
C4. How can I build collaborations?

The first step in forming a strategic alliance involves due diligence. You should decide what you want to achieve and then ask questions about your partner's character, objectives and resources. You may want partners who provide similar resources or, on the contrary, one that will complementary your resources (106).

Secondly, the alliance should have the common objective of ensuring that all the organizations are committed to the main goal and can share advocacy. Collaborations can be treated as strategic alliances in which the partners share resources and risks in advancing towards an agreed goal. In strategic partnerships, the working methods, standards and desired outcomes are matters for negotiation.

Trust, transparency and credibility are critical for a successful relationship. With these elements, the answers to questions on whether and how to best serve the audience should be obvious.

Inherently, collaboration involves activities outside one's immediate control, which may appear threatening to some. Aspects to be considered before establishing a collaboration are whether the roles are unclear or uncomfortable and whether the collaboration will involve more work. Often, collaborations represent friction among ideas and new ways of working, which make new demands on all participants.

The relationships you build at different levels of the health system are vital not only to obtain the information you need but also to form strategic allies for influencing policy change. A number of strategies can be used to build momentum for change. One is to nominate "champions" in parliament and build relationships with them or with decision-makers who can raise issues in the appropriate forums (97).