

# WORKING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Your guide to building a successful community partnership

This tip sheet provides you with some ideas on how to get the most out of a strategic charity or community partnership. You could consider these points when you're choosing a charity or community partner, or during your initial kick off meeting to make sure your partnership is set for success

## TOP TIPS FOR WORKING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

1

**Look for a 'mission fit'** between your company's product and values, and those of the charity

2

**Keep PR proportionate.** Celebrate your successes but be mindful of over-exploiting the opportunity

3

**Look at the long term.** Time is needed to see a real impact on the community and on your business - and for partners to start feeling comfortable with each other

4

**Continual reflection and self-assessment of projects is important.** It's inevitable that there'll be aspects of a partnership that work well and others that can be improved

5

**Get to know your community partner's work** - The better your understanding of how your partner makes a difference, the better equipped you'll be to inspire your colleagues to support them

6

**Remember it's a partnership.** Don't impose your agenda without discussing what your partner wants to gain. The best relationships will be those where there's a genuine balance between what everybody gains

7

**Get to know how your charitable partner operates.** Charities and commercial organisations can have very different working cultures. For instance, response time expectations and working hours may differ

8

**Be sensitive to the time pressures your contact will be facing.** Your community partner will likely be balancing other roles. Understand that there'll be limited admin support for them as they work with you



9

**Think about different ways you could work together** - map these out with your partner. What other support could you offer them? Think in terms of governance (help with legal aspects), developing staff skills (places on your training programmes), HR and staff matters (advice on policies), finance (regulatory guidance) and IT (database design)

10

**Remember that community organisations are very collaborative with each other**, even if they could appear to be competitors. Don't assume they won't talk to each other before agreeing to work with your business. If you blot your copy book with one organisation, it may come back to haunt you later!

11

**Be realistic about the level of reporting you ask for.** Work with your partner and define from the outset a number of updates and meetings. Expecting reports more than twice a year is probably unrealistic, in fact annual reports might be a better fit. Be wary of overloading your community partner with paperwork - contracts are quite rare apart from high value funding relationships so a **memorandum of understanding** might be more appropriate

12

**Remember that cash support is always hugely helpful**, alongside gifts in kind (office furniture, IT hardware, meeting rooms, printing facilities etc). The reality is that all community partners are strapped for cash, and many say that it's the most helpful support you can offer. You'll find it much easier to start and sustain relationships if funding is at least part of the portfolio of support you provide

