



SOUTH EAST

LOCAL ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP

WHAT MAKES GOOD
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP
A GUIDE

The principles for effective public-private sector partnerships that achieve results are:

the development and pursuit of shared goals;

identifying capacity to deliver these goals;

an evidence-led story which commands attention and drives collaboration;

having the right people at the table who represent more than just their own organisational interests

to convene a coalition of the willing with a passion for collaboration and action

Effective public-private partnership is difficult to achieve through Board-style meetings alone. Those who convene public-private partnerships need to find ways of working that can energise partners, bringing them together to shape specific projects, secure investment funding or deliver new innovations.

Ultimately partnerships have the best chance of success where relationships are built on mutual respect and allowed to develop to a stage of maturity - to try, fail, learn and try again. If something doesn't work, then it is not a failure as long as the learning is shared and can provide a foundation for future success.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2011, SELEP has built its engagement activity and impactful delivery from the strong foundation of effective partnership. We have taken the learning from these years of experience to develop a guide which outlines the building blocks for effective partnership between public and private stakeholders. We hope this will be used to guide how the private and public sector can work together in partnership moving forward.

Partnerships versus Collaborations

Building a partnership is a long-term commitment between individuals and organisations to deliver collectively. Partnerships differ from simple collaborations in their depth and formality. Collaborations are usually informal and brought together to deliver short, sharp activity or discrete projects, whereas partnerships are about building trust and relationships for the delivery of shared strategic aims. Partnership creates the condition for collaboration to take place and to succeed.

SELEP has had the unique role as a convenor of public and private sector partnerships, often across political boundaries and even between what at the outset could be seen as competing interests. These partnerships have always been brought together through a process of:

1 Identifying a strategic priority that needs addressing (e.g., sectoral, thematic, geographic).

2 Drawing partners together from the public and private sectors in an inclusive way and actively listening to their viewpoints.

3 Establishing a common cause and collective ambition to guide the work of the partnership.

SELEP has also benefitted from its agility in being able to advocate on behalf of partners on specific issues without the need for excessive governance or extensive sign-off processes.

A business-led approach to partnership building has also ensured that there is a strong voice for the private sector in our partnerships that has allowed for greater trust to form in engaging with the public sector on regional economic issues over time.

As these functions now transition from Local Enterprise Partnerships to Local Authorities, effective partnership is as important as ever and Government will expect a strong level of participation going forward.

The foundation for success

Sector-led but shared ownership

Allow sector representatives to lead the agenda of the group, recognising that any group is owned by its members and not by the host organisation. It is particularly important for private sector members to feel part of this shared ownership and shared endeavour.

Clear vision or mandate

Partnerships should identify a clear vision or mandate e.g., focussing on a particular shared strategic objective. This should also include how the partnership wants to communicate and engage with other relevant structures, such as central Government. This vision should be shared and not driven solely by the public or private sector.

Evidence-led

Any partnership should be underpinned by strong evidence and research which gives credibility to the activity, supports the justification to act and enables members to quantify impact.

Sufficient resources

Sufficient resource capacity and commitment from partners is required for a partnership to maintain momentum and delivery. This does not necessarily need to be a financial resource. Partnerships are driven by purpose, not money as they bring together those with the passion and drive to make things happen.

Not duplicating effort

Before establishing any partnership, you need to be sure that it is not duplicating and/or significantly overlapping with an existing arrangement. New partnerships should be filling an existing gap e.g., engaging with a wider geography to amplify the voice of the sector but not taking over the roles of those sub-regional or hyperlocal partnerships.

The foundation for success continued

Consistency and respect

Consistent communication is key to the long-term viability of partnerships and its effectiveness in action. Committing time to fostering relationships among stakeholders is also key in this respect and should be viewed as a crucial element of building trust and delivering in the long-term. Crucially, no one should underestimate the value of developing a shared voice, good communication and of getting the language right.

Resilience and working at pace

Once trust and relationships are established in partnerships, it embeds a level of resilience that allows the group to be effective when facing challenges or opportunities. The partnership should be able to deliver at pace to address pressing challenges or existential threats. The importance of this foundation was highlighted over the pandemic, with key stakeholders coming together at very short notice to deliver key programmes and activity.

Leadership

Strong personalities that can be the drivers of proactive action and lead partnerships are key. But these leaders must be inclusive, pragmatic, see the big picture and foster a spirit of generosity.

Advocacy and common challenges

Any effective partnership should be able to advocate for its members, creating a platform to amplify messages and drive forward change whether that be a sector, thematic, or geographic partnership. Ensuring that there is alignment at the outset on common challenges that partners face is crucial to this.

Identifying a common interest, something that needs to change, or a shared goal to be pursued, can be a powerful early step for any public-private partnership. This provides a platform for those who have the desire and ambition to deliver change and who can bring together and build trust within an inclusive coalition of the willing; marshal the data and evidence to support ideas and connect with people to shape the future and make a lasting difference.