

How to Create Partnerships Guide



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Partnerships can be very helpful for delivering Transition activities in your community. They can enable you to be more effective, build new relationships, and bring a range of other benefits to your group. Working in a partnership can be great, and they can also be challenging if they are not set up properly.

This guide offers an overview of how partnerships develop. Specifically, it covers topics such as: 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.

The Importance of Partnerships

Working in partnership with others is a great way to reduce competition and build a more collaborative culture in your community (see [Transition in Group Culture](#), see [Working Together Well](#)). Some of the benefits of partnerships include:

- Not duplicating work that is already being done.
- Expanding on existing work and accomplishments.
- Connecting with more people.
- Building relationships, which is key to building a resilient community.
- Supporting different aspects of transitioning by relying on different groups' experience.
- Co-creating new ideas and solutions that you could not do on your own.
- Helping both partners to be more sustainable by working together long-term.
- Increasing awareness of the Transition movement.
- Getting more people involved in your Transition group.
- Finding out about future opportunities for funding and financial support.



Types of Partnerships

There are many different ways you can work in partnership, from very informal to more involved partnerships. At the informal level you can:

Share Information. Sharing information can help foster a sense of openness, while also increasing opportunities for your group and your partners. If your partners know what you are doing, and you know what they are doing, then you can be more aware of possibilities for working together. It also helps to avoid clashing with your partners' events or duplicating work.

Ask to Consult. Consulting with other groups is great for building support and relationships. It shows that you are open to the views of others with the added bonus of raising your profile. It can also provide useful feedback from people in your community.

At the next level of partnership, often involving a greater level of commitment, you can:

Decide together. This is often seen as a deeper level of consultation. With your partners, you make decisions about what is going to happen, without delivering projects together. This can be a great way to involve key people in your community with whatever you are trying to achieve. This can help to develop a feeling of joint ownership of community projects (see [Decision Making](#)).

Support other groups in your community. You help others do what they want by providing various kinds of support: like materials, resources, personnel, or financing. Many Transition groups see this as their main work in their community. This can also happen the other way around, where your Transition group receives support from partners to do your projects.

Deliver projects together. Using a similar approach, you work alongside your partners to deliver a project together. These types of partnerships can be both rewarding and challenging. Depending on the project, working with partners can be very simple. Try not to over-complicate things. Delivering projects in partnership often benefits from thinking carefully about how you will work together (see [Working Together Well](#), see [Building Trust](#), see [Group Agreements](#)).

Strong partnerships benefit from having a good foundation in place at the beginning. It helps when everyone is clear about what they are doing and what they have signed up to deliver.



Creating a Successful Partnership

Having a few things in place from the beginning can help your partnership to be successful:

- Having a shared vision of what might be achieved by working together (see [Visioning a Post-Transition Future](#))
- Respect and trust between different partners (see [Respect for Diversity](#), see [Building Trust](#))
- Respected individuals taking strong leadership in the partnering process (see [Leaderfull Groups](#))
- Agreeing shared aims and objectives through a clear and open process (see [Group Agreements](#))
- Putting time into building the partnership
- Having similar aims and values
- Being clear on how you work together and make decisions (see [Working Together Well](#), see [Decision Making](#))

Why Partnerships Fail

A partnership will only succeed if both partners deliver on what they have promised. A few things to watch out for and to try and avoid include:

- Not creating an inspiring shared vision
- Unequal power in the partnership (see [Power and Privilege](#))
- Lack of a clear purpose to the partnership
- Confusion around different roles and responsibilities
- Clashing values and ways of working
- Not putting in enough time or commitment
- Hidden agendas and competition
- Failure to communicate properly
- Lack of evaluation or monitoring systems (see [Monitoring and Evaluation](#))
- Failure to learn from past and ongoing mistakes (see [Action-Reflection Cycle](#))

Setting Up a Partnership

When approaching a potential partner, try 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. How might a partnership help both sides to achieve what they want? Ideally this gives everyone a better understanding of what working together would be like and whether it is a good idea.



If you feel that it is not going to work, it is fine to not enter into a partnership. Working together is ideally something that feels exciting, fun, and rewarding; not burdensome or depleting.

Develop a shared understanding at the start

At the beginning, work together closely to set up the partnership. If you don't, it can become very difficult later on. Build a strong foundation for your partnership by:

1. Being very clear with each other about:
 - What it is you both want from the partnership.
 - What your shared aims and objectives are.
 - What you are both trying or hoping to achieve.
2. Making sure that people in both groups:
 - support the other group.
 - are committed to working together in partnership.
 - understand the reason for the partnership and the benefits it brings.
 - understand each other's values, and ideally share some of them.
3. Developing a genuinely shared vision and set of goals for the project that everyone has agreed to
4. Understanding how each organisation operates, since your group might operate very differently from a more formal organisation.

Attitude towards partnerships

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

- Being genuinely interested in understanding other groups and communities (see [Enhancing Cultural Competence](#)).
- Seeing yourselves as building relationships (not “recruiting” people to “your” group)(see [Building Bridges](#)).
- Communicating with each other in a language you both understand.
- Seeing yourselves as a neighbour, networker, and facilitator, not as a leader.
- Welcoming each other's different points of view, with no expectation of always agreeing (see [Respect for Diversity](#), see [Re-Framing Conflict](#)).
- Enjoying the ride and looking for fun in each opportunity that arises.



Planning the actual work

Be open and honest about your capacity to deliver and what that will look like; this helps avoid misunderstanding later on. Try to do some things together:

- Plan out the project over time, think about timescales and what it is you want to achieve (see [Producing a Timeline](#)).
- Be clear about people's roles and responsibilities and how you will work together.
- Use a range of methods to involve people; workshop sessions as well as formal meetings (see [Events to Help Promote Your Project](#), see [Small Practical Project Ideas](#)).
- Encourage ideas from your partners and plan activities together, This helps build a feeling of ownership that leads to commitment.

Have fun together and celebrate!

Try to take some time to celebrate and to have fun when working with partners. A great way to build relationships with people is to laugh, have fun, and celebrate together.

Related Resources

[Transition in Group Culture](#)

[Working Together Well](#)

[Decision Making](#)

[Building Trust](#)

[Group Agreements](#)

[Effective Groups](#)

[Visioning a Post-Transition Future](#)

[Leaderfull Groups](#)

[Power and Privilege](#)

[Monitoring and Evaluation](#)

[Action-Reflection Cycle](#)

[Enhancing Cultural Competence](#)

[Building Bridges](#)

[Respect for Diversity](#)

[Re-Framing Conflict](#)

[Producing a Timeline](#)

[Events to Help Promote Your Project](#)

[Small Practical Project Ideas](#)



References

[Boosting Impact: 3 Creative Ways Nonprofits Can Partner For Success](#)

[Collaboration: Building the International Partnership](#) - Non-Profit Risk Management Center



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