

Collaboration Support Resources

Selecting a lead agency

Audience	<p>Who needs to select a lead?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Prime: smaller organisations selecting someone else to lead (and take on primary responsibility for development/accountability) who they will work with as a junior delivery partner. b) Peer: smaller organisations selecting a lead from among their peers (primarily for admin rather than strategy) who they will work with on delivery as an equal partner and share leadership. c) Public: a group of stakeholders in a particular geographic/local authority area need to agree one organisation to lead an invited bid (primarily Big Lottery programmes to date).
Purpose	<p>Why do they need to select a lead?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Prime: because smaller organisations typically have limited time and resources to develop partnerships, and in large procurements there may be a number of potential leads, so they need to prioritise which relationships to develop. b) Peer: because public bodies typically want to contract with only one organisation per service, and require consortia to work accordingly. c) Public: because the decision-making process needs to be open and transparent and give a wide range of stakeholders the opportunity to shape a bid so it is as strong as possible for the relevant area.
Intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Prime: smaller organisations identify a practical number of potential lead agencies (1 to 3) to develop relationships with. b) Peer: a consortium model that reflects broadly equal participation between members with one agreed lead. c) Public: one selected lead organisation (with relevant sign-off from the local authority, if required) and evidence to show the process and criteria followed to make the selection.

This document is part of a series of Collaboration Support Resources designed for voluntary and community organisations.

For more information about the whole series, and to use the other resources, go to

<http://www.voscur.org/collaborationresources>

Selecting a lead agency

Introduction

Collaborative projects take many forms and, as outlined in the introduction to these resources, we have categorised three broad types: peer, public and prime partnerships. A lead agency will often, if not always, be required for each of these types, but the process of selection, and what the other partners want of this lead, will be different in each case:

- **Peer partnerships:** among a number of broadly similar organisations in terms of their size, resources and influence, the lead agency is likely to be the one that has administrative capacity, experience of dealing with contracts or an existing relationship with the commissioner. Their role as lead is less likely to imply greater influence in the partnership.
- **Public partnerships:** for collaborative bids invited from a geographic/local authority area, typically led by a VCS organisation but potentially involving public and private sector groups too, the lead agency needs to be able to unite all the other delivery partners, have their confidence, trust and respect, and have the size/capacity to ensure the project's sustainability. Their role as lead does put them in a position of influence, but as a public process, they need to be seen to manage the partnership fairly and transparently.
- **Prime partnerships:** where several large organisations are competing to win a contract, and they have said they plan to subcontract parts of its delivery to partners, the question of 'selecting a lead agency' for potential subcontractors, especially if they are smaller VCS groups, is which of these potential primes should they put effort into developing relationships with, given limited time and resources. Sometimes, if there are very few potential primes, or it is clear that you would only want to work with one or two of them, this decision is quite simple. But in large procurements, with lots of competing primes, small VCS groups may get approached by many potential primes making more or less concrete offers and thus need to decide which two or three to focus on. As the prime will have much more influence in this kind of partnership, part of the selection process will be to identify those who are most likely to respect their small subcontractors and properly value their contribution.

(Note that the term 'prime contractor' is typically used in relation to multimillion-pound national contracts where large management companies buy in the majority of specialist input from subcontractors. Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are less likely to commission services of interest to such companies, but many similar issues apply to large CCG procurements, so the term is used here to reflect this difference from those noted above, and is used interchangeably with 'lead agency'.)

This document sets out some of the questions and issues involved in 'selecting a lead agency' for each of these types of partnership.

1. Peer partnerships

Introduction

Peer partnerships can be a real opportunity to create something that is greater than the sum of its parts and, in the current environment, they are becoming much more a normal part of the work of a voluntary organisation. Some of the pros and cons of peer partnerships, set out as a spectrum of potential risk, are outlined in section 1 of [What can small organisations contribute to partnerships?](#)

Planning

These resources are designed throughout to be honest about the potential complexities and risks of collaboration, but also positive and proactive about dealing with risks pragmatically if partnership working is in the interests of your clients. A key risk of peer partnerships, conversely, is that for organisations who already know each other quite well and/or have a history of previous collaborations, new joint projects can be almost too easy to get into. That doesn't mean winning contracts as a partnership is easy – just that if managers in different organisations know each other and get on well, it's easier to take things for granted, rather than go through a more robust process or ask the probing questions you would do of an organisation you'd never worked with before. Trust is possibly the most important factor in making a partnership work, and where there's a high level between organisations, that's a great foundation; but, as the Charity Commission points out, it's no substitute for proper due diligence as well.¹ Because although the partners may be essentially equal in their influence and contribution to decision-making, from the commissioner's point of view the lead agency may still be expected to take on full legal and financial responsibility for the delivery of the contracted service. It's therefore crucial to properly consider how the partnership would deal with the potential failure of one partner, as the commissioner will still expect the contract to be delivered in full by the remaining partners, and the lead agency may face financial penalties if the work of the partner that has failed/dropped out can't be undertaken by finding a replacement organisation, or by sharing the work out.

Generic process

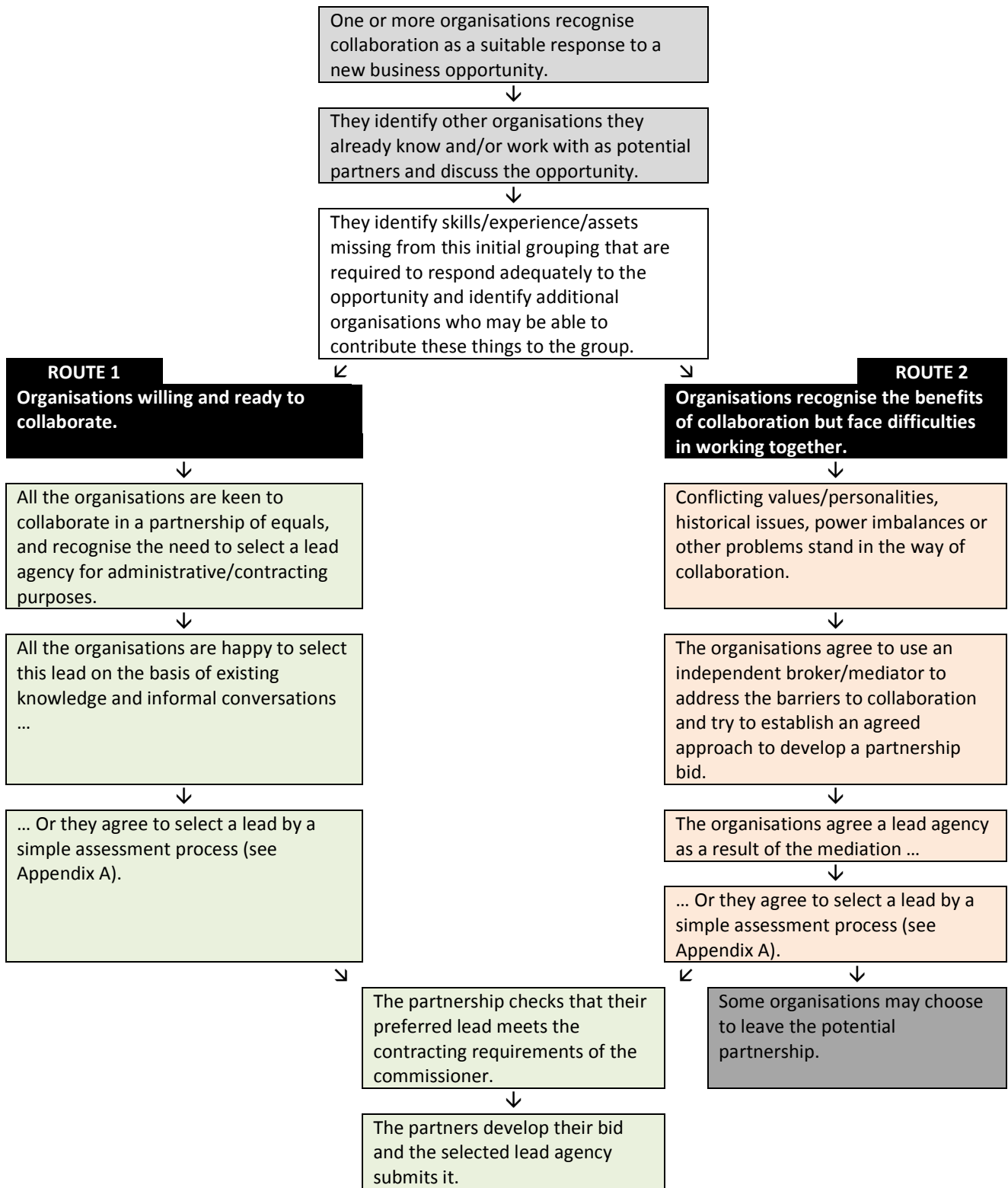
Developing a partnership of peer organisations is potentially simpler than other scenarios, and the left-hand side of the diagram below outlines the most straightforward process of selecting a lead in this case.

However, all organisations have a history, and problems in the past may be a barrier to collaboration between some groups in the future. Similarly, partnership working is often

¹ [Consortia for the Delivery of Public Services](#): the issues for small and medium-sized charities, Charity Commission, 2011.

dependent on individual personalities, and if the chief executives or senior managers of two organisations don't get on, this could easily stop them working together effectively, even if collaborating is in the best interests of their clients. The right-hand side of diagram 1 below (route 2) outlines a slightly more complicated process where these initial difficulties can be dealt with in order for the partnership to develop. It also acknowledges that sometimes one or more potential partners may well choose to walk away from a collaborative project, though the others may be able to continue without them.

Diagram 1. Two routes to a peer partnership



Selection options/tools

If it's not obvious either from initial discussions or from clear differences between organisations' capacities and experience which organisation should lead a partnership, a more formal or objective comparison may be needed.

For example, Appendix A contains a self-assessment questionnaire template for a simple selection process that can be adapted to a variety of different situations and types of partnerships, as outlined above.

Alternatively, previous research by NCVO and the Impetus Trust suggested organisations should consider 'appointing an "Honest Broker" to provide clear, impartial leadership and smooth out any issues that arise' when developing voluntary sector consortia. 'This role could be filled by a representative from a CVS,' for example.²

² [Open Public Services: experiences from the Voluntary Sector](#), NCVO & Impetus Trust.

2. Public partnerships

Introduction

Public partnerships, as defined in these resources, are in many ways very different to competitive tenders, and to date have been used primarily by the Big Lottery to select a limited number of large-scale projects, usually health related, from across the country.

In the past, an independent agency, such as a local authority or an infrastructure organisation, has usually taken the lead in facilitating the selection process. All local stakeholders have an interest in ensuring the process of developing a partnership bid is robust and transparent and the proposal submitted is as strong as it can be. Competition between organisations to lead and be contracted to deliver services is of course inevitable, but the public nature of the process should help ensure fair decision-making. This is because everyone loses out if the funder regards the process as flawed, and local organisations are likely to want to maintain good relations for future cooperation or collaboration.

CCGs could choose to use this kind of approach in the future (or become more involved in Lottery programmes along with local authorities), and some of the lessons and processes developed may be applicable to other kinds of partnership development.

Planning

Key questions that stakeholders have to decide between themselves, and/or can expect an independent facilitator to address, include:

- Who are all the stakeholders and how are they informed/contacted (especially if they will be voting for the lead)? Is there a comprehensive list or an established way of ensuring representation, such as an older people's forum or supported housing forum?
- Who can/will/must select the lead – stakeholders, organisations who will deliver, public bodies, service users, relevant forums, or a combination? If the programme's criteria set this out clearly, that makes the process simpler, but if the decision is left open then effective facilitation to design and implement a process is crucial.
- Are the requirements of a lead agency (and other partners) already defined, or part of the proposal/bid to be developed? It is obvious that a funder is unlikely to approve a charity with a turnover of £125,000 as the lead agency for a multimillion-pound programme. Setting out such factors early on should help manage expectations and avoid unnecessary disputes.

Generic process:

The key steps in developing a public partnership are set out below. In most cases, the first three steps are likely to be very similar for any collaboration, but the second three steps may well differ in the mechanics of voting or decision-making:

1. Identify stakeholders (and/or independent facilitator).
2. Agree local/programme priorities, approach and criteria for lead.
3. Potential leads identify themselves.
4. Potential leads set out their approach/credentials/complete PQQ.
5. Stakeholder Q&A of leads/evaluate PQQ.
6. Stakeholders vote for lead/implement other selection process.

Selection options/tools

Some of the advantages and disadvantages of different selection processes are outlined below:

B. Public partnerships: selection process models		
Process	Advantages	Disadvantages
Example 1: workshop and vision		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop to identify project needs/priorities/selection process <input type="checkbox"/> Organisations identify themselves as potential leads <input type="checkbox"/> Leads circulate vision/approach by email to all stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> Email vote for lead (by stakeholders/board) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Onus on potential lead to demonstrate creativity and leadership in setting out vision (rather than being constrained by predefined criteria) <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to focus on programme outcomes rather than selection process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Choosing between a number of broad visions is more subjective than assessing credentials against a more formal role description <input type="checkbox"/> Less opportunity for service user input
Example 2: presentation and Q&A		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Organisations identify themselves as potential leads <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop to identify priorities and presentation criteria <input type="checkbox"/> Potential leads present credentials and approach at a meeting of stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to draft a role specification, so evaluation is against clear criteria (rather than an aspirational vision) <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity for live Q&A about proposals before voting <input type="checkbox"/> Service users could form part of presentation and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Need manageable (small) number of potential leads for all to present and be questioned in a practical way <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder choices likely to be influenced by performance of individual presenting, but this isn't necessarily an indication of

<input type="checkbox"/> Q&A and vote for lead (by stakeholders/board)	ask questions	the overall organisation
Example 3: PQQ		
<input type="checkbox"/> Workshop to identify priorities and select process <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders define PQQ <input type="checkbox"/> Leads complete PQQ – circulated by email <input type="checkbox"/> Vote for lead (by stakeholders/board)	<input type="checkbox"/> Defining a PQQ makes decision criteria relatively objective <input type="checkbox"/> More formal process reduces the influence of charismatic individuals who may present convincingly but are less able to deliver	<input type="checkbox"/> PQQ process risks echoing typically dry equivalent from public commissioning, prioritising a safe choice over creativity <input type="checkbox"/> Lead proposals may be in response to PQQ requirements, but if stakeholders evaluate them (rather than an independent panel), their choices may still be quite subjective, i.e. based on who/what they already know of the potential lead <input type="checkbox"/> No verification of PQQ information submitted

Note that these are only examples based on approaches used for previous programmes. Elements of each can be combined in different ways. For example:

- An independent facilitator could be appointed to first work with a group of service users to define some of the priorities and selection criteria before any potential leads come forward or develop approaches.
- A multi-stage process could be designed, incorporating strategic sessions for visioning/agreeing local priorities; presentations with face-to-face Q&A; written submissions; and voting. The short timescales involved, however, usually mean a quicker, simpler process is required.
- A recognised and representative board could be appointed to make the final selection, rather than all the stakeholders voting.

3. Prime partnerships

Introduction

In large procurement processes, where smaller organisations don't have the capacity to deliver the whole of a contract themselves, working with a prime contractor to provide part of an overall service may be the best way of developing both the reach and the sustainability of your organisation.

However, if there are more than two or three potential prime contractors involved, and many or all of them have expressed an interest in working in partnership, the time required to explore potential collaborations with five or six lead agencies is likely to be more than smaller organisations have to invest. It therefore makes sense to focus your efforts on just two or three potential primes. But how do you decide which to choose, given that you will only have limited information about them?

You may know and have had some dealings before with large local organisations. If this knowledge or experience is largely positive, it's likely you'll want to develop the relationship. With others, it's less clear cut, and there are no concrete guidelines for deciding how to prioritise. So the following sections set out some key questions to consider when choosing where to invest your time and suggest some simple tools to help rank potential primes based on what you know or can find out about them.

Planning

Ideally, a commissioner will organise some initial support and activities to help introduce potential partners to each other, because it's in the commissioner's best interests to receive well-worked-out collaborative bids that draw on the strengths of a range of diverse organisations. If they don't provide such support, and there are lots of potential primes and partners, it's all the more important to evaluate as quickly as possible where to focus your efforts. The questions and tools below should help you to do that.

It's also crucial to remember the strengths and assets of your organisation, as discussed in [What can small organisations contribute to partnerships?](#), when you're starting to assess potential primes and then when you go on to discuss potential partnerships with them.

During the early stages of a procurement process, when the services required have been specified, but before you know which other organisations are interested in bidding for them, the following approaches and tools may be useful:

- Prepare an 'organisational CV' setting out your strengths, partnership offer and needs. You could then send it to a contact list if one is available, or distribute it at commissioner briefings, which are usually attended by interested parties. Primes are likely to value open, honest information. (There is no standard format for an organisational CV. It will depend on the key information you want to share about a specific opportunity. It is likely to contain

some of the details identified on the [Strategic Partner Information Form](#), and the table at the end of [this example organisational CV](#) is one way of summarising different areas of your organisation's work and its assets.)

- Draw up an initial set of criteria for what you want and need from a partnership. Then, based on what you already know or can find out quickly through desk research, score each potential prime against how receptive you believe they'll be to your collaboration requirements. You can then prioritise your efforts accordingly. (See Appendix B for more details.) If primes call you, of course, be ready to check your assumptions and reprioritise accordingly – down or up.
- If the service specification is clear, and perhaps if there's only one lot/contract being procured, you could consider forming a consortium with other smaller organisations (a peer-type partnership outlined in section 1 above) which could work together as a subcontractor to potential primes. This approach has the advantages of being able to promote your combined capabilities and of creating strength in numbers. The disadvantages are that it would take time to set up and puts all your eggs into one basket. It would need a relatively high level of trust and a clear agreement between members, as primes may well choose to approach individual members to work with them separately outside your agreed structure. See [Preparing for Collaboration](#) for more details about forming a consortium.
- Establish an ethical or partnership principles policy for your organisation that captures your key values, the expectations you have of yourself and your staff, and the expectations you have of other organisations you may work with. It can then be used in discussions with potential partners as a benchmark for the kind of organisational culture and values that are likely to underpin a successful collaboration. The King's Fund, for example, uses an [Ethical Collaboration Policy](#) to inform all kinds of potential partnerships.
- Draft a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that includes your key cultural as well as practical requirements for any collaboration. This would cover the same kinds of issues and values as the organisational CV and ethical policy outlined above, but set it out in a more formal document that a potential partner can easily, after discussion/negotiation, commit to by signing. ([This template](#) provides a basic MoU format to adapt.)
- Be clear about how the procurement process will work for partnerships, as it could significantly affect your approach to developing relationships. In particular, do all the organisations involved in a partnership need to be part of a joint submission at the PQQ or tender stage, or is it solely the lead's responsibility to win the contract and then choose who to work with? The advantage of needing to be part of the bid in the early stages is that it entails a commitment from the lead to include you in the eventual delivery arrangements, but the disadvantage is that it requires more work up front and possibly being assessed as part of the PQQ. Conversely, if partnerships can be worked out after the contract is awarded, your formal input is likely to be less during the early stages, with the drawback that a successful lead could choose not to work with you in the end.

Generic process

Most commissioning and procurement processes follow a similar format, outlined below, along with an indication of your opportunity/requirement for involvement at each stage:

Process		Input
1	Needs assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Contribute understanding of client needs and relevant experiences to date <input type="checkbox"/> Influence approach to service design and delivery
2	Draft commissioning strategy	
3	Public consultation	<input type="checkbox"/> Respond to draft commissioning strategy, identifying strengths and weaknesses <input type="checkbox"/> Influence the services to be procured and the format of the procurement (links between services and outcomes, contract sizes, provider requirements)
4	Commissioning strategy	
5	Service specifications	<input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary assessment of opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Identification of potential partners <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation of supporting information
6	Briefings and information (potential support/activities provided by commissioner)	<input type="checkbox"/> Clarify procurement process and requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Initial collaboration discussions
7	PQQ	<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment to partners may be required (and joint assessment against PQQ criteria)
8	Tender	<input type="checkbox"/> Detailed assessment of delivery partners may be required (including governance arrangements and written agreements)
9	Negotiation of main contract with commissioner	<input type="checkbox"/> Potential contribution to negotiation of terms
10	Negotiation of subcontracts between prime and subcontractors	<input type="checkbox"/> Terms of relationships written into legal documents

Selection options/tools

The table below sets out some of the challenges you're likely to face in developing this type of partnership, identifies potential consequences and suggests some ways to address them when prioritising where to focus your efforts. Section 2 of [What can small organisations contribute to partnerships?](#) sets out, conversely, some of the opportunities that prime partnerships may offer.

C. Challenges of prime partnerships		
Issues	Consequences	How to address
<p>Organisational culture and values could be different from your own: which potential prime appears to offer the best fit?</p>	<p>What looks like a good partnership on paper (in terms of skills, finance, delivery, etc.) doesn't work in practice (personal relationships, different priorities under pressure, different decision-making criteria).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Research the organisation as far as possible – for example, look at their website, read their annual reports, try to find out who they've worked with in the past, ask current/previous partners about their experience. <input type="checkbox"/> How open are they to initial discussions? Do they want to find out as much about you as you do about them? Or do they have a clear idea of what they want and are interested in deciding whether you fit?
<p>Your skills and experience duplicate those of the prime rather than complement them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Overlapping strengths could lead to tension or conflict as much as greater combined strength. <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding gaps in organisational capabilities could result in weaknesses in the bid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Draw up simple SWOT (Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats) analyses of your organisation and potential partner organisations and compare them to help identify areas of fit (see SWOT tool). <input type="checkbox"/> Alternatively compare organisations' strategic/business plans, as these are likely to identify the same sorts of opportunities and areas for development.
<p>Operating models: do any of the potential primes work in ways that are especially similar or different to your approach?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your approach doesn't fit with the prime's usual model so they may not want to use it. <input type="checkbox"/> Changes to your usual systems and processes if you choose to fit in with prime's model. 	<p>Identify the essential and desirable characteristics of a prime partner at the start of the process, and for each characteristic, such as operating/support model, and decide whether or not you will be able to be flexible when negotiating the terms of a partnership. (See Appendix B below for an example of how to do this.)</p>
<p>Current partners and track record: who does the prime currently work with and who have they worked with in the past? Have previous collaborations worked or not?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You could be named as a partner in a prime's bid (without agreeing specific terms) but not be given any work if they're successful. <input type="checkbox"/> The prime may unfavourably change the terms of your partnership in the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be clear with potential primes about what they can and can't say about any initial conversations you have with them (confirm via email). <input type="checkbox"/> If your relationship does develop into a formal agreement, make sure its terms are equitable and include a defined process for future renegotiation in which you both have the same options to agree or not to proposed changes (see Guide to Contract Law regarding contractual rights to change terms).
<p>Relationships: even when dealing with large organisations, personal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If your good relationship with a partner is via one person and they leave or move to a new post, your relationship could change completely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Don't assume the person you have a good relationship with is representative of the whole organisation – still try to understand its overall culture and values by speaking to others so you have a more rounded view, and ensure your decisions aren't based on

<p>relationships are crucial but can be fragile.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The person you have a good relationship with may also have little influence on decision-making, giving you the impression things are going well only for someone else to decide otherwise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one unusually supportive individual. <input type="checkbox"/> Follow up conversations and confirm verbal agreements in writing (so at least you have an email trail of correspondence to help bring a new person up to speed).
<p>Regulatory issues: registered charities must comply with company law and Charity Commission rules.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your organisation may make decisions that contravene its governing document, putting its status and trustees at risk. <input type="checkbox"/> Trustees have a legal responsibility for the decisions a charity takes, and would be unable to fulfil their duties of prudence and care without fully understanding the terms and potential consequences of a collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If the service you are interested in bidding for fits completely within your charitable objects, it's likely that working with partners to bid for it does too. But you do need to check there is nothing in your organisation's governing document that prevents you working in partnership with other bodies, especially ones that are not registered charities. For example, most governing documents contain a section detailing the organisation's 'powers' which usually includes clauses about cooperation/collaboration. <input type="checkbox"/> Remember that collaboration is also potentially more complex than joint fundraising (even with corporate partners), so although the Charity Commission has produced detailed guidance about fundraising partnerships, the potential consequences of collaboration are a greyer area. For example, to what extent can you predict the impact of a partnership on your cashflow position, and the consequences of it deteriorating to dangerous levels? This example shows a forecast cashflow for a multi-year payment-by-results contract. It suggests the project would involve over two years of investment before breaking even. The upper and lower lines show best and worst scenarios. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan time at board meetings well in advance so trustees have plenty of chance to understand the potential implications of a partnership. <p>These resources don't cover such regulatory issues in detail and, unfortunately, they can be complex. For more information, Charity Commission guidance is a good place to start.</p>

Appendix A. Self-assessment due diligence questions for peer partnerships

Where a number of similar-sized organisations need to select a lead agency for administrative/contracting purposes, and it's not immediately obvious which of the partners should take on this role, a simple self-assessment exercise may help to identify which of the partners is best placed to do so.

The template below sets out a number of standard questions each partner can answer themselves. Comparing the total of Yes/No answers and self-assessed scores should help to inform which of the partner organisations is best placed to take on the role of lead.

There is no standard format for this process. The questions below can therefore be reduced, expanded or adapted to suit different situations, commissioner requirements and types of collaborating organisations.

Ref.	Question	YES/NO or 1 – 10
Governing documents and filing		
1	Does the legal structure of your organisation enable it to enter into contracts or similar obligations, i.e. is it a corporate body (company) that is registered as a charity or community benefit organisation?	Y/N
2	Does the governing document of your organisation have provisions that will prevent or obstruct working in collaboration? For example, are there specific clauses that prevent collaborative working? Is the proposed collaboration within the charitable objects?	Y/N
3	Is the governing document (and especially the objects clauses) up to date and relevant to your organisation's current profile and operation?	Y/N
4	If not, what steps will be needed to remedy any difficulties? For example, do you need to pass a special resolution to amend the document and get prior permission from the Charity Commission if needed?	Y/N
5	Has your organisation filed its returns to Companies House and/or the Charity Commission over the past five years? If not, how many times have there been defaults?	Y/N
Governance		
6	Does your organisation currently have sufficient trustees to hold quorate meetings?	Y/N
7	Are quorate trustees' meetings held regularly and in accordance with the governing document and good practice?	Y/N
8	Do the minutes of the trustees' meetings for each organisation indicate that the trustees are aware of and carry out their legal duties as trustees and (where relevant) company directors?	Y/N
9	Does your organisation hold a quorate AGM each year that complies with charity and (where relevant) company law regarding notice, agenda and minutes?	Y/N
10	Has your organisation failed to deliver on grant-funded projects or on contracts within the past three years? If so, what were the reasons for the failure and what was the outcome?	Y/N
11	Has your organisation been involved in litigation over the past three years (other	Y/N

	than HSE or employment tribunal litigation)? If so, provide details, including outcome, where known.	
12	Has your organisation been the subject of a Charity Commission investigation in the past three years? If so, provide details, including outcome, where known.	Y/N
13	What insurance cover does your organisation have: <input type="checkbox"/> Public liability <input type="checkbox"/> Employers' liability (covering both paid staff and volunteers) <input type="checkbox"/> Employment protection <input type="checkbox"/> Business interruption <input type="checkbox"/> Professional indemnity <input type="checkbox"/> Trustee liability	Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N
14	What quality mark(s) does your organisation have?	
	Finance	
15	How secure is your organisation's current financial position? (Assess by examining trends of income and expenditure over the last three years.)	1 – 10
16	Is your organisation registered for VAT?	Y/N
17	Are management accounts made available to management on a regular basis?	Y/N
18	How reliable are they as a source of management information to aid decision-making?	1 – 10
19	How reliable and realistic are current forecasts and budgets?	1 – 10
20	Does your organisation have a business/funding plan in place for the next two to three years?	Y/N
21	How likely is it that this two- to three-year plan will be achieved?	1 – 10
22	Does your organisation have an up-to-date risk register that includes financial viability?	Y/N
23	Does your organisation currently hold any contracts with local statutory bodies?	Y/N
24	Do your organisation's published accounts comply with recommended practice and legislation (Charities SORP)?	Y/N
25	How effective are your internal financial policies/procedures and controls and do any areas need to be reviewed?	1 – 10
	Human resources	
26	Does each of your paid staff members have an up-to-date contract that complies with employment legislation?	Y/N
27	Do your organisation's recruitment procedures comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006?	Y/N
28	If your organisation uses volunteers, do you have compliant volunteer recruitment and management policies and procedures in place? (Note: a well-managed organisation will have had all the policies and procedures listed in 26 to 28 audited by specialist employment lawyers within the past 12 months. If the contracts/policies have not been reviewed for more than two years, there may be compliance issues. If these documents do not exist, then the organisation's governing body may be vulnerable to allegations of mismanagement, civil suits and even criminal prosecution.)	Y/N
29	In the past three years, has your organisation been the subject of an	Y/N

	employment tribunal claim or an investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission? If so, provide details, including outcome, if known.	
30	In the past three years, has your organisation been involved in an accident or reportable incident, or been the subject of an HSE investigation or prosecution?	Y/N
31	Has any officer, director or trustee of your organisation been disqualified from acting as a director or trustee under the Companies Act 2006 or the Charities Act 2011?	Y/N
	Policy	
32	Does your organisation have compliant policies in place for the following in relation to trustees, paid staff and volunteers: <input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety <input type="checkbox"/> Equality and diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding (including DBS check policy and procedures) <input type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality, data protection and FOIA <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Codes of conduct	Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N Y/N
	Information management	
33	To what extent does your organisation's current IT capability enable effective management of staff payroll, financial recording and contract performance?	1 – 10
34	To what extent do your organisation's current systems have the capacity to discretely manage payroll, financial recording and contract performance for a new project?	1 – 10
35	To what extent is your current monitoring and reporting system accessible to external partners (e.g. via the internet)? If not, how will management information, monitoring and reporting be collated and shared?	1 – 10
	Total YES	
	Total NO	
	Total 1 – 10 scores	

Appendix B. Prime assessment criteria/tool

One way to help you decide where to focus your efforts in developing relationships is to use the MoSCow tool at the start of the process. (See Appendix B of [What can small organisations contribute to partnerships?](#) for more information about MoSCow.) Usually, this tool is used to help negotiate terms with one potential partner. Here it's used to prioritise what your organisation must/should/could get out of a potential partnership, then to estimate how receptive to these criteria you think potential primes might be based on what you know about them and their track record. (A tick indicates that you think the organisation will be receptive to the characteristics you want. A cross means you think they won't.)

Obviously this is based on imperfect knowledge, and just because you can find out very little about a certain organisation, doesn't mean to say they won't be a good partner. But faced with a range of potential primes to approach, this kind of provisional assessment could help you be as proactive as possible in finding a partnership that works for you, while always being open to calls from other organisations.

	Prime characteristics	Prime A estimate	Prime B estimate	Prime C estimate	Prime D estimate
Must	Culture/values	✓	✓	✗	✓
	Delivery model	✗	✓	✓	✗
Should	Price	✓	✗	✓	✗
	Track record	✓	✗	✓	✓
	Reputation	✗	✓	✓	✓
Could	Open in discussions to date	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Operational fit	✗	✓	✓	✗
Priority to develop:		No	1st	2nd	No