

## DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING: Suggestions and Terminology

These pages explain some of the suggestions and terminology used in the “Developing Skills for Partnership Working” tool.

### SUGGESTIONS: A) Meeting Individual and Team Learning Needs

SUGGESTIONS...	Comments
<b>360° appraisal</b>	In staff appraisal/ personal development planning, seeking the views of partners (alongside those of colleagues, managers and customers/ users), can challenge perceptions of learning needs and clarify action needed.
<b>coaching</b>	One-to-one or small group approach to learning in everyday work situations; ‘hands-on’ where the learner is inexperienced, or ‘hands-off’ where the need is to build on experience to drive up performance. Good quality feedback essential.
<b>Common Purpose</b>	Programmes for cross-sector understanding and networking organised by the Common Purpose organisation
<b>in-house training</b>	Could concern similar topics to off-site training - see below. Potential to strengthen partnership working where <i>joint</i> training is arranged.
<b>leadership development</b>	Longer off-the-job and in-house leadership development programmes (covering, eg, building vision, influence, motivating others, managing change, etc) are becoming more widely available. Make sure that there is a strong component relating to partnerships/ inter-agency working and attention to influencing skills and leadership styles.
<b>mentoring/ buddying</b>	Use of a ‘wise and trusted’ guide and adviser, who encourages reflection, learning and confidence. May be someone with a similar or greater level of experience.
<b>networking</b>	Opportunities to get to know people from other organisations and places and discuss work topics. Potential to strengthen partnership working where networking opportunities bring people together from different interests, disciplines and organisations.
<b>off-site training</b>	<p>Formal, partnership-related courses may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ managing change</li> <li>▪ managing conflict</li> <li>▪ managing relationships and working in partnership</li> <li>▪ facilitation</li> <li>▪ team building</li> <li>▪ inter-agency project management/ programme co-ordination</li> <li>▪ use of IT for collaborative working</li> <li>▪ evaluating partnerships</li> </ul> <p>May include provision that is organised as part of continuing professional development programmes in particular professions or sectors. Distance/ on-line provision may be an option. Make sure that there are opportunities to put into practice the key behaviours required for effective partnership working.</p>
<b>problem solving &amp; creative thinking</b>	<p>Structured exercises to get to root causes of problems, to break down and restructure how we think about a subject, to gain new insights, find solutions to performance issues and create new opportunities. Techniques can include, eg, mind maps, brainstorming, fishbone diagrams, decision trees and force field analysis.</p> <p>May be part of in-house training programmes, intended to promote service improvement and innovation</p>

SUGGESTIONS...	Comments
<b>role play</b>	Structured opportunities for individuals to play - and better understand - the role of other partners, or tackle situations which develop their behavioural skills
<b>work shadowing &amp; assignments</b>	Opportunities to spend time with partners, to learn more about their work, perspectives, etc. Assignments may involve short-term projects or longer term secondments/ exchanges. The benefits will be greater where there are clear objectives, both for learning and outputs.

## SUGGESTIONS: B) Meeting Partnership Development Needs

SUGGESTIONS...	Comments
<b>action learning</b>	Where people work in small groups to tackle important issues and learn from their attempts to change things. Involves regular and rigorous sessions, which provide time and space for a process of questioning and reflection. Similar concepts include: 'learning sets', 'self-help groups', 'quality circles'.
<b>"bite-sized" briefings &amp; learning opportunities</b>	Crucial to provide digestible briefings for partnership members and opportunities where they can learn in convenient ways which take up the minimum of time. Topics might include partner roles & responsibilities, policy developments, funding opportunities, etc.
<b>benchmarking processes &amp; performance</b>	Use of benchmarks for comparing partnership processes and performance to identify ways of increasing quality and impact. May involve use of diagnostic tools with 'twinning' partnerships and the use of external standards such as the Business Excellence Model. See also Process mapping below.
<b>capacity building</b>	Development programmes which aim to facilitate the contribution of different types of partner, perhaps focusing on strengthening "lay" or under-resourced interests on a partnership. Programmes may cover, eg, the subject matter of the partnership, explanations of jargon, partnership structures and decision-making, partner roles, etc.
<b>facilitation</b>	Use of a third party to promote group learning and decision making. May apply particular techniques to specific partnership issues/ priorities (like building consensus and trust and refining partnership success measures). The facilitator role may be played by someone within the partnership, though an external party may be able to help a group make better/ faster progress.
<b>ICT systems for collaboration</b>	Use of the internet to promote improved communications, exchange of information and shared learning. May involve 'on-line learning communities' where those involved in partnership working make full use of collaboration software, web discussion areas, knowledge bases, moderated mailing lists, etc.
<b>induction about the partnership</b>	Briefings on the partnership, the partners, etc. Essential to enable new partners assimilate quickly their role and assess how best they can contribute. Can be worth checking later in the life of a partnership if members need to renew their understanding of partnership and other partners.
<b>joint project review</b>	Periodic review of partnership/ project effectiveness. There are several diagnostic tools available - other than "Smarter Partnerships"!

<b>SUGGESTIONS...</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>joint tasks/ working groups</b>	Key to improved partnership working - but need to be treated as partnerships in themselves, with similar needs to develop relationships, build the partnership team, set goals and boundaries, review progress, etc. Learning can be strengthened by ensuring that there is a conscious effort to review what has worked and why - and what has not - and build the lessons into future joint working. In many fields, opportunities arise for joint working on bids - this is especially important where partners need to work together if the bid is successful.
<b>large group interventions</b>	Big scale events which attempt to bring together all interested parties to clarify needs, build vision and win commitment. Related concepts: Open Space Technology, Community Visioning.
<b>learning labs</b>	Formed by bringing together a team/ group of people who have a direct interest in pursuing a common purpose or in tackling a mutual problem - often front-line staff. Participants asked to talk about how they could learn more from their experiences, from better information or from experimentation to bring about changes and improvements. Participants consider how they can improve their ability to learn and communicate more effectively, and develop a shared vision.
<b>process mapping</b>	Process maps are diagrams which show what an organisation or partnership does and how it delivers services. The mapping shows the major processes involved, the key activities which make up each process, their sequencing, inputs and resources required, and the outputs produced by each activity. Process mapping can help partners understand how and where they contribute to successful outcomes and focus on how best to improve service quality.
<b>study visits</b>	Structured visits to other partnerships/ organisations to review their approaches. Can inspire change. Helps to have clear learning objectives and an understanding of how to translate others' experiences to your own area.

## TERMINOLOGY - A guide to some of the words used in the learning needs analysis

<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>comments</b>
<b>skills</b>	
▪ coalition building	helping partners come together on common ground
▪ vision & consensus building	helping partners determine the difference they want to make and how to work towards it
▪ communicating	expressing ideas and concepts - especially in lay terms; listens attentively & responds
▪ consultation	asking others for their views & involving them in decision making
▪ delegating	giving someone responsibility & authority
▪ assertiveness	sure of one's own needs but willing to give to gain
<b>knowledge</b>	
▪ forms of partnership added value	how partnerships can achieve more than partners acting individually: more, better, faster results
▪ interdependencies between partner activities	how success for one partner depend on the actions of others
▪ use of performance management systems to reinforce partnership	systems relating to how resources are allocated and how (individual or organisational) performance is rewarded
<b>TRUST</b>	
<b>skills</b>	
▪ building robust relationships	seeking to ensure that others don't anticipate things which may not be delivered
▪ managing expectations	encouraging genuine two-way communications and improved mutual understanding
▪ promoting dialogue	listening actively, clarifying & checking understanding
▪ empathy	putting yourself in someone else's shoes
▪ giving constructive feedback	soliciting views & keeping people informed, while minimising demands on time
▪ managing communications	seeking to ensure that others don't anticipate things which may not be delivered
▪ coping with the unfamiliar & unexpected	encouraging genuine two-way communications and improved mutual understanding
<b>knowledge</b>	
▪ group dynamics	how people behave in groups
▪ methods to build the capacity of partners	formal and informal ways of helping partners play a full & effective role
<b>LEARNING</b>	
<b>skills</b>	
▪ systems thinking	holistic understanding of forces which shape behaviour and outcomes - intended & unintended
▪ networking	getting to know others & sharing information
▪ diagnosing performance issues	identifying what gets in the way of greater success - & scope for improvement
<b>knowledge</b>	
▪ benchmarking & process mapping	techniques for analysing & comparing critical performance requirements
▪ how to promote learning in partnerships/ groups	formal and informal means of encouraging reflection & learning by doing
▪ learning needs analysis	how to review individual & team development needs
▪ facilitation techniques	methods to enable group learning & decision-making
▪ nature & implications of the partnership life cycle	stages as partnerships develop and mature - and how to help manage change

<b>MANAGING FOR PERFORMANCE</b>	
<b>skills</b>	
▪ entrepreneurial	identifying & realising opportunities
▪ project team building	applying partnership development principles to joint team working
▪ project planning/ management	applying project management disciplines to joint projects
<b>knowledge</b>	
▪ partnership structures	different models of partnership (formal and informal) & how these fit the partnership purpose
▪ accountability mechanisms	how partners are accountable to each other & to local communities, funders, etc
▪ functions required for successful performance	roles & tasks which partners need to carry out to achieve objectives
▪ co-ordination methods	planning & programming for joint working
▪ managing meetings	how to run different kinds of meetings to ensure objectives are met
▪ partnership evaluation methods	how to assess partnership processes and impact
▪ collaborative use of ICT	applying ICT to enable partnership working/ build common knowledge