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Welcome

Tēnā koutou

The Department of Internal Affairs, in association with Waitakere City Council, is pleased to support partnering initiatives with this guidance on partnering agreements.

Putting Pen to Paper: Profiles is the second resource in the Putting Pen to Paper series. The first, *Putting Pen to Paper: Creating Partnering Agreements that Work* (2006), gave advice on the key features of partnering agreements and the steps to follow when developing them. Readers welcomed the advice and requested some practical examples.

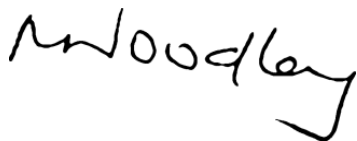
This guide, *Putting Pen to Paper: Profiles* responds to that request. The case studies represent a range of sectors, scales, styles and degrees of collaborative work. They also represent many years of partnering experience.

The author, Megan Courtney, has been actively involved in brokering and sustaining many functional relationships focused on shared goals. Her expertise and leadership is recognised in this field.

The Department of Internal Affairs works across central and local government actively supporting engagement on community outcomes processes. Today there are many examples throughout the country of successful collaboration between local and central government.

Finally, the case studies themselves are true stories of partnering agreements and their challenges, opportunities, losses and rewards. *Putting Pen to Paper: Profiles* records this experience and celebrates some of the successes to date.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the organisations from around the country that have helped make this project happen. They have not only given us their time, but their practical advice about how to put pen to paper. The case studies viewed alongside the collaborative agreements provide a unique insight into how agreements, and the partnerships behind them, practically come together.



Nāku noa, nā
Morag Woodley
Director Operations

Acknowledgements

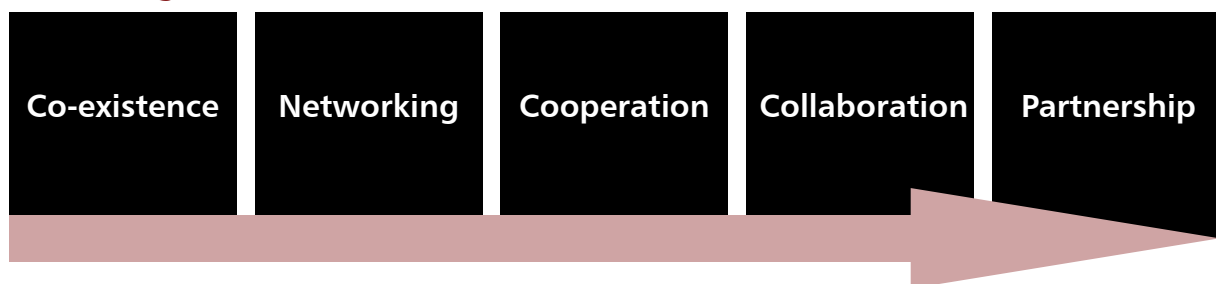
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Nick Beveridge, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society
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Peter Guerin, Rotorua District Council
Rachael Fonotia, Aranui Community Trust Society
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Sam Hill, Auckland Regional Council
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Introduction

Background to Partnering

Over the last few years partnering approaches between local government, central government, Iwi/Māori organisations, and business and community sector groups have continued to strengthen. Partnering covers a broad spectrum of joint working arrangements with the relationships between people and organisations acknowledged as key ingredients for successful interagency working. As illustrated below, partnering is best thought of as working together across a broad spectrum of arrangements. Increasing levels of interaction and commitment are required the further along the continuum you are.¹

Partnering Continuum



Craig & Courtney (2004) - Potential of Partnership; page 38

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goals, power, resources etc

Partnering is acknowledged as key to addressing complex problems which are demonstrably beyond the realm of any one agency working alone. However, partnering can be time consuming, resource hungry and should be used selectively. The partnership box to the far right of the diagram above is not nirvana. It is possible to work in more than one continuum box at a time and aspire or move to a different box over time. What matters is knowing where you are on the continuum and what kind of working relationship best suits your purpose for coming together. As discussed in *Putting Pen to Paper 2006*, traditional top-down contracting models do not easily fit with partnering approaches and there are many ongoing issues to be resolved if the potential new gains of partnering are to be fully realised in New Zealand. Consequently new styles of documentation are being developed to support new ways of working.²

Background to Putting Pen to Paper: Profiles 2007

Through a collection of case studies, *Putting Pen to Paper: Profiles* provides guidance on some new approaches to interagency agreements. This case studies guide is the practical companion to the Department of Internal Affairs/Waitakere City Council co-sponsored guide *Putting Pen to Paper* published in 2006.

¹ For a more detailed explanation of the partnering continuum see Appendix 1. For more detail on the practicalities of partnering see Craig and Courtney "The Potential of Partnerships" 2004 on <http://www.waitakere.govt.nz/OurPar/pdf/potentialofpartnership.pdf>

² For how different kinds of agreements might relate to the partnering continuum see Appendix 2.

Putting Pen to Paper focused on partnering agreements and offered guidance to organisations entering into new multiparty relationships. It also highlighted key agreement related issues needing national attention. A copy of the guide can be found at www.localcentral.govt.nz.

About the 2007 Guide

Putting Pen to Paper: Profiles 2007 provides further guidance on partnering agreements by illustrating some of the real experiences of partnering.

The project began with the DIA Central/Local Interface team identifying 11 agreement case studies from across the country that promoted collaboration in different ways. This 2007 Guide includes agreements that cover a wide range of sectors, players, scales, styles and degrees of collaborative working.

Significantly, no two agreements look the same. The fact that there is no 'one size fits all' partnering agreement reinforces the need for an agreement to reflect both the nature of the relationship and the reasons why the parties are putting pen to paper.

This report is in two parts.

The first part details the background negotiations behind the 11 partnering agreements. Representing many hundreds of hours of discussion, negotiation and visioning, these documents become the key statements for the way agencies want to work together. Each describes:

- the context for working together and the benefits of putting pen to paper;
- how the agreement was developed and what helped or hindered that process;
- special aspects of the agreement;
- what has happened since the agreement was signed;
- advice for others embarking on collaboration and partnering agreements.

The agreements, or excerpts of the agreements, follow each case study. When read together the backgrounds and agreements provide insight and guidance on how collaboration and partnering can be reflected in written agreements.

The agreements that accompany the case studies are, as noted above, all quite different. This means some agreements focus on:

- gaining shared commitment to a vision (North-West Wildlink);
- governance for a new shared entity (Southern Rural Fire Authority);
- relationships and how parties will work together towards common goals (SKIP³ – Barnardos; Kaipara District Council – Te Uri o Hau; Rotorua Strategy – Youth Transitions; Northland Monitoring Forum; COBOP);
- partnering and implementing a shared work programme (Community Waitakere - Waitakere City Council); and
- integrating funding contracts (Coromandel Independent Living Trust; Southern Wairarapa Safer Community Council).

The second part is a summary of key lessons learnt across all the case studies.

Although differing widely the case studies share many common themes of how each agreement was developed and the advice that the participants now offer to others. This final section reflects on key factors that assist both agreement development processes and positive outcomes from the agreements themselves.

Discussion in this last section focuses around the importance of:

- mandates;
- communication;

³ Strategies for Kids, Information for Parents.

- being realistic about what can be achieved;
- effectively involving communities in agreement processes;
- preparing to work differently;
- taking time to build relationships and develop a partnering agreement;
- people and relationships;
- coordination and brokerage roles;
- moving from signed agreements into implementation phase;
- acknowledging differences while focusing on commonalities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan Courtney', with a stylized, cursive script.

Megan Courtney
Partnering Advisor
Waitakere City Council

What matters? – Key lessons from the case studies

There are similarities across the 11 different agreement experiences both in terms of the challenges faced and the factors that assisted interagency partnering agreements to succeed. This section offers some reminders about what really matters.

The key lessons learnt from across the case studies have been summarised and grouped around 10 key themes.

1. Mandate

Securing a mandate for an agreement, both within and across organisations, is important. Strong support and leadership from the highest level provides a foundation for the agreement development process that follows. Senior management understanding and approval of the collaboration process can help enlist wider organisational support. A clear mandate from the top can also mean that staff who are developing and negotiating the agreement can get on with these tasks and make decisions around the table on behalf of their organisation.

Senior managers need to ensure that their support for collaboration is clearly communicated through all levels of the organisation. In larger organisations it can be particularly important to ensure that middle management is clear about the expectations of senior management. The mandate for collaboration can also be found in legislation and strategic policy frameworks. For example, the Local Government Act 2002 provided the impetus for collaboration in the Community Outcomes Bay of Plenty (COBOP) case study while the Northland Regional Policy Statement provided impetus for the Northland Monitoring Forum. These higher-level frameworks can provide guidance on why and how parties should come together and can act as catalysts for collaboration and partnering.

2. Communication

Many people talked about the importance of making sure all the parties come together from the outset. In the Kaipara District Council - Te Uri o Hau case study, face-to-face communication in the early stages was key to relationship building and exploring what working together might achieve.

As the agreement is put together parties should be proactively encouraged to describe and write down what they⁴ think. Building in time to write things down can be very useful as it ensures people are actually thinking about, and understanding, concepts, visions and actions in the same way. Unchecked assumptions can lead to disagreements later that can impact both on relationships and the way the agreement is implemented. It pays to get

⁴ While 'they' usually refers to an organisation, in the initial stages of an agreement development process organisational 'voice' is generally entrusted to a nominated representative(s) who is mandated to 'speak' on behalf of their organisation.

these things right at the start.

If the parties are unsure of anything during this stage of the process, they should be encouraged to seek advice or support⁵ from other organisations. This is a practical way of getting ideas, reassurance, or support for thinking and doing things in new ways.

Engaging with internal and external stakeholders is also an important part of the agreement development process. Be clear about why you are engaging your stakeholders and what you are expecting them to do. Some common reasons for engaging with stakeholders include: information gathering, letting others know what you are planning to do, and seeking funding or active participation in the process.

Progress reports to those not at the collaboration table are also important. It ensures that the final agreement will not be completely unknown to all the possible signatories. In the Waitakere City Council - Community Waitakere Partnering Agreement case ongoing progress updates and opportunities for input and comment helped ensure wider organisational approval and support for the agreement.

Many case studies also talk about the benefit of having simple agreements that are clearly laid out. For example, the one page North-West Wildlink Accord captures the essence of the relationship and can easily be framed and displayed.

3. Community in the Process

Working with Iwi/Māori and community sector organisations can mean thinking differently about agreement development processes. Many case study participants learnt that partnering with the community sector raises a number of different issues for consideration. For example, while staff from local and central government are usually paid to participate, many community sector personnel are not⁶. In these cases some additional resources or support⁷ can make a significant difference to the ability of iwi and community sector organisations to meaningfully engage in the process. In the SKIP- Barnardos example initial resources from the Ministry of Social Development allowed Barnardos to build the internal capacity to participate more equitably. Similarly, in Aranui, funding of a community-based consultation coordinator by the Christchurch City Council assisted local communities to have stronger input into renewal plans.

The language of contracts and collaboration can be very difficult to understand. It is important that agreements are built around words that all parties can relate to and feel comfortable with. Where appropriate it is also important to:

- allow extra time to enable wider dialogue, discussion and action. Iwi/Māori and community sector representatives often require time to consult and interact with their wider stakeholder groups;
- incorporate community development and community capacity building principles into both agreement development and implementation phases⁸;
- be confident in seeking advice from others who have had success with iwi and community sector partnerships.

⁵ Examples include legal advice, support from parent or national organisations, checking others' experiences of working with the organisation and seeing how others have framed accountabilities or developed new processes or mechanisms to support collaboration.

⁶ Smaller community sector organisations tend to be funded to deliver specific services or outputs and there is generally little paid salary capacity for activities beyond this. This may mean a community organisation's involvement in a partnering agreement relies on volunteer time and staff goodwill to add collaboration into their core work programme.

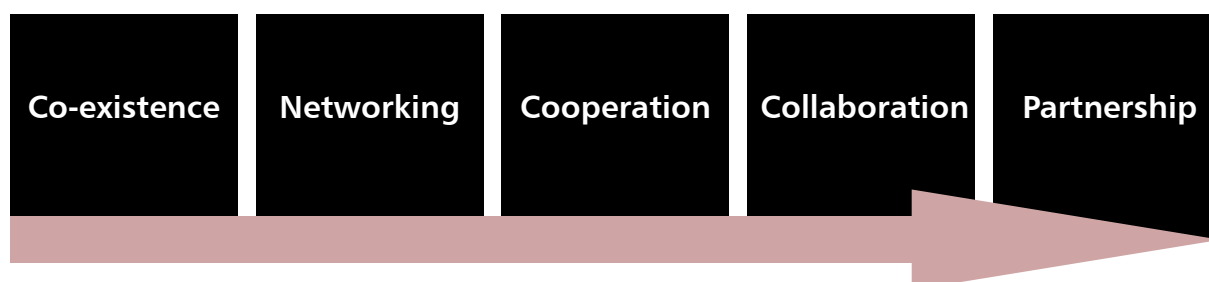
⁷ For example: petrol vouchers, honorariums or koha, consultation assistance (food, hall hire, postage, facilitator time) etc.

⁸ Examples include commitments to engage, not just with community sector representatives around the table but with the wider community, and offering strategic planning or project management training for community organisations leading or involved in action projects.

4. Preparing to Work Differently

Sharing becomes important the further you move along the partnering continuum. Key agreement elements, such as governance, roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities, have to be thought of very differently. For organisations working at the collaboration and partnership ends of the spectrum a real shift in 'headspace' is required. This means thinking not about what one party might do for another, but what they do for each other and how they contribute together. Some of the key words that organisations working in these spaces used when describing their experiences were "equal" and "reciprocal" relationships.

Partnering Continuum.....



Craig & Courtney (2004) - *Potential of Partnership*; page 38

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Organisations moving into the partnership space need to be prepared for a fundamental rethink of the nature of relationships. Becoming a 'partner' often changes how things have always been done. New processes for reporting, accountabilities, work programming and relationship management usually need to be developed. In the Community Waitakere – Waitakere City Council case a new Partnering Agreement required the development of a *shared* work programme⁹. The Council now has assigned active roles and tasks in the work programme and is equally responsible for what is or is not achieved.

Consciously thinking of ways to empower those you are working with, even for those not working in the partnership box, can be useful in the long term. For example, in Aranui, Housing New Zealand employs local residents to mow lawns.

Other actions that can make a real difference to the quality and longevity of relationships include:

- handing over the agreement writing pen (as in the Kaipara – Te Uri o Hau case study);
- acknowledging and documenting the value of history, knowledge, and mana;
- taking time to build relationships and to understand how each organisation works;
- looking for opportunities to connect with, network, and support partner agencies outside the collaboration table.¹⁰

5. Time

The importance of time was one of the strongest themes across all the case studies. Partnering agreements do take time and allowing for this from the outset is very important. Before embarking on a collaborative agreement take time to meaningfully engage with your partners face-to-face. The importance of 'doing the ground work'¹¹ was strongly

⁹ Under the previous funding for service agreement, responsibility for achieving the work programme lay solely with Community Waitakere.

¹⁰ Examples include support letters for funding applications, sitting on advisory groups and promoting the work of partner organisations in the media.

¹¹ Getting to know each other, understanding how each organisation works and realising a little of the history and future aspirations of each party.

emphasised along with the need to be flexible and responsive. Being consciously guided by where various parties around the collaborative table are, in terms of their ability and readiness to sign up to a shared vision or way forward, is important. Having the common sense and confidence to go as fast or as slow as necessary can make a difference to long term support and ownership of the final agreement.

Getting to a shared vision can also take time. It may take some time (and facilitation!) for different perspectives to come together. Differences in language, purpose, and approach often only become apparent at the point of writing things down. Many of the case studies illustrate the benefits of some 'storming along the way' and see conflict as a healthy and very natural part of the collaboration process. Looking back, the parties to the North – West Wildlink Accord view the many, and often difficult, meetings it took to get to shared agreement on the Wildlink concept as critical to understanding different ways of thinking and to galvanising their group for the action phase which followed.

6. People Factors

Many case studies show that when agreements and collaborative arrangements work really well it is often due to the people and relationships behind them rather than the signed agreements themselves. Across the case studies many people commented that they both enjoyed and valued working with similarly dedicated people with high energy and commitment to achieving not just a signed up agreement but also long term relationships. Participants also talked of actively seeking out those who were of a similar mind and philosophy who could make things happen. Important qualities people spoke about were passion, honesty, faith, persistence, respect, flexibility, openness, and a willingness to listen *and* do things differently.

As seen in the SKIP – Barnardos and the Southern Rural Fire Authority case studies, and many others, pre-existing relationships also make agreement development processes significantly easier. This is mainly attributed to high levels of trust and knowledge about each others' ways of working.

7. Coordination and Brokerage

In some of the case studies facilitators have played an important role in keeping relationships strong. Facilitators may be independent of the parties to the agreement or they may be representatives of the parties themselves. In many cases the key issue was that of available capacity to do the job. In the Coromandel Independent Living Trust (CILT) Integrated Funding Contract case study the commitment of CILT's Chief Executive to maintaining active relationships with funders has meant that delays to the implementation of the agreement have not significantly impacted on the goodwill of the parties involved.

Having one or more personnel assigned to pull things together, chase people up, prepare communication or consultation plans, and organise events around signing etc, is often critical to things getting done. Some of the case studies noted that without this specific coordination resource, administrative tasks, such as writing up minutes and developing frameworks to support collective brainstorming, all took much longer because these tasks had to be juggled within already full work programmes.

The role of a strategic broker¹² is now increasingly acknowledged as a key success factor for interagency working. At various times, different people are often required to take on different parts of the broker role. Sometimes someone is required to manage interpersonal conflict, or at other times, to actively build consensus to persuade reluctant parties or

¹² Strategic brokers are tactical, practical people who actively bring organisations, sectors and people together. It is a skilled and complex role, involving people management, juggling multiple agendas, accountabilities and tasks. For more see Craig and Courtney: Potential of Partnership pages 69-77.

engage other important stakeholders or funders. Often this is about acknowledging and utilising the skill sets and networks people have. For example, early on in the Community Outcomes Bay of Plenty (COBOP) case study, collaboration broker roles were informally assigned to key central and local government managers who encouraged others in their sector to participate in the COBOP process.

8. From Agreement to Action

Having some visible action planned after the agreement has been signed can readily demonstrate the benefits of working together. Examples from the case studies include festivals, community workshops, work programme alignments, and new brands and logos. Celebrating these successes, however small they seem, actually matters.

As noted in “Putting Pen to Paper” (2006), being clear about who relates to whom and how and when things should happen is also important. This helps ensure that work programmes and monitoring processes get up and running. Making these responsibilities clear in the agreement can help with this.

In the early days of working together processes for reflection are also important. In some case studies, for example the Rotorua Strategy – Youth Transitions and the Integrated Funding Agreements, the partnering agreement is viewed as a ‘living’ document that can be changed over time. In these cases parties commit to review, usually annually, what is working and what is not. Changes can then be made to processes, work programmes, and agreements as appropriate. This process helps to strengthen the relationships as well as the agreement itself.

In other cases, however, the written agreement moved from being in the forefront of collaboration to sitting in the background. After a period of time, these agreements have become touchstones, or symbols, of the relationship and explain why the parties came together. The fact that the agreement is there is what counts. Examples cited here include Kaipara District – Te Uri o Hau and the COBOP agreements.

9. Being Realistic About What Can Be Achieved

Getting signatures onto a partnering agreement is only the beginning. For this reason, it is important that what the agreement promises is realistic and achievable.

Securing some initial resourcing to kick-start the implementation phase of an agreement makes a big difference. Even more important, however, is knowing what can realistically be delivered with the available resourcing. For example, the Northland Monitoring Forum’s desire to undertake new collaborative monitoring programmes has had to be tempered by the scarcity of resources available to undertake any substantial new work.

Resource issues can be even more challenging if this is the first time the parties have worked together or if a complex new initiative is proposed. These situations tend to be even more resource hungry than normal.

Some case studies also reiterated the importance of not ‘overselling’ an agreement before it has had time to be implemented. Potential results and actual results are two very different things. Overselling what can be done may mean that the value of small yet significant gains are later overlooked when viewed as part of a larger, unfulfilled work programme.

10. Commonalities and Differences

Working collaboratively does not mean giving up your own agenda. It is important to be very clear about why you are collaborating, what you hope to gain, and what is important to you. Not everything your organisation thinks or does will be shared. Where there appear to be more differences than similarities it is important to question if what you are doing together is the best course of action for your organisation. It is also important to realise that sometimes you have to agree to disagree and move on.

As mentioned earlier, conflict is a natural process to be worked through and managed rather than avoided. For some agencies, however, learning to negotiate and advocate with confidence is often a challenging experience.

In times of heated discussion and disagreement, moving forward will rely heavily on focusing on similarities and the ground that is shared between the parties. As noted in the Northland Monitoring Forum case study, having a purpose and vision clearly documented that can be returned to is helpful.