

Building and Sustaining Effective Partnerships

A Guide for Practitioners





we all work with partners
we all are partners ourselves
we all have experience to share
we all have something to learn



What is a Partnership?

An ongoing working relationship where risks and benefits are shared.

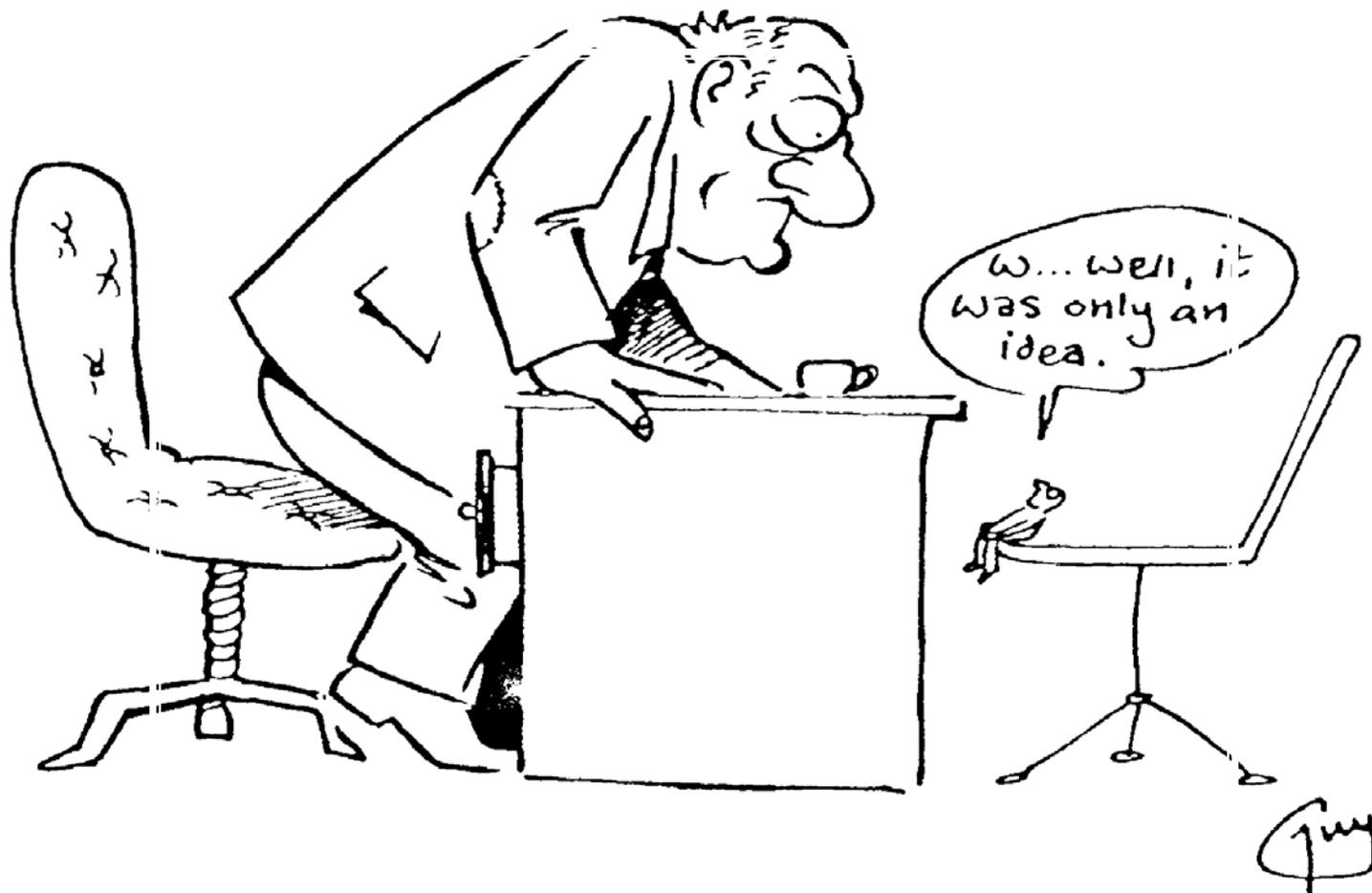


What is a Partnership, in practice?

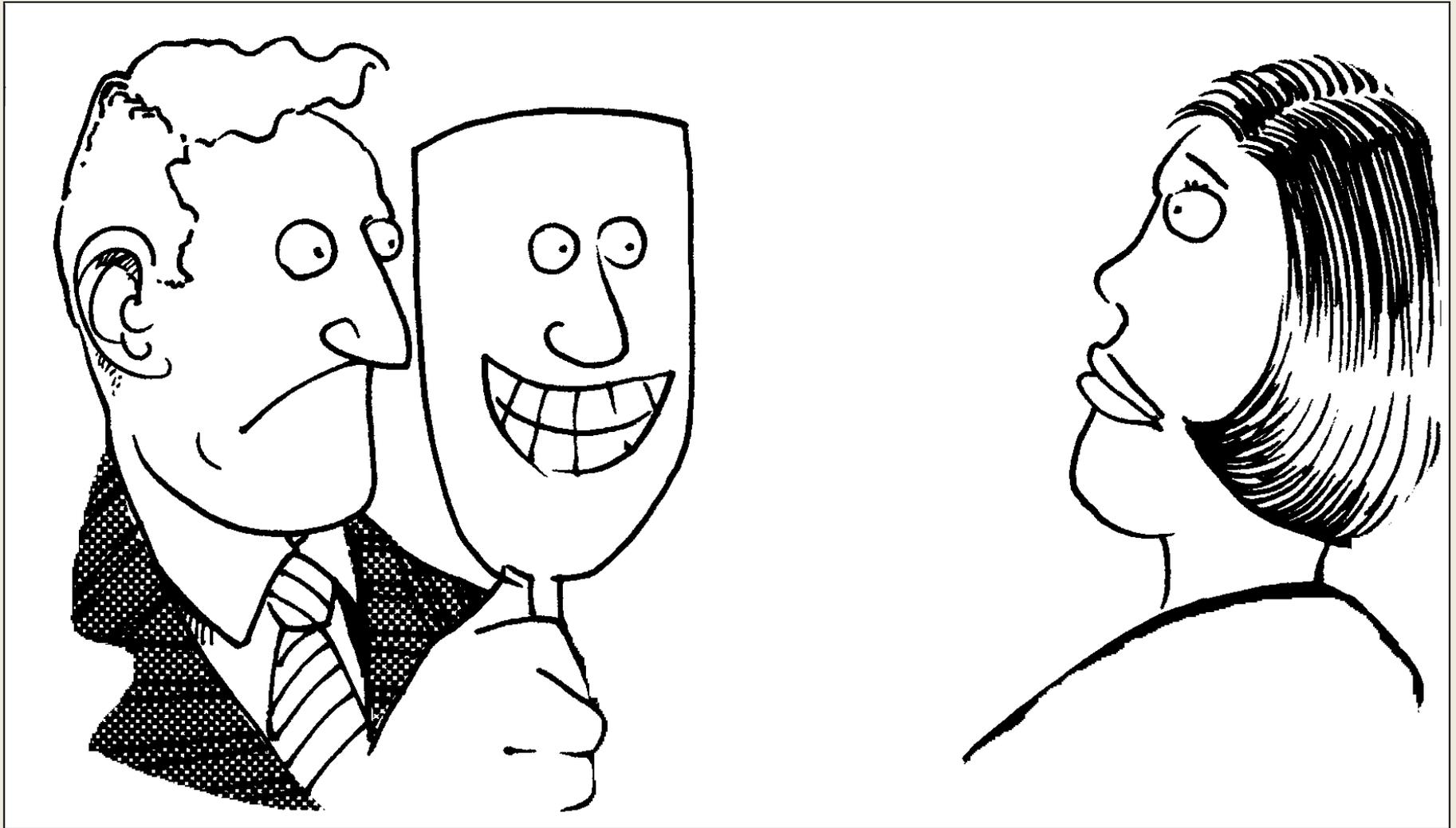
1. Joint creation of projects
2. Commitment of tangible resources
3. Mutual accountability



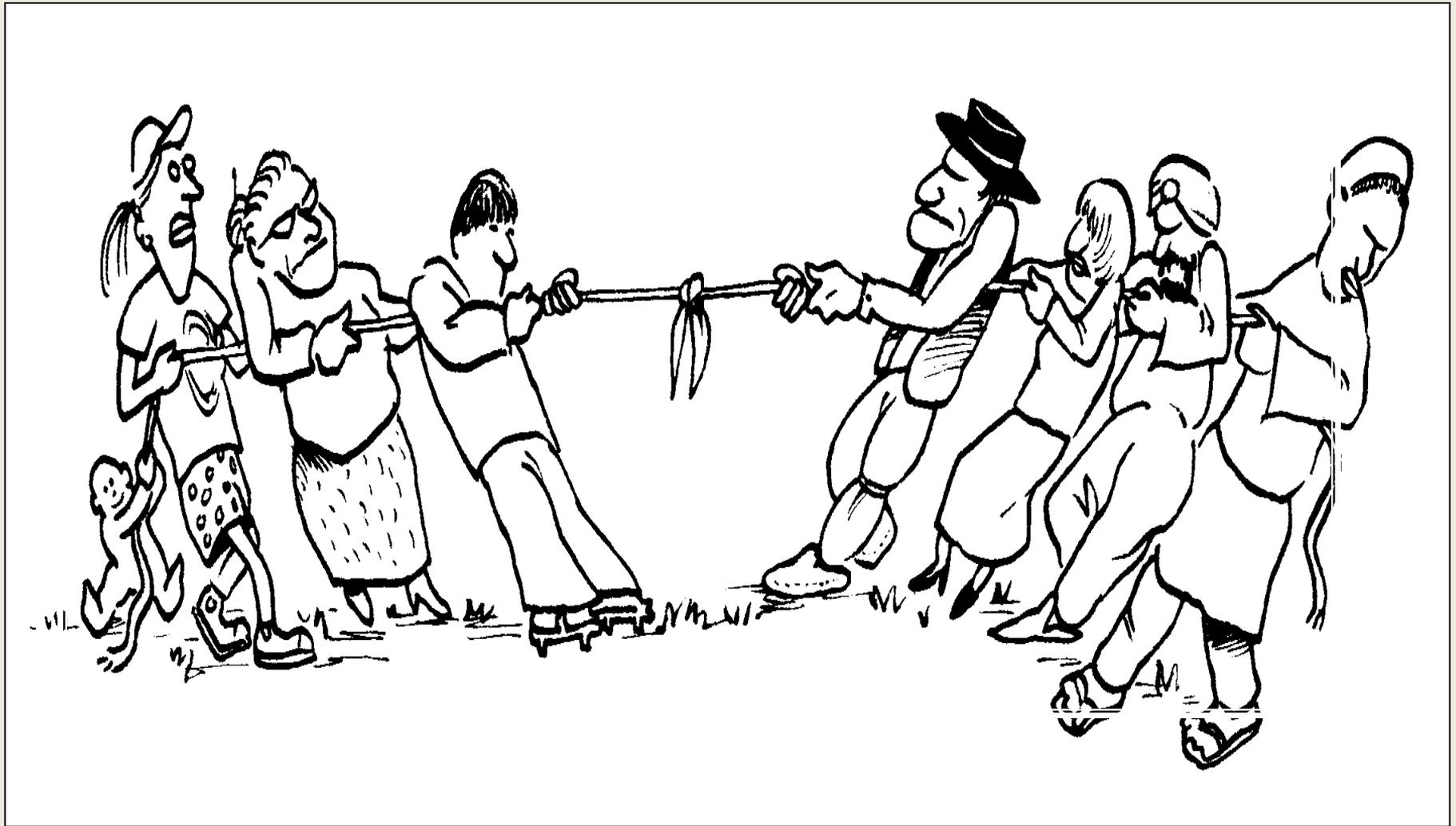
What gets in the way?



power imbalance



lack of transparency



each partner aiming to 'win' at any cost...



Why do all partnerships need these 3 core principles?

1. EQUITY

because it leads to

RESPECT

for the added value each party brings

2. TRANSPARENCY

because it leads to

TRUST

with partners more willing to innovate & take risks

**3. MUTUAL
BENEFIT**

because it leads to

ENGAGEMENT

more likely to sustain & build relationship over time

Exploring some further concepts

What difference does it make which organization or sector **initiates** a partnership?

What difference does it make if partnering is **voluntary** or a **requirement**?

What kind of **time commitment** do you think it takes to engage in partnership? Is it codified within your organization?



A Strategic Approach to Partnership





Preparing to partner





1

PREPARE

To Partner or Not to Partner?

- New ideas
- Expanded scale
- Exchange technical expertise
- Provide, receive, or expand funding
- Share data
- Access to new constituents
- Leverage influence

- More time & cost upfront
- Increased coordination & communication needs
- Investment in maintenance
- Increased risks:
unproductive relationships,
partners not meeting
goals/expectations, etc.
- Changing organizational
visions and strategies

Partnership Intensity

Cooperation	Coordination	Collaboration
Lower Intensity/informal		Higher Intensity/formal
Shorter-term, informal relationships	Longer-term effort around a project or task	More durable and pervasive relationships
Shared information only	Some planning and division of roles	New structure with commitment to common goals
Separate goals, resources, and structures	Some shared resources, rewards, and risks	All partners contribute resources and share rewards and leadership
EX: Associations, networks	EX: Coalitions, project teams	EX: Joint ventures



The Art and Science of Partnering

1
PREPARE

- Insight / imagination
- Vision
- People skills, i.e. flexibility, humbleness
- Relationship building
- Personal engagement style



- Technical knowledge
- Negotiation, mediation, facilitation skills
- Critical analysis
- Evaluation
- Project Management





Selecting Partners

2
SELECT





Partner Selection Process





Scoping Checklist



Does the partner have...	Current status	Further actions
A good track record?		
Good standing in the field/sector?		
Wide-ranging contacts and influence?		
Skills and competencies that complement your org/other partners?		
Sound management and governance structures?		
Record of financial stability?		
A stable staff group?		



Negotiating Agreements



3

NEGOTIATE





Spectrum of Partnership Documentation



Less Formal:
No documentation
Verbal Agreement

More Formal:
Memorandum of
Agreement
or Understanding

Most Formal:
Partnership
Agreement
Joint Venture



Partnership Agreements



- Goals and expectations
- Roles and responsibilities
- Joint work plan
- Financing and resource contribution
- Fundraising
- Communications (including media)
- Decision-making structure
- Partnership review and measurement
- Long-term planning
- Exit strategy



Managing the Partnership





Quick Tips for Successful Collaboration



- Frequent communication, regular face-to-face meetings
- Take some field trips.
- Designate a coordinator or point person
- Get your boots muddy working on something tangible.





- Hire the right staff and clarify roles
- Joint work planning
- Manage conflicts and grievances
- Celebrate small successes





Measuring the Partnership



5
MEASURE



What to measure?

5
MEASURE

Operations

Fulfillment of commitments
Management
External communications
Transaction costs

Set up

Governance structure
Agreements
Sufficient resources
Clear roles
Right partners?
Clear review process

Partner Relations

Internal communications
Equity
Transparency
Institutional buy-in





Why measure a partnership?

- Predict early issues that could impact outcomes
- Potentially re-defining the partnership
- Keeping people motivated and on-task
- Changing activities & partners if required





Concluding or Adapting

6
CONCLUDE
OR
ADAPT





Concluding/Adapting

- Tendency is to focus on the beginning, not the closure.
- Most partnerships aren't designed or meant to last long term.
- All partnerships need to talk about the end at the beginning.



“At some point, the relationship will be so different from the one envisioned in this partnership, it will be time for this one to end. A successful exit to this partnership will be when Big Sur Land Trust is so fully competent that it has little to ask from TNC and TNC has little to offer, and when the conservation projects of mutual interest are completed.”

- Big Sur Land Trust – TNC Owner’s Manual

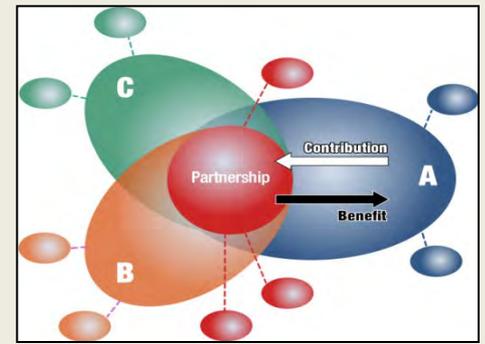


A Strategic Approach to Partnership



Example of poor partnering behavior	What does this convey to partners?	How to transform the situation with good communication?
Arriving late or ill-prepared for meetings	The meetings – and probably the partnership – are not important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ID a lead person from each org who can act as the point person -ask questions about their org’s priorities, and if they are changing -have a conversation about what could work better for them.
Making bilateral alignments/agreements with selected partners/individuals	If we agree, others will have to accept it (bullying).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -reflect on the potential negative impact on other partners, underscore need for transparency and involvement -clarify why the bilateral alignment has arisen, and explore how to share bilateral conversations with the group
Failing to complete agreed upon tasks within the timeframe, and giving no explanation	These tasks are not a priority, and the affects of me not doing them are someone else’s problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -revisit importance of the tasks, explore other ways of completing them. -
One group acting on it’s own to report partnership results to public/external stakeholder	Limited loyalty to the partnership, my own objectives are more important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -agree on a strategy and ground rules for public communication, logo use and other external communication. -discuss/recognize the importance of being accountable to the partnership.
Individual partners going to donors or board members with updates or resource requests, without the knowledge of others	We’re more interested in the success of our own organization than the groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -identify a lead person to represent the partnership in high level conversations -create an agreed upon strategy for engaging with donors

Deepening partner engagement: Ideas to assist partners / partnerships in addressing issues creatively



- Create a glossary of the partnership's language, definitions, meanings
- Create an opportunity ('safe space') to address power issues
- Introduce examples of good practice and good stories, tools, frameworks and examples of what is working, why and how
- Meet individually with partners
- Set up staff exchanges, field trips, exposure to each other's issues / values / ways of working / achievements
- Create and capture expectations of each other (eg build a set of shared values that all partners will adhere to)
- Create 'fit for purpose' communications channels and management strategies
- Give recognition to 'good behavior' and achievements to reinforce the partnership and its goals
- Be the 'champion' of the vision and plans for the partnership – and keep reminding partners of both
- Help create a pathway for partners to engage
- Encourage partners to share leadership roles and encourage champions
- Remind partners of the value of their contributions and their benefits from the partnership
- Celebrate successes
- Encourage good record-keeping and ensure records are accessible
- Develop a risk management strategy
- Create monitoring and evaluation tools

Partnering works best when groups:

- Take time to build **strong working relationships**
- Develop **genuine concern** for each other's underlying interests
- Do more **listening** than talking
- Develop good **communication skills** at all levels
- **Deal with difficulties** rather than ignoring them
- Balance a **flexible with a rigorous** approach
- Focus on practical and sustainable **results**



Special Considerations for Multi-Sector Partnerships



This and subsequent slides adapted from Partnership Brokering Association (PBA) training materials <http://www.partnershipbrokers.org/>

Some sector stereotypes

Public Sector	Corporate Sector	Non-profits	Aid Agencies
Bureaucratic	Profit-driven	Self-righteous	Arrogant
Passing the buck	Hard-nosed	Narrow focus	Overpaid
Dogmatic	Greedy	Unrealistic	Wasteful
Focused on elections	Looking for the quick fix	Looking to score points	Following the “latest fad”
Inflexible	Self-centered	Unprofessional	Unfocused
Controlling	Inconsiderate	No accountability	Insensitive

**If these stereotypes are true –
why would anyone EVER want to partner?**

Public Sector

Possible Drivers to Partner

Benefits to Public Sector of Partnering	What Public Sector Partners can Contribute
Spreading risks	Act as coordinating mechanism
Establish a sustainable business model with multiple stakeholders	Bring legitimacy and credibility into the process
Skills to implement programs	Bring in decision-making (laws)
Show buy-in on products and programs	Resources (money)

Corporate Sector

Possible Drivers to Partner

Benefits to Corporate Sector of Partnering	What Corporate Partners can Contribute
Expanding business models, new ways of doing business	Resources (money)
Employee engagement	Consumer awareness
Improve their reputation	Marketing opportunities
Decrease instability/insecurity of business environment	Distribution channels
Potential new customers, opening up new markets	Business principles, discipline, metrics
	Expertise, knowledge, know-how

Non-profit Sector

Possible Drivers to Partner

Benefits to Non-profit Sector of Partnering	What Non-profit Partners can Contribute
Leverage resources	Social license to operate
Exert influence, have a “say” (advocacy)	Contribute to social-economic processes
Create opportunities for new programs	(Human) resources, expertise, local and contextual knowledge
Build capacity, exchange knowledge	Societal enlightenment
Long-term relationships, commitments	Social accountability (help businesses achieve their triple bottom line)
Opportunities for scaling up	Expertise, knowledge, know-how
Shift from short term to more strategic partnerships	
New ways of working/experimentation	

International Agencies

Possible Drivers to Partner

Benefits to International Agencies of Partnering	What International Agency Partners can Contribute
Efficiency, save resources	Reach, influence with (international) governments and communities
Fill gaps in implementation capacity, expertise, geography	Resources (various)
New ways of working, new ideas	Research
Build capacity, exchange knowledge	Experience, stability (most international agencies have been “around the block”)
Increased visibility	Footprint (influence, presence in other continents, global level)
Access to different types of resources	Act as initiator and convening body
Scale up	

Drivers to Partner that can apply to ALL sectors

- Access to more **resources** (expertise, knowledge, skills, networks, and money)
- To have great **reach/scale/impact**
- Aspiration to have greater **legitimacy**
- (re) building **reputation**
- **Economic sustainability** for social causes
- Increasing expectations of **transparency** and **accountability**

Experience suggests that partnerships work well when...



... each sector plays its appropriate part and contributes from core competencies and strengths

Resources

TNC's Conservation Partnership Center

www.conservationpartnerships.org

World Wildlife Fund – UK [Partnership Toolkit](#)

The Partnering Initiative

www.partneringinitiative.org

The Fieldstone Alliance

www.fieldstonealliance.org

Partnership Brokers Association

www.partnershipbrokers.org

