

When to say NO to partnership - 10 Red Flags

Partnerships between organizations have many benefits, including increased impact for clients, potential financial efficiencies, and enhanced program outcomes for each organization. But, not all partnerships will be good for your organization. There are some red flags to pay attention to so that you can end or pause conversations about potential partnership opportunities in the early stages.

1. Unclear Motivations – Self and situational awareness is key to effective partnerships. If you don't have a clear sense of the other organizations motivations or your own, take time to clarify before you say yes.

2. No Compelling Why – Similar to motivation, you need a clear “why” you want to develop or maintain a partnership.

3. Lack of Follow Through –Is your partner capable of doing what they say they will do? If the response is slow or nonexistent, it may be an indicator that it may be more effort than benefit to enter into a partnership.

4. Low Relationship & Trust – There needs to be time and effort put forward by all involved to build a personal relationship as well as an organizational partnership. Do you trust your potential partner? Do they trust you? If trust and relationship are low, it may be time to push pause.

5. Limitations – It could be limitations of capacity, another major project, or financial instability. Do you or your potential partner just have certain realities that will limit ability to effectively partner right now?

6. Incompatible Organizational Cultures – If the partner organization's culture or values clashes with yours in terms of work style, communication, or decision-making processes, it can lead to friction and hinder the success of the collaboration.

7. No benefit or value - Effective partnerships require time and effort. If there is no additional benefit for each individual organization, or for the group, it may not be a good fit.

8. Commitment Imbalance – Both partners require support from leadership and project sponsors. Commitment imbalance may come to light if there isn't a clear “why” for both organizations, or you are noticing a lack of follow through.

9. Problematic Power Dynamics – Does one organization appear to hold all the power in decision making and resource allocation? If so, effective collaboration may be a challenge.

10. Intuition – If your gut says something is not right – listen to it!

