



Humanitarian Leadership Academy's Partnership Approach

Focus on collaboration

Collaboration is the cornerstone of the Academy. To fulfil our ambitious mandate, demonstrate our commitment to working through partnerships and provide the best possible service, the Academy cannot act alone.

We will work together across the humanitarian sector and beyond to ensure that information, knowledge, and learning are shared to increase efficiency in this time of growing pressure. We will partner with others from outside the traditional humanitarian sector too – from technology companies to universities; from local communities to multinational corporations – to help us find innovative and creative solutions utilising technical expertise, knowledge and skills not currently available to the sector.

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) Standard defines a humanitarian partnership as “a relationship of mutual respect between autonomous organisations that is founded upon a common purpose with defined expectations and responsibilities. Partnerships can be established with or without formal contractual agreements. Partners can be small, community based organisations or large national or international institutions. A humanitarian partnership is one in which two or more bodies agree to combine their resources to provide essential goods or services for disaster survivors”¹.

Working in collaborative partnership is central to the Humanitarian Leadership Academy and our mission to empower people around the world to prepare for and respond to crises in their own countries. Working with partners deeply rooted in their own societies will increase people's access to learning products that are high quality, cost effective and operating at scale. Successful partnerships will be instrumental in increasing the impact and sustainability of our work.

This document lays out the Academy's partnership principles and its approach to creating and sustaining successful partnerships².

¹ The Guide to the HAP Standard- Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management, 2008

² Please note, the Academy's definition of 'partnership' is not the same as a 'formal legal partnership'

The Academy's Partnership Principles

Our partnerships will be built upon the following principles;

Mutual Benefit- with clear and agreed common vision for the partnership, which is mutually beneficial for both parties and goes beyond the partners interests to contribute to a positive impact on our target groups

Equity and empowerment- where values are aligned and understanding and respect for differences in opinion and culture is practiced

Accountability and transparency- with clear and rational decision making and open communication

Who can be Academy partners?

The Academy welcomes partnership opportunities with a wide range of sectors including, but not limited to:

- Civil Society

This includes local, national, and international NGOs as well as community-based associations and groups.

- Bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies

This includes working with donors and UN organisations

- Government / public sector

Government / public sector partnerships range from village and district level authorities to national level ministries. These partnerships may be considered around collaboration, capacity building and long term advocacy goals. The Academy recognises that even in countries with poor governance records, different levels of government can still present viable and dynamic partnership options. However, partnerships of this nature require thorough political and policy risk analysis prior to initiation.

- Research and Policy Institutions

The Academy will partner with research and policy institutions, such as academia, to carry out needs analyses, including learning needs assessments, to develop specific content in which the institution has technical expertise, and to evaluate the impact of our work, whether a whole work stream or a single product.

- Private Sector

We are exploring partnerships with a range of private sector partners in countries in which we have a presence. We encourage innovation around corporate social responsibility, business sustainability, corporate entrepreneurship responsibility as well as core business, and to develop and test products together with private sector partners that benefit Academy programmes. Drawing on their innovation, technical expertise, knowledge and skills to find creative solutions to the world's challenges.

- **Media**

At local, national and international levels, media can communicate the need for, and convey the quality and impact of our work. It can also act as an accountability mechanism, and shift public and political opinion on the issues and positions that the Academy promotes and advocates. Media is an important partner for funding as well as profile, in particular during emergencies. And in many programmes, the media provides an important means for supporting campaigning and awareness-raising around particular programme objectives.

Types of Collaborative Engagement

Successful partnerships require time and resources, with different partnerships requiring different approaches. The Academy recognises this and has adopted a range of partnership or relationship management mechanisms. These include:

Stakeholder engagement

We will work alongside those whose values and aims align with our own to raise the profile of our vision - a world where people are enabled to prepare and respond to crises in their own communities. Stakeholders may not necessarily be formal partners, instead the majority will be those organisations working in the humanitarian sector (even if not themselves humanitarian organisations, such as universities) whose work will both impact and/or be impacted by the work of the Academy. This type of engagement will normally be found in the informal day to day consultation, networking and engaging with one or more individuals in meetings, working groups, forums and workshops.

Cooperation

We will sometimes support other partners who are in a lead role on a specific project by providing input and resources where appropriate.

Coordination

We will provide coordination leadership on dedicated projects through good relationship and project management.

Collaboration

We will collaborate with partners and work more formally and intently towards shared goals in a spirit of co-creation and collaborative leadership. These will typically be enshrined through collaborative agreements, often working within legal contracts or funding agreements.

Potential partner organisations

The Academy is keen to partner with organisations or individuals who share its core aims and values. This includes those in the private and public sectors, as well as the humanitarian, development, academic and research sectors. The Academy will also partner with other organisations – such as press or broadcast media – where such a partnership would contribute to the Academy's vision and would meet the principles of partnership.

The Academy will undertake due diligence procedures on all prospective partners, so as to ensure compliance with Academy policy and with the Academy's legal obligations within the regulatory frameworks of the UK and the country(ies) in which the partnership operates.

Partnership Checklist

We have developed a checklist to help the Academy assess appropriate partners. This is to guide the relationship and is not about imposing a particular methodology but to ensure that key approaches and questions are explored to help the development of the relationship over time.

Some of the considerations that have been included in the checklist are:

1. Do the partners values and/or objectives align with those of the Academy?
2. Has there been a clear and open discussion about what both / all parties want from the collaboration?
3. Do we understand how the partner wants to be involved in taking the relationship further?
4. Has there been discussions about how they would like to work together; ways of working, who is involved, any considerations or concerns?
5. Are there clear methods for raising issues or concerns on either side?
6. Has a point person been identified to keep in contact with?
7. Is there a clear recognition on both sides of the time needed to build the relationship?

There are of course other aspects that have been taken into account that involve making sure that organisational, legal and other checks and policies are appropriately followed in order to ensure compliance with the regulatory framework in the UK as well as in the countries where the Academy operates/will operate.

Once this process is completed, we will assess the partner and complete the required due diligence, vetting and risk assessments before entering into any agreement.

When not to partner

The Academy will not partner with organisations that are in conflict with our aims and values. This includes – but is not limited to – companies manufacturing or selling arms, those in the pornography industry and those in the tobacco industry. The Academy will carry out extensive risk assessment on partnerships that are proposed with industries that are likely to conflict with our vision and aims, or with which partnerships may have considerable

political implications: security services, fossil fuels, pharmaceuticals, alcoholic drinks, gambling, nuclear energy, and those who sell or manufacture breast milk substitutes.

The Academy also distinguishes between collaborative partnerships which are based on the aforementioned values and principles, and more transactional partnerships based on the provision of goods, services and consultancy. In some cases the latter may also amount to a collaborative partnership, but would normally represent an exception to the rule.

The Academy reserves the right to exercise its discretion in forming and declining opportunities of partnerships.

Maintaining Strong Partnerships

Strong partnerships are built on trust and shared belief. If two organisations are confident that each will help the other reach their goals and if they each trust that the partnership will not incur excessive costs – whether in terms of money, goodwill or time – then both will actively seek opportunities to collaborate. In this way, such partnerships deliver success not only in the short term on specific projects, but also in the longer term.

To build these relationships, the Academy will continuously apply its principles of partnership throughout all its interactions with partner organisations. This means sustaining engagement even once the initial momentum of project set-up has dissipated; detailed, timely reporting, robust evaluation and a commitment to learning; and listening to partners if changes to project delivery are needed (e.g. in response to changing circumstances in the region).

In short, the Academy will act respectfully of partners' contributions and their time. The Academy will also have this expectation of its partners, and we will place particular emphasis on expanding and scaling partnerships that work well with the Academy.

To implement this in practice, wherever possible, all partners will have a named Academy contact who will be their first point of call throughout the partnership. This named contact will ensure that all Academy contributions to the project meet the agreed expectations, and that regular contact is maintained with partners.

Regular contact will be particularly crucial where partner organisations are not operating close to the Global Academy Office or any Academy Centre.

The Academy will also adopt a strict policy on documenting partnerships, ensuring that important information is effectively captured, stored and shared; helping both parties manage the partnership.

It is expected that many partner organisations will have multi-national reach, or will have expertise relevant to several Academy work-streams. As such, there is a risk that multiple conversations will develop with staff in different Centres or departments. The Academy will develop a customer relationships management (CRM) system that will help to mitigate this risk, ensuring that staff are aware of existing relationships before pursuing new partnerships.

Evaluating and Learning from Partnerships

Criteria by which a partnership will be evaluated will be laid out during the planning stages. These criteria – along with any associated monitoring metrics and the processes by which these data will be collected – will be themselves developed collaboratively with the partner organisation(s), and will be agreed by all parties before the project commences. Learning from our partnerships is something the Academy sees as paramount, and we will establish mechanisms to continuously learn from successes and challenges, which will inform future partnerships and programmes.

The Academy MEAL Manager will play a key role in embedding learning within our partnerships and projects.

In evaluating and learning from its partnerships, the Academy distinguishes clearly between the project and the partnership itself and recognises the value of both being carried out separately. This is to determine how efficiently and effectively the partners worked together rather than as individual entities, something often missed by project evaluations. Furthermore, evaluating the partnership itself can also glean the added value and unintended benefits of the partnership. Examples of partnership evaluation indicators include, but are not limited to, efficiency, effectiveness, communication channels, shared reporting processes and dispute resolution rates.

Review points

The Academy will ensure that all partnerships are regularly reviewed to ensure they are operating smoothly and meeting their objectives. Reviews should involve all parties, though there is no requirement that partners be physically present. Reviews will include:

- Assessment of the partnership from the point of view of each partner
- Highlighting additional resources or inputs required
- Progress against milestones and deliverables
- Risks and challenges ahead, and agreement of mitigating measures
- Learning arising from the partnership to date

After-Action Reviews

The Academy will work closely with our Academy Centres to conduct regular After-Action Reviews; micro evaluations of activities with a focus on reflection and learning, which will be shared with partners through narrative reports.

Lessons learned meetings

The Academy will conduct regular internal meetings with our partners to discuss lessons learned across ongoing or recently closed partnerships. These will feed into the Academy's partnership approach and help inform partnership reviews.

For more information about the Academy's partnership approach, please contact Alex Farrington, Partnerships and Projects Manager- a.farrington@humanitarian.academy