4.1 SUSTAINING OUTCOMES AND MOVING ON

Moving on conversation prompts

USE IT
To open an honest conversation among partners about the future of the partnership

WHEN
At any stage, planned or as it arises; essential as the partnership nears its end

WHO
Partners, one to one and as a group

Moving on is closely linked to sustaining the partnership's outcomes, so it can be discussed at any stage. It needs as much tact and sensitivity as the early relationship-building phase, perhaps more: genuine interest in others' perspectives, good listening, and readiness to rethink your own views.

One-to-one conversations

1. Choose your timing well.
2. Choose the best person to talk to, not necessarily the most obvious, such as the broker.
3. Set the scene: explain your perspective and what prompted the conversation.
4. Open objectively, taking care the other person doesn't take your remarks personally.
5. Refer to the history of the partnership and its goals.
6. Invite early responses; don't push too far too fast.
7. Adjust your position in the light of their response. Make it a conversation, not a monologue.
8. Ask them to suggest how, and when, to take it further.

Group conversations

Focus on the future, with open questions that encourage wide-ranging, positive answers.

What matters most
What are the most important elements of the partnership, and how can we protect or enhance them?

What we are proud of
What are we most proud of so far, and how can it inform our decisions?

Our options
What moving on options are there, and how can we explore each to find the best for everyone?

How others will react
How will colleagues and stakeholders react, and how can we check their views?

Is there a deadline?

Do we need to decide? Is it non-negotiable? Is there a deadline, and do we accept it?

What we still need to know

What more do we need to know, and how will we find out and share it?

Next steps

How will we take this further, and who else should be involved?

To keep it open-ended and constructive, consider a workshop for option mapping or scenario planning, with a facilitator from the group or from outside.

Navigating with care

- People may not reveal their wishes, sitting on the fence until others' views are clearer.
- A partner who starts the conversation must not force the pace or push its own view, especially if it provides much of the resources.
- Some partners may hold a non-negotiable position, such as a fixed exit date. Surface it early, so no one debates what cannot change.
- Partners with very different views may feel isolated, or suspect deals behind the scenes. Give every partner the chance to set out their situation.
- People often feel real attachment to each other and the project. Acknowledge the emotions as well as the practicalities.

Sometimes the conversation quickly reaches conclusions everyone is happy with, though each partner will need to check them internally. Sometimes it causes dissent: agree to meet again, share out tasks such as gathering information, or hold smaller conversations in between. With breathing space, difficult issues often resolve themselves.

The setting

Start informally, over a meal, on a walk or during a project visit. For the real work, find a peaceful place away from daily distractions where people feel at ease. Noisy, cramped or cluttered rooms affect everyone; small signs of care set a good tone.

Recording decisions

Capture decisions so all key players agree what was decided and can take it back to their organisations. Different versions of the conversation can cause confusion at best, and relationship breakdown at worst.

Moving on through the partnering cycle

Phase	What to do
Scoping and building	Lightly establish that every partnership moves on, and agree expected impacts, sustainability and duration. Invest time in strong relationships; learn each partner's cultural context; explore what might lead a partner to issue a deal-breaking ultimatum; agree objectives, milestones and regular health checks.
Managing and maintaining	Under delivery pressure, don't lose sight of sustainability. Hold informal health checks, and ask whether capacity issues will affect sustainability, and who else could help build capacity.

Phase	What to do
Reviewing and revising	Build sustainability into reviews and evaluations, not just impact. Map out end scenarios, their impact on stakeholders, and how and when to communicate.
Sustaining outcomes	Implement the moving on strategy and communicate results and decisions to stakeholders.

Why partners move on

Driver	Partners' action	What happens
Resources reduced or withdrawn	Redesign the project or partnership; or abandon it	Greater self-reliance, for example more efficiency or new partners with different resources; or the partnership ends and the project is left or handed over
Project completed	Conclude the project or partnership	The partnership winds down; partners publicise success and share lessons, and may collaborate on something new
Project continues beyond its timescale	Maintain; or hand over	The partnership continues with adjustments, perhaps new partners; or hands over to a mainstream system or a new mechanism
Project failed	Leave, or hand over any outcomes	Partners revert to business as usual
New partnering potential	Begin a new cycle	The partnership is renewed or renegotiated with new activities, perhaps new partners
Changing partner priorities	Some or all partners move on	Partners separate, or some continue with or without new partners
Changing context: political, social, economic	Adjust or end the partnership	Partners review the partnership in the light of the new situation (tool 4.3)

Whatever the reason, recognise the outcomes (even a "failed" partnership has achievements) and support them with mechanisms for sustainability that work.

Adapted from The Moving On Toolbook (Tool 1). © The Partnering Initiative. More tools at thepartneringinitiative.org/resources/type/tool/