



THE COLLABORATION QUICK SCAN (CQS)

*Do you work with partnerships for sustainable development?
Check out this CQS tool*

How to optimise your collaboration in 4 steps



THE PARTNERSHIPS
RESOURCE CENTRE

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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 CQS help your partnership?

Get the most out of your collaboration with the Collaboration Quick Scan (CQS). The idea of cross-sector partnerships is to achieve greater impact through bringing together resources and aligning your action. This is easier said than done. Partnerships take time to develop and manage. 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.

How to make this work? Partnership literature recognises that **relationship management is crucial to a partnership's success**. Austin & Seitanidi (2012)¹ identified 14 elements that characterise the nature of a relationship with partners. As these 14 elements have a big impact on the results you collectively achieve, they are central to this Collaboration Quick Scan.

The CQS is a four-step tool that helps:

- Reflect on the nature of your relationship
- Understand how value is created in your partnership
- Identify the elements that need work in order to achieve maximum impact
- Identify where you are in building collaboration
- Take action on important elements to optimise your partnership

Four steps towards collaboration

The Collaboration Quick Scan³ consists of four consecutive steps, visualised in the below infographic. The first two steps are done by each partner individually as a self-assessment. The first step puts forward 14 statements which reflect the elements. You might find that these statements apply to your reality, or not. Once you are familiar with the elements, you may prioritise the most important elements in the second step and allows you to identify what should improve in your view.

The last two (optional) steps are done by as many partners as possible in your partnership. They turn the tool into a peer-to-peer assessment, and compare your responses and priorities to your partner's, and formulate what to act on jointly. As such, it helps all parties involved to build a mutual understanding of your collaboration. These steps help you define where you want to go in terms of relationship management.



¹ Austin, J. E., & Seitanidi, M. M. (2012). Collaborative value creation: A review of partnering between nonprofits and businesses: Part I. Value creation spectrum and collaboration stages. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 41(5), 726-758.

² The infographic is adapted content from Slidemodel.

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Using the CQS

Using the CQS

Tip 1

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

The Collaboration Quick Scan offers starting points for a constructive and open discussion with your partner. This is best done in a moderated workshop setting, depending on the issues at hand (see tip 1 for suggestions).

Who is the Quick Scan for?

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

Please note: the Collaboration Quick Scan is not designed to:

- develop a strategy – please use one of the many other tools available, including the [PPP Canvas](#)
- evaluate a partnership: the Quick Scan focuses on the relationship dynamics between partners
- provide solutions: the Quick Scan serves rather to help you identify where you are in building collaboration and how to improve
- be an all-encompassing tool: there are other tools and sources that help address more specific elements of a comprehensive analysis of your partnership.

Step 1: Check your collaboration

This first step contains 14 statements that refer to your organisation, resources, your partner, your partnership, value and impact. Please read each statement carefully and tick one of the four options per statement. 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.

The below figure visualises the four steps of the Collaboration Quick Scan:



Your organisation



1. Level of engagement

My organisation fulfills all obligations that were mutually agreed by the partnership.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

Your organisation

2. Importance to mission

The partnership is crucial to my organisation's mission; if it wasn't in place, our mission would be at risk.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

Resources



3. Magnitude of resources

We contribute many different types of resources (such as money, knowledge, time, human resources and services) to the partnership.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

Resources

4. Type of resources

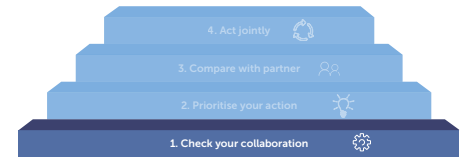
We make core competences (such as knowledge or specialised skills) available to the partnership to optimise collaboration.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

Your partner⁴



5. Level of interaction

We have frequent and intensive contact with our partner during which we discuss how to collaborate and deal with challenges.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

Your partner

6. Trust

Our partner trusts us and we trust our partner.

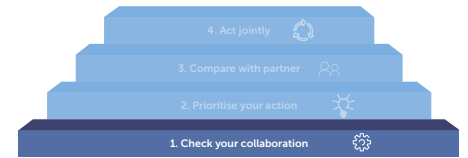
To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

⁴ if you plan to take step 3 and 4, please have in mind the specific partner you intend to compare your responses to.

Your partnership



7. Scope of activities

The scope of our partnership's activities is broad with various types of interventions which requires a substantial commitment from us.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

9. Managerial complexity

The management of the partnership is dynamic, unknown and unpredictable, which requires higher level managerial skills (such as strategic insight) from us.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

8. Internal change

The partnership has substantial and unmistakable influence on our organisation's internal operations.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

Value



10. Strategic value

The strategic value of the partnership influences our organisation's long-term course.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

11. Co-creation value

What the partnership delivers is being co-created by all partners and guaranteed by their broad support.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

12. Synergistic value

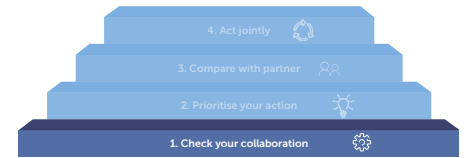
Our partnership is focused on creating results that can only be achieved together through close collaboration.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

Impact



13. Innovation

The partnership has developed innovative approaches and methods that contribute to our envisaged impact.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

14. External system change

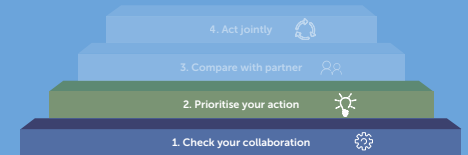
The partnership's contribution towards changing the external system is substantial.

To which extent does this apply to your situation?

- A. very much
- B. somewhat
- C. very little
- D. not at all

Please add your explanation and examples:

Step 2: Prioritise your action



While each element could influence the results that you are collectively trying to achieve, the degree of influence depends on how important the elements are to your partnership. This second step helps to prioritise the elements that are most important for your partnership at this stage. Please indicate which five elements are the most important for your partnership as well as which require action. Addressing them should be an important part of your approach to improve your collaboration.

<p>In your view, what are the most important elements?</p> <p>Please select the five most important elements.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level of engagement 2. Importance to mission 3. Magnitude of resources 4. Type of resources 5. Scope of activities 6. Level of interaction 7. Trust 8. Managerial complexity 9. Internal change 10. Strategic value 11. Co-creation value 12. Synergistic value 13. Innovation 14. External system change
<p>What does this mean for the partnership?</p>	<p>List observations or action points for your top 5.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <input type="text"/> 2. <input type="text"/> 3. <input type="text"/> 4. <input type="text"/> 5. <input type="text"/>

Step 3: Compare with partner



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

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 CQS. This will require some individual preparation so make sure that each participant has time to think about their role and input.

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

	You	Your partner
Compare your five priority elements with those of your partner	○	○
	○	○
	○	○
	○	○
	○	○

Step 3: Compare with partner



Step 4: Act jointly

After discussing synergies and differences, the fourth step helps you to identify the elements you want to work on jointly.

Elements you want to work on jointly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○○○○○○○○○
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Think about what and who is needed to work on these elements. Make a list of action points with a clear planning, both in time as well as in terms of responsibilities.

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>)



List of action points:	Plan the action points in time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immediate action • intermediate action • long-term action 	List who is responsible for which action and formulate how to monitor progress on the action points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

You can organise a facilitated dialogue (see box with tip 2) and make sure all participants are able to engage and feel comfortable to share their vision. Every opinion is valid and valuable.

In the dialogue, you need to decide collectively whether or not to take action, and *which* actions, based on your priorities. This could spark meaningful discussions. It will also help you see various views on particular issues within your partnership.

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