

Clarify Expectations To Create Healthy Partnerships

“We just assumed you would...”

“I had no idea you expected us to...”

Global partnerships can be crippled by agendas, non-negotiables, and expectations that are not clearly expressed up front. The challenging thing about these factors is that they may be subconscious and therefore hard to articulate. Or some partnership elements may seem so patently obvious to one individual or group that they don't bother to verbalize them. Either error can lead to serious misunderstandings.

Here is where good facilitators are worth their weight in gold. Because they understand both cultures, facilitators can identify issues and guide discussions about previously unrecognized differences. In many cases, facilitators must also adroitly help on-site participants overcome cultural reticence to express what they think may be a contrary opinion, and at the same time they should assist Western partners to understand the often more subtle communication of their non-Western partners.

Participants in global initiatives will want to be as flexible as possible, and their list of essentials and expectations should be as short as possible. But each participant—church, facilitator, NGO, agency, etc.—must honestly lay on the table whatever is critically important to them.

The best “essentials” are those that define broad requirements for partnership and then put the on-site partner(s) in the driver's seat. For example:

- Our partnership must multiply the capacity of on-site partners in “P” country to saturate their nation with vibrant churches.
- As a linking church, we want to come alongside our long-term workers, sharing their vision of establishing viable business opportunities and training for the unreached “A” people in the “B” district of “C” country.
- Our partnership will be shaped and led by our sister church which has a missions vision to take the gospel to a particular city/region outside their local area.

To Make Sure We Understand Each Other

Here is a series of open-ended statements to jump start your dialog about expectations. This list is not meant to precipitate a laborious discussion of every point but to help identify areas where varying expectations may go unrecognized.

1. We will consider this partnership successful if...
2. We expect the on-site partners to lead our partnership in the following ways...
3. We anticipate that our facilitator will lead our partnership in the following ways...
4. We understand that crucial decisions about the partnership will be made through a process that involves... For us, “crucial decisions” include...
5. We anticipate that the on-site participants' involvement in this partnership will include...
6. We anticipate that linking partners' on-site involvement will include... at an approximate frequency of...
7. We expect other types of involvement by the linking church to include...
8. The length of time that we are ready to commit to involvement in this partnership is... [with] [without] the possibility of renewing some level of formal commitment thereafter.



9. After the partnership commitment is finished, we anticipate ongoing relationships that might include...
10. We [expect] [do not expect] participants in this partnership to also partner with others. If they do, we anticipate [they will create a separate partnership] [the new partners will join our current partnership with the following guidelines...]
11. We expect that problems and conflicts will be addressed in the following way...
12. We expect that when on-site partners are not comfortable with the methods or approach of linking participants, they will...
13. We [anticipate] [do not anticipate] that the facilitator and/or on-site partners will visit the linking partners. If so, at a frequency of... and with costs covered by...
14. We expect on-site personnel to be regularly accountable for their partnership-related ministry activities to [person, organization, board].
15. We anticipate the following financial investment... with the following accountability and reporting...
16. We expect that any solicitation for additional funds by on-site partners will follow these guidelines... And any contribution of additional funds by linking partners will follow these guidelines...
17. If a partner wants to amend or dissolve the partnership, we expect that they will follow the process of...
18. We agree that security guidelines will be established by [person/group], and all partners will be expected to make sure that their people understand and seek to follow them by...
19. We expect that the linking church will have in place the following internal leadership...
20. We expect that regular communication from the on-site partners will include... And regular communication from the linking partners will include...
21. We expect that screening and training of linking participants for on-site involvement will be the responsibility of... The training of on-site participants for partnership activities will be the responsibility of...
22. We expect that a meeting of all partners will occur [on-site] [in the linking country] at a frequency of... The costs for attendance at such meetings will be covered by...
23. We would like all partners to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership on a frequency of... by doing...

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