

12 steps towards successful cross-sector partnership

- 1. Understand the issue** to ensure the programme is relevant and sensitive to the problem and the context: What are the major needs? Who are the key stakeholders? How might the partnership fit with existing activities?
- 2. Know and respect your partners:** understand the resources and value they bring, their culture, their specific drivers for engagement, as well as their limitations and internal challenges. And **be open and transparent** about your own drivers, value and limitations to help **build trust**.
- 3.** Ensure that all partners have the **knowledge and skills** around the process of partnering in order to agree principles and **co-create the partnership**. Specialist, independent **partnership facilitators** may help take partners more efficiently through the process of building a robust, effective partnership.
- 4.** Identify clear **partnership objectives** that deliver results and add value to each of the partners. Objectives should have specific **measurable goals** to allow the partnership to track progress and demonstrate success and value-add to each partner.
- 5. Start small and scale up** to allow partners to develop effective relationships, build up trust, and test and adjust the partnership's operational and governance arrangements before moving to more ambitious plans.
- 6.** Co-create a **partnering agreement** that sets out **clear roles and responsibilities** along with objectives and a **governance/decision-making structure** that ensures proper accountability and efficient delivery.
- 7.** Build strong **institutional commitment** to the partnership by identifying the clear value of the partnership to each partner's priorities, engaging senior champions, and integrating where possible with other partner activities.
- 8.** Ensure the highest standard of **project management** to support a task-focused approach, with all partners actively engaged in delivering tangible and practical results.
- 9.** Embed the highest standards of **relationship management** to ensure that partners are kept fully engaged and valued, the principles of partnership – equity, transparency, and mutual benefit – are achieved, and that any challenges or issues can be recognised early.
- 10.** Ensure **strong communication** both within the partnership – contributing to the project and the relationship management – and externally to celebrate success and continue to build buy-in with other stakeholders.
- 11.** Build in **ongoing review**, including 'health checks' to assess the partnership and determine and implement changes that would improve its effectiveness.
- 12.** Plan for the **longer term** by understanding how the programme (as opposed to the partnership) may be made sustainable or, if designed to be temporary, that the outcomes of the programme are sustained.