Communities
Partnership
Framework

Guidelines for establishing and sustaining partnerships with external stakeholders

Contents

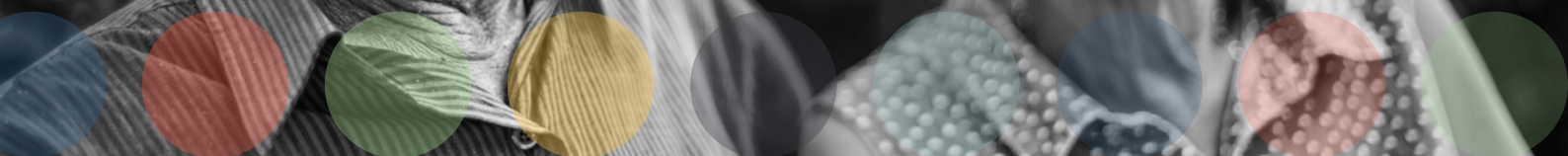## Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Communities (Communities) acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures, and to Elders both past, present and emerging.

The first step in living alongside and working with the Aboriginal community is built upon establishing respectful relationships. Crucial to these respectful relationships is acknowledging the history of Aboriginal people and recognising the importance of connection to family, culture and Country.

Language

Within Western Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may be referred to in the national context.

Consultation

The Communities' Partnership Framework (the Framework) has been co-developed through a series of consultations and workshops with Communities staff and representatives from community services sector peak bodies and organisations.

Aboriginal community

Communities' Partnership Framework will underpin Communities' future Aboriginal Engagement and Participation Framework (the Aboriginal E&P Framework).[1] The connection between the two Frameworks will enable community input, ownership and partnerships between Communities and the Western Australian Aboriginal community.

The Aboriginal E&P Framework will articulate a model for engagement, partnership and co-design between Aboriginal Western Australians and Communities. It will provide policy direction, program development and advice for the transparent monitoring, implementation, and accountability of outcomes for improving the social and emotional wellbeing [1] of Aboriginal Western Australians, including Communities' Aboriginal staff [2].

The Aboriginal E&P Framework will be informed by conversations with key Aboriginal leaders, community members and organisations, and departmental and other government stakeholders. Importantly, the Aboriginal E&P Framework will inform the implementation and governance of Communities' future Aboriginal Outcomes Self-determination Strategic Plan and other key culturally inclusive strategies across the department.

People with disability

The State Disability Strategy 2020-2030 outlines a whole of community commitment to changing the lives of people living with disability, ensuring that they, and those who share their lives, have the same opportunities to contribute to and participate in all aspects of community life. This includes having the same opportunities to partner and engaged with Communities as all other stakeholders. All relationships and activities must include measures to address barriers that limit the capacity of people with disability to participate and contribute equitably.

Have your say

This Framework was first published in May 2021. It is intended that the Framework will evolve and be updated over time to reflect changes to agency policies and strategies, and emerging partnership practice. If you have any feedback or suggested changes, please contact:

Sector Partnerships Team
sectorsupport@communities.wa.gov.au

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1 Currently being developed by the Strategy and Transformation Division.

Introduction

The Department of Communities (Communities) was established to transform how human services are designed for, and delivered to, some of the most vulnerable Western Australians. Its purpose is to collaborate with diverse partners and stakeholders to create culturally secure, accessible and inclusive pathways that enable individual, family and community wellbeing.

As an organisation, Communities engages with a broad and diverse range of stakeholders across different sectors, and often in complex environments. These stakeholders include, but are not limited to individuals, families and communities; not-for-profit and community services organisations; the three tiers of government; Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations; businesses and private sector organisations; advocacy groups and peak bodies; Ministers and the media.

Communities serves people from diverse backgrounds and with specific needs including Aboriginal people, communities and organisations; people living with disability; older people; youth; women; children in care; women, children and families experiencing family and domestic violence; carers and the people they care for; and people experiencing homelessness.

Communities' corporate values recognise that integrity, respect, honesty and transparency are critical to building and sustaining trusted and productive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders.

Since inception, Communities has been growing relationships with the community services and private sectors, individuals, families and the community, and all tiers of government. The quality of relationships with external stakeholders will significantly influence Communities' ability to deliver and achieve its strategic objectives and better outcomes for all Western Australians.

To achieve its objectives, and effect meaningful change, Communities strives to embrace new ways of working by creating genuine partnerships for collaboration, striving for cultural safety and proficiency, leading with integrity, and sharing decision making. Genuine and collaborative policy and place-based partnership approaches are also vital to reforming the way governments work with Aboriginal people, communities and Community Controlled Organisations, and progressing towards meeting the National Agreement on Closing the Gap outcomes, measures and targets.

Department of Communities

- Local Communities
- Ministers
- Media
- Aboriginal families and communities
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- People with lived experience
- Universities and Research Institutions
- Advocacy Organisations and Peak Bodies
- Non - Government Sector Organisations
- Private Sector
- Local, State and Commonwealth Governments

Purpose and scope

In 2020, Communities' Leadership Team endorsed the development of a program of work structured around three focus areas—partnership vision, partnership delivery, and partnership capability—designed to improve staff' and the agency's partnership capability and culture. This Framework establishes Communities' partnership vision, and is designed to support, develop and improve the agency's partnership capability and ways of working with its partners.

The Framework

Applies to:

all Communities staff and can be applied to relationships with stakeholders across all sectors. The principles will apply to all relationships; however, the implementation will change depending on the specific partnership. Links to additional tools and resources are provided throughout the Framework to support users to adapt and apply the partnership principles to different relationships and circumstances.

Is designed to:

- establish Communities' partnership vision, purpose, ambition, principles and behaviours

- ensure a consistent, agency-wide understanding of and approach to partnerships.

The vision, ambition, principles and behaviours are leveraged and adapted from key Communities' and State Government strategies and frameworks. They are embedded in the partnership approach to ensure that the agency partners in ways that are consistent with, and support it to achieve, broader strategic and policy requirements and objectives.

The strategies and frameworks include:
- Communities' Strategic Plan 2019-2023
- Our corporate iCREATE values
- Agency Capability Program Ways of Working
- the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy, the scope of which applies to all Public Authorities
- Outcomes Measurement Framework.

Using the framework

The Framework has been designed to provide an overarching frame of reference to support Communities to build and sustain relationships with external stakeholders, and in doing so strengthen staff', as well as the agency's, partnership capability.

It includes guidance and tools adapted from a range of evidence-informed Australian and international frameworks, all of which have been assessed as effective in supporting the development and maintenance of robust, equitable relationships (see **Appendix 1**).

The Framework guides a structured approach to establishing, managing, sustaining and evaluating partnerships. The guidance and tools provided are generic by design, enabling them to be adapted and tailored to different relationships, purposes and contexts. Specialised resources and training available to support safe, appropriate and inclusive ways of partnering include:
- Communities' Aboriginal Cultural Hub
- Communities' Rainbow Hub
- Communities' Disability Confident Workforce training and Access and Inclusion Resource Kit
- Diverse WA: Cultural competency training for working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Framework structure

The Framework is structured as follows:

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Section 1:        Section 2:        Section 3:
Why we            About             How to
partner           partnerships      partner
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Section 1: Why we partner

Partnership is at the core of Communities' purpose. This purpose of this section is to establish a consistent, whole of agency approach to partnerships, with a focus on:

- The benefits of working in partnership to individuals, the community sector and to the agency.
- Communities' partnership vision and approach, with guiding partnership principles and behaviours.
- How working in partnership aligns with, and supports the achievement of, key agency and State Government strategies, policies and objectives.

Section 2: About partnerships

Partnerships are widely recognised as a core requirement in delivering effective human and community services, and critical to addressing complex problems that cut across agencies, sectors and jurisdictions. The purpose of this section of the Framework is to establish a consistent, whole of agency understanding of partnerships, with a focus on:

- Defining partnership and the recognised benefits of working in partnership.
- The spectrum of partnership and relationship arrangements and approaches, and the opportunities and challenges each presents.
- Common characteristics and elements of successful and unsuccessful partnerships.

Section 3: How to partner

Successful partnerships are developed, managed and nurtured systematically. The purpose of this section of the framework is to guide users through the four stages of the Partnership Lifecyle, providing information and tools on:

- The Partnership Lifecyle model.
  - **Lifecycle Stage 1:** Five steps to planning, scoping and building a partnership.
  - **Lifecycle Stage 2:** Establishing and managing a partnership.
  - **Lifecycle Stage 3:** Maintaining a partnership.
  - **Lifecycle Stage 4:** Next steps: sustaining, changing or adjourning a partnership.

Why partner?

Partnership is core to our purpose

Communities purpose is to collaborate to create pathways that enable individual, family and community wellbeing. Partnership is at the core of its purpose to make a positive difference to the lives of Western Australians. Partnerships, like everything Communities does, is focused on achieving the following outcomes:

Partnering to improve Communities' outward focus

Communities' has commenced an ongoing agency capability program to develop our organisational capability by improving our outward focus, strengthening our people and enhancing our systems and processes. Improving partnership capability is a key component of improving our outward focus.

The benefits of partnering

Partnerships provide opportunities to harness the unique skills, capabilities and expertise of the people, families, communities and organisations we work with, combining efforts for greater collective impact across all areas of activity and responsibility. Partnerships can enable those involved to[i]:

- Combine their expertise and resources, to achieve outcomes that would be difficult if acting alone.
- Co-develop, test and implement policy and service responses that are culturally safe, strengths- and place-based, accessible and inclusive.
- Develop and implement integrated approaches to complex problems across agencies, sectors and jurisdictions.
- Understand barriers to equitable opportunities and outcomes, and find ways to address them.
- Learn from people with lived experience, and be responsive their needs and expectations.

- Develop mutual trust and increase their willingness and capability to take risks, innovate and do things differently.
- Deliver greater collective impact; and responses to opportunities and challenges.

Partnerships also enhance Communities' ability to deliver and achieve State Government priorities, and to fulfil its statutory and policy responsibilities and role as a system steward. It is therefore recommended that the Framework be read in conjunction with the relevant State Government and Departmental policies, strategies and legislation.

Relationship to other plans, policies and strategies

Partnership Framework

- **Supporting Communities Policy**
- **Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy**
- **Working Together: One Public Sector Delivering for WA** (Service Priority Review)
- **Outcomes Measurement Framework WA**
- **National Agreement on Closing the Gap**
- **Department of Communities Strategic Plan 2019-2023**
- **Agency Capability Program**
- **10 Year Strategy for Reducing Family and Domestic Violence**
- **Ageing with Choice:** Future directions for seniors housing 2019-2024
- **All Paths Lead to a Home:** WA's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030
- **Beyond 2020 – WA Youth Action Plan**
- **Building a Better Future:** Out-of-Home Care Reform Program: Roadmap 2019-2023
- **Resilient Families, Strong Communities:** A roadmap for regional and remote Aboriginal communities
- **State Disability Strategy 2020-2030**
- **Stronger Together:** WA's Plan for Gender Equality
- **Sustainable Health Review:** Final Report to the Western Australian Government
- **WA Aboriginal Procurement Policy**
- **WA Carers Strategy**
- **WA Strategy to Respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse) 2019-2029**
- **WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030**
- **WA Veterans and Families Strategy**
- **WA Volunteering Strategy**
- **Communities' Leadership Hub** (internal)
- **Communities' Aboriginal Cultural Hub** (internal)
- **Communities' Rainbow Hub** (internal)

Vision

Working together to improve outcomes for all Western Australians.

Purpose

To improve opportunities and outcomes for all Western Australians through respectful, honest and reciprocal partnerships with our internal and external stakeholders in planning, designing and delivering policies, programs and services.

Principles

- The lives and wellbeing of all Western Australians is at the core of Communities' partnerships.
- Relationships with stakeholders are critical and cover a spectrum of arrangements from coordination to partnership.
- Communities strives to be culturally safe and secure in all relations with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.
- Communities values, respects and celebrates individual and community diversity.
- Communities works to deliver culturally safe, strengths- and place-based, person-centered, accessible, equitable and inclusive policy and service responses.
- Communities recognises partnership is not always achievable or required.
- Communities recognises that its partners have different, but equally important, capabilities, knowledge and perspectives.
- Partnerships are relationships built on mutual trust, respect and transparency.
- Responsibility and accountability are mutual and shared.
- Communities knows when to share or cede control, and step back or away.

Behaviours

- Drive demonstrable improvements in life outcomes for all Western Australians.
- Acknowledge the value, and seek the perspectives, of organisations with knowledge of and connections to people and place.
- Demonstrate cultural competency by enabling culturally safe and secure engagements and interactions with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.
- Develop and grow individual and agency capability to be diversity aware and inclusive in everything we do.
- Conduct all relationships with transparency and through open communication, including the sharing of appropriate data, information and the basis for decisions.
- Consult on all significant issues using a collaborative approach to decision-making, including the co-development of strategies, policies and services.
- Ensure partnerships are mutually beneficial by openly sharing our knowledge, capabilities and experiences, and learning from our partners.
- Co-develop partnership expectations, governance mechanisms and practices.

About Partnerships

Partnership describes arrangements, formal or informal, where two or more organisations or divisions bring together their unique strengths and capabilities to achieve a shared outcome, recognising that a partnership approach presents an opportunity to deliver greater impact than working alone.[ii]
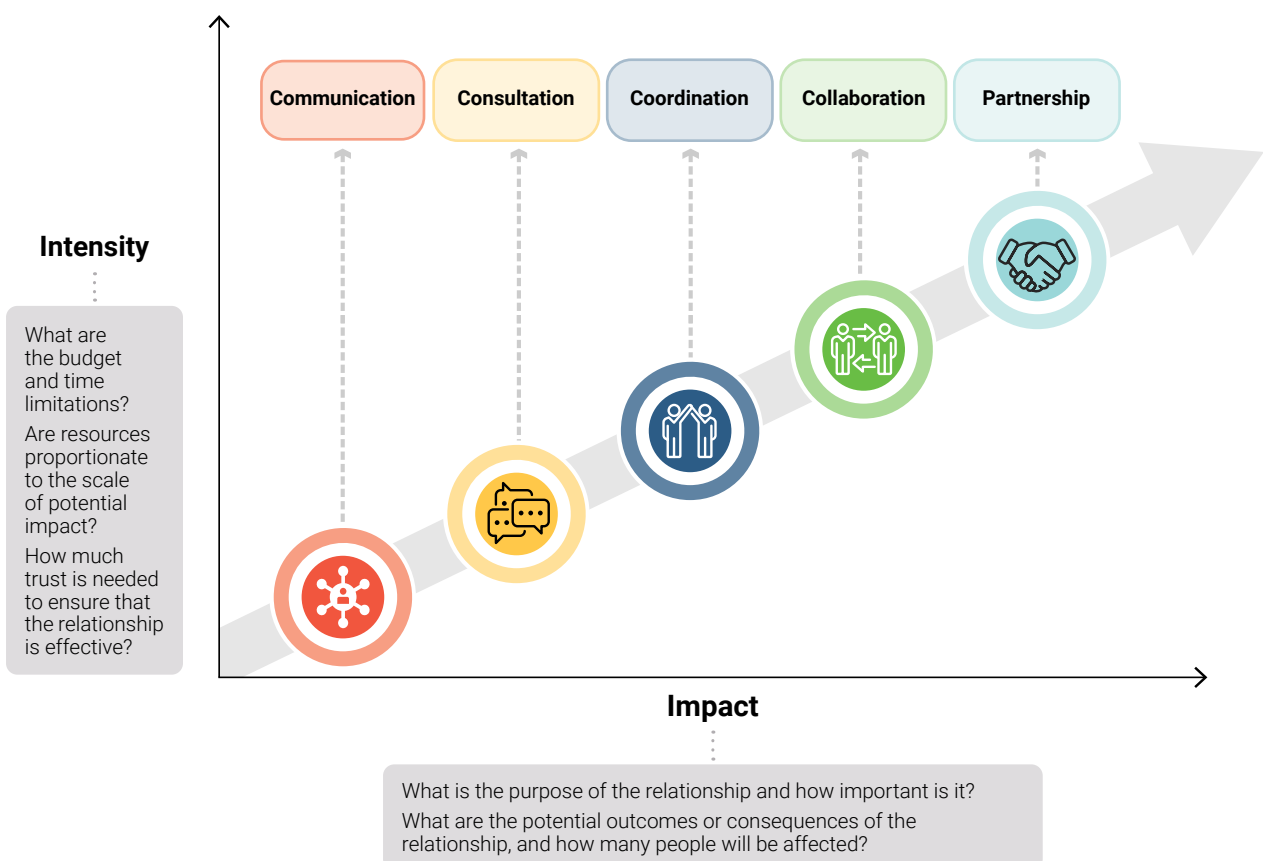
Partnership is about moving beyond independent responsibility and results to relationships where design, development, risks and responsibilities are shared, and where interdependency makes organisational, system and community transformation a possibility.

Why partner?

Partnerships are widely recognised as a core requirement in delivering effective human and community services, and critical to addressing complex problems that cut across agencies, sectors and jurisdictions. Done well, partnerships provide opportunities to leverage the unique skills and expertise each partner brings, enabling the sharing of information, resources and capabilities to jointly achieve outcomes that could not be achieved by acting alone.[iii]

In addition, partnerships provide opportunities and mechanisms to

Figure 1: The Partnership Spectrum

Communication **Consultation** **Coordination** **Collaboration** **Partnership**

Intensity

What are the budget and time limitations?

Are resources proportionate to the scale of potential impact?

How much trust is needed to ensure that the relationship is effective?

Impact

What is the purpose of the relationship and how important is it?

What are the potential outcomes or consequences of the relationship, and how many people will be affected?

achieve a more coordinated and integrated approach to developing and implementing policy, programs and services.

Relationships and partnerships types

Relationships are formed and evolve in complex strategic and operational environments, and will be shaped and informed by internal and external factors including the:

- broader social, political and economic context
- purpose and outcomes partners pursue
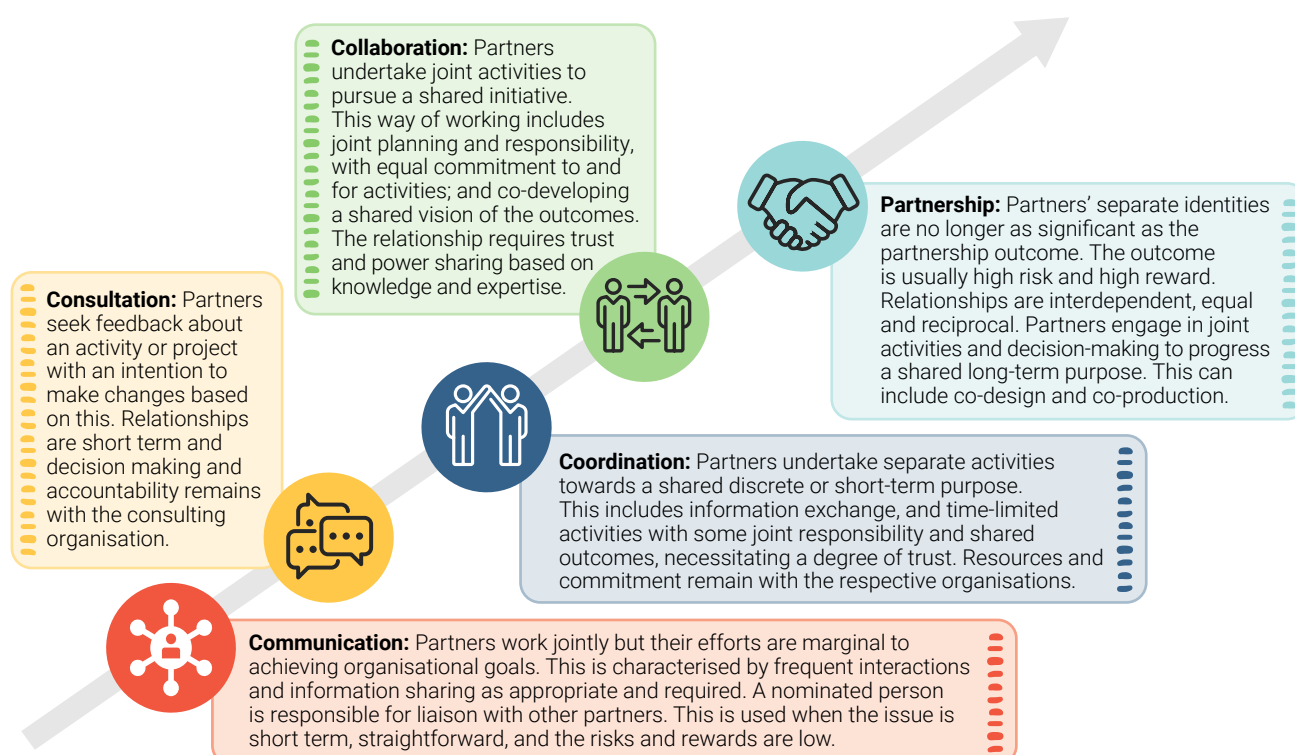- capacity, capability and willingness of partners.

Partnership arrangements cover a range of types and should be adapted to the needs and characteristics of each initiative and the partners involved: not all situations require a partnership, and not all relationships will progress to partnership.

The partnership spectrum[iv] (**Figure 1**) clarifies the appropriate relationship types, levels, methods and structures to achieve a desired outcome. The relationship types and methods spanning communication, cooperation, consultation, collaboration and partnership are shown in **Figure 2**[v].

Relationships may stop at cooperation, coordination or collaboration as appropriate while others may move up and down the Spectrum, responding and adapting to internal and external factors.

Figure 2: Relationship Types

Collaboration: Partners undertake joint activities to pursue a shared initiative. This way of working includes joint planning and responsibility, with equal commitment to and for activities; and co-developing a shared vision of the outcomes. The relationship requires trust and power sharing based on knowledge and expertise.

Partnership: Partners' separate identities are no longer as significant as the partnership outcome. The outcome is usually high risk and high reward. Relationships are interdependent, equal and reciprocal. Partners engage in joint activities and decision-making to progress a shared long-term purpose. This can include co-design and co-production.

Consultation: Partners seek feedback about an activity or project with an intention to make changes based on this. Relationships are short term and decision making and accountability remains with the consulting organisation.

Coordination: Partners undertake separate activities towards a shared discrete or short-term purpose. This includes information exchange, and time-limited activities with some joint responsibility and shared outcomes, necessitating a degree of trust. Resources and commitment remain with the respective organisations.

Communication: Partners work jointly but their efforts are marginal to achieving organisational goals. This is characterised by frequent interactions and information sharing as appropriate and required. A nominated person is responsible for liaison with other partners. This is used when the issue is short term, straightforward, and the risks and rewards are low.

Relationships are fluid, moving up and down the spectrum depending upon the task and context, and relative impact and intensity of the relationship. The position on the spectrum is also indicative of the expectations and commitments.

The spectrum and continuum models provide useful tools for working with new or current partners, by assessing and designing the level and type of relationships most appropriate to achieving a specific purpose, and subject to regular review of the arrangement.

Building successful partnerships

Partnerships can deliver many benefits, but they are not without risks and challenges. Common characteristics of unsuccessful partnering practices include:

- Compromising personal and organisational credibility, reputation and trust.
- Compromising organisational culture and values.
- Tension and conflict between partners.
- Loss of power and autonomy of one or both partners.
- Reinforcing stereotypes and ill-will.

Understanding the recognised elements and conditions of successful partnerships, and applying this across the life of the partnership, can minimise risk and maximise partnership benefits and success.[vi]

Elements and conditions of successful and sustainable partnerships, include:

- Acknowledging and harnessing each partners' strengths and assets.
- Acknowledging and understanding each partners' and persons' values, beliefs and cultural background.
- Acknowledging and accounting for each partners' constraints and limitations.
- Respecting each partners' organisational culture and values.

- Establishing mutually agreed and understood partnership rationale, vision and goals.
- Defining and agreeing to each partners' roles and responsibilities.
- Co-developing plans to manage change, resolve conflict and manage risks.
- Agreeing to and planning for regular partnership health checks and resolving challenges as they arise.
- Communicating openly, honestly and transparently.
- Securing interest, ownership and commitment from senior levels in each partner organisation.
- Sharing information and being open about what can and can't be shared.
- Building trust and familiarity between partner organisations and staff involved in the partnership.
- Having honest discussions on difficult issues.
- Recognising, rewarding and celebrating individual and collective successes.
- Acknowledging the individual benefits to each but remaining focused on shared outcomes.

Suggested tool:

The 12 Steps Towards Successful Cross-sector Partnerships describes the elements and conditions in more detail.

How to partner

Successful partnerships are developed, managed and nurtured systematically. The Partnership Lifecycle (below) is four stage process for managing a partnership over time. Each stage of the lifecycle is underpinned by several steps and tasks.[vii] The stages, steps and tasks include information and tools to guide users through each stage. The Lifecycle is a guide only, it is not expected that a partnership will follow these stages sequentially or complete all steps and tasks at each stage.

Figure 3: The Partnership Lifecycle

Partnership Lifecycle

1 **Stage 1:** Scope, build and plan

> **Step 1:** Partnership readiness
> **Step 2:** Scope and assess
> **Step 3:** Choosing the right partners
> **Step 4:** Partnership structure
> **Step 5:** Partnership review – maintain, sustain or adjourn?

2 **Stage 2:**
Manage and
maintain

3 **Stage 3:**
Review and revise

4 **Stage 4:**
Sustain, adapt
or adjourn?

Partnership Lifecycle Stage 1:
Scope, build and plan

This section of the Framework describes critical success and risk factors to consider when planning a partnership. It includes prompts and tools to support users to evaluate why and whether you should partner, with who, and how.

Creating a successful partnership takes time. Investing time in laying the groundwork could minimise risks and maximise success across the life of the partnership.

Stage 1 focuses on laying the groundwork by identifying prospective partners and bringing them together for exploratory meetings prior to

commencement. These meetings provide an opportunity to[viii]:

- establish and build trust and rapport
- gauge willingness and capacity to partner
- establish a shared purpose and objective(s)
- generate shared ownership and commitment, and an understanding of mutual benefits
- discuss ground rules, expectations and outcomes
- discuss and agree on joint activities, membership and responsibilities, and the partnership structure and lifespan
- identify potential issues, constraint and challenges, and discuss how they can be managed and addressed.

These preliminary conversations can advance the negotiation and development of an agreed partnership arrangement during Partnership Lifecyle **Stage 2**, as well as increase the probability of partnership success.

Step 1: Partnership readiness

Partnership should begin with a self-assessment of individual and organisational, partnership readiness[ix]. A partnership readiness assessment can guide consideration and assessment of individuals', and the agency's, partnership capacity and capability, and benefits and risks of partnering before entering a partnership. Further, the information gathered can support the selection of the right partners and partnership arrangement to achieve the desired outcome.

> **Suggested tool:**
>
> The Internal Prospective Partnership Assessment can guide a structured approach to **Step 1.**

Step 2: Scope and assess

Scoping and assessing focuses on thinking about the partnership's purpose, partnership building, why a partnership is wanted or needed, and who to partner with and how. Questions to guide this process, include:

- Should we partner?
- What purpose would the partnership serve?
- How should we define success?
- What type of relationship do we need or want?

> **Suggested tool:**
>
> The Partnership Checklist can guide a structured approach to **Step 2.**

Step 3: Choosing the right partners

Successful partnerships bring together the right organisations. The right partners are those who have the capabilities, attributes and values that will enable the partnership to achieve its objectives: that is, those who have compatible and complementary skills, knowledge and values, and who can value add by filling gaps in organisational capability.[x] This includes cultural and place-based knowledge and relationships.

> **Suggested tool:**
>
> The Choosing Partners Checklist can guide a structured approach to **Step 3**.

Step 4: Partnership structure

Not all relationships need to be formal or formalised. Partners may choose informal arrangements, such as ad-hoc information sharing with agreed timelines and processes, to formal arrangements with governance and accountability mechanisms. Regardless of the level of formality, managing, maintaining and sustaining the partnership will be easier if partners work together to co-develop and document[xi]:

- agreed structures on how goals, resources, risks, successes and accountabilities will be shared, communicated and celebrated
- power imbalances between partners and how these will be managed
- the partnership purpose, common goals, joint objectives, roles and responsibilities, performance expectations, review mechanisms and an exit strategy
- protocols for communication, ways of work, and dispute resolution.

A clear governance structure, whether formalised or informally agreed, establishes how the partnership will be managed, behave and operate, and provides a baseline for monitoring and assessing the partnership's health and achievements. A Partnership Agreement, described under Partnership Lifecycle Stage 2, may be appropriate.

Suggested tool:

The Partnership Toolkit *Formalising how you will work together* checklist can guide a structured approach to **Step 4**.

Partnership structures are discussed in more detail at Partnership Lifecyle **Stage 2**.

Step 5: Partnership review – maintain, sustain or adjourn?

Regular partnership health checks are important to maintaining the partnership, and decisions on whether a partnership should be sustained or adjourned. Thinking about the partnership's final stages during pre-partnership discussions may provide a sense check on partners' commitment and appetite for risk and help shape a future partnership agreement. Points for consideration could include:

- What will be measured: the partnership, partnership outcomes or both?
- What will success or failure look like?
- How will outcomes and success be measured? What data and information needs to be captured, who will record it and how?
- Can, and should, we sustain the partnership, outcomes or both beyond the agreed end date?
- What will be the next steps and how will we move on?

Suggested tool:

The Reflecting on and Continuing the Partnership checklist can guide a structured approach to **Step 5**.

Maintaining, sustaining or adjourning a partnership is discussed in more detail at Partnership Lifecyle **Stages 4**.

Partnership Lifecycle Stage 2: Manage and maintain

This section of the Framework provides suggestions and tools to support the early stages of partnership establishment.

Stage 1 of the Partnership Lifecycle: Scope, build and plan, was about bringing prospective partners together, establishing trust and exploring partnership possibilities. Done well, it should have established the right conditions for Stage 2: Manage and maintain. Partners should feel comfortable being open and honest about their understanding of the partnership purpose and benefits, and each partner should have the knowledge and confidence to co-develop a Partnership Agreement[xii].

A Partnership Agreement is critical to partnership sustainability, maturity and success. Developed by all partners, the Partnership Agreement:

- Acts as a guideline on how members will behave and interact.
- Governs how the partnership will operate and what it seeks to achieve.
- Provides a baseline for monitoring and reviewing the partnership's health and success.

It is recommended that the Partnership Agreement captures most, or all, of the following elements for a sustainable partnership:

- Declarations of any actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- An agreed understanding of the partnership, and shared vision, purpose and direction, and success.
- Agreed principles and behaviours defining how partners will collaborate, build consensus, communicate, and foster trust, respect, and active participation.

- The roles, responsibilities and expectations of all partners.
- Agreed levels of administrative support and funding responsibilities.
- How skills or information gaps will be addressed.
- The anticipated breadth and span of influence, and the extent of representation and membership.
- Communication and workflow processes, with separate plans if required.
- A monitoring and reporting methodology, identifying indicators, timeframes and milestones, and how progress will be tracked and risks addressed.
- A process for ongoing monitoring, reporting and reflection on how the partnership is working.
- Regular progress reporting to internal and external stakeholders.
- Conflict management processes and procedures.

The degree of formality required of the Partnership Agreement will depend on the nature and purpose of the partnership. Some partnerships may be established informally, others may require a legally binding agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding. Legal advice may also be required. The Governance, Integrity and Reform Division can provide advice on the most appropriate type of agreement and conflicts of interest.

> **Suggested tool:**
>
> The Partnership Arrangements checklist can guide a structured approach to designing and negotiating a partnership.

Partnership Lifecycle Stage 3: Review and revise

This section of the Framework focuses on Stage 3 of the Partnership Lifecyle: Review and revise, providing general guidance and tips on maintaining the momentum, overcoming challenges, and monitoring the partnership's health and success.

Post-establishment, partners' focus often shifts from the partnership to project/service implementation and delivery. Successful partnerships are those where partners achieve a balance between delivering outputs and outcomes and maintaining the partnership[xiii].

The Partnership Agreement is critical to achieving this balance, providing a baseline of expectations against which the partnership can be monitored and evaluated. Regular monitoring supports partners to:

- assess, evidence and communicate the partnership's achievements, impact, value and effectiveness
- identify and address partnership challenges before they become unsolvable
- make informed decisions about whether to sustain or adjourn the partnership (**Lifecyle Stage 5**).

Suggested tool:

The Partnership Healthcheck Tool can support a structured approach to **Stage 3.**

Partnership Lifecycle Stage 4: Sustain, adapt or adjourn?

This section of the Framework provides guidance on moving on options and next steps, ensuring outcomes can be sustained and celebrating and sharing the 'story' of the partnership.

Most partnerships will end. Some are time limited, designed to end at agreed date, stage or when the original purpose has been delivered or achieved. Some may need to adapt to continue delivering the intended outcomes. Others end because attempts to save them have failed.

Partnership practitioners[xiv] recognise that to be successful, partnerships should not resist change, and be willing to adapt or adjourn as required. Knowing when and how to adapt or adjourn is important to sustaining trust and relationships between partners beyond the life of the partnership.

Early discussions about and planning for partnership succession or cessation can help manage these risks. Discussions and plans should include how the partnership will:

1. identify, acknowledge and celebrate its partners, their contributions and collective accomplishments
2. document the partnerships history and key learnings
3. adapt or change, including prospective new members, purpose and processes
4. be dissolved
5. inform internal and external stakeholders about its succession or cessation.

Practitioners recommend including discussions about adapting and adjourning during **Stage 1** pre-partnership discussions, and documenting options and plans in the Partnership Agreement (**Stage 2**).

The following describe common partnership succession and cessation scenarios.

Scenario 1: Partners decide to sustain and continue the partnership, making minor adaptations and improvements if required. In this situation, consider how the partnership's achievements can be celebrated, documented and communicated.

Scenario 2: One or more partners choose to leave. In this situation, in addition to celebrating, documenting and communicating achievements, also consider succession planning, including:
- reassigning the departing member(s) roles and responsibilities
- identifying and engaging prospective replacement partners
- continuity of the partnership while new partners are brought on board.

Scenario 3: The partnership disbands because partners decide that one partner organisation can sustain and deliver the partnership initiative independently. In this situation, in addition to celebrating, documenting and communicating achievements (as above), also consider, depending on the circumstances:
- how partnership activities, assets and liabilities will be transferred to the remaining partner; and/or
- whether departing members should remain connected to the partnership initiative and how, such as a trustee or adviser.

Scenario 3: The original partnership disbands, but partners decide to sustain relationships and/or activities under a different management or partnership arrangement. In this situation, consider how partners' and the partnership's achievements can be celebrated, its history and key learnings documented, and changes communicated with stakeholders.

Scenario 4: A partnership ends because it has reached its intended end date or delivered the intended initiative(s) or outcome(s). Ending the partnership indicates achievement rather than failure. In this situation, consider how the partnership's achievements can be celebrated, documented and communicated, as well as how its end will be formalised.

Scenario 5: A partnership ends because partners decide it is no longer effective and/or functional, and their attempts to avoid cessation have failed. In this situation, consider how the partnership's achievements, challenges and lessons learned will be acknowledged and documented, and how its end will be formalised and communicated to stakeholders.

> **Suggested tool:**
>
> The Ending Partnerships Painlessly Checklist can guide a structured approach to **Stage 4**.

Appendix 1:
Sources and additional resources

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Endnotes

i   See for example John R. Butcher, et al (2019), OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance; KPMG INTERNATIONAL; Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS).

ii   See for example Bryson, Ackerman and Eden, 2016:2; Jackson et al, 2008; Carey, McLoughlin and Crammond, 2015; Wilkins, Phillimore and Gilchrist, 2015.

iii   See for example, Butcher et al, 2019; Caplan and Jones, 2002.

iv   Adapted from ACI: NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation, 2014. Other relationship spectrum and continuum models include for example Himmelman, 2002 and Keast and Mandell, 2013 for the Australians Research Alliance for Children and Youth.

v   Adapted from The Partnership Initiative Relationship Spectrum and World Food Program Corporate Partnership Strategy.

vi   See for example The Partnership Initiative; Butcher et al, 2019; Porter and Birdi, 2018. See for example The Partnership Initiative; Butcher et al, 2019; Keast and Mandell, 2013; Porter and Birdi, 2018.

vii   See for example, The Partnership Brokers Association 2019, KPMG INTERNATIONAL

viii   These factors are widely identified as key partnership mechanisms, see for example Argarwal et al, 2015; QCOSS, 2018; Roussos and Fawcett, 2000; Wilkins, Phillimore and Gilchrist, 2015; Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2015; Carey and Crammond, 2015

ix   See for example, Victorian Council of Social Service; Keast and Mendell, 2013.

x   See for example, the Australian Department of Social Services; VicHealth; The Partnering Initiative.

xi   See for example, Wilkins, Phillimore and Gilchrist, 2015.

xii   See for example, VCOSS; the World Wildlife Fund.

xiii   See for example, Australian Department of Social Services; VCOSS; World Wildlife Fund.

xiv   See for example The Partnership Initiative Moving on: Effective partnership transitions, transformations and exits. See for example The Partnership Initiative Moving on: Effective partnership transitions, transformations and exits; Australian Department of Social Services.