

# A reflective learning framework for partnering

The following framework is based on insights from the early work of the **Healthy Communities Together** partnerships programme (developed by The King's Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund), and a rapid synthesis of evidence and theory from reviews of what makes for effective partnerships. Rather than prescribing a series of 'must dos', we have developed these questions for partnerships to use as a preparatory and reflective tool in their work. New partnerships could use the questions to explicitly consider and be better prepared for some of the challenges and opportunities they may encounter in the early stages of partnering. More established partnerships, could use the questions on an ongoing and iterative basis, as a reflective learning framework to support their partnership's development. They could also use their experiences to iterate and develop the framework itself.

A fuller description of our observations of partnering-in-practice in phase 1 of the **Healthy Communities Together** programme, which informed this framework, is available here: [www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/learning-framework-for-partnering](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/learning-framework-for-partnering)

## 1. What is the purpose of the partnership's work?

Who are the intended beneficiaries of your work together?

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What impact does your partnership want to have?

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Who are you trying to influence?

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How are you collaborating to develop your partnership's purpose ?

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When will you need to articulate the partnership's vision and who needs to be involved in this?

### The nine whys

*An activity to help members of a group uncover the purpose of their work.*

## 2. What is the distinctive role of this partnership?

How do you see your work leading to the change you want?

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What other work is going on in your area/system on this topic?

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How is your work distinct from and related to that work, and what does it contribute?

### **Myron Rogers' maxims on change in living systems**

*A leading thinking and practitioner in organisation development, Myron Rogers has developed five maxims for work which seeks to effect systems change.*

## 3. Who are the partnership's members and stakeholders?

How are you learning about the knowledge, skills, perspectives, interests, connections and wider resources that your members bring?

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Who are your stakeholders, and how are you engaging them in your work?

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What are your accountabilities and how might that impact on making decisions?

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What do changes in your membership mean for the range of skills, knowledge, perspectives and organisational affiliations you have, and your capacity to work towards your purpose?

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How can you create regular spaces in which informal and personal connections can develop among members?

### **Stakeholder analysis**

*A framework for mapping stakeholders according to the extent of their agreement with a proposed change, and their trust in an organisation's capacity to make change happen.*

### **The human-centred design toolkit**

*Understanding how to engage those you are seeking to support in devising your purpose and approach.*

#### 4. How is working being shared and recognised?

How will you come together as a partnership in ways that take account of everyone's capacities and preferences?

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Do you have a lead, and what is their role? Has this been agreed collectively? And is it congruent with your values as a partnership?

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How will you communicate between meetings? Which other modes could be useful?

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How will you ensure that power differentials between members are recognised and all voices are equally heard in conversations?

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Do smaller voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations need to be reciprocated for their time? What are the different forms this could take?

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How will you hold yourselves to account for whether you are working in the ways you have agreed?

#### **David Kantor's four-player model**

*A simple structure you can use to observe how you are communicating with each other, and to identify how you can develop your approach to have more effective and inclusive conversations.*

#### **Understanding group dynamics and team functions**

*Unspoken and sometimes unconscious dynamics in groups have a significant impact on what the group can achieve together.*

*Becoming aware of and talking about these dynamics, and reclarifying how work is shared out across team functions can help to partnerships to work together towards their purpose.*

#### 5. How are you learning and adapting?

How are you balancing your attention between task delivery, how you are working together, and what you are learning?

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What spaces and times do you have to reflect on your membership, purpose and ways of working?

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How are you holding yourselves to account for acting on what you are learning?

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How are you sharing learning in your wider networks?

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#### **Appreciative inquiry exercise**

*A resource for noticing and growing what is going well in your work as a partnership.*

#### **Bridges transitions model**

*A resource for exploring psychological transitions as you move from old to new ways of working.*

Other resources from The King's Fund that you may find helpful:

**Creating space for conversations**

*Pointers on creating space for meaningful virtual conversations in the context of urgent and busy work schedules.*

**How to do 'learning' in practice**

*Four points to pay attention to when seeking to cultivate a learning environment.*

**Leading across the health and care system: lessons from experience**

*Five factors to prioritise for leaders who want to work collaboratively across health and care systems.*

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