

HOW TO CREATE PARTNERSHIPS

People:	People in your group who are developing partnerships
Time:	1hour 30minutes
Resources:	This guide and a place to meet

How can this help us?

Partnerships are really important for delivering Transition in your community, as they enable you to be more effective, build new relationships and bring a range of other benefits to your group. Partnership working can be great, but if they are not setup properly then they can be problematic. As well as doing the activity, refer to this guide whenever you are entering a new partnership.

The guide:

Why partnerships are important exercise

Do this activity with your group:

- Get into pairs
- Take 5 minutes each to talk with each other in pairs about partnerships you have been involved in.

Think about the following

- Why did people decide to work together?
- What were they able to do together than they could not have done alone?
- Think about an experience of groups competing instead of collaborating.
- What problems happened because the groups couldn't collaborate?
- What were the missed opportunities?
- What happened to relationships? To the community?

Then take turns to reflect back to the group what was positive and what was challenging.

Then go back into pairs for 15 minutes and read through the rest of this document to get an overview of what makes a successful partnership. Then come back together and discuss how you would setup a potential partnership with a group in your community.

Guide to effective partnership working.

The following outlines why partnerships are important, different types of partnerships, what makes a successful partnership, why partnerships fail and some guidelines for setting up a partnership. This is a good section to come back to, whenever you are considering entering into a partnership.

Why are Partnerships Important?

There are a range of reasons that partnership working can be important, these are some of the most common:

- You don't duplicate work that is already being done
- You can expand upon existing work & accomplishments
- You to connect with many more people
- Building relationships with others is key to building a resilient community
- Different groups can support different aspects of transitioning
- Working together can lead to new ideas and solutions that you could not do on your own

There are also other benefits from partnership working such as increasing awareness of Transition, getting more people involved in Transition and finding out about future opportunities for funding and financial support amongst others.

What does being in partnership mean?

Transition is about collaboration not competition and working in partnership with others is a great way to build a collaborative culture in your community. There are many different ways you can work in partnership the following outlines some of the most common ways you can work in partnership with others, starting with the most informal to more involved partnerships.

At a really informal level you can do the following.

Share Information:

Sharing information with others can open up lots of opportunities for your group and others. If people in your networks know what you are doing and you know what they are up to, then you can see possibilities for working together. It also helps you to avoid clashing with other events, duplicating work and helps foster a sense of openness.

Consultation:

Consulting with other groups is great for building support and relationships as it shows that you are open to the views of others with the added bonus of raising your profile. It is also a great way to get really useful feedback from people in your community and provides opportunities to build relationships.

There are three other ways that you can work in partnership with others which require a greater level of commitment from the people involved.

Deciding together:

This is where you work with others to make decisions on what is going to happen, but you do not deliver projects together. This can be a great way to involve key people with what you are trying to achieve in your community. It can be seen as a deeper level of consultation and is great way of developing a feeling of common ownership over projects happening in your community.

Supporting other groups in your community:

You help others do what they want by providing support financial or otherwise. Many Transition groups see this as their main work in their community. This can also happen the other way around where Transition groups will be supported by others to do projects.

Delivering projects together:

This often involves doing the above, but you also work with other groups/people to deliver a project together. These types of partnerships can be great, but they can also be the most challenging.

Working in partnership with others can be very simple depending on the project, don't over complicate things if it's not needed. It is really when you are delivering projects together that you need to think more carefully about how you will work together.

The rest of this guide can help you to build strong partnerships by making sure you have a good foundation in place at the beginning where everyone is clear what they are doing and what they have signed up to deliver.

What makes a successful partnership

When developing a partnership having the following in place from the beginning can really help your partnership to be successful:

- Having a shared vision of what might be achieved by working together
- Respect and trust between different partners
- Respected individual or individuals taking strong leadership in the partnering process
- Agreeing shared aims and objectives through a clear and open process
- Putting time into building the partnership
- Having similar aims and values
- Being clear on how you work together and make decisions

As well as all the above crucially a partnership will only work if both partners deliver what they have promised as part of the partnership.

Why partnerships fail

Knowing why partnerships fail is almost as useful as knowing why they succeed, the following are to be avoided if possible:

- People involved in the partnership have not created an inspiring shared vision
- Unequal power in the partnership
- Lack of a clear purpose to partnership
- People don't understand the different roles/responsibilities
- Different values and ways of working
- Not enough time or commitment put into it
- Hidden agendas and competition
- Failure to communicate properly
- Lack of evaluation or monitoring systems
- Failure to learn

Setting up a partnership

When setting up a partnership it is useful to understand how it will help both of you to achieve what you want. A good way to do this is by having an initial informal chat about what you both hope to achieve, how you both operate and what you both expect out of the partnership. Doing this gives everyone a better understanding of what working together would be like and whether it is a good idea.

Important: It is fine to not enter a partnership if you feel that it is not going to work, working together with others should be fun and rewarding and not a burden to your group.

Develop a shared understanding at the start

It is really important to work together closely to setup the partnership correctly at the beginning, if you don't do this then it can become very difficult later on. So build a strong base for your partnership by:

- Being very clear with each other about:
 - o What it is they want from the partnership
 - o What their aims and objectives are
 - o What they trying to achieve
- Make sure that both of your groups support and are committed to working together and that people understand the reason for the partnership and the great benefits that it brings
- Make sure you both understand each other's values, ideally you will share some of them
- Develop a genuine shared vision and set of goals for the project that everyone has agreed to
- You need to understand how each other's organisation operates, as Transition groups can operate very differently from other more formal organisations.

Your attitude towards partners can really help a partnership succeed

If you both decide to enter the partnership then having a positive attitude towards each other can really help it to succeed, you can do this by:

- Being genuinely interested in understanding each other groups and communities
- Seeing yourselves as building relationships (not "recruiting" people to "our" group)
- Communicate with each other in a language you both understand
- See yourselves as a neighbour, networkers and facilitators, not as leaders
- Welcoming each other's different points of view, with no expectation of always agreeing
- Enjoying the ride and looking for fun in each opportunity that arises

Planning the actual work:

It is great to do the following together:

- Plan out the project over time, think about timescales and what it is you want to achieve
- Be clear about people's roles and responsibilities are and how you will work together.

GUIDE

- Use a range of methods to involve people; workshop sessions as well as formal meetings.
- Encourage ideas from your partners and plan activities together, this helps build a feeling of ownership that leads to commitment.

Most importantly be open and honest about your capacity to deliver and what that will look like, this helps avoid misunderstanding later on.

Have fun together and celebrate

Often when working in partnership the work can dominate, but it is really important to take time to celebrate and to have fun when doing partnership work. Partnership working is really about building relationships with people and one of the best ways to do this, is to laugh, have fun and celebrate together.

It can be useful to print out this guide and store it in a folder about your group so you can refer to it in the future and show new members of your group so they understand the processes you use.

This guide was co-produced by Transition Network and Tina Clarke.

More support:

For more support and information on building network and partnerships go here:
<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/networks-and-partnerships/>

Check out the 7 essential ingredients of Transition here:
<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/>

This document is released under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>