

Partner incentives: Assessing partner expectations



Partnerships in Practice Tool

Different types of partners have different reasons for being in a partnership. Their incentives for being involved, and staying involved, depend on their size, needs, sector affiliation (i.e. public, private, non-profit, donor, academics, media) and the resources they contribute or receive.



Tool purpose

To explore what different partners' priority incentives are for being in a partnership and to check their expectations are being met.



Practice message

Partnerships can be improved by understanding why your partners may want to join forces in the first place, how their incentives may change over time and how their expectations can be met.



Partnership message

Incentives for engaging in a partnership are often assumed and therefore can sometimes be misunderstood. It takes time to review and understand partners' motivations and expectations.



Materials

Large sheets of paper (e.g. flipchart), Post-it Notes, coloured pens and a digital camera (optional).



Assessing partner expectations



This activity is designed as a group exercise to do with fellow learners or with partners (e.g. implementing partners, research colleagues, advocacy network organisations, etc.). Select one person to facilitate the process.

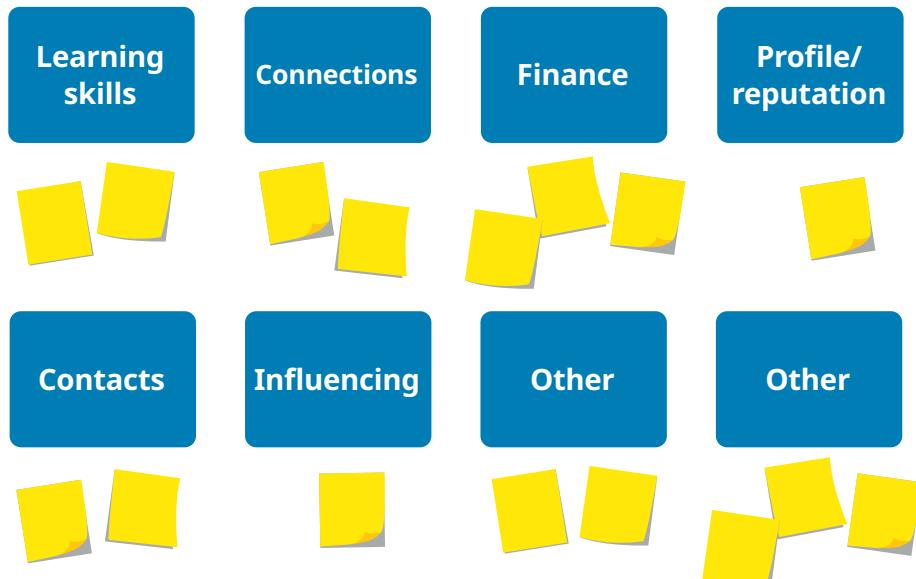
1. Start with a brief (10 minute) group discussion by asking this question: **What defines success for our partnership?** Write up the **success factors** on the flipchart or large pieces of paper for all to see.

Tip: Usually different partners/people have varying views of what success means. This discussion will help to test assumptions about why partners are involved and what they want to achieve.

2. Next, give each participant some Post-it Notes and a pen. Ask everyone to reflect individually on the list of success factors and then to think about their **current reasons** (incentives) for being in the partnership. Request that each 'incentive' is written on one Post-it Note. Allow ten minutes for this exercise.
3. During this reflection process, the facilitator uses the opportunity to write the following category names on another flip chart/piece of paper (or on Post-it Notes to stick to a wall): 1) learning/skills; 2) coverage/outputs; 3) finance; 4) profile/reputation; 5) contacts; 6) influencing; 7) other; 8) other (see diagram below).
4. Then ask all participants to stick all of their Post-it Notes on the flipchart (or wall) under each category. Invite everyone to read them and discuss each category briefly. Not all incentives will fit into these categories. Using the two 'other' category options, decide together how to group these other incentives and agree new category names. Take a photo of the flipchart (or wall) to capture the findings.
5. Next, ask the individual participants to collect their own Post-it Notes (remembering which category they belong to) and then to organise their own 'incentives' into a top five priority list.

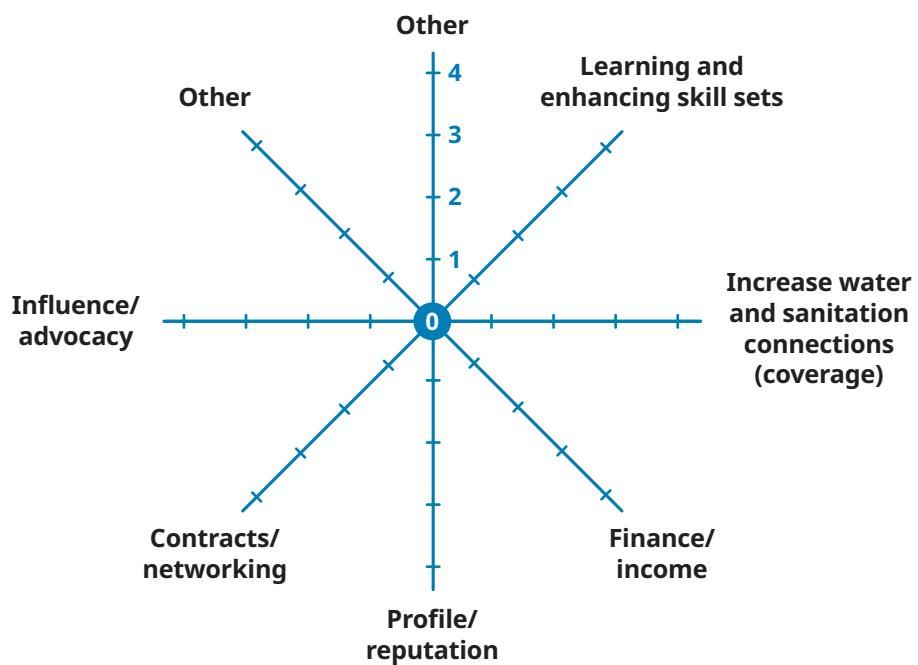
Tip: Ask any participants that are from the same organisation to group their incentives together, so that they have five top organisational incentives overall.

If you are doing this with fellow WaterAid staff only, group yourselves by department and prioritise your top five by departmental incentives.



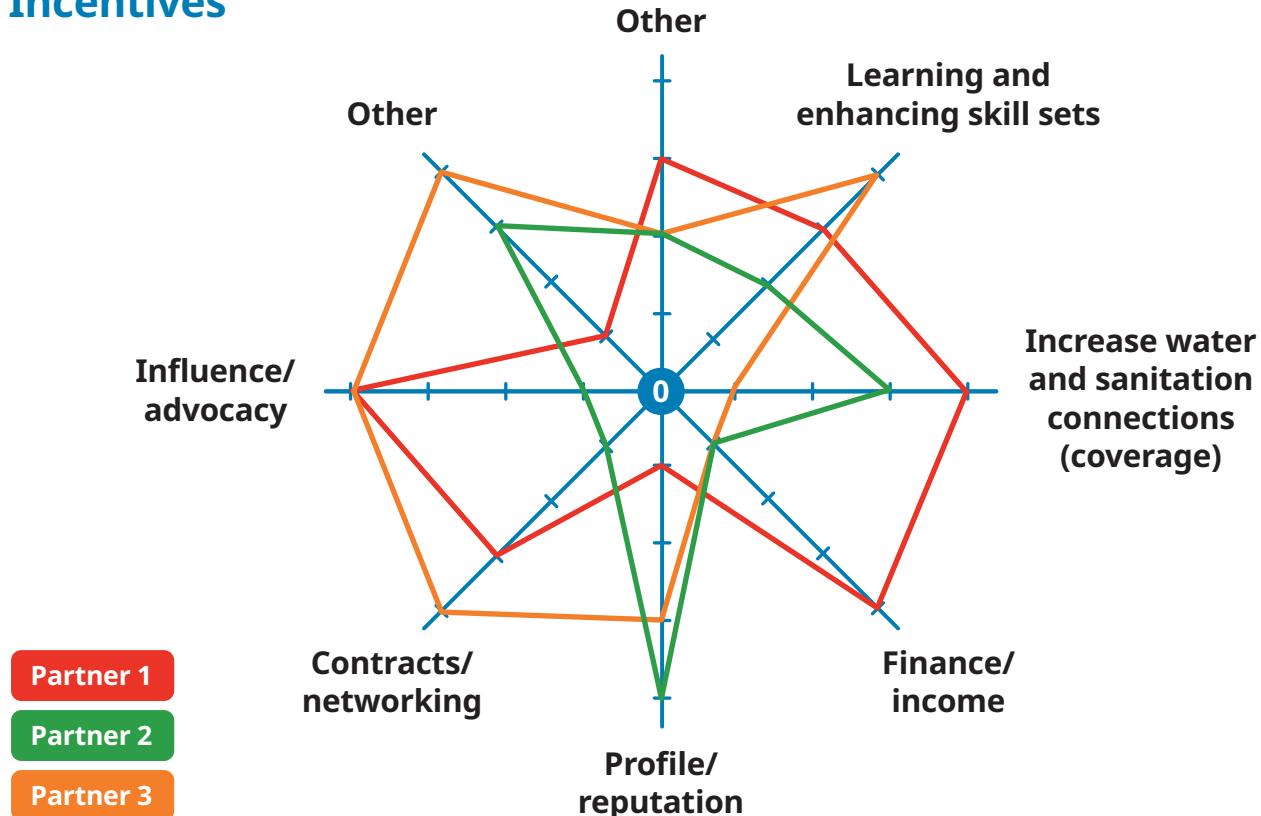
- During this prioritisation process, the facilitator can draw a 'spidergram' with eight legs on the flipchart paper. Mark grades (0–4) along each spider 'leg'. Then write the name of the categories at the foot of each leg (see diagram on the right).
- Using each partners'/ organisations'/WaterAid departments' incentives list – noting that 0 = the least priority and 4 = highest priority – map the priorities onto the relevant incentive category. Ask each partner/ organisation/department to use a different colour pen so it is easy to see which incentives belong to whom (see diagram below).

Assessing incentives



Tip: Sometimes incentives for engaging in a partnership are cumulative in nature, i.e. priority 4 can only be met if priorities 3 and 2 are also met, etc. Sometimes they are not linked at all.

Incentives



Open discussion

Now you have a ‘spidergram’ which visually shows the various incentives that different people currently have for participating in the partnership.

Discuss the following with your colleagues:

1. Do the incentives match with what you assumed beforehand? If not, why not?
2. Do the objectives of the partnership meet the incentives of the participating partners/WaterAid departments sufficiently?
3. Are partners' incentives too ambitious or under ambitious?

Changing practices

Thinking more about the reflections above, would you consider making any changes to the partnership?

For example:

1. What can practically be done to ensure all departments'/partners' incentives are understood and addressed?
2. Might changes result in amendments to partnership agreements/paperwork?
3. If you did this exercise again in six months, might incentives be different?

References and tools

For further guidance on partnership basics, please see:

- [WaterAid's Partnership Toolkit](#)
- [BPD's website: bpdws.org](#)



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