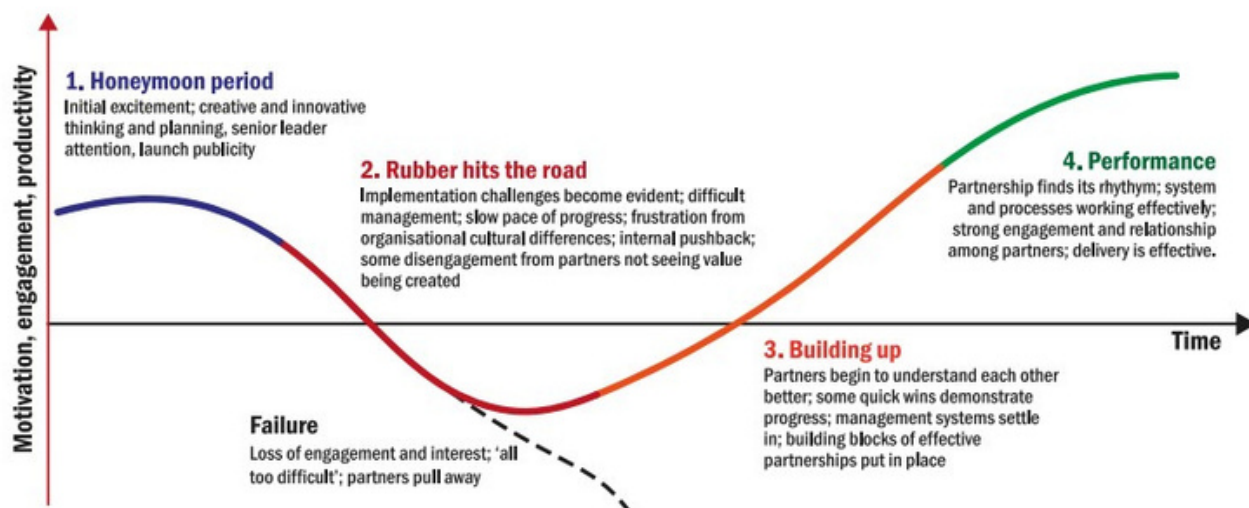


# Lifecycle of Organizational Partnerships

In organizations, as in life, there are ebbs and flows in every relationship. Those relationships go through cycles of challenge, clarity, refining and growth and sometimes even endings. When organizations enter into a partnership with another organization you can see these cycles at play too. It is often good to pause and reflect on the partnership to gain insight into the other partner and the way you work together.

The Sustainable Development Goals developed a guidebook to partnerships with a number of helpful tools including the image found below. Read on for more details about these cycles in the life of a partnership.

## Typical early cycle in partnerships



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THE SDG PARTNERSHIP GUIDEBOOK

**The Honeymoon:** This is in the early stages of the partnership where everyone involved is excited and creativity is at its peak. People are motivated and eager to work together. In organizations, this is the stage where senior leaders are most involved. This can also be the stage where the partnership is launched to the public if applicable.

**Rubber Hits the Road:** This is where the hard work happens and partnerships bump up against limitations or challenges that were often not anticipated. Progress slows and people are less interested in doing the work often because it is no longer exciting or energizing. There can be frustration among employees or pushback on project goals. Because progress slows it can be more challenging to see the value of the partnership.

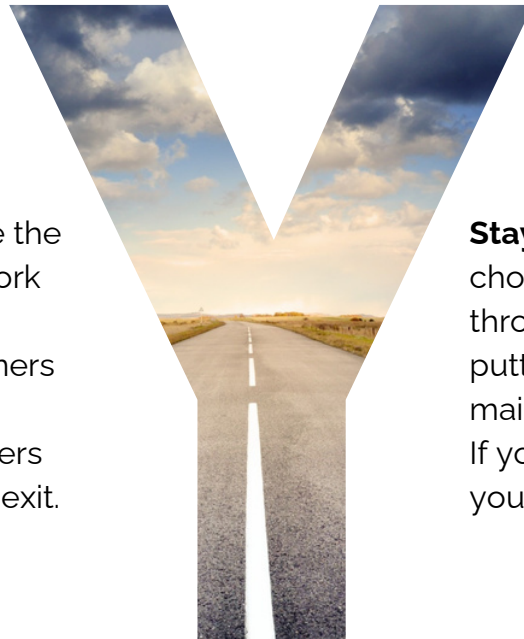


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Partnership Guidebook can be accessed here: <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/knowledge-centre/partnering-guidebooks/sdg-partnership-guidebook/>

In the Rubber Hits the Road phase, organizations are at a crossroads, where they need to make a choice about what will happen next: **Failure** or **Stay the Course**

**Failure:** Partners no longer see the value in the partnership, the work becomes too challenging to overcome difficulties and partners pull away and end the project. This is the point at which partners and partnerships can make an exit.



**Stay the Course:** The partners choose to commit to working through the challenges and putting in the time and effort to maintain and build the partnership. If you choose to Stay the Course you enter the building up phase.

**Building Up:** Over time, partners begin to understand each other better and can place the value of working together above everything else to keep moving forward. In this stage, it is helpful if there are some quick wins or accomplishments to help the partners see that the partnership is working and worth the effort. Usually in this stage the new systems are working effectively. The final phase is Performance. Here the partnership finds its rhythm and systems are working well. There is strong engagement and a high level of trust among partners. In this phase, those working within the partnership are the most engaged. There is room for creativity and innovation. This is where you will see the outcomes that you were hoping for in the early stages of the partnership coming to life and being achieved.

Knowing about the phases in the partnership cycle can help you identify where you are at in a particular partnership. Review your partnerships. Where are they in the cycle? How does this information help you gain insight why things might be happening in the partnership, the ways you work together, and/or improve the effectiveness of the partnership?

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success”  
~Henry Ford~