4.6 SUSTAINING OUTCOMES AND MOVING ON

Partnership transitioning guidelines

USE IT
To plan sustainable outcomes from the outset, and manage the final phase well

WHEN
Part 1 throughout the lifecycle, from scoping; part 2 as the partnership nears its final phase

WHO
Partners together

All partnerships eventually need to take on a new form or close. Planning for the full lifecycle makes sure outcomes are sustained and relationships stay good. Review the plans regularly to check they are still fit for purpose. Where a partnership is time-bound from the start, set expectations clearly from the beginning.

Possible trajectories

New phase of work
Rescope and continue.

Scale
Grow the work.

Adjust or rejuvenate
Restructure and renew.

Shut down
Close the partnership.

Whichever path you take, the most important things are good relationships between partners and the sustainability of outcomes: that they continue beyond the life of the partnership. Embed and agree exit strategies from the outset. Otherwise partnerships can end messily, compromising outcomes and relationships, or partners get locked in long after the partnership should have ended.

Part 1: Planning sustainable outcomes throughout

Phase	Questions
Scoping and building	• What must change in the enabling environment to sustain the vision and programmes? • Will a partnership approach help bring that change about, and what will it take? • How does each partner understand sustainability, and do they think it important? • How can partners embed sustainable outcomes in the partnership and their relationships? • What successful examples offer good learning? • Can those crucial to sustaining outcomes be involved from the start, as advisers, observers or allies? • Can sustainability be woven into the whole plan, including capacity building where needed? • How will partners recognise or measure sustainability, and record their commitment to it?

Phase	Questions
Managing and maintaining	• How can the partnership be structured to promote local self-reliance and build capacity to sustain programmes? • How far can resources come from local sources, or other self-sufficient approaches? • How can the partnership engage with and improve local or mainstream systems for long-term delivery? • How sustainable are the outcomes, and what are the indicators? • What must be built into reviews to keep sustainability at the forefront?

Part 2: Moving on or revising

Be inclusive

- Involve as many key stakeholders as possible
- Engage top management of the partners, and of those taking the work on
- Share responsibility for winding up or handing over
- Allow people to express emotions, including anger

Be transparent

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

Be clear

- Tell those who need to know what is happening
- Base decisions on accurate, verifiable information
- Identify and address the risks

Be patient

- Allow enough time: if you rush, things get neglected
- Don't expect everyone to adopt changes at the same pace
- Take time out together to explore views and manage conflict

Communicating the transition. Share the work between partners, choosing people seen to speak for the partnership. Prefer face-to-face over written, agree what is public and when, and share the lessons without breaching trust. See tool 4.5.

Adapted from How to strengthen collaboration (Tool 7). © The Partnering Initiative. More tools at thepartneringinitiative.org/resources/type/tool/