

Factsheet 4: Principles in Action Across the Different Partnership Stages.

Working Together

Working in partnership has several stages and each stage has different issues to consider. The four key stages of working in partnership are:

Stage I: Exploring the potential for the partnership.

This stage is characterised by getting to know each other and what different perspectives each party can bring and to determine common purpose and goals. It is also the stage of exploring whether you will be able to work effectively together without compromising each partner's independence. When a patient organisation or pharmaceutical company has never worked with each other before, it may be helpful to consider the following:

Issues for consideration

For HCOs:

- Why is the partnership important? What do we hope to achieve for patients?
- What are the benefits or outcomes to be gained for both partners?
- Does the partnership align with organisational values and core business/mission statement?
- What are the potential risks?
- If they are a member of Medicines Australia (MA), do they adhere to the MA Code?
- Do they have a consumer engagement policy or similar?

For companies:

- Is the patient organisation a legal entity?
- How big or small is the organisation?
- Will they have access to the patient voice we need?
- Do they have resources and capacity to achieve the goals of the partnership?
- Have they worked with pharma before? If not, what are potential barriers?
- What is their mission statement?

Practical tips

Important for both parties to undertake due diligence on the potential partner such as:

- Research the organisation and see what has been reported on previous funding, sponsorship and grants,
- What is the company's mission statement and do they value patient opinion and experience? What are their documented processes for patient engagement?
- Consult with other patient organisations that already work with companies that you can learn from
- Contact MA or check the MA website to see if the company is a member
- Each partner needs to respect each other's set of values and principles for working together

Stage 2: Establishing a partnership.

This is the stage where both parties want to commit to working together. After having explored the potential in Stage 1, both parties are wanting to define the scope of the partnership, roles and responsibilities and activities to be undertaken and agree on what they will work on together.

Issues for consideration

For HCOs:

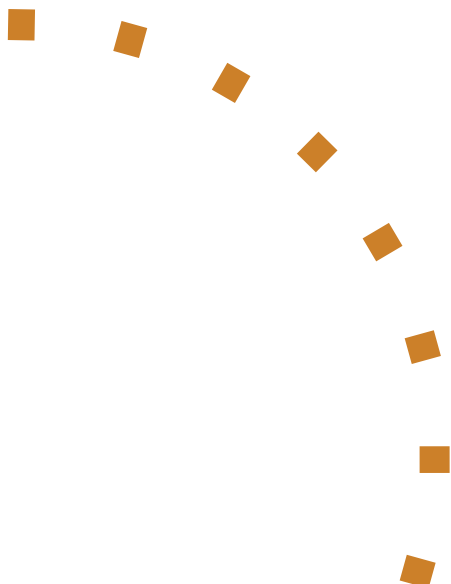
- What is the best section of the company to work with?
- How will the partnership be branded: use of logos, what endorsements will be expected?
- Who will own the IP?
- What are the patient health outcomes we are hoping for?
- What are the risks?
- What is our role and what is not our role?

For companies:

- Has the patient organisation got the resources to achieve the partnership goals?
- What is the patient organisation's decision-making process and how does that fit with our internal policies?
- Any conflicts of interest?
- Will the collaboration continue to deliver on the following:
Contribute to enhancing the quality use of medicines and improve patient health outcomes

Practical tips

- Important to have open and clear communication and discuss any concerns or risks early
- Ensure the partnership is complying with the principles and good practice guidelines
- Establish a written agreement between the organisations which outlines any funding provided, services, benefits and outcomes and clarifies roles and responsibilities
- Develop a risk management plan
- Have a nominated person in each organisation that will take responsibility for the partnership and associated activities
- Develop a public facing document that describes the partnership to external stakeholders
- Establish a regular process for communication about the services or activities so that progress can be monitored
- Seek independent legal advice, if required



Stage 3: Maintaining a partnership.

This stage is characterised by effective monitoring of progress and contractual obligations while also continuing to build a genuine partnership.

Issues for consideration for both parties

- Make a regular time to catch up to review progress and maintain regular communication about contractual roles and responsibilities
- Identify issues and make time to discuss them
- Review risk management plan
- Co-design solutions to issues and challenges and seek external advice if necessary
- Maintain a feedback loop with members, boards and external stakeholders on activities to remain transparent

Practical tips

- Have regular meetings where progress can be discussed as well as new opportunities or emerging issues/risks. Each partner could rotate chairing the meeting
- Document issues and potential solutions or plans to address issues
- Co-design or co-develop a solution to challenges arising so that both parties contribute to the problem solving
- Have a consistent narrative about the partnership to external stakeholders and report progress publicly on each partners websites
- Ensure public facing documents are co-branded with partner logos reflecting commitment from both parties
- Profile the benefits of working together using various communication platforms. Telling stories of collaboration that leads to positive change will help lead a cultural shift.

Stage 4: Terminating/Closing a partnership.

Unfortunately, there are occasions where a partnership is not working or it was established for a finite period or specific purpose and when that is achieved, there does not seem a clear reason to keep the partnership going. If the partnership is finishing for the latter reason, it is more straightforward. The common purpose has been achieved or completed and the door may remain open for future collaborative endeavours. If the partnership needs to end because it is not working or objectives are not being met, it is important to look at the contract or agreement and ensure you follow due process in ending the contract. This may involve giving written notice and handing back unspent funds. Important to consider the following:

Issues for consideration for both parties

- Clear rationale and evidence for terminating partnership
- Is there a process outlined in a written contract or agreement for ending the partnership? If so, follow the steps
- Be transparent about unmet goals and outstanding funds and how they will be managed
- How the termination of the partnership will be reported to both organisations and externally

Practical tips

- Aim to resolve problems in the partnership as they emerge
- Seek independent legal advice
- Ensure support from individual organisation before commencing discussions on terminating the partnership so that any other options have been identified and explored
- Seek the support of a more senior member of the organisation to be involved in discussions, if required