

Knowledge Initiative



Ten steps for improving your partnerships

Start off on the right foot and choose the right partners. Take the time to scope out the right organizations to work with, and do your due diligence. Ask yourself, does your partner fill strategic gaps, provide key skills or resources, open up access to key stakeholders, or expand geographic reach?

Agree on shared objectives. The purpose of a partnership should be clear to everyone involved. Defining clear objectives, and even a vision statement, can help provide clarity and focus.

Know your roles. Each participant organization should clearly understand its role and responsibilities. In other words, each organization should be clear on what is expected from it, what its commitments are, and what it can expect from its partner.

Plan together. A shared implementation plan is an ideal way to minimize conflict, increase transparency, create benchmarks for measuring progress, and evaluate future of the partnership. Remember to make joint plans realistic, adaptive and based on available resources.

Get it in writing. Each agreed objective, role, responsibility, work plan, communication protocol, conflict mediation, monitoring system, etc. should be recorded in writing to avoid misunderstandings and to help prevent conflicts. Engaging lawyers is encouraged!

Talk early and often. Clear communication, both within and between organizations, is integral to effective partnerships. Note that being attentive to language and jargon is particularly important when working across sectors.

Continually work to build trust and respect. Trust across organizations needs to be constantly cultivated. Take advantage of opportunities for joint field trips and social time!

Check in and measure. Measuring not only your progress towards outcomes, but also the health and functioning of your partnering relationship will help you identify problems before they undermine the effort.

Celebrate! Progress towards outcomes can seem slow and overwhelming. Celebrating small successes can keep people engaged and motivated.

Learn from your experience. Partnering is a dynamic process, and if it is approached with a flexible, humble and constructive attitude, the result will be a continuous learning process that promotes effective work and successful relationships.

To learn more, visit the [Conservation Partnership Center](#).

