12 steps towards successful cross-sector partnership

1. **Understand the issue** to ensure the programme is relevant and sensitive to the problem and the context: What are the major needs? Who are the key stakeholders? How might the partnership fit with existing activities?

2. **Know and respect your partners:** understand the resources and value they bring, their culture, their specific drivers for engagement, as well as their limitations and internal challenges. And **be open and transparent** about your own drivers, value and limitations to help **build trust.**

3. Ensure that all partners have the **knowledge and skills** around the process of partnering in order to agree principles and **co-create the partnership.** Specialist, independent **partnership facilitators** may help take partners more efficiently through the process of building a robust, effective partnership.

4. Identify clear **partnership objectives** that deliver results and add value to each of the partners. Objectives should have specific **measurable goals** to allow the partnership to track progress and demonstrate success and value-add to each partner.

5. **Start small and scale up** to allow partners to develop effective relationships, build up trust, and test and adjust the partnership's operational and governance arrangements before moving to more ambitious plans.

6. Co-create a **partnering agreement** that sets out **clear roles and responsibilities** along with objectives and a **governance/decision-making structure** that ensures proper accountability and efficient delivery.

7. Build strong **institutional commitment** to the partnership by identifying the clear value of the partnership to each partner's priorities, engaging senior champions, and integrating where possible with other partner activities.

8. Ensure the highest standard of **project management** to support a task-focused approach, with all partners actively engaged in delivering tangible and practical results.

9. Embed the highest standards of **relationship management** to ensure that partners are kept fully engaged and valued, the principles of partnership –equity, transparency, and mutual benefit – are achieved, and that any challenges or issues can be recognised early.

10. Ensure **strong communication** both within the partnership – contributing to the project and the relationship management – and externally to celebrate success and continue to build buy-in with other stakeholders.

11. Build in **ongoing review,** including 'health checks' to assess the partnership and determine and implement changes that would improve its effectiveness.

12. Plan for the **longer term** by understanding how the programme (as opposed to the partnership) may be made sustainable or, if designed to be temporary, that the outcomes of the programme are sustained.