforum.org.au/Asset%20files/A%20guide%20community%20partnersh.pdf)

and

[www.illawarraforum.org.au/Asset%20files/Sample\\_Agreement.doc](http://www.illawarraforum.org.au/Asset%20files/Sample_Agreement.doc)