

PARTNERSHIP WORKING/COLLABORATION FOR VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

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In the current economic and political climate, VCOs are increasingly considering the advantages of collaboration. The term 'collaborative working' is used to describe any situation in which people are working across organisational boundaries towards some positive end.

The terms 'collaboration' and 'partnership' are often used interchangeably –

Collaboration is the generic term used for all forms of working together.

Partnership is one type of collaboration which, unlike more informal types of collaboration, is generally governed by some formalities such as having terms of reference or an elected membership.

The Institute for Voluntary Action Research has produced a very useful document "Getting Ready for Collaboration". Visit www.ivar.org.uk

There is a **spectrum of collaboration**. At one end of the spectrum, organisations may come together in networks or assemblies. The key feature of such arrangements is that the collaborating organisations remain independent, but may engage in activities such as sharing information, developing a common response to a policy initiative or discussing a shared problem.

At the opposite end is merger, a form of collaboration which involves an organisation giving up its independence to come together with another organisation.

Between these two extremes are forms of collaboration that involve coming together with varying degrees of commitment to permanent arrangements and sharing across organisational boundaries.

An **agreement** which covers collaborative working may be known as a

- collaborative working, joint working or partnership agreement or protocol
- memorandum of understanding (MoU)
- service level agreement (SLA)
- contract
- joint venture agreement

NCVO has much good information on collaboration, including a useful document "Joint working agreements". Visit www.ncvo-vol.org.uk and go to Advice & Support and then Collaboration

For a model collaboration contract visit www.bassac.org.uk Bassac is an umbrella body for community organisations which focuses on collaboration as a main pillar of its work. It has many useful resources.

Seek legal advice before entering into more formal types of collaboration.