1.13 SCOPING AND BUILDING

Guidelines for partnering conversations

USE IT
To structure four kinds of partnering conversation, from generating possibilities to completing commitments

WHEN
At every stage: possibility early on, action whenever needed, completion throughout

WHO
Partners together

Partnerships move forward through conversation. Four kinds of conversation each do a different job. Knowing which one you are having helps keep it focused.

1 Conversation for possibility

- Imagine the future as a rich scenario of inspiring possibilities. Share creative, aspirational ideas; feasibility does not matter yet.
- Most useful early on, when partners are creating a vision, and again when the partnership is renewed.
- Run it as a brainstorm of 15 minutes to an hour, around open questions that invite reflection rather than yes or no answers.
- *What would a breakthrough in … mean? What would it make possible? What are we building with this initiative?*

2 Conversation for opportunity

- Turn possibilities into concrete joint commitment to breakthrough action, and agree which can realistically be pursued.
- Start with: *What can you declare would be a breakthrough at the end of this initiative?* Discuss for at least 15 minutes.
- Then draft a shared commitment statement (not a partnering agreement), opening "Our partnership is committed to…". Each partner writes one; discuss the strengths (not weaknesses) of each; choose the best and refine it together until everyone is fully satisfied.

3 Conversation for action

- Hold at any stage when joint or individual action is needed, to clarify who is accountable for what.
- The key question: *Who will take what action, by when?*
- Keep written notes of each commitment and copy them to every partner, so partners can hold each other to account.

4

Conversation for completion

- Being complete with something means being whole with it. It matters on an ongoing basis, not only at the end, because it builds understanding and alignment.
- Use the questions below, and act on the answers.

Questions for completion

Question	Follow-up
What is left to do before we can say the partnership has succeeded, or is finished?	What actions do we need to take? Who will do what, by when?
What promises or commitments have we made but not yet delivered?	Who will do what, by when, to complete them?
Who wants or needs to know the status or outcome of the partnership?	How will we communicate it to them?
Who might be angry, irritated or disappointed with us or our activities?	How will we complete this with them?
Who has contributed to the partnership and its activities?	How will we acknowledge them and their contribution?
What else will we do to be complete with our initiative?	

Adapted from The Partnering Toolbook (Tool 5). © The Partnering Initiative. More tools at thepartneringinitiative.org/resources/type/tool/