

Checklist for collaborative working



20 questions trustees need to ask

Collaborative working describes joint working by two or more charities in order to fulfil their purposes, while remaining as separate charities. Agreements may range from very informal agreements to large-scale service delivery contracts. Sometimes the decision to work together can lead to a formal merger.

Purpose of the checklist

This checklist is intended as a simple guide to the typical issues trustees will need to think about when considering working collaboratively. Trustees must act prudently in the interests of their charity. This means that they should be satisfied that there will be adequate benefits for their beneficiaries. The extent to which an agreement is formalised is a matter for trustees to consider, and may require professional advice.

This checklist is intended as a simple guide to the typical issues trustees will need to think about when considering working collaboratively. We have designed the checklist to be suitable for all charities to use. Not all questions may be relevant to every charity - it will depend on the nature and scale of the proposed collaboration.

The checklist should be looked at alongside the Commission's publications:

- *Choosing to Collaborate: Helping you succeed*
- *Collaborative Working and Mergers: An introduction (CC34)*

Initiating collaboration

1. How can we better meet the needs of our charity and its beneficiaries by working with others?
2. How will potential partners be identified? Do we already have an existing relationship with them?
3. Is the proposed partner charity(s) compatible with us in terms of its charitable objects, culture, governance arrangements, organisational structures and funding base?
4. What are the reasons for collaborating?
5. What will or might our charity gain and lose from collaborating? Have we considered the wider impacts on our charity?
6. Do we plan to approach stakeholders for their views, particularly service users?
7. Does the proposed collaboration further our charitable purposes? Is it an appropriate use of charitable funds? Is any private benefit incidental?
8. Are there significant reputational or financial risks? If yes, are we carrying out a due diligence exercise?

Approaches to collaboration

- 9. Have we considered what type of agreement will be appropriate for our charity's needs?
- 10. Do we need to take professional advice about the type and content of the agreement?
- 11. Does the agreement state the collaboration objectives, benefits for each party, duration and funding arrangement?
- 12. Does the agreement address the identified risks including any conflict of interest?
- 13. Are there significant reputational or financial risks? If yes, are we carrying out a due diligence exercise?

Planning and communicating

- 14. Have we established a project board, committee or group to oversee the project? Is there an individual managing the overall process or other arrangements in place?
- 15. Have we established a project plan with milestones?
- 16. Have we identified the risks associated with the collaboration and put measures in place to mitigate those risks?
- 17. Have we estimated the full cost of collaborating and how it will be resourced? This should include costs such as staff time, rebranding, professional fees, relocation and unanticipated costs.
- 18. Have we conducted a stakeholder analysis and established a communications plan that covers all relevant stakeholders and audiences? How will we manage any joint branding?
- 19. Have we identified clear measures to monitor the success of the collaboration? How will it be evaluated?
- 20. Have we developed an exit strategy for ending the collaborative arrangement should circumstances change?

L means there is a specific legal or regulatory requirement. Trustees and the charity must comply with these requirements.

This checklist forms part of the Big Board Talk series. For more information please see our website www.charitycommission.gov.uk

big board talk

...the conversation
all charities need to have