4.4 SUSTAINING OUTCOMES AND MOVING ON

Handing over successfully

USE IT
To hand over the partnership's work, or close it, without damaging relationships or outcomes

WHEN
As the partnership hands over, closes, or a partner leaves

WHO
Partners together, with a broker or facilitator if needed

It is easy to manage moving on clumsily: most practitioners have far more experience of starting and running partnerships than of transitioning or closing them. Good relationships can unravel at this stage as partners revert to their own priorities.

Tips for handing over

Be inclusive

- Involve as many key stakeholders as possible
- Engage senior managers of the partners, and of those taking the work on
- Share responsibility for the handover as widely as possible
- Let people express emotions, including anger: it usually shows they care

Be transparent

- Discuss the handover openly and avoid secret conversations
- Record the decisions and the handover process
- Be honest about difficulties and bad news

Be clear

- Tell those who need to know what is happening
- Base the handover on accurate, verifiable information, not impressions
- Identify and address the risks

Be patient

- Allow enough time: rushing means important things get missed
- Expect some partners to take longer to adapt than others
- Don't make decisions in the heat of the moment
- Take time out together to explore views and manage conflict

Be a good role model

- Behave considerately towards partners and those taking over
- Complete all your handover tasks diligently
- Be prepared to let go of something you care about when the time comes

Keep to the partnering principles

Principle	Why it matters	How to keep it while moving on
Equity	Each partner contributes and is valued, which builds respect for every partner's priorities.	Keep consulting and including all partners. Invite and hear every perspective, and decide by consensus. Check that those who are silent agree.
Transparency	Open, honest behaviour with no hidden agendas builds the trust day-to-day work depends on.	Agree what discussions are needed and when; one-to-ones may make others feel excluded. Decide what to share with stakeholders and what stays confidential.
Mutual benefit	Each partner has the right to gain value, which keeps the partnership going as long as it is needed.	Focus on achievements and the benefits each partner has gained. Consider how decisions can add further benefit. Be generous in acknowledging every contribution.

When principles are ignored. A telecoms company and an NGO built a respected national helpline for young people over ten years. The company had always been clear its commitment would end, and offered to help find a replacement, but the NGO orchestrated a media campaign and lobbied government to force it to stay. The company's reputation suffered, the relationship broke down, other companies avoided the NGO, and the helpline closed.

When one partner leaves

The remaining partners assess the impact and decide whether to find a new partner or adjust to fewer. Departures bring a sense of loss even when welcome, but also make space for something new. Expect some partners to become suddenly positional, or to behave out of character, such as seeking allies rather than working openly with the group.

Bringing in help

A broker or relationship manager already in post will naturally help manage the process. If there is none, partners may appoint an external facilitator, agreeing:

- the need for a facilitator
- the parameters of the role
- how it will be funded
- how, and by whom, the facilitator will be briefed
- how much background they need

Celebrate and close well

Record what went well, give credit and celebrate achievements, even small ones in a partnership that failed. Don't judge too quickly: lateral benefits may only emerge later, and it is not always obvious who contributed most, or what counts as success.

An unmanaged ending. A city development forum of businesses, local government, NGOs and a university ran highly successful programmes over five years, visibly transforming the city, until the council began offering similar support. No one would raise closing it, so members simply stopped coming. Despite its achievements, it is remembered as an organisation that failed rather than a temporary partnership that succeeded.

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