



CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS [C4S]

*Do you work with partnerships for sustainable development?
Check out the C4S tool*

A practical tool to assess the performance of your partnership

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The Partnerships Resource Centre (PrC) is a specialist research centre at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM). We connect scientifically sound research and practitioner experience of cross-sector partnerships to aid sustainable and inclusive development. We conduct collaborative action research which focuses on mutual learning in order to contribute to change processes. We have developed a set of self-assessments, which can also be used as peer-to-peer assessments, to help practitioners navigate their partnership practices. For more information about the PrC partnering tools, please contact us at prc@rsm.nl.

How can the Conditions for Success (C4S) tool help you?

The idea of cross-sector partnerships is to achieve greater impact by bringing together resources, aligning activities and co-create interventions. This is easier said than done. Partnerships take time to build and develop. We usually don't take this into account and are focused on achieving results. Meanwhile aligning interests, defining common objectives and agreeing upon roles and responsibilities takes up much effort.

This C4S self-assessment tool¹ can enhance the performance of your partnership. It will help you analyse the effectiveness and (potential) success of your partnership. The assessment is based on nine conditions for success² which help you see whether you are on the envisioned 'right' track. They are key for enhancing both the performance and the problem-solving capacity of partnerships for sustainable development. The below infographic visualises the nine conditions for success.³



After you have come to grips with relevant aspects of your performance, you can identify the necessary areas for improvement in your partnership. This will allow you to determine where action is required.

The Conditions for Success tool:

- Assesses the performance of your partnership.
- Identifies which conditions require action in order to enhance the partnership's effectiveness and success.

Enhance the success of your partnership

C4S aims to review the performance and effectiveness of your partnership. It helps identify which conditions require action to enhance the success of your partnership. The nine conditions of the assessment fit within three overarching themes, outlined in Part I of this tool:

- a. **Actors:** their specific resources, identities and histories
- b. **Process:** relevance of process management
- c. **Context:** relevance of the problem-structure and broader 'situational context'.

This tool is a self-assessment, but can be turned into a peer-to-peer assessment. As such, it can provide a basis for dialogue around core conditions for successful partnerships. This is best organised in a group dialogue setting, or a facilitated workshop.

Tip 1

If you feel you could use some help with applying the tool for your partnership, please contact Marieke de Wal of the Partnerships Resource Centre at prc@rsm.nl.

¹ Corresponding author: Marije Balt via balt@rsm.nl

² Pattberg, P., & Widerberg, O. (2015). Transnational multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development: Conditions for success. *Ambio*, 45(1), 42-51

³ This infographic is adapted content from SlideModel

Using the C4S How to do the assessment?

Using the C4S

The assessment consists of two parts. The first part is to answer a number of questions on the conditions for success: actors, process and context.

Part I		
Actors	Process	Context
1. Optimal partner mix	3. Stringent goal setting	7. Active metagovernance
2. Effective leadership	4. Sustained funding	8. Favourable political and social context
	5. Professional process management	9. Fit to problem-structure
	6. Monitoring, reporting, and evaluation to support organisational learning	

Why focus on actors?

You want to have an **optimal mix of partners** to get the most out of your partnership. This set of questions makes you reflect on which partners would be needed to bring about change. It checks whether partners have the willingness, capability and resources to make this work. The questions explore whether the partnership matches their values and identities, build trust and transparency, in particular in case of power asymmetries. This set of questions also helps identify and manage the different types of **leadership** needed for the partnership to succeed.

Why focus on process?

The effectiveness of partnerships also depends on how things are done. The first set of questions refers to **goal setting**. These concern not only how ambitious or stringent your partnership's goals are, but also how exactly these goals have been developed (jointly or by one or two partners). The next condition for success is securing and sustaining **funding**.

Professional process management is another condition for success. These questions explore whether the partnership includes staff who focus exclusively on partnership tasks and staff with managerial experience to occupy key positions. Ensuring effective communication between the process managers and among key partnership members is also part of this condition for success. Lastly, a good **monitoring, evaluation and learning** system is key, and the questions inquire whether your partnership embraced robust, open and mutual monitoring, reporting, and an evaluation system to record progress and processes.

Why focus on context?

The first set of questions concern **metagovernance**, and the way to promote this is by checking partnership goals against a number of minimum criteria for their fit to, for example the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Liaising with other partnerships, organisations and institutions working with related problems also benefits the performance of your partnership. The **political and social context** will influence the chance to succeed. Those partnerships with implementation at the local level are highly dependent on local conditions. Partnerships have to be wary of filling functions that used to be carried out by governments, which erodes public authority. The questions explore whether your partnership is learning and building on local institutional and governance structures and builds institutional capacity. The last condition looks at the **fit to problem structure**. Every problem is different with specific administrative problems and political constituencies. Each problem requires different institutional setups. This set of questions also investigates whether a partnership is the most appropriate solution to the problem at hand, or if there are other, more promising avenues that can be explored.

The second part focuses on the importance you attach to the various conditions, with a view to enhancing your partnership's performance.

Part II

Prioritise the various conditions from your perspective and formulate action points. Optionally, you can compare the outcome with your partner and formulate joint action as suggested above, see also Annex I.

Who is the C4S assessment for?

The C4S assessment is designed for anyone involved in partnerships for sustainable and inclusive development looking to get the most out of their collaboration. Partnership managers, partnership co-ordinators, partnership brokers and process facilitators can get the most advantage out of the C4S tool. It is also recommended for teams that are directly involved in the partnership, and responsible for implementing activities, monitoring outcomes and make decisions about challenges, directions, resources and priorities.

Please note: the C4S assessment is not designed to:

- develop a strategy – please use one of the many other tools available, including the [PPP Canvas](#)
- evaluate a partnership: the C4S focuses on the specific relationship between partners
- provide solutions: the C4S serves rather to help you identify which conditions require action to enhance the partnership's effectiveness and success.

Part I: Conditions for success

Actors

These questions focus on two conditions – optimal partner mix and effective leadership – that are considered important for enhancing the performance of partnerships for sustainable development. Please read each question carefully and put your answer in the grey box.

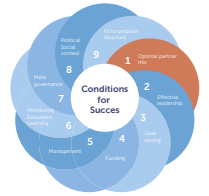
For each of the answers we ask you to share **why** you think this statement applies or not. Please share with us your expectations, experiences and examples. Any observations can be added in the dedicated boxes.

Your observations:

Part I: Conditions for success

Actors

1. Optimal partner mix



1.1 What are the social and environmental issues the partnership seeks to address?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

1. Optimal partner mix

1.2 What are the interests of your organisation to address these issues?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

1.3 Who do you need within the partnership to address these issues?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

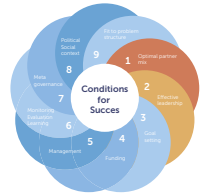
1.4 With what kind of partners does your organisation usually collaborate?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

1.5 What is your organisation's reputation as a partner (based on previous experiences)?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

2. Effective leadership



2.1 Which leadership style⁴ prevails in your organisation?

Rate the leadership style in your organisation from 1 to 6, with 6 being the most prevailing leadership style while identifying the least with number 1.

Visionary: motivates people towards a vision <i>Characteristics:</i> self-confidence, empathy, change-catalyst	Coaching: developing people <i>Characteristics:</i> developing others, self-awareness, empathy	Affiliative: creates harmony and builds emotional bonds <i>Characteristics:</i> empathy, building relationships, communication	Democratic: forges consensus through participation <i>Characteristics:</i> collaboration, team leadership, communication	Pacesetting: sets high standards for performance <i>Characteristics:</i> conscientiousness, drive to achieve, initiative	Commanding: demands immediate compliance <i>Characteristics:</i> drive to achieve, initiative, self-control
Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate

2.2 How would you describe your organisational culture and core values?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

⁴ based on Primal Leadership by Daniel Goleman et al.

Process

These questions focus on four conditions: goal setting, funding, management and monitoring, and evaluation and learning. These are considered important for enhancing the performance of partnerships for sustainable development. Please read each question carefully and put your answer in the grey box, including explanations and examples.

Your observations:

Process

3. Stringent goal setting

3.1 How does the partnership's ambition align with your organisation's mission and vision?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

3.2 What is the shared vision of your partnership?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

3.3 What are the specific goals of your partnership?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

3.4 How do the ways in which your organisation and the partnership envision these goals differ?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:



3. Stringent goal setting

4. Sustained funding

4. Sustained funding

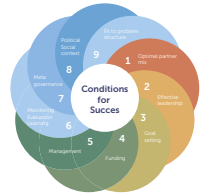
4.1 How is your partnership funded?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

4.2 How could its funding be sustained in the future?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

5. Professional process management



5.1 What does the governance structure of the partnership look like, in terms of the decision-making process and communication policy?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

5.4 How is the implementation of partnership activities being managed?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

5.2 How are differences in views or potential conflicts managed by the partnership?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

5.5 What are the roles and responsibilities of your organisation? How much time (fte, or numbers of days or weeks) does your organisation spend on managing your partnership?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

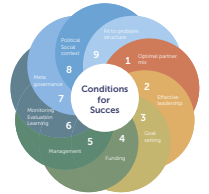
5.3 Do you perceive power imbalances in your partnership? If so, when is it visible?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

5.6 What do you do to build trust among each other in the partnership?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

6 Regular monitoring, evaluation and learning



6.1 How is monitoring and evaluation organised?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

6.4 Who has ownership of the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) process?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

6.2 How is learning embedded in this partnership?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

6.5 How are the results of MEL being used by the partnership?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

6.3 To what extent do you distinguish between the progress of results and the effectiveness of the collaboration?

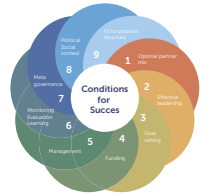
Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

Context

The below questions focus on three conditions: metagovernance, political and social context and fit to problem structure. These are considered important for enhancing the performance of partnerships for sustainable development. Please read each question carefully and put your answer in the grey box, including explanations and examples.

Your observations:

7. Active metagovernance



7.1 To what extent are the activities and goals of the partnership aligned with policy frameworks, such as the SDGs (or other relevant frameworks in your areas of work)

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

7.3 How does this alignment become visible in the partnership?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

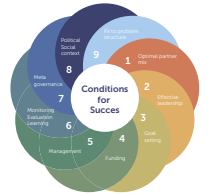
7.2 How did your partnership determine with which frameworks to align?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

7.4 Do your organisation and the partnership have different preferred frameworks to align with? If yes, how do they differ?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

8. Favourable political and social context



8.1 How does the partnership engage with (local) governments and their policies?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

8.4 How does the partnership engage with civil society organisations?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

8.2 How does the partnership engage with global market players?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

8.5 How does the partnership engage with other initiatives that aim for similar goals?

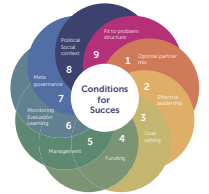
Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

8.3 How does the partnership engage with local business systems?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

8. Favourable political and social context

9. Fit to problem structure



9.1 Upon the start of the partnership, what kind of problem analysis was made and by whom?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

9.3 Why was the partnership considered suitable to address the overall problem?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

9.2 Who are the political actors and specific problems behind the overall problem you aim to address?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

9.4 Each problem requires different institutional setups; how does the setup of your partnership respond effectively to the overall problem?

Give your answer and add your explanation and example:

Part II: Prioritise your action

Now that you have come to grips with relevant aspects of your performance, you can identify the necessary areas for improvement in your partnership. This will allow you to determine where action is required. The following questions focus on the conditions that are most important to enhance your partnership's performance.

In your view, what are the most important conditions?	1. Optimal partnermix	High priority	Neutral	Low priority
	2. Leadership			
	3. Goal setting			
	4. Funding			
	5. Management			
	6. Monitoring and evaluation			
	7. Metagovernance			
	8. Political and social context			
	9. Fit to problem structure			
Which conditions should your resources focus on?	Please formulate five priorities:			
	I.			
	II.			
	III.			
	IV.			
	V.			

Please identify which conditions require action and fill them out in the below table.

List of action points:	Plan the action points in time:	
	1. immediate action 2. intermediate action 3. long-term action	Include who is responsible for which action, and decide how to monitor progress on the action points
○		○
○		○
○		○
○		○
○		○

Annex 1: optional step

Compare with partner

This step allows you to compare your responses and priorities with those of your partner:

- Make a comparison of both responses and priorities
- Identify synergies and differences
 - By comparing your and your partner's answers, you might find that your perceptions differ (as we learned from group sessions).
 - The same goes for sensitive topics, such as trust. This can now be put forward with a view to a constructive and open dialogue on expectations and needs.

Once all involved partners have done this assessment separately, you can plan a facilitated dialogue to discuss the highlights of your findings together. If you opt for a group setting with one or more partners, it is important to make sure that every partner and stakeholder is and feels represented. All participants should engage and feel comfortable to share their vision. Every opinion is valid and valuable. In the dialogue, you need to collectively decide whether or not to take action, and *which* actions, based on your priorities as well as those of your partner(s). This could spark meaningful discussions.

Tip 2

We recommend to turn this exercise into a group effort. This means that you sit together and discuss the different elements of the C4S assessment. This will require some individual preparation so make sure that each participant has time to think about their role and input.

Tip 3

You can ask a partnership broker⁵ to facilitate this conversation. We highly recommend to turn this into a recurrent exercise and to integrate this in the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) strategy of your partnership.

⁵ "Partnership brokers are individuals who support multi-stakeholders partnerships at local, national or international levels enabling them to better achieve their sustainable development goals" (source: <http://partnershipbrokers.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/brokersleaffinal.pdf>)

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