

# Working together for better outcomes: the role of research partnerships



## Aim and audience

This guide is aimed at research partners from international, national or local government; small or large private or public companies; non-governmental organisations (NGOs); and the citizenry. It provides guidance for working with interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary researchers in order to achieve improved research outcomes through shared responsibility.

## Helping you to make your collaborations successful

To aid more successful collaborative research partnerships: we propose you consider using our checklist of actions during these five stages of a collaborative process (Table 1). A number of these actions are posed as questions for you to ask yourself and your team. During our workshop, two values and a related set of principles were identified that underpin these actions (see right).

**1. Values** that can help deliver successful collaborations are: respect different viewpoints and other sources of knowledge, and be flexible and open to different ways of doing things.

**2. Suggested principles** that can help deliver successful collaborations include: engage, commit, build trust, advocate, communicate, participate, build capacity, reflect and ask questions, deliver, share outputs, and review and evaluate.

## General requirements for collaboration

1. The process of establishing a partnership is as important as the outcomes to be achieved.
2. Collaboration needs to be well-facilitated allowing people to 'open up' and share issues. The role of the facilitator and facilitating organisation is to provide a safe space.
3. As a research partner, you can:
  - Help shape research funding agendas.
  - Have an input into determining research questions.
  - Insist that research is neutral, addresses all sides of a question and avoids asking for one-sided evidence.
  - Be sensitive to, and willing to learn about, constraints that researchers work under.
  - Work towards a collective view and avoid domination by special interests, including your own.
  - Share experiences of both successes and failures to help improve research processes and outcomes.
4. Individual projects in a larger programme of research may need to be 'depressurised', if the expectations on them are too high. This can be achieved by communicating the context of how each project fits into the bigger picture and ensuring that workloads and deliverables are equitably spread. Any non-negotiable issues need to be clearly articulated.
5. Networks, citizen science projects and other opportunities for social learning can help build citizen and other partner capacity for collaborative working.

## Working Together for Better Outcomes (WT4BO) workshop outputs and details

**WT4BO workshop website**  
[bit.ly/WT4BO](http://bit.ly/WT4BO)

**Guidance notes for funders and researchers are available from the workshop website.**

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