Internal partnership dynamics

Journey Planner
[2]

Guidance document
November 2021

Background

Governance is concerned with the way in which decisions are taken and implemented to realise a collective goal. In short, it is the means to an end.

Purpose – Effective partnership working is crucial for achieving better outcomes and aligning benefits for the environment, economy and society. This document provides suggested guidance for designing and implementing effective partnership governance arrangements.

Focus – Partnerships related to flood and coastal erosion risk management, water management or broader partnerships featuring these aspects.

Target audience – The guidance aims to support existing partnerships, or those looking to establish new partnerships.

Self-assessment framework – a separate self-assessment framework is also available to download to enable (existing/emerging) partnerships to assess the effectiveness of their partnership arrangements.

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales

Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government

Environment Agency

Background

Journey Planners – Guidance is provided in the form of Journey Planners, which are each made up of modules (including objectives, advice and good practice examples).

Your partnership: Your priorities – Although the Journey Planners are numbered (1 to 3) they do not need to be read in order, or in their entirety. You can navigate to specific modules of interest to suit your needs and priorities.

Background – This guidance was produced as a result of the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Research and Development Programme funded research project '<u>Understanding effective Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management governance in England and Wales</u>' (2019/20) and an internal Environment Agency project on water governance and catchment partnerships (2018/19). Both projects identified governance challenges encountered in partnerships and conditions for successful partnership working. These lessons have been combined to create practical guidance on effective partnership governance. <u>This is not intended to provide a definitive or prescriptive view on good practice, but to offer suggestions for overcoming common governance challenges and establishing stronger, more effective and legitimate partnerships.</u>

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs
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Overview of Journey Planners

JOURNEY PLANNER 1: Legitimate partnerships

- 1.1 Accountability and transparency
- 1.2 Participation and representation
- 1.3 Fairness
- 1.4 Evidence-based decision making

JOURNEY PLANNER 2: Internal partnership dynamics

- 2.1 Collective ownership
- 2.2 Roles, responsibilities and working relationships
- 2.3 Resource and capacity

JOURNEY PLANNER 3: Cross-sectoral coordination and integration

- 3.1 Collaboration and cooperation
- 3.2 Boundary spanning
- 3.3 Resource sharing

Internal partnership dynamics

Journey structure

Modules

- 2.1 Collective ownership
- 2.2 Roles, responsibilities and working relationships
- 2.3 Resource and capacity

Destination

Effective governance structures and mechanisms are essential for creating the right enabling environment for partnership working to achieve the partnership's goals.

These can be grouped into 3 core sub-themes related to:

- **Collective ownership**
- **Roles, responsibilities and working relationships**
- **Resource and capacity**

Pathways for managing internal partnership dynamics

1. **Collective ownership** – Establishing and crucially maintaining a shared vision and direction for the partnership is essential for cultivating ‘buy-in’, shared ownership and commitment to achieving the partnership’s goals.
2. **Roles, responsibilities and working relationships** – Roles and responsibilities must be clearly assigned, and internal working structures established to facilitate collaboration and implementation. Simultaneously, it is vital that partnerships take the time to get to know one another so that members understand each other’s roles, remits and the constraints within which they are working outside of the partnership, while establishing trust.
3. **Resource and capacity** – Resources can take many forms, including data, technological capabilities, financial resources, as well as human resources (for example personnel, skills and expertise, authority and power). The effectiveness of partnerships depends on their ability to adequately source, allocate, share and use limited resources in an efficient way.

Navigating the journey planner: user guide

Symbols

Objective

St Statutory requirement: (W) indicates Wales only and (E) indicates England only; otherwise assume both

Advice. Examples of good practice are marked as **Eg**

Further information and resources

Abbreviations

CaBA	Catchment Based Approach
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
FCERM	Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management
LLFA	Lead Local Flood Authority
LA	Local Authority
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
PSB	Public Service Board (Wales)
RFCC	Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
RMA	Risk Management Authority

Module 2.1

Collective ownership

2.1 Collective ownership

Establishing collective ownership – Creating and maintaining a shared vision and direction for the partnership is essential for cultivating 'buy-in' and commitment to achieving the partnership's goals. [1]

A shared vision – Co-creating a mission statement or vision strategy is vital for maintaining line of sight; however, the process of establishing this is just as important as the resulting outcome. Taking time to deliberate and reach a consensus, taking into account the views of different stakeholder groups, is necessary for establishing buy-in and commitment. How this is achieved, and the length of time this process takes, will vary between different types of partnerships. For those created for a specific policy-driven purpose (such as Coastal Groups) the vision/goals may already be well defined; whereas for partnerships formed in response to a specific event/issue (such as in the aftermath of significant flooding), there may be a host of potentially conflicting visions for the partnership and what it should achieve. [2]

Jointly determining the purpose and functionality of the partnership

In addition to establishing a shared vision (what the partnership aims to achieve), it is vital to clarify the function of the partnership (how it will operate to achieve these aims). The corresponding practical and legal implications, and possible constraints, must be fully considered in order to put in place appropriate governance arrangements (and potential 'work arounds') to address these. This is especially important for partnerships seeking to undertake joined-up decision making.

Crucial questions to discuss may include: Is it possible to pool or align statutory duties and what are the legalities of this? Where the partnership will involve decisions that impact on the statutory functions of certain partners, have wider governance arrangements been considered in the design of partnership governance? How will roles and responsibilities be distributed between statutory and non-statutory actors, and how will this impact the dynamics of the partnership and level of collective ownership? How will partners be involved in identifying and co-creating 'work arounds' to possible legal, organisational and practical constraints to joined-up working? [3]

2.1 Collective ownership

Sustaining momentum – Defined goals, measurable targets and milestones play an important role in sustaining momentum and managing expectations about when and how certain decisions will be taken and specific activities implemented. These should be outlined in a clear action plan and progress monitored. Just as important as master planning, is keeping a running record of the decisions and actions made during partnership meetings. These should be circulated promptly before/after meetings and 'check points' created to monitor progress (for example at the start of every meeting or at specific points in time between meetings). [4]

Jointly shaping the agenda – In addition to jointly establishing the wider vision for the partnership, it is also important to think about how the agenda for partnership meetings is set. Where possible, there should be opportunities for partners to contribute to the (draft) agenda, propose relevant items and provide feedback. This can help establish joint ownership for the meeting, while ensuring a fair approach to participation. On a practical level, the agenda should clearly specify the purpose of each item so partners have a clear idea of what to expect and potentially prepare ahead of time. [5]

Task and finish groups – It can be helpful to establish task and finish groups to undertake a specific activity or oversee a certain topic area. Such groups have not only been shown to improve efficiency and implementation, but also represent opportunities for establishing collective ownership. Indeed, where appropriate, task and finish groups made up of different stakeholder representatives act to remove responsibility from a single organisation and promote joint responsibility across relevant partners. [6]

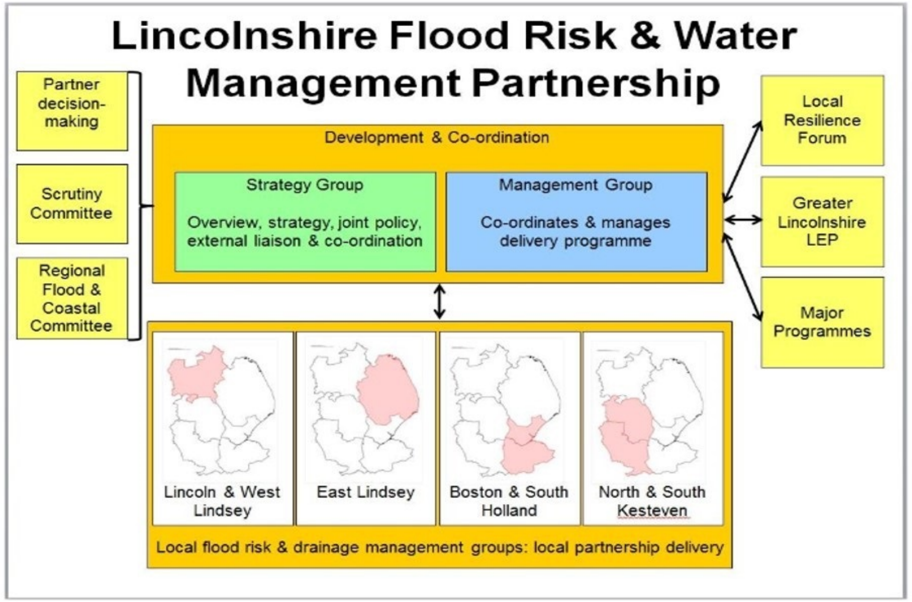


Image left: Overview of Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Water Management Partnership activity groups (LFRWMP, 2019)

2.1 Collective ownership

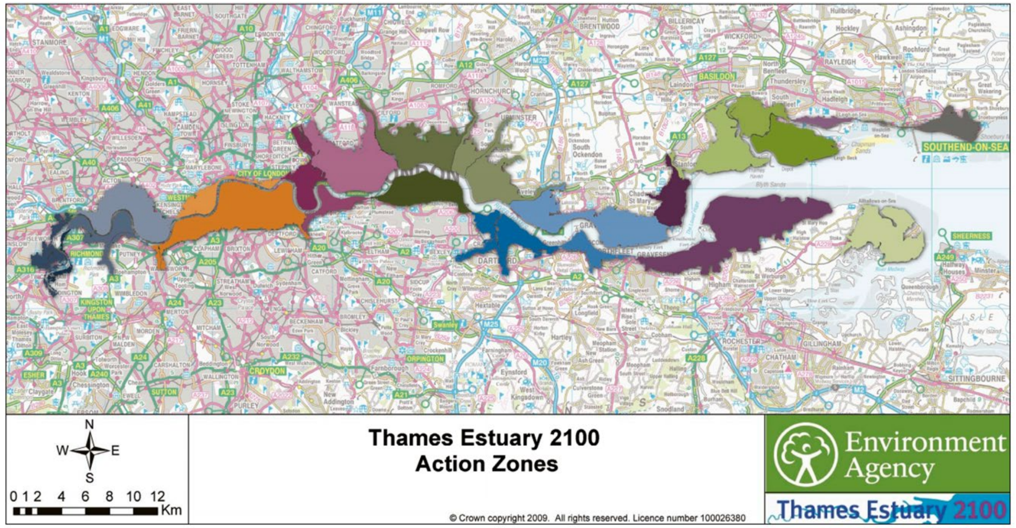
Eg

Living Action Plans – The Thames Estuary 2100 Plan (TE2100)

TE2100 (published in 2012) represents the first adaptive pathways approach applied in the UK. The plan adopts a phased approach, subject to monitoring reviews (every 5 years, against key indicators) and a full review and updated plan every 10 years;

- 2010 – 2034: maintenance of current flood defence system and protection of land for future improvements
- 2035 – 2049: reshaping the riverside through development, raising existing flood walls, embankments and small barriers. Selection of option for enhancing or replacing the Thames Barrier is anticipated around 2040
- 2050 – 2100: implementing selected option for future Thames Barrier

The Environment Agency coordinate implementation of the Thames Estuary 2100 Plan, which was developed with partners and communities, to ensure ‘buy-in’ and collective ownership. The plan itself establishes the direction of travel for the estuary long-term and relies on multi-agency actions. [7]



2.1

Collective ownership

Identifying quick wins and future opportunities

Developing and achieving early 'quick wins' can help to build momentum and commitment to implementing the wider goals of the partnership. In turn, the ability to demonstrate 'success' early-on can help to evidence the added value of the partnership itself (see box 35). To identify these opportunities, a process of joint deliberative enquiry is recommended, where partners are able to identify opportunities for mutual collaborative advantage through open exchange.

A useful strategy is to undertake an 'opportunity mapping' exercise to identify where it might be feasible to implement certain interventions in a way that maximises benefits. Further guidance is available in Natural England's Natural Capital Evidence Handbook (page 32).

[8]

Eg

Monitoring effective progress

The environment sub-group of the South West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee identifies clear targets and establishes progress monitoring across organisations based on shared objectives. The sub-group's terms of reference identifies three types of actions:

1. **Monitoring** the Capital Investment Programme and ensuring accountability for achieving broad environmental outcomes
2. **Enabling** partners and land-managers to support implementation through upstream, in-channel, floodplain and coastal management solutions
3. **Challenging** the development of future programmes and alignment with other environmental and climate change programmes

An annual action plan outlines specific actions and importantly reports progress against these. This clarity of planning ensures momentum of the group's activities, as well as providing a transparency and reporting function.

[9]

Module 2.2

Roles, responsibilities and working relationships

2.2 Roles, responsibilities and working relationships

Creating an enabling environment – Internal governance structures are essential for creating the right enabling environment for effective partnership working. [10]

Clear roles and responsibilities and internal working structures are essential for effective partnership working. This can be supported through the use of governance mechanisms such as terms of reference and collaboration agreements, or else outlined in an overarching strategy document.

Related to this, partners need to understand the wider governance structures within which individual partners are operating and where certain decisions and actions agreed within the partnership might require additional approval/sign-off from partner organisations. [11]

Effective leadership is important for maintaining focus, facilitating internal working, and resolving potential conflicts, alongside other structures/processes. Leadership roles should be assigned according to capabilities and capacities. Typically, this role is enacted by the partnership chair and/or designated theme leaders of working groups. It is important to be aware of who occupies these roles and how their affiliations might influence the group dynamics. Establishing an independent chair or periodically rotating leadership roles can help to mitigate potential (perceived) conflicts of interest, while also helping to sustain momentum and collective ownership (see Journey Planner 1). [12]

2.2 Roles, responsibilities and working relationships

Consistency and succession planning – While it is not always possible for the same individuals to attend every partnership meeting, efforts should be made to ensure a degree of consistency among partnership members. A useful strategy within partner organisations may be to assign 'lead' and 'reserve' individuals to act as representatives. This has the advantage of avoiding repetition between meetings and enabling the maintenance of internal partnership relationships over time. [13]

Being aware of power dynamics – It is important to be aware of differences in power between partners, which often result from the formal distribution of roles and responsibilities, and corresponding distribution of resources. Third sector, voluntary and non-statutory groups in particular may be less able to act and potentially feel disempowered by public actors. It is important to be mindful of these differences and understand how this may influence deliberation and resulting decisions taken by the partnership. It is also essential that this is considered when establishing the function of the partnership (see box 3). [14]

Making time to reflect – It is vital to create safe spaces for open, honest reflection about how the partnership is working in practice and how members are working together. This might be through team building days, or at periodic meetings. [15]

Tools to support self reflection and assessment

Accompanying this guidance we have developed a **self-assessment framework**, which could provide a useful springboard for facilitating these discussions.

Additional evaluation tools are available for catchment partnerships to self-assess their capabilities: Framework for the monitoring and evaluation of catchment partnership working. [16]

2.2 Roles, responsibilities and working relationships

Dedicated time to building trust is needed, particularly in the early stages of a partnership. Taking time to get to know '*the other'* is essential as members need to understand each other's roles, remits and crucially the constraints within which they are working. Honest communication is vital. Building trusting relationships can be supported through the frequency of meetings, secondments or internal seminars, for example. [17]

Maintaining line of sight requires clear mechanisms to be established to ensure adherence to agreed roles and responsibilities, while supporting implementation and accountability (see Journey Planner 1, Module 1.1). These mechanisms should be aligned with the agreed vision and goals of a partnership. [18]

2.2 Roles, responsibilities and working relationships

Eg

Mainstreaming integration and collaboration – Area Leadership Team Communiqué Our Commitment to Integrated Delivery

Building on the Environment Agency national level Communiqué issued in 2018, the West Midlands Environment Agency Area team have recognised the need to show leadership and commitment for integration by issuing their own Communique to detail their commitment to the practice of integrated working.

This short document recognises that "*clear expression of our shared principles for integrated working would help teams agree how to work together effectively*" and goes on to detail the principles for integrated working which have been signed up to by the Executive Directors. The Communiqué summarises the key goals: "*As we plan and develop future work programmes we would like teams to work with partners and across functions to deliver joint outcomes. We should seek to identify partnership projects that can both reduce flood risk and improve the environment; while respecting the need to focus on achieving our priority goals efficiently*."

Supported from the top, and setting out the vision and priorities for the organisation, the document provides the basis for establishing collaborative working processes and integrated delivery as standard practice.

[19]

Bourn Brook, Birmingham (© Environment Agency)

Module 2.3

Resource and capacity

2.3 Resource and capacity

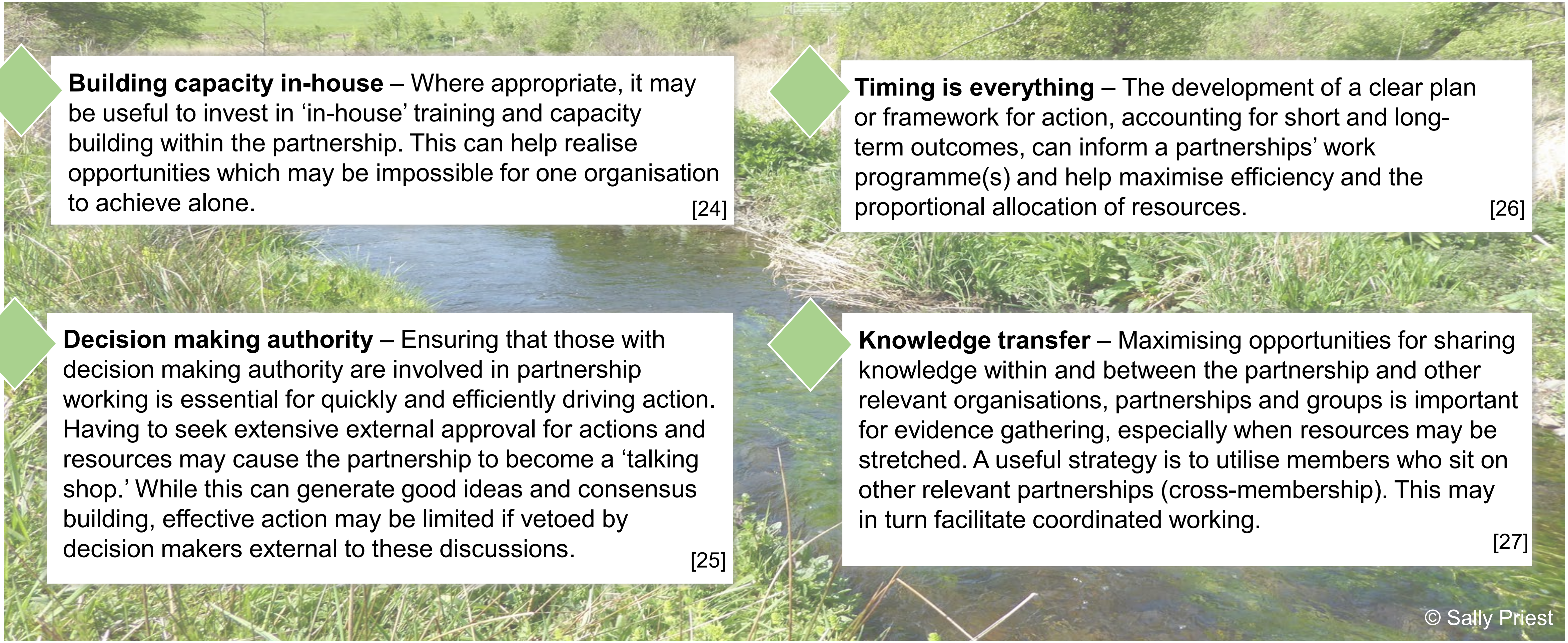
Making the most of limited resources – The effectiveness of a partnership depends on its ability to adequately source, allocate, share and use limited resources in an efficient way. Partnerships may have different approaches to maximising resources depending upon their goals and structure. Some may pool resources and jointly procure services, others may align activities which can allow them to make resource gains. Merely understanding what others are doing and the sharing of results can help avoid repeated effort. [20]

Dedicated personnel – Where possible, it is beneficial to dedicate personnel to the running and day-to-day operations of the partnership. Partnerships that are able to employ someone to undertake crucial administrative roles (for example organising meetings, recording meeting minutes) are more likely to be efficient and better managed, and consequently viewed more positively by their members. [21]

Working groups – It can be useful and more efficient to organise and assign certain decisions and tasks to specific (sub) working groups. Consideration should be given to the 'make-up' of these groups in terms of stakeholder representativeness and how this might influence outcomes; ultimately, an appropriate mix of stakeholders should be involved. Internal structures should also be established to ensure oversight and accountability for any working groups (for example how/when will they report back to the wider partnership?) (see Journey Planner 1). [22]

Recognising the limits – Recognising the limits of partnership capacity is essential when designing the structure of partnerships, establishing expectations and sustaining membership and momentum. This means setting realistic goals and deadlines, and organising activities (such as meeting frequency) accordingly. Tasks should also be assigned to those best able to address them. [23]

2.3 Resource and capacity



Building capacity in-house – Where appropriate, it may be useful to invest in ‘in-house’ training and capacity building within the partnership. This can help realise opportunities which may be impossible for one organisation to achieve alone. [24]

Timing is everything – The development of a clear plan or framework for action, accounting for short and long-term outcomes, can inform a partnerships’ work programme(s) and help maximise efficiency and the proportional allocation of resources. [26]

Decision making authority – Ensuring that those with decision making authority are involved in partnership working is essential for quickly and efficiently driving action. Having to seek extensive external approval for actions and resources may cause the partnership to become a ‘talking shop.’ While this can generate good ideas and consensus building, effective action may be limited if vetoed by decision makers external to these discussions. [25]

Knowledge transfer – Maximising opportunities for sharing knowledge within and between the partnership and other relevant organisations, partnerships and groups is important for evidence gathering, especially when resources may be stretched. A useful strategy is to utilise members who sit on other relevant partnerships (cross-membership). This may in turn facilitate coordinated working. [27]

2.3 Resource and capacity

Data sharing – Protocols for data sharing should be established early on to facilitate collaboration and efficient use of resources. These can rely on formal or informal agreements.
[28]

Joint collection of data – Some partnerships may establish governance arrangements for the joint collection and use of data. This has added advantages, for example: collected data can be tailored to the needs of the partnership; ensuring consistency of data; cost sharing; avoidance of duplicated effort; data collection and processing tasks can be assigned to partners with the best capability or capacity. This is particularly important for cross-sectoral working (see Journey Planner 3, Module 3.3).
[29]

Driving economies of scale – Partnership working can create opportunities for maximising resource efficiency. For example, joint procurement of data and services can lead to economies of scale, drive better value for money and lower overall resource and transaction costs.
[30]

Eg

The Northumbria Integrated Drainage Partnership (NIDP)

The NIDP's aim is to collectively undertake flood risk studies and facilitate a shared understanding of risk to inform flood risk and drainage management solutions. It has established formalised agreements and data sharing protocols, as well as using the procurement processes of one organisation to jointly commission data collection and modelling on behalf of the partnership. Recognising that data needs, and evidencing 'risk', varies between the different sectors involved, the NIDP agreed a shared approach to data collection methods, which is used for risk studies. In turn, these risk studies are prioritised in a medium-term 10 year rolling plan, which not only supports resource efficiencies but is also flexible and can be refined, subject to emerging scientific evidence or changes to local conditions. The NIDP also is an example of the benefits of joint procurement and alignment of services. A number of studies are commissioned altogether as part of Northumbrian Water's procurement framework and this scheduling of multiple studies with a set of consultants familiar with the requirements has created economies of scale and reduced the cost of each study.
[31]

2.3 Resource and capacity

Eg

Pooling resources – Coastal Partners

Coastal Partners (formerly named the Eastern Solent Coastal Partnership) were established in 2012 to create a combined coastal management service spanning 4 Local Authorities (Fareham Borough Council, Gosport Borough Council, Portsmouth City Council and Havant Borough). By implementing FCERM works centrally, they are able to enhance resource efficiency through joint procurement, joint bidding for funding and dedicated staff resource, while strengthening in-house coastal expertise. [32]

Accessing resources via cross-sectoral coordination and integration – Linking activities to wider initiatives and other sectors, groups and partnerships is a useful means of accessing (and potentially pooling) resources in ways that can maximise benefits for all. The governance requirements for improving this are addressed in Journey Planner 3 (*cross-sectoral coordination and integration*). [33]

Thinking creatively – Efforts should be made to identify overlapping areas of interest and opportunities for mutual collaborative advantage to achieve 'win wins'. This requires partners to look beyond their initial priorities and think creatively about how resources can be pooled and allocated to maximise efficiency and value for money. Opportunity mapping is a useful exercise in this regard (see box 8). [34]

2.3 Resource and capacity

Demonstrating added value – The ability to recruit and sustain the involvement of different organisations is often dependent on the ability to demonstrate the added value of the partnership and how this will support 'the day job'.

Value refers broadly to process-based elements (such as access to resources and resource sharing, the development of skills and networks, or building relationships with the community); output-based elements (such as strategy or plan creation); or outcome-based elements (such as properties subject to flood risk reduction).

The ability to demonstrate added value will inevitably differ depending upon the overall aim of a partnership and the stage that it is at. While output-based measures are easier to communicate, process and outcome-based benefits of partnership working are much harder to assess, which can make it difficult to convey value added. Partnerships should, as part of their remit and outputs, look to help partners record and report the added value of the partnership, including the less quantifiable benefits (for example skills developed, better understandings of other organisations, relationship building), in a way that can be shared with others to justify partnership engagement, where required.

[35]

Wider governance context: Collaboration and Integration in Wales

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 introduced five ways of working, including duties to collaborate and to take an integrated approach. This is intended to assist public bodies in meeting their well-being objectives and the national well-being goals more widely. As a result of this statutory requirement, the pressures to demonstrate the added value of a specific partnership are arguably less pronounced compared to those operating in England. Nonetheless, public bodies have still reported difficulties in undertaking additional roles to their core statutory duties and the need to justify and demonstrate the added value of partnership activities. It is also worth bearing in mind that the Five Ways of Working are only applicable to the public sector organisations listed in the Act and not to other potential partnership members.

[36]

Destination

Journey planning

Continued

Legitimate partnerships

JOURNEY PLANNER 1

- 1.1 Accountability and transparency
- 1.2 Participation and representation
- 1.3 Fairness
- 1.4 Evidence-based decision-making

Cross-sectoral coordination & integration

JOURNEY PLANNER 3

- 3.1 Collaboration & cooperation
- 3.2 Boundary spanning
- 3.3 Resource sharing

Background information

Research project FRS17186
Flood and Coastal Research Team, Environment Agency

Project webpage: https://www.gov.uk/flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-research-reports/understanding-effective-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-governance-in-england-and-wales

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