



Accountability in Partnerships – Learning Questions

This tool aims to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of our partnerships. It is not an in-depth partnership audit but rather an easy-to-use framework for regular use by CARE teams in order to be more consistent in our approach to partnerships across the Confederation. It falls under CARE's efforts to become a more accountable organization.

CARE defines accountability as explaining, being held responsible for and hearing the perspectives of others – including our partners – about how well we are meeting our commitments - and then actively making changes and improvements based on what we've learned and heard. Working with partners is a key strategy to achieve our impact goals and fight more effectively against global poverty and injustice. By endorsing global external commitments such as the [Charter for Change \(C4C\)](#), [the Grand Bargain](#) and [the Principles of Partnership](#), CARE is committed to working towards more effective partnering and locally-led disaster response.

It is critical to remember that partnering is not an end in itself, rather an approach within which more effective and higher-value initiatives can emerge. To the extent possible, accountability measures should be co-created between partners to enhance ownership. They should reflect the key principles that underpin the partnership such as openness and transparency, equity, mutual benefit and complementarity. Below is a set of key dimensions of accountable partnerships, and a set of learning questions to explore for each.

1. **Communication, openness, and information-sharing:** Good communication is at the heart of successful partnerships and should be taken very seriously. It can make or break the partnership. Communication challenges are often amplified in remote partnerships.

Key learning questions:

- *How do you ensure regular and open dialogue between partners?*
- *How do you share information, ideas, and concerns between partners? Is there resistance to sharing specific information?*
- *How do you share and make accessible financial information between partners? Is there clarity as to how financial resources are divided and used for the joint initiative, including the allocation of overheads?*
- *How partners are kept informed and how are decisions recorded and communicated?*
- *Are the key elements underpinning the partnership – communication, governance arrangements, resolving differences – leading to confidence and trust building between partners? Has a strong level of trust been achieved?*

2. **Equity, respect and mutual accountability:** Equity in partnerships is critical and involves: being valued for what each party brings, enjoying equitable rights and responsibilities, having a fair say in decisions, benefiting equitably from the partnership, creating mutually-beneficial value. Equity is built by truly respecting the views, attributes and contributions of all those involved.

Key learning questions:

- *How do partners feel (equally) engaged in the joint initiative? Do they feel they are both equitably contributing to and benefiting from the partnership? Do they feel appreciated for what they bring?*
- *How are challenges and differences addressed? In what ways is alignment between the partners reached?*
- *How are decisions reached? Do partners feel they have an equal say in important conversations and decisions? Are power imbalances out in the open? How are they addressed?*
- *Are partners' contributions equally reported and visible?*

- *Do existing organizational systems and practice (e.g. financial monitoring and reporting) support or hinder the building of trust and respect between partners?*

3. **Shared capacity, organisational development & learning:** Competitiveness can easily break a partnership. Agreeing to explore and build on the added value of collaboration and understanding the right of all partners to gain from their engagement in the partnership is an important starting point to build commitment to the joint initiative. An effective partnership should deliver mutual benefit.

Key learning questions:

- *How are the unique contributions/capacities of each partner benefiting the other and the joint initiative as a whole?*
- *How does the partnership facilitate a two-way learning process?*
- *How are all entities growing their capacity and developing as organizations?*

4. **Shared vision, mission, and goals for the joint initiative:** Partnerships are often marked by real (or perceived) anxieties about working with organizations that are different from us. A commitment to exploring each other's motivation, values and underlying interests will build understanding and appreciation of the added value that comes from diversity, quelling fears that differences may lead to conflict or relationship breakdown.

Key learning questions:

- *How do you make sure that there is a clearly, well-articulated shared vision and common purpose between the two partners (for the joint initiative or beyond)?*
- *How do you ensure that the joint programme of work reflect the common goals and values of each partner?*
- *How do you make partners harness their respective complementarities to create additional value? (the multiplier effect of partnership vs. the adding effect)*

5. **Existence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the overall performance of the partnership.** While it is common to assess the outcomes of the joint initiative, assessing the health of the partnership to deliver on these outcomes is as critical. This can also provide key information on the effectiveness of the partnership and its value-add, and generate lessons learned on good partnering.

Key learning questions:

- *What processes or mechanisms are used to review the partnership (e.g. partnership scorecard, regular partnership health check conducted?)*
- *In case of complaints, what measures can partners take? Are these measures known and used?*
- *Which processes are in place to constantly feed and respond to feedback?*
- *How do you guarantee that lessons about the partnership are learnt, captured and fed into the organizations' systems?*