



## Ending Partnerships

### Introduction

Amongst all the literature about partnerships, little has been said about ending partnerships. But there are real issues: some partnerships deliver very little, or have reached the end of a natural life. Also, many people feel that there is now a plethora of partnerships, with confused roles and accountability.

Local Strategic Partnerships are expected to bring more coherence to local partnership arrangements, and there are external pressures to rationalise our partnerships. This process is not straightforward, as many partnerships have formed voluntarily with particular reasons for being, and cannot simply be erased from existence. Their end (or closure) must be managed.

Ending partnerships at the appropriate time will help to simplify the plethora of partnerships that already exist, and may release resources to be re-directed where they are needed most.

Most partnerships come to an end either because -

- the original objectives have been met, and the partnership task is complete;
- the parties no longer share the same objective
- to make way for some other form of working or organisation
- or for some other reason.

Ending partnerships is a change issue, and the approach will depend on what you want to achieve.

### If the partnership's job is done.....

- celebrate what partners have achieved
- take stock of the lessons partners have learnt, and record these in a lessons learnt report.
- communicate the partnership's closure to interested parties, and share the lessons learnt.
- Have regard to the partnership agreement or constitution. It may provide for how the partnership will be terminated.
- Agree how any partnership assets will be shared or disposed of. Likewise how will any liabilities be shared.
- Ensure adequate handover arrangements are in place.
- Draw the partnership formally to a close, with recognition of everybody's efforts.

**If there is more to be done, and the partnership is being disbanded to make way for some other arrangement or structure**

- establish with partners the need for change - focus on desired outcomes
- make the most of opportunities which ending the partnership might offer
- promote theme of working smarter, not harder as a guiding principle
- identify forces acting in favour and working against change (i.e. use a force-field analysis)
- plan an effective handover to the new body
- help the individuals affected adjust to the change
- introduce incentives which support the desired changes
- ensure excellent communication flows - consider preparing a communication plan.

**TOP TIPS & KEY QUESTIONS**

- Take care to build, not undermine relationships - trust takes a long time to build and moments to undermine
- Who should prepare the lessons learnt report – who can be objective enough?
- consider how best to communicate lessons learnt – who may benefit from your experiences? What do they need to know?



***“You will never be lonely working in partnership!”***