

NCOSS EIP INFORMATION WEBSITE

Early Intervention Program – Expression of Interest 2005 Stage 2

Tool 2: Checklist for small and medium sized NGOs in forming partnerships

The following is a checklist for small and medium NGOs to consider during the tendering period if they are thinking about becoming part of a partnership or consortium to delivery EIP services. It provides a series of questions that small and medium organisations may wish to consider to help in the decision making and planning processes.

Is there an organisational fit?

To get started, small and medium NGOs could think about whether there is a 'values fit' between their organisation, the Lead Agency (if your organisation is not the LA) and other partners and whether the partners have a shared understanding and complementary capabilities. Some questions to consider in seeing if the organisations have a values fit are:

- ⇒ How does your organisation relate to the Lead Agency?
- ⇒ How does your organisation relate to other partners in the consortium?
- ⇒ Have you worked together in the past, and if so, what were your lessons from this?
- ⇒ Is there a good fit in terms of values, philosophy and goals between partners?
- ⇒ Do the members of the proposed partnership have complementary capabilities?
- ⇒ Is there a commitment for cooperation? If not, which may be the case if partners were formerly 'rivals', then what incentives for cooperation can be put in place?
- ⇒ Is there a common and shared understanding of the approach between the partners to the EIP services?
- ⇒ Do the partners share a common vision, values and understanding of the scope of the EIP services to be provided?

What roles are the different members of the consortium going to play?

In forming a consortium or partnership to operate EIP services, and in fact for any type of consortium, it is important to be very clear what roles each of the members of the partnership will play. It is also important to allocate tasks and responsibilities in the

partnership in ways that enable each organisation to do what it does best. To help plan this the following questions may be useful:

The Lead Agency

- ⇒ What does the Lead Agency do best?
- ⇒ What does the Lead Agency bring to the consortium?
- ⇒ What will be the role of the Lead Agency?
- ⇒ What services will the Lead Agency deliver as part of the EIP service?
- ⇒ What should the Lead Agency provide to support the consortium and other members of the partnership?

Your organisation

- ⇒ What does your organisation do best?
- ⇒ What can your organisation add to the consortium?
- ⇒ What will be the role of your organisation or service?
- ⇒ What services will your organisation deliver as part of the EIP service? It is important to be precise here:
 - What type of services?
 - Quantity?
 - Expected outputs and outcomes?

Other partners

- ⇒ What do other partners do best?
- ⇒ What can they bring to the partnership?
- ⇒ What will be the role of other members of the consortium?
- ⇒ What services will other partners deliver as part of the EIP service?

By answering these questions your organisation and members of the partnership will all be clear about:

- The service delivery model proposed
- Specialisation within the partnership: which partner agency is going to do what? To be effective this can be based on allocation of tasks and responsibilities within the partnership in ways that enable each agency to do what it does best.
- The role of the Lead Agency
- What support the Lead Agency will provide for partner agencies
- The role of the Lead Agency and partners in service planning
- The role of the Lead Agency and partners in data collection, reporting and evaluation.

Do the proposed arrangements fit with your organisation?

Once you are clear about what your organisation's role will be in the partnership and exactly what services your organisation is going to deliver as part of this EIP service, it is important to look at how this will fit with your existing services and programs and to make sure they will not have any detrimental effects on your current programs and services. Some questions to consider include, but are not limited to:

- ⇒ How do the service delivery arrangements proposed in the partnership to delivery EIP services fit with organisation's operations
- ⇒ In particular, how do the services that your organisation is to provide as part of this partnership to deliver EIP fit with your organisation's current operations? Particular areas that might need consideration are:
 - If your organisation currently does case management, but is not the Lead Agency, how will you organise the services you are providing without having a role in case management?
 - How will you consider providing family support for families accessing child care places?
- ⇒ What will be the impact of providing these EIP services on other staff in your organisation and on the programs and services they are providing?
- ⇒ Do we have the physical capacity to take the EIP program on, in terms of aspects including but not limited to:
 - Office space and program space
 - Management time and capabilities

Some other questions that may need to be asked are:

- ⇒ Training for staff – how is training to be organised and provided in the partnership?
- ⇒ How will the staff of the new services work in relation to the existing staff?
- ⇒ How will supervision and support be provided for the staff of the EIP services?

How do you work out your costs, the financial impact on your organisation and the benefits of partnership?

Once you are clear about what you are going to deliver you will need to work out how much it will actually cost your organisation to provide these services, so that you can participate in negotiations with other partners on how the funding will be divided up. In this process it is important to consider **all costs**, so that they can be factored into the EOI. This means looking at the full range of costs which may include but not be limited to:

- ⇒ Costs of setting up and managing the partnership (time, staff involvement)
- ⇒ Direct service costs, in particular wages and on costs for staff employed; taking into account direct service time, time for staff and consortium meetings and planning as well as expected award increases and the need for penalty rates if required
- ⇒ Organisational overheads – this includes additional administrative and coordination or management costs e.g. to cover the costs of employment, payroll, supervision and support for EIP service staff and to provide admin support to the new service, if needed
- ⇒ Rent to provide space for service delivery and office space
- ⇒ Capital costs, which may include things such as:
 - Premises – reorganisation or refurbishment to accommodate new staff and services
 - Additional office furniture and equipment
 - Equipment and resources to set up space(s) for programs
 - Computers and other information technology upgrades
- ⇒ Costs of data collection and reporting

It is also important to look at how the proposed new services will impact on the financial operations of your organisation, to make sure there are no detrimental effects on what you are doing now:

- ⇒ Are all costs of the new service covered?
- ⇒ What impact does it have on the budget?

You should also consider any financial and resource benefits to your organisation of forming the partnership. These may include:

- ⇒ Expansion of your service capacity
- ⇒ Access to expertise in business planning, financial management, quality improvement and other areas of management
- ⇒ Enhanced future viability of your service.

Communication within the partnership

An effective partnership requires continual effective communication and sharing of information. Good communication is important to help build trust and to keep service delivery on target. Some questions to ask are:

- ⇒ What mechanisms are in place for information dissemination between the Lead Agency and other partners?
- ⇒ What mechanisms are in place for information sharing between all partners?

- ⇒ What sorts of communication processes would help make the consortium or partnership work in a transparent and effective way?
- ⇒ What mechanisms can be put in place to ensure personal contact and site visits to help maintain communication and trust?
- ⇒ What mechanisms will need to be in place to facilitate communication regarding service delivery, and at the same time respecting confidentiality and privacy of clients?

Governance and decision making arrangements for the partnership

In forming the partnership arrangements you will look at the structures that are set out in Tool 1: Options for creating partnerships and select the model that will work best for your partnership. Once this has been done, some questions around governance and decision making arrangements that small and medium NGOs may need to consider are:

- ⇒ What will be the governance structure for the new EIP service and how will partner agencies be represented on and involved with this?
- ⇒ How are decisions about the EIP services going to be made within the partnership?
- ⇒ What structure and processes will be developed to facilitate decision making?
- ⇒ What role will your organisation play in decision making?
- ⇒ What mechanisms are to be put in place to enable all members of the partnership to be involved in decision making?
- ⇒ In what areas will all members of the partnership be involved in decision making and in what areas will this be done by the Lead Agency?

Small and medium NGOs need to also look at how their management and governance structures will be involved. It is important that agreements for service delivery in a consortium or partnership model are not just an agreement based on the working relationships between the two individuals. It is important to make sure that:

- Your Management Committee or Board is involved and understand and approve the proposed partnership
- Internal mechanisms are put in place to keep the Management Committee or Board informed of the progress of the EIP services and the partnership arrangements
- You have identified any implications for management and governance of your organisation that joining this partnership may have.



Making a partnership work: effective contractual arrangements

Partnership arrangements need to be formalised and in writing, usually in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding, a contract, a letter of intent, a partnership agreement or a letter of authority. Some of the aspects that small to medium NGOs should check are included include, but are not limited to the following areas:

- ⇒ Details of roles of partners and services to be provided by each partner agency
- ⇒ Financial arrangements
- ⇒ Decision making arrangements
- ⇒ Mechanisms and processes to identify and resolve conflict, should it arise. Please note, having proposed dispute resolution processes between partner agencies is required for the EOI
- ⇒ Mechanisms for how new members can join the partnership (and who makes this decision).
- ⇒ Process for member agencies to leave the partnership or consortium (and details of what will happen to any contracted services under EIP). Again, please note, having provisions for changing partners in your service model e.g. including a new member and exiting an existing member) is also required for the EOI
- ⇒ Time period for the partnership – is it time limited?
- ⇒ Review mechanisms for the partnership

It is also for partnerships and consortia to be flexible and well planned. It is therefore important to consider:

- How to keep a focus on future gains, to help solve short term conflicts
- How to make the partnership dynamic, with capacity to evolve to respond to new opportunities and the environment.

All of this takes time – don't rush the development stage. A solid, workable and ethical partnership agreement is an essential building block.