

# Top Tips Guide

## Tools for Working in Partnership



### Introduction

This series of Top Tip Guides has been produced to support Third Sector learning providers so that they will be better informed on key issues and the use of effective standard practices.

### Tools for working in Partnership - Top Tips

1. Obtain clarity about the type of partnership you are going to be involved with. The words Partnership, Consortium, Sub-contractors are often used interchangeably, yet each means something different. It is vital that all parties are crystal clear about what type of working arrangement is being considered.
2. Is the partnership going to be temporary or permanent?
3. Identify potential partners – draw up a set of criteria that all partners must meet before they can be an official member of the partnership.
4. Articulate clearly what the positive pay-off for each partner will be.
5. Decide whether all partners are equal or whether there will be a Lead Partner.
6. All parties must be agreed on the aim of the partnership – what it is intended to achieve.
7. Be honest about the types of problems that new partnerships face and suggest how these problems will be dealt with, e.g.:
  - a. Reassuring staff and volunteers – people often dislike change
  - b. Organisations cultures can change when involved in partnership work – sharing of resources, ideas etc is necessary
  - c. Accountability will have to be shared. How would your organisation feel if a partner made a big mistake?
  - d. Apply a clear methodical process to setting up, running and reviewing the partnership
8. Draw up a partnership agreement. All parties must decide upon the elements that must be covered. Don't forget:
  - a. % split of payments



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- b. A clause which covers the steps to be taken if one partner fails to deliver. At worst, this could lead to the loss of a contract which could ruin the chances of future work for the other partners. How would this be handled?
  - c. Roles and responsibilities
  - d. Dispute resolution
  - e. Etc.
9. Use a suitably experienced solicitor to make the agreement official. This is crucial and need not cost a huge amount. £200-£500 is fairly standard.
10. Consider whether the partnership should have its own legal structure. There are strict rules about charities trading, so a Company Limited by Guarantee or other appropriate structure might be required. See [www.bwbllp.com](http://www.bwbllp.com) for further information.

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## Definitions

**Partnership** - The Audit Commission (1998) defines partnership working as: “*A joint working arrangement where the partners:*

- *are otherwise independent bodies*
- *agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal*
- *create a new organisational structure or process to achieve this goal*
- *plan and implement a joint programme*
- *share information, risks and rewards*”

**Consortium** - A consortium is an association of two or more individuals, companies, organizations or governments (or any combination of these entities) with the objective of participating in a common activity or pooling their resources for achieving a common goal.

**Sub contractor** - A subcontractor is an individual or in many cases a business that signs a contract to perform part or all of the obligations of another's contract. A subcontractor is hired by a general contractor (or prime contractor, or main contractor) to perform a specific task as part of the overall project. The incentive to hire subcontractors is either to reduce costs or to mitigate project risks.

## Resources

- NAVCA's [Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit](http://www.navca.org.uk/stratwork/positions/procurement) (LCPU) provides practical information, advice and support in this area  
[www.navca.org.uk/stratwork/positions/procurement](http://www.navca.org.uk/stratwork/positions/procurement)

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- **NCVO** [www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/commissioningandprocurement](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/commissioningandprocurement) includes Commissioning and procurement: step by step. This section introduces commissioning and procurement, explaining the processes, purpose and terminology of commissioning public services from the voluntary and community sector (VCS). It includes an excellent further reading list. In particular have a look at <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/commissioning/consortia> which explains the drivers to delivering public services in consortia. Also: the models, process of formation, and risks and benefits of bidding and delivering as a consortia.
- **ACEVO** (<http://www.acevo.org.uk/Services+Resources>) has a range of support services to help third sector organisations become more efficient and effective. Support is available for a range of areas including Impact Reporting, Partnership Programme; Working with Local Authorities; Full Cost Recovery; Income Generation; Procurement and Commissioning of public services; Consortia Support
- Report by Rocket Science on Partnership Working published January 2006 for the Improvement Service. [RocketScience Base Tools Report Jan 06.doc](#)
- Audit Commission (1998). *A Fruitful Partnership*. <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/A190CA25-7A7E-47D1-BCAB-373A86B709C0/A%20Fruitful%20Partnership.pdf>
- [How to support...Collaboration for communities: Giving power to partnership](#) bassac, 2011  
This resource has been developed to guide facilitators of collaboration through the several stages of supporting a collaborative venture. It sets out the key issues you will face and provides a framework for organising and planning your support.