

# **GUIDELINES FOR PARTNERING CONVERSATIONS**

## **1. Conversation for Generating Possibility**

A Conversation for Generating Possibility is a conversation to envisage the future as a rich scenario of inspiring possibilities. It is about sharing creative and imaginative ideas. Questions of feasibility are of no concern at this stage. Rather, a Conversation for Possibility is intended to bring out intuitive and aspirational views of how the best possible future might appear.

A Conversation for Generating Possibility will be most appropriate during the early stages of the Partnering Process, when partners are working together to create a vision, but it can also be applied later as the partnership is renewed. It should be conducted as a brain-storming session around a set of specific strategic and open questions that encourage reflection and imagination, and do not elicit simple 'yes' and 'no' answers.

A Conversation for Possibility should continue for at least 15 minutes, although it could last up to an hour. Examples of suitable 'open' questions include:

- What would a breakthrough in ... (insert theme or desired outcome) mean?
- What would a break-through in ... (insert theme or desired outcome) make possible?
- What are you / we building with this initiative?

## **2. Conversation for Generating Opportunity**

A Conversation for Opportunity is concerned with generating concrete joint commitment for breakthrough action. It is a conversation about shared accountabilities.

It is through such a conversation that partners arrive at agreement about which of the possibilities that have been created earlier constitute concrete opportunities for the future and could be realistically pursued by the partners.

A Conversation for Opportunity invites people to answer the following question: What can you declare that at the end of this initiative would be a breakthrough?

Once this question has been discussed, partners can move on to develop a shared Partnership Commitment Statement (not to be confused with a Partnering Agreement). The Statement might begin with an opening statement such as:

*We are / Our partnership is... committed to ...*

Each partner is asked to write down what he/she thinks that the commitment statement should be. This is then shared with the other partners and the strengths (not the weaknesses) of each statement are discussed.

The group will choose the statement they consider best to work on further and then continue to amend it together as a group until it adequately reflects the commitment of all partners, and everybody is fully satisfied.

## **3. Conversation for Generating Action**

A Conversation for Generating Action can be held at all stages of the Partnering Process, whenever joint or individual action is required. It helps to clarify individual responsibilities and to create a common understanding of who is accountable for what.

It also helps to take the Partnering Process a step further, turning possibilities and opportunities into concrete activities. The key opening question might be:

*Who will take what actions, and by when?*

It is recommended that written notes are kept of the individual commitments made and that these are copied to each partner. This will enable the partners to hold each other accountable later.

#### **4. Conversation for Completion**

Being 'complete' with something means being 'whole' with it. Completion not only applies when terminating a certain process, but it is equally important that partnerships are complete on an on-going basis.

This conversation helps to promote understanding and create alignment between the partners. A Conversation for Completion can therefore be conducted at all stages of the Partnering Process.

Partners can usefully ask themselves (and each other) the following questions and undertake further activities based on the answers given:

- *What is left to accomplish in order for us to say that the partnership has been successful?*
- *What actions do we need to take to achieve this?*
- *Who will do what, and by when?*
- *What promises or commitments have we made but not yet delivered on?*
- *Who will take what actions and by when should they be completed?*
- *Who wants/needs to be apprised of the status/outcome of the partnership?*
- *What will we do to communicate this to them?*
- *Who might be angry, annoyed, irritated or disappointed with us or with our activities?*
- *How will we complete this with them?*
- *Who has contributed to the partnership and its activities?*
- *How will we acknowledge them and their contribution?*
- *What else will we do to be complete (i.e., whole) with our initiative?*