Community Partnerships

Interagency Policy Committee

# Building Partnerships

A Best Practices Guide

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# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS
## A BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

## INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Government recognizes that, in today's inter-connected world, it cannot operate alone and needs to work in tandem with the private sector, civil society, and individuals to address pressing issues of the day. Large scale and complex challenges—from reducing poverty and improving education, to protecting the country from natural disasters and terrorism—require cross-sector solutions and collaboration that leverages the full range of American talent, ingenuity, and commitment to action through creative partnerships.[1]

The Federal Government has prioritized enhancing its ability to build and sustain partnerships, launching collaborative initiatives at home and abroad to address the most pressing problems facing the nation. These partnerships have helped us do more with less, build on the capabilities of others, leverage collective action, broaden investments to achieve policy goals, and improve performance. As government budgets shrink and Federal employees are asked to accomplish the same missions with fewer resources, the use of partnerships as an instrument for achieving the government's objectives will become increasingly important.

This document provides guidance to help departments and agencies (collectively "agencies") expand their use of partnerships. It draws on experiences, best practices, and internal guidance from across government and represents the collective wisdom of partnership specialists from more than twenty agencies. It does not address all contingencies or speak to the unique authorities or issues faced by particular agencies. Nor does it supersede existing agency regulations, policy or guidance on partnerships (Federal employees should consult with their Office of General Counsel and partnership offices, where applicable). It does, however, offer insights and common practices on issues involved in building effective partnerships based upon common challenges identified across agencies and policy areas.

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*Just as no nation can wall itself off from the world, no one nation— no matter how large, no matter how powerful—can meet these challenges alone. Nor can governments alone. Today's threats demand new partnerships across sectors and across societies—creative collaborations to achieve what no one can accomplish alone. In short, we need a new spirit of global partnership.*

*President Barack Obama, September 22, 2009*

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[1] For the purposes of this document, we define partnerships as "collaborative working relationships between the U.S. Government and non-Federal actors in which the goals, structure, and roles and responsibilities of each partner are mutually determined."

# WHY PARTNER

Partnerships provide the capacity to achieve what may not otherwise be achieved. In many instances, solutions for problems are outside the control of government alone, and the U.S. Government is demonstrating that, in today's networked world, it provides better services to citizens when it works with others and maximizes the use of partners' core competencies.

Effective partnerships draw together different organizations with complementary and reinforcing strengths, allowing each partner to focus on its central capacities and assets to produce outcomes with greater impact than can be achieved independently. Federal partnership specialists have found that partnerships:

> - Inspire creative ideas and greater potential for innovation and game-changing solutions through collaboration with partners that have different experiences and perspectives;

> - Provide access to more resources, goods, services, intellectual capital and expertise, cutting edge technology, audiences, networks, physical presence and infrastructure, markets, financial capital, venture funding, and capabilities, creating opportunities for greater impact, cost reductions, and efficiencies;

> - Improve decision making and risk management as a result of information sharing among partners;

> - Increase the agility and nimbleness of efforts since partners frequently can adapt and execute in ways that are difficult for the Federal Government;

> - Enhance programmatic credibility by involving reputable partners;

> - Reduce conflict by involving more people in program development and in informing policy development; and

> - Increase opportunities to mobilize passion, excitement, and commitment outside government.

# WHEN TO COLLABORATE, AND WHEN IT MAY NOT WORK

Agencies should first consider the value a partnership will create, keeping in mind that collaboration is a tool, not an end unto itself. Four widely accepted reasons for pursuing partnerships are: (1) they advance a shared objective; (2) they enhance impact through resource sharing; (3) they improve programmatic reputation/visibility; and (4) they achieve mutual programmatic goals. A broad principle is that an agency should be able to show that it will be more effective if it works through a partnership and that associated resources, including staff time, will serve the agency's statutory purposes.

Some enabling conditions for creating partnerships include:

➢ High priority issues must be addressed, and there is an opportunity to take action;

➢ There is wide recognition that effectively addressing these issues will require contributions from outside government;

➢ Non-governmental assets are available and there is non-governmental interest in partnering to address issues;

➢ Resolution of issues is impeded by responsibilities and authorities that are fragmented and dispersed among many entities, both public and private;

➢ There is an agency with the authority to make a decision but not sufficient power to implement it alone;

➢ Leadership supports a collaborative process; and

➢ The sponsoring agency is able and willing to devote the staff time and funding to support the collaborative process.

This last condition is particularly important. Agencies should be realistic about what it takes to build and sustain collaboration. Partnerships do not manage themselves and require time and commitment. There is often a great deal of enthusiasm during the initial stages of brainstorming and relationship building as partners realize what they can accomplish by working together. Enthusiasm, however, can dissipate after a partnership is launched and collaboration moves into an implementation stage and requires day-to-day management. An agency needs to be willing to devote staff time and resources to both building and managing a partnership to maximize the prospects for success.

Importantly, not every challenge, policy objective, or program, is ripe for collaboration. It is therefore important to consider when partnership is most likely to succeed, and when conditions could undermine partnership building, irrespective of its potential to support Federal Government objectives. The times when partnerships are less likely to succeed include:

➢ Affected parties do not see the issue as a high enough priority to commit time and energy to a collaborative process;

➢ There is urgency to addressing an issue that precludes taking time to develop a solution collaboratively;

➢ The sponsoring agency is not committed (or cannot commit) to implementing a solution reached through a collaborative process;

➢ There are insufficient resources (staff time, funds, etc.) to adequately support the collaborative process;

➢ At least one of the key potential partners is unwilling to participate out of a conviction that the issues involve a matter of rights or non-negotiable principles;

➢ The situation has become so polarized that potential partners are unwilling to talk face-to-face;

➢ At least one of the key potential partners could address its interests more effectively in a different way and/or partnership is expected to delay progress;

➢ The sponsoring agency has an oversight function that would be in conflict (or perceived conflict) with a partnership; and

➢ There are no recognized or available partners to make collaboration possible.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

Partnership practitioners across the Federal Government have identified the following key elements as best practices that have contributed to the success of individual partnerships.

- **Clear objectives and agreed-upon scope** – The partnership lays out clear objectives that may include specific goals or may focus on building skills, relationships, and capacity. Consensus on the scope of a partnership—including its scale, extent, and intent—focuses the effort. This is essential since partnerships align the interests of multiple organizations. Instances of unclear problem definition, objectives, and goals have led to ineffective partnerships.

- **Early participation by partners**—Partners are brought to the table early in the process to help design the partnership. This process of co-creation helps to increase buy-in and maximizes the likelihood that the partnership will be structured in a way that fully takes advantage of the resources and capabilities of the various partners. This also involves more voices, perspectives, and experiences in scoping the partnership to increase innovation and avoid "groupthink."

### Communicate Success

Communicating the accomplishments created by partnerships can increase the visibility of projects and partnerships; inspire others to get involved; create a sense of community; help partnerships learn from one another; and generate new ideas for creative projects.

- **Sufficient resources and information** – The partnership or collaboration has access to sufficient resources to ensure success. Resources include time, staff, information, data, skills, and money. Partnerships do not manage themselves and require commitment to maintain relationships and momentum.

- **Mutual benefits and responsibility** – All partners share in the responsibility for outcomes, and benefits of the partnership; and partners have sufficient and continuing incentives to participate. Decision making is shared or mutually supportive. A healthy partnership will work toward

achieving specific benefits for each partner over and above the common benefits to all.  Only in this way will the partnership ensure continuing commitment and sustainability.  This requires that agencies understand their partners' motivations, recognize their risks and constraints, and work to accommodate their needs.

- **Trust and Respect** – Partners trust one another, which helps them work together despite different organizational interests, motivations, cultures, values, and infrastructure.  The frequent rotation of Federal employees can create challenges, since building the partnership is often based on personal relationships.  This can be offset through carefully planned partnership handovers to other Federal officials.  Partners also should respect one another's mission and goals, and the legal authorities under which they operate.

- **Good communication and transparency** – Continuous communication and frequent opportunities to check progress build relationships; provide mutual recognition, trust, and respect; and improve the capacity of participants to solve problems together.  Agencies may want to incorporate time into meeting agendas for additional communication and networking to help build relationships.  It is important to explain the reasons for any decision or course of action adopted by an agency on partnership matter and to accept responsibility for the consequences of the decision or action.

- **Careful management** – Essential elements include: 1) clearly defined participant roles and responsibilities; 2) clear ground rules and protocols, including mechanisms for resolving disagreements; and 3) informal and formal communication links with the public, the media, and other government agencies, where appropriate and necessary.

- **Compliance with legal requirements** – Partnerships work best when agency and outside partners are in alignment with their respective legal counsel offices and those offices are involved in the planning process from the outset.

- **Planning for implementation and evaluation** – Participants agree on the steps each will take to implement their collective plan, and on measurable outcomes to gauge effectiveness.  It may be useful to unbundle activities for the partnership into pieces that are easier for partners to understand and implement, particularly for complex, multi-sector partnerships.  This also can help build momentum by setting achievable implementation goals with more immediate and tangible results, and create more opportunities to "course correct" and adjust where necessary.

## TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS

There are many different types of partnerships and approaches to making them work.  Some involve resources, with partners prepared to provide significant funding, especially if they believe this will benefit their business interests.  Other non-monetary partnerships can help generate ideas, develop content, design engagement activities, and provide skills and knowledge to ensure initiatives are a success.  Partners can also help develop relationships with different audiences.

Below are some of the more common arrangements in partnering:

### Monetary Partnerships

Sharing the monetary responsibility for a partnership may provide an advantageous framework because it demonstrates a joint fiscal commitment to achieving mutually-defined goals. Partnerships, however, should not be viewed as a way of augmenting government appropriations or circumventing gift-acceptance rules. Instead, when the Federal Government aligns its strategy with partners' priorities, shared funding makes the most sense because all sides become invested in mutual goals. Partnerships in which money or other resources are transferred to or from the Federal Government must comply with applicable legal authorities which can vary widely between agencies; thus development of partnership initiatives with a shared funding component will always require close coordination with agency counsel offices. These types of partnerships may be developed through non-binding commitments such as Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), Letters of Intent (LOIs), and Statement of Intent (SOIs). Although non-binding, such frameworks must always be developed in coordination with agency counsel offices.

### Non-Monetary Partnerships

Some partnerships do not require funding and instead rely on the synergies created when the unique comparative advantages of the public and private sector are joined together. Government monetary commitments are by no means the only assets that can be invested into a partnership; programmatic and policy objectives frequently can be advanced by leveraging the convening power of the U.S. Government to bring together the right partners to stimulate and catalyze collaboration. These types of partnerships may be developed through non-binding commitments such as MOUs, LOIs, and SOIs. Although non-binding, such frameworks must always be developed in coordination with agency counsel offices.


## CHOOSING PARTNERS

The selection of partners is critical to the success of collaboration and involves an evaluation of their capabilities as well as legal and policy considerations. Generally speaking, the U.S. Government has the ability to partner with various entities from the private sector and civil society: businesses, non-profits, foundations, faith-based groups, labor associations, universities, and others. It is important to map out potential stakeholders who share an agency's interests before conducting outreach. In evaluating potential partners, agencies should identify organizations or people who will help solve the challenge and have the capacity to support a partnership, and develop a plan for reaching them with a clear and compelling argument for why they should collaborate, taking into account their organizational mission, interests, and culture. Once an agency has met with potential partners and identified the most likely candidates, they must be vetted through a process with appropriate due diligence (described in more detail below). Keep in mind, that public-private partnerships are not procurements and that any obligations of Federal funds must follow agency guidelines.

In choosing partners, agencies must avoid any suggestion that they have a special relationship with particular private entities or do not deal with private sector and civil society actors in an even-handed manner.  All outreach must be done consistent with established ethics principles of non-endorsement or preferential treatment, and should involve close coordination with agency counsel offices to ensure outreach and partnership development initiatives are consistent with those principles.   When initially seeking potential partners or commitments, one best practice is to issue a general call to action to a broader audience, rather than begin by approaching individual or pre-selected potential partners or institutions (inclusive vice exclusive).  This does not require all calls to action to be broadcast publicly; however, they should be issued to a broad audience of appropriate recipients, so that no individual recipient feels singled out and pressured to participate, and that there is no appearance of endorsement, preferential treatment, or privileged access.

Some agencies have addressed partnership outreach by issuing blanket program statements that inform potential partners of agency interest and receptiveness to receiving partnership concept papers (see USAID's GDA Annual Program Statement).  Partners have been invited to talk with these agencies to see if their ideas have a potential for consideration prior to submitting a concept paper.  In doing so:

➢ An agency's outreach efforts to the private sector and civil society should not be limited to a small number of prominent or well-established foundations, philanthropic organizations, or businesses, but should seek to cast a wide net and involve, or provide such opportunities to, a variety of parties from the private sector or civil society.  Not every outreach effort has to encompass all possible actors, but agency outreach to the private sector and civil society should cumulatively, and wherever feasible in specific efforts, involve a wide array of parties.

➢ Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate to initiate direct contact with a specific potential partner, such as when that entity has already demonstrated a commitment to the relevant issue.  This is particularly the case when an agency is merely alerting such an entity to a broad call for action to make sure that it is aware of the opportunity.

### USAID – Annual Program Statement

Each year, USAID issues a Global Development Alliance (GDA) Annual Program Statement (APS) inviting organizations to submit proposals for public-private partnerships.  This application process solicits for concept papers that propose partnership ideas to the Agency.

The APS process provides broad outreach and advertisement of the Agency's interest in partnering and satisfies the Agency's competition policies.

*Perform Due Diligence*

The selection of any particular partner must have a supportable justification in terms of the expertise, resources, or other value that the partner brings to the relationship, and agencies should perform due diligence when selecting particular partners.  The term "due diligence" has its roots in business and law, traditionally referring to the steps taken in advance of undertaking commercial transactions.

In the due diligence process, research on many partners—including major companies, foundations, and NGOs—lends itself to database and web searches, supplemented by traditional reference checks.  In this context, due diligence refers to actions agencies take to evaluate the risks and benefits of potentially being associated with a non-Federal entity.  The purpose of the due diligence search is to: 1) avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of a conflict; and 2) protect the agency's reputation.
Due diligence should help avoid unwelcome surprises and the potential that the business practices of a partner will reflect poorly on the U.S. Government and its partners.

Many Department guidelines have recognized that organizational risks may arise in both of the following areas:

➢ *Reputational impact*—All organizations and institutions value their reputation and will be concerned about whether their reputation will be damaged, either by the fact of the partnership itself or by future fallout should the partnership fail.

➢ *Implementation challenges*—Once a partnership is established and resources are allocated, execution challenges might emerge as the partnership moves into project implementation.

Agencies also should consider organizational conflicts of interests.  Before engaging in negotiations with a potential partner, agencies should identify any high profile grants, contracts, investigations, enforcement actions, pending adjudications, or other notable actions involving the Federal Government and the potential partner.  Considerations may include but are not limited to:

➢ Whether a potential partner has pending business before any agency that would be involved in a partnership, including contracts or grants, the size, timing or nature of which would give rise to an appearance that the potential partner is trying to influence the outcome of that government action;

➢ Whether a potential partner is regulated by the agency that would be involved in the partnership; and

➢ Whether a potential partner has recently met with an agency or has such meetings scheduled in the near future concerning other matters on which the potential partner is seeking favorable agency action such that the timing of a partnership arrangement would present the appearance of a conflict of interest.

In addition, it is prudent to determine whether a potential partner is a lobbyist organization, or the not-for-profit arm of a for-profit entity, and whether that status makes the partnership imprudent. While an agency generally can form a partnership with any of these entities, it should consider whether such a partnership creates the appearance of favoritism undermines the agency's integrity or any agency decision-making process.

When negotiating with potential partners, agency officials should avoid, in general, a discussion of any other business the partners may have with the Federal Government, such as grants, contracts, or waiver applications. Similarly, to the extent potential partners are regulated by an agency, the regulating agency should not be present or involved in the negotiations.

Listed below are three areas for consideration for conducting a review: image and motivation; social and environmental responsibility; and financial soundness. These comprise the common elements for a due diligence process.

*Image and Motivation*
- What is the potential partner's motivation for joining the partnership? Is the project consistent with the potential partner's mission, business interest, or unique competencies?

- What is the public image of the potential partner? Have there been any tensions between the community and the organization?

- What is expected of the respective parties to the partnership and do they have the capacity to contribute to the partnerships success?

- Has there been anything in the media that would reflect negatively upon the potential partner? If so, how has it dealt with significant negative publicity?

- Are there any pending lawsuits against the potential partner that would be of concern should it become a partner?

- Is the potential partner willing to engage with the agency in a transparent manner without expecting an exclusive relationship (i.e., barring competitors)?

**Communicating Parameters to Partners**

Nongovernment actors typically are unaware of the legal and policy parameters that guide what Federal employees can and cannot do in a partnership, sometimes leading to misunderstandings and unmet expectations. For example, many organizations do not understand the rules governing endorsements and have wasted time and energy trying to get government officials to include their logos and information on government websites and publications in a way that would violate ethics rules. Agencies could issue formal guidance about these parameters and provide it to potential partners during the early stages of partnership development, so that these kinds of situations are avoided.

In setting out parameters, it is also important to maintain a clear distinction between your agency's roles and the roles of your partners. While an agency can encourage support from the private sector and civil society, it cannot make specific decisions about how nongovernment entities use their resources and cannot coerce, or be seen as coercing, involvement.

*Social and Environmental Responsibility*

- Is the potential partner primarily involved in the manufacture or sale of goods or services with which the agency would not want to be associated?  Do these activities constitute a significant share of their total portfolio?

- Does the potential partner have a good reputation , especially (in the case of businesses) with respect to corporate social responsibility (CSR)?  For new companies or a company with a poor CSR history, is it committed to instituting/improving a sound CSR policy?

- Does the potential partner have fair and transparent labor policies and practices?

- Does the potential partner have a non-discrimination policy?  What is it?

- Is the potential partner a party in any regulatory lawsuits that would be of concern to the Agency?

*Financial Soundness*

- For NGOs, how is the organization constituted and financed?  Who are its main contributors?

-  Is there anything about the organization's financial status that would call into question its ability to contribute to the partnership's success?

- Is the entity a registered lobbying organization and if so, what type of lobbying activity has it participated in recently?

- Is the entity a registered foreign agent?

## UNDERSTANDING WHY BUSINESSES ARE INTERESTED IN PARTNERING

It is important to understand why businesses would be interested in working with the U.S. Government. Partnering with a for-profit business is different than partnering with foundations or non-governmental organizations, as businesses are focused on making profit. Some common reasons businesses will want to partner with an agency include:

- ➢ Exposure to new markets and market share;
- ➢ Opportunities to create and test new products to meet unmet social or individual needs;
- ➢ Enhanced reputation, brand loyalty and goodwill;
- ➢ Improved operational or workforce efficiencies;
- ➢ Reduced business risks;
- ➢ Improve supply chains for products and services; and
- ➢ Demonstrate corporate social responsibility

It is perfectly legitimate for businesses to benefit from a partnership with a U.S. Government Agency. Partnerships that work directly with businesses operations (particularly around supply chains) rather than through corporate social responsibility programs frequently are more sustainable since the businesses often continue the programs after U.S. Government involvement ends.

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## AVOIDING ENDORSEMENTS

The U.S. Government cannot lend its authority or imprimatur in inappropriate ways for the private gain of its partners; and it must be careful to avoid suggesting a preferred relationship with, or endorsement of, a partner, or the appearance of, or actual, privileged access or unfair competition. For practical purposes, an endorsement means an agency action that makes a qualitative statement about an organization or its programs and services. For example, a statement by an Agency that "the XYZ Association is excellent" and should receive support from a foundation is an endorsement.

The legal basis for the prohibition on endorsements derives from the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Executive Branch Employees. These regulations state, in relevant part, that:

> An employee shall not use or permit the use of his Government position or title or any authority associated with his public office to endorse any product, service or enterprise

except: (1) in furtherance of statutory authority to promote products, services or enterprises; or (2) as a result of documentation of compliance with Agency requirements or standards or as the result of recognition for achievement given under an Agency program of recognition for accomplishment in support of the Agency's mission.

Some partnership arrangements, such as co-sponsorship, have the potential to raise at least the appearance that an agency is showing preferential treatment to a particular organization, especially if the agency works with the partnering organization on many projects and others are seeking similar opportunities.  This is a question of degree and judgment, which should always be informed by advice from agency counsel.

## THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Agencies typically enter into partnerships with the private sector and civil society through the creation of a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is considered a best practice.  Through the MOU, the participants can establish the overarching purpose of the collaboration, identify how they will govern themselves, establish their respective roles and responsibilities identify resources to be committed, and finalize communication plans and other partnership issues.  An MOU can be developed at several different stages of a partnership.  While some are developed at the outset of the partnership to express interest in collaboration, others can be done later in the process in order to provide greater detail on how the relationship will be governed.

The process of negotiating an MOU is an effective method for transparent engagement and negotiation with external partners.  It can formalize the commitment of partners or it can finalize and document the results of joint planning.  The process of drafting an MOU also provides an important opportunity for agency and partner counsel to ensure that the planned activities are consistent with applicable legal authorities.

An MOU, generally, is a legally **non-binding** document that describes the intentions of the partners to proceed with a given course of action to achieve stated objectives.  In some cases, companies (and particularly their legal departments) may use the term MOU to refer to a legally binding document.  Therefore, it is important to make it clear to the partner that the MOU is to be non-binding.  If preferable to a partner, the MOU may be retitled as a *Letter of Intent* or other characterization as determined by the partners.

While each partnership is unique, the following information is recommended for all MOUs:

**Partner organization details:**  The name, contact information, and description of each partner.

**Goal and objectives:**  A description of the problem the partnership was formed to solve; what the goal is in solving the problem and why the partnership is a good way for achieving this goal; and what the partnership strategies are for reaching the goal.

**Operating principles:**  A description of how the partnership will manage its program(s), including specification of:

- Any special administrative structure required by the partnership;
- How decisions will be made and conflicts resolved;
- How partners will communicate about the partnership and the clearance process for press releases, advertisements, and media outreach;
- The appropriate use of logos or agency seals;
- Ground rules for any fundraising by partners;
- What metrics will be used to determine if the partnership is meeting its objectives;
- How the MOU can be renewed, modified, or terminated; and
- The end date for the MOU or the arrangement, and a description of any follow-on activities.

**Roles and responsibilities of partnership members:**  What each member contributes and receives from the partnership; a preliminary view of the resources that each member intends to provide (financial and non-financial); and the partnership's implementation timeline.  If the arrangements reference the use of U.S. Government funding or other resources, the MOU should specify that it is not binding and that provision of any resources is subject to the availability of appropriations.  The agency responsible for the arrangement must also ensure that the funds it intends to use can legally be spent for the partnership and any specific partnership activities.

**Accountability:**  How partnership program performance will be measured, whether an independent audit of the partnership's financial arrangements will be undertaken, and how adjustments will be made to the partnership.

## Optimizing Process

Partners have raised concerns about the amount of time it takes to develop partnerships with the U.S. Government. To the extent that process can be streamlined, it likely will encourage private sector and civil society actors to increase collaboration with the Federal Government. Examples include the use of pre-cleared MOUs with check boxes for approved partnership activities (an approach used by the Department of Commerce) and a designated office that provides partnership management support.

## THE FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) is a commonly cited concern for Federal officials who engage the private sector and civil society, but it often is misunderstood or misapplied. Congress passed the FACA in 1972 (revised in 2000) to ensure that consensus advice given to the Executive Branch from committees that include members of the private sector is both objective and transparent, and to avoid undue influence behind closed doors. In developing partnerships, agencies must be sure not to inadvertently create a group that provides consensus advice without compliance with FACA requirements. As FACA questions are often highly fact dependent, these questions should be worked closely with agency counsel offices.

## MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

Monitoring and evaluation are essential in managing all government programs. A best practice is to develop metrics that not only evaluate government activities, but also evaluate how well the partnership functioned and its impact, including an assessment of whether the same outcomes could have been achieved with each partner acting on its own. Evaluations also can track whether partners are achieving their goals. Including the partner's desired outcomes in the metrics may provide a way to demonstrate success to the partner and provide for a continuing commitment to the partnership.

Partnerships can be complex, and it is rare to get it "just right." Whether a partnership goes incredibly well, or falls short of intended goals, it is critical to measure effectiveness, learn from success and failure, and document and communicate those lessons for others.

Agencies also should also be ready to adapt and make changes to a partnership since operating environments are dynamic. Many successful partnerships have changed significantly from their original intentions. There is significant room for flexibility and adaptability in making programmatic changes.

Although each partnership is different and has specific outcomes that should be measured, the following are some examples of public-private partnership measurements that agencies have found useful:

- Total public and private funds leveraged;
- Number of people benefitting/impacted;
- Amount of investment leveraged; and
- Scale reached by working through a partnership.

# AGENCY PARTNERSHIP CULTURES

The following are elements across agencies that have been successful in developing a culture of partnering:

- **Leadership –** Partnerships need strong leadership from agency heads.  Sustained leadership from a Secretary or Administrator provides the enabling environment for partnerships to flourish and enables managers to plan for incorporating partnerships in their strategies.  Agency heads that speak authoritatively on the importance of collaboration and provide room for risk taking in developing partnerships have seen large increases in partnership development.

- **Dedicated Staff –** Creating operational units dedicated to partnership building has allowed many Agencies to dramatically increase the number of partnerships and build experience in partnership development and deeper institutional knowledge.   Dedicated partnership offices also offer a one-stop shop for private sector partners; and although these offices do not always create partnerships of their own, they often are able to direct partnership inquiries and facilitate introductions to main line units in their agencies.

- **Resources –**A dedicated budget associated with partnership development provides flexibility in programming.  Agencies are required through appropriations processes to pre-plan their budgets and have limited pipelines available to take advantage of good private sector ideas.  Several Departments have created a dedicated source of funding for partnerships, which they use to jump start programs and plan for partnerships in their regular budgeting cycles.

- **Planning –** Government strategic planning that includes substantial private sector input can create better outcomes in programming and create more meaningful, effective, and sustainable partnerships.  Partners become much more committed when they have input into the planning process.

- **Champions -** Successful partnerships frequently involve one or two champions who make it happen.  These change makers, who some refer to as entrepreneurial bureaucrats, push their partnerships through all of the necessary steps.  Giving these champions the tools, policies, resources, and recognition they deserve is a key to success across agencies.

- **Awards and Incentives –** Providing recognition for work on partnerships provides incentives to staff to make a change in the way they approach their work.  Incentives also provide some cover for the risk-taking that is often necessary when it comes to forming partnerships.  A best practice is to establish specific partnership awards for staff and partnerships, although existing agency awards could be utilized.

## CONCLUSION

Public-private partnerships can be a game-changing mechanism for the U.S. Government to achieve its objectives, and agencies are doing more through partnerships than ever before.  Through these partnerships, the Federal Government is bringing in new creative ideas, spurring innovation and leveraging the best of business, civil society, foundations and individuals.

Partnerships necessitate an enabling environment that supports collaboration.  Many agencies have taken important steps to foster partnership cultures, build bureaucratic structure to institutionalize the use of partnerships, and provide policy guidance and encouragement for collaboration.

Changing the mindset and behaviors of any large organization is difficult and takes time.  Agencies that are just getting started on building partnerships may leverage the experience of other agencies that have been partnering for some time.  While there is no set formula for partnership, there are a number of models that are more commonly used and agencies may use the guidance in this primer to assist them in their partnership development.