

# Reviewing

the way you partner



A resource for practitioners  
working in partnership

# About this resource

Building effective health justice partnerships (HJPs) requires partners to pay attention to how they work together, not just what they do. One way you can monitor this is by setting up processes for reviewing your partnership - this resource is designed to help you to do that.

Reviewing your partnership can help you to identify the added value of working in partnership (for all partners), and how you might better achieve your shared goals.

We recommend HJPs review their partnership at least annually. Beyond that, this resource can be used at different stages across your HJP. For instance, it can guide discussion when forming a new HJP, as you develop a shared understanding of the partnership's resources and processes. You might use the questions listed as talking points whenever your partnership comes together to help you identify strengths and areas for development in your approach, and to prompt discussion about opportunities for alternative ways of working. Or, you might use the questions towards the end of a funding period, to reflect on how the partnership has changed over time, and to consider what is needed to support your next phase of working together.

This resource is broken into three broad but mutually reinforcing areas:

- **Relationships:** how you connect, how well you know each other and what's important to one another, and how clear the roles and responsibilities are in the partnership.
- **Resources:** how clear you are on the specific resources each partner contributes to the partnership and what the partnership has (or doesn't have) that is needed to achieve your shared goals.
- **Processes:** how your partnership communicates with each other, how you make shared decisions and solve problems, what accountability or governance structures you have in place, and how you're sharing information and data to improve your work or track how you're achieving your shared goals.

# How to use this resource

This resource includes questions you can answer as you review your partnership relationships, resources, and processes. There's also an action plan template to help you identify and plan your collective next steps.

You can complete this resource in whatever way works best for you, such as:

- As a partnership together: fill it out together as a tool that drives a discussion
- Each partner individually with a follow up partnership discussion: fill it out separately, with results tabled for a meeting.
- One partner individually: fill it out from your own perspective and consider how your reflections might inform how you need to be working to contribute to an effective partnership.

# Relationships

**To what extent does the partnership have a shared understanding of what each partner’s expectations and motivations are for working together?**

*e.g., We recently had a conversation about our referral processes, which brought to light a lot of assumptions in our partnership - it would be good to clarify our individual expectations and motivations about working together.*

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**To what extent do the partners have an alignment in the goals and vision for working together?**

*e.g., When we started the partnership four years ago, we talked about our goals and vision and were on the same page, however almost all staff working in the partnership now were not there at the beginning. We haven't documented this or updated it, and we're not clear on how well we're doing in achieving those goals.*

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**To what extent is there clarity of roles and responsibilities in the partnership, and how do those different roles interact?**

*e.g., Each partner has different professional rules and obligations, but we are clear and open with each other about this, and we work creatively together to address our shared goal, which is supporting our clients. Not sure how well we explain this role clarity to new people though.*

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**Reflecting on the answers above - what are your strengths, areas for development and opportunities for alternative ways of working in partnership?**

*e.g., We've identified some areas where we're really open and transparent with each other – both partners value this and we can use this way of interacting to support our conversations. Add a standing agenda item to our meetings to share examples of where we think we're achieving our goals – and think about how we might document these examples.*

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# Resources

**To what extent has the partnership identified each partner’s contribution to achieving shared goals?**

*e.g., I have a hunch about what my partner can contribute (for example, space, staff meetings and the data I think they’re capturing on client wellbeing) but we haven’t really mapped this out together. I love how trauma informed they are in their approach - I wonder if we could talk about how they could boost my skills in this space?*

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**To what extent does the partnership have the resources needed to achieve the identified goals (consider this in terms of the appropriate funding, infrastructure etc.)?**

*e.g., As a lawyer working in a hospital, I have an office that feels really out of the way - our clients often have a hard time finding where I am. I haven't talked to my health partner about how this can frustrate me (and our clients!).*

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**To what extent does the partnership have the right mix of personnel, disciplines and roles to support it achieving shared goals?**

*e.g., Our partnership is predominantly made up of social workers and lawyers. We are a diverse bunch, and we think creatively and work together. It’s not easy work, but the team is supportive and has a great energy. What we’re missing is buy-in from decision makers in our organisation.*

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**Reflecting on the answers above - what are your strengths, areas for development and opportunities for alternative ways of working in partnership?**

*e.g., There are a few things that are assumed in our partnership, and how we worked in the beginning hasn’t necessarily continued. We’re adding a ‘partnership check in’ to our meeting agendas to talk about how we’re working, what we’re each contributing and how this helps us to achieve our goals.*

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# Processes

**To what extent does the partnership have an oversight mechanism (governance structure) that makes decisions about the management and implementation of the partnership, and supports the partnership’s accountability? To what extent is this oversight mechanism regularly reviewed?**

*e.g., We have two committees. One is made up of team leaders and frontline staff and they review our data on service access, opportunities for training and referral troubleshooting. They report to and inform the second group, the executive group, who make decisions about the strategic direction of the partnership and its sustainability. We review the function of both these groups annually.*

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**To what extent are the partnership’s communication methods supporting good working relationships?**

*e.g., We currently communicate via email, and things can get lost in translation or take days to resolve when a phone call would be faster.*

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**To what extent does the partnership have processes and tools in place to monitor how the partners are working together towards shared goals?**

*e.g., We have been thoughtful and clear about the resources and infrastructure our partnership needs from the outset – for example, when we first applied for funding for our partnership, we included a six month period for setting it up before seeing clients. One thing we haven’t done is carve out what we need to maintain our partnership, beyond the set-up phase.*

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**To what extent does the partnership have processes and tools in place to help it track progress, identify opportunities for improvement, demonstrate its outcomes and share information?**

*e.g., We have a standing agenda item at our quarterly meetings to review and discuss the information we have about client demographics and most frequent matter types. We have a clear agreement on how we share responsibilities for funder reporting. Our executive group is starting to ask for more information about how we’re making a difference for our clients.*

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**Reflecting on the answers above - what are your strengths, areas for development and opportunities for alternative ways of working in partnership?**

*e.g., Make a meeting time to talk about our communication processes and how we can improve them in a way that meets both our needs. Ask the executive group to discuss and provide more details on the types of information that would meet their needs and the level of resourcing they're able to commit to this work.*

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# We're here to help

If you like this process of reviewing your partnership and would like to go even deeper, Health Justice Australia can work with you to facilitate a comprehensive HJP health check. The HJP health check is an opportunity to re-focus on the essential foundations of effective partnership, assess the extent to which those foundations are present in your partnership, and create a plan for how the partnership might respond.

Contact us to find out more.

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## About Health Justice Australia

Health Justice Australia is the national centre for health justice partnerships. We support the effectiveness and expansion of health justice partnerships in Australia through:

- Knowledge and its translation: developing evidence and translating that evidence into knowledge that is valued by practitioners, researchers, policy-makers and funders
- Building capability: supporting practitioners to work collaboratively
- Driving systems change: connecting the experience of people coming through health justice partnerships, and their practitioners, with opportunities for lasting systems change through reforms to policy settings, service design and funding.

