



KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

This document contains what we have learned over the years about key aspects of successful partnerships. This is not an all-inclusive list, but rather highlights some foundational aspects that successful partnerships have made part of their work.

Our Partnership Philosophy

A true partnership involves *mutual trust and risk*. All parties are investing in the relationship and sharing the risk that it might not work out. But they also are building trust in each other's abilities and learn from each other as they engage in good work! It is most certainly not just a contractual agreement that involves monetary transactions. *Ideally, partners will engage in:*

- strategic planning and program development;
- technical assistance to enhance staff capacity;
- education;
- cross-cultural learning and sharing;
- resource mobilization.

Ensuring there is a *shared vision* – and not just a one-year or one-time commitment – builds the necessary foundation for a true partnership. This provides the opportunity to grow and leverage the unique skills each partner brings to the partnership. This does not mean there is agreement on everything. It is important for partners to recognize there may be disagreement and they need to be transparent about those issues so they can move forward in a deeper, more productive way that is truly collaborative and not driven by one partner alone. Consistent, open communication is essential to overcoming challenges faced in partnerships.

We strive to *facilitate partnerships that are multi-faceted and inclusive*. Enhancing access to palliative care isn't a simple issue and involving many partners from different sectors and backgrounds can significantly strengthen the outcomes. This collaborative environment allows partners to be strategic in their approach to solving challenges. A partnership may find opportunities to involve other stakeholders in your community, such as universities, churches, or individuals with a passion for palliative care.

Setting Goals and Expectations

Ensuring you have a shared vision is foundational for starting a true partnership. Setting goals and expectations for your partnership are important to building the foundation and continuing to grow and nourish the partnership. A review and discussion of each organization's mission, values and strategic plan is a good starting point. Then each partner can document their goals and expectations for the partnership. These should be shared and discussed with each other. The goal is to reach a common understanding of what each partner hopes for in the relationship. Reaching an agreement on shared goals – overarching goals for the partnership as well as



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tangible goals that are time-bound – is helpful to ensure the partners are on the same page and moving ahead in a truly collaborative way.

Goals: It's probably best to identify 2-3 major partnership goals per year (or over a period of years). Goals give you something tangible and measurable to accomplish. Every partnership is different so the scope of the goals can vary greatly. But even focusing on one key goal is helpful ... and other areas of focus and growth in the partnership may emerge.

Expectations: It is not only possible, but likely that your expectations for the partnership may initially differ from those of your partner, so it is important to talk through these. Start by sharing your expectations and asking your partner about theirs. Understanding of each other's expectations – and agreeing on some common ones – will result in a strong partnership that can meet (or exceed) expectations for all.

Communication

Communication is not always easy, especially when you have 8,000 miles (or 12,875 kilometers) between you! Lack of good communication can lead to ambiguity, confusion, more questions, frustration, and possibly even distrust.

Below is some of our best communication advice, gathered from many partners with many years of experience:

- **Appoint a Key Contact Person.** Identify a key contact person – either a staff member or volunteer – who is charged with coordinating partnership communication and activities on a regular basis and updates staff on their partnership initiative. This person should serve as the point person on the partnership committee and advocate for the partnership in the organization.
- **Ask Questions.** Always ask questions where clarity is needed. Don't hesitate. If you feel you are asking too many questions, say so, and ask if it's best to set aside some for another conversation. Or, email some questions that may need less discussion.
- **Be Concise.** Always try to be very clear with what you mean. Avoid vague comments or discussion whenever possible. This helps avoid wrong interpretations and reduces confusion in communication.
- **Be responsive.** Always try to be responsive – even if it is initially an email to say, 'Thanks – received your email and will get back to you by the end of next week.' This helps the partner know you have received their note and are making a plan for response.



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- **Be Patient.** Have patience with your partner. While your partnership is an incredibly important relationship and valued by your partner, it may not always be at the forefront of their thought. Working in palliative care, whether in the US or Zimbabwe, is very demanding. We are often faced with patients or needs that require immediate attention, so responding to your email may not always be an immediate priority.
- **Provide Friendly Reminders.** To that end, it is also perfectly OK to send a reminder email to your partner if you have not had a response from an email you sent a few weeks ago. Don't hesitate to give them a reminder that you sent them an email and would like to discuss... most people appreciate the reminder.
- **Schedule Standing Meetings.** Establish a set day and time when you will touch base with your partner. We recommend once a month. This can be a brief catch up or a more in-depth meeting with a set agenda – depending on your needs. GPIC can set up calls through Zoom, an online audio/video conferencing platform that we have found to be very useful and effective with communication around the world. There may be times when an international partner does not have access to WiFi to connect through Zoom or Skype. Try to budget \$10-20 to keep loaded on a Skype account that will allow you to dial a landline or cell phone just in case.

Contact Us!

Global Partners in Care is available to work with individual partnerships to strengthen these foundations and build successful partnerships. Before we sit down for a one-on-one meeting, give some thought to the following questions that will be important to our discussion:

- Why did you get involved in this partnership initially?
- What values are guiding you in this partnership?
- What expectations and hopes do you have for your partnership for the next 1, 3, and 5 years (i.e. projects, visits, communications, learning, etc.).
- Are there things you would like to be a part of your partnership?
- What do you think will be challenges in your partnership?