



How to develop good cross-sector partnerships in community investment

What is Community Investment?

Cross-sector partnerships are a key element of businesses' community investment activity as they allow companies and other organisations to leverage resources, address social issues more effectively and benefit all partners.

The current corporate / charity partnership landscape

- 83% of companies and 97% of NGOs expect partnerships to become more or much more important in the next three years
- 58% of corporates believe that their partnerships have helped them change business practices for better
- Both corporates and NGOs agree that effectively harnessing the business competencies and non-cash assets can make much more of an impact on the NGOs than those businesses' financial support
(C&E Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer 2014)

Collaboration between companies and between sectors is not new. More and more organisations are looking to partner not only with charities but also with other businesses, public sector agencies, housing associations and social enterprises.

For companies, having a 'charity of the year' can require a lot of time and resources. Historically the relationship has been based on fundraising for the charity involving stakeholders such as employees and clients but sometimes it's difficult to articulate the difference made just after a year. Increasingly, businesses are preferring to extend this commitment to three years or more. Periodically revisiting the partnership objectives and commitments, focusing efforts in long term changes, contributing to the partner's capacity building and having a multi-layered partnership is considered best practice.

This guide provides information on how your business can develop a sustainable and successful partnership with other organisations. It includes:

- an overview of the five principles of good community investment
- key steps to build a good partnership
- recommendations to keep in mind
- examples of good partnerships
- useful links



1. Community Investment

The process of developing good cross-sector partnerships should be considered alongside your organisation's overall approach to community investment. To find out more about best practice in community investment please visit our [website](#) or access the '[How to develop a community investment strategy guide](#)'.

Like any sound business process, developing a cross-sector partnership needs to be well thought through and respond to the business and the social issues that the business is trying to address. It fits within one the [Five principles of Good Community Investment](#):

1. Identify social issues
2. Work in partnership with your communities
3. Plan and manage your community investment
4. Inspire and engage your employees, customers and suppliers
5. Measure and evaluate the difference made



Investing time upfront to clarify what you want out of the alliance, understanding the needs and expectations of the partner and involving key stakeholders in your decision making, will enhance the impact of the partnership and distinguish your company as a good investor in the community.

What follows is a step by step guide to getting it right for your business and the community.



2. Steps to build good cross-sector partnerships

2.1 Establish what it is you want to do

The decision to enter into a partnership with a charity should be in response to your company's community aims and objectives as set out in your organisation's community strategy. Therefore you need to ensure that the partner that you select complements and works with you to achieve the aims, targets and objectives as defined by your strategy.

Once the social issues or key drivers for your partnership have been defined you should decide what you want to achieve from partnering with a community organisation. Key factors that you will have to consider include:

- Why are you looking to set up this partnership? Are there things that you can't do without the partners?
- What are the specific objectives of the partnership? Consider internal targets such as engaging your employees, and external such as strengthening brand loyalty, partnering with a charity that is easily recognised by your customers?
- What resources are you going to bring to the partnership to ensure you provide the appropriate support for both yourselves and the charity or community organisation?
- Can a partnership deliver employee volunteering opportunities for you?
- Are you willing to invest in building the capacity or capabilities of the charity in order for the partnership to be successful?
- Do you need the charity to allow you to work locally, nationally and indeed internationally if that is important to you?
- Do you need the partnership to allow you to innovate in the way you address a social need?
- Have you considered other possible partners in addition to charities such as community and/or public organisations, local government and/or social enterprises?



Once you have set your objectives you are in a position to set out what resources you are prepared to assign to the partnership. These resources will include budget to launch, manage and communicate the partnership, activities to measure the outcomes and impact of the activities and may also include restricted and unrestricted funding.

2.2 Setting the desired partner criteria

The criteria for the type of organisation you wish to partner with will of course be guided by what you want to get out of the partnership, but it is important to establish what will be required of your partner, what issues they have to tackle and what their capacity for delivery is.

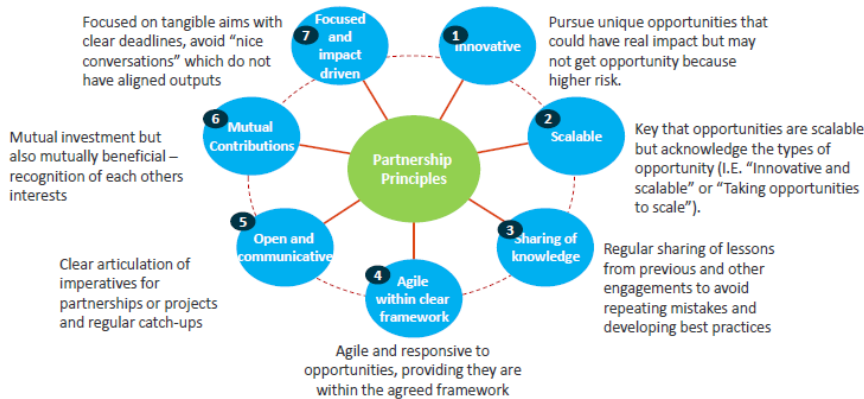
If you are looking for a partner that can offer employee volunteering opportunities as part of an employee engagement strategy then you may want to consider their geographical reach and whether that fits the location of your staff.

Finally, you may want to consider the organisational values of the charity or community partner – are they traditional, innovative, global, local, etc. - and consider whether they meet those of your organisation.

Best practice example: Marks & Spencer's partnership criteria



What are we looking for in a partnership?





2.3 Research potential partners

There are then several methods you can use to find a charity partner.

- Desk research. In particular, use websites such as Guide Star www.guidestar.org.uk which holds a list of over 160,000 UK charities.
- Ask your own people. Use your company intranet to gauge opinion internally, or take this further by organising a staff vote. You can design a simple straw poll online, and advertise the short listed charities' websites for your employees to view, or you could organise a more formal presentation for your staff, to be given by each charity or community organisation.
- Use consultants/advisers. There are both commercial organisations and voluntary organisation such as Business in the Community who will act as an adviser in this area. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations, or the Charities Aid Foundation are two others. For more information on both visit www.ncvo-vol.org.uk and www.cafonline.org respectively.

2.4 Approach those organisations that you are interested in working with

Your research should have resulted in a shortlist of organisations that you are interested in working with. Now you are at the stage to approach those organisations or indeed, invite in those that have approached you and who meet your criteria.

When you first contact the charity or community organisation, talk to them about your proposition and find out whether they would be interested in working with you. Charities and community organisations have their own selection criteria for corporate partners. These will include the nature of the work that a company undertakes, the strength of a company's reputation, and the financial return on investment that any partnership is likely to reap.

To help you get the most out of these preliminary discussions ensure you have a clear brief outlining:

1. The background and nature of your organisation and its vision, values and objectives
2. The clear social issue that you are addressing and why
3. The specific objectives for the partnership





4. The timing and proposed lifespan of the partnership
5. What you feel the partnership will bring to the charity or community organisation

Charities and community organisations understand the value they have to offer companies. This can include access to a supporter base that matches the profile of a company's target market, employee skills and expertise in certain areas, or a trusted high street brand. With this in mind, be upfront about your expectations and be fair in valuing what the charity brings to the table.

Comparing the organisation's objectives with the potential partner to see if there are any "no go" areas, or areas of difficulty is always important. The next step is to meet with the organisation and find out a bit more about them, how they would manage the partnership, and whether they are a good match for your business. This can take a number of different forms from a formal proposal, to a face to face meeting with key decision makers, or a pitch to a charity committee made up of employee representatives.

Whichever route you take be sure to give each of the organisations the best possible chance to shine by letting them know what you are looking for in a partnership and how they will be assessed.

2.5 Make the selection

So you have talked to the different charities, established who does and does not fit your criteria and vice versa, now you must decide how to select the appropriate one.

Revisit the objectives of your partnership; what you wish to achieve and the best way to do this is. If part of your objectives is to engage employees then an employee vote is the most effective way. This will ensure buy-in across the company and help to foster a sense of ownership amongst your employees. Be creative when you set this up, make use of effective communication tools which will help to increase participation.





If your objectives are more customer focussed, you may wish to enlist the support of Marketing, Innovation, Product Development and PR. Whoever you engage and however you make the final decision you should ensure your objectives and criteria are met to avoid a failed partnership.

2.6 Set specific objectives for the partnership

Now that you have your charity or community partner you need to sit down with them and define what each party's objectives for the partnership are.

The organisation's objectives are likely to include:

- Generating financial income through the company, the employees or the customers in a variety of ways.
- Gaining access to other resources such as gifts in kind that have a direct monetary value for the charity or community organisation, or that contribute to a positive impact in the community with which they work.
- Gaining access to support from your employees in the shape of skills sharing volunteering.
- Gaining the ability to share their campaigning and fundraising messages with your staff and customers where appropriate.
- Raising awareness of the groups they represent.

Finally, revisit your own objectives and also consider how you expect to measure success and long term impact.

2.7 Formalise the agreement

With the objectives set, you now need to negotiate and agree details of the partnership. Some partnerships choose to formalise the agreement through a contract, sometimes called a 'Memo of Understanding' or 'Partnership Agreement'. Whatever you choose to call it, the purpose is to provide a structure to your partnership.





The final agreement should outline:

- a description of the organisations and the respective representatives
- definition of the issue that you are addressing together
- vision and objectives of the partnership
- proposed activities
- work plan
- resource commitments from both partners
- roles and responsibilities
- risk assessment and management
- the proposed length of the partnership and milestones
- sustainability considerations to maximise long-term outcomes
- relationship management protocols (who will lead each stage and how to make sure duties are undertaken)
- decision making procedures
- funding arrangements (including how and when that money will be disbursed)
- measures to strengthen partnering capacity
- monitoring and evaluation
- how each party will profile the partnership in their internal and external communications
- branding and;
- exit strategy

A comprehensive partnering agreement scorecard by [The Partnering Initiative](#) can be found [here](#).

3. Additional recommendations

- There are five key elements that are also important to always keep in mind:
- Good communication is key. Good partnerships are based on the two way flow of communication to find opportunity areas between the organisations. It is important to have clearly defined lines of communication.
- The relationship should be built on mutual respect, with both parties clear about what they are bringing to the partnership, and both being recognised for their efforts.
- Schedule regular meetings and use them to review the process and assess how well the partnership is performing against the objectives set.
- Secure senior support from both organisations. Your partnership is more likely to succeed if it is supported at all levels of the company; in particular a senior champion can have



significant impact on levels of take-up. Your senior sponsor could chair a steering group which directs and supports the programme. This facilitates finding future opportunities too.

- Allocate enough time and resources for measurement and evaluation. This is often underestimated but capturing the impact of the activity will help to support your business case and review the effectiveness of the partnership

4. Some examples

Click (ctrl+click) on the images to get directed to their website.

4.1 Barclays, Plan & Care partnership



Since 2009, Banking on Change, the partnership between Barclays and the charities CARE International and Plan UK, has been using a savings-led approach to financial inclusion that has already opened up access to financial services, and given the skills to save, to over half a million people. It has developed a model for linking informal savings groups to formal banking services.

4.2 Boots and MacMillan



By partnering with Macmillan, Boots UK have made cancer support readily available at many of their high street stores. Pharmacists have been specially trained to help customers cope with cancer, the Boots Macmillan beauty advisors are trained to give make-up tips to help customers affected by cancer manage the visible side effects of cancer treatment. This is a multi-layered



partnership that includes fundraising, matched giving, cause related marketing/recognition, hospitality, volunteering, exchange of expertise.

4.3 HEINEKEN UK and Addaction



These two organisations have been working together for over a decade. In 2014 'Act for Addaction' was launched and actively engaged HEINEKEN's colleagues in the partnership for the first time. Colleagues conducted fundraising and volunteered in a range of activities from teams refurbishing Addaction service centres, to capacity-building volunteering such as setting up a mentoring programme with Addaction staff.

Act for Addaction has enabled HEINEKEN not only to underline its commitment to tackling alcohol misuse, but also to increase colleagues' understanding of alcohol misuse and their approach to tackling alcohol harm, creating ambassadors for responsible consumption.

4.4 PwC's Brigade and Beyond Food



An exciting and pioneering triple sector partnership between the private, public and beyond profit sectors to help disadvantaged individuals develop employability skills and find work. The project forms part of the Fire station, a social enterprise hub supporting the development of the social enterprise sector.





5. Useful links

The C&E Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer 2014

<http://www.candeadvisory.com/barometer>

Provides an assessment of the motivations, drivers, barriers, enablers, role models, trends and forecasts for corporate-NGO partnering.

The Partnering Initiative

<http://thepartneringinitiative.org/>

Reports, toolboxes and other useful resources development of the theory and practice of partnering; in supporting organisations from all sectors to partner effectively and strategically; and in building the capacities and putting in place the infrastructure to scale up collaboration worldwide.

Contact BITC

If you would like more information about community investment please visit our [Community Investment resource bank for members](#) or alternatively get in touch with your Corporate Advisor or the [Community Investment Team](#).

