
Rykneld Homes Ltd Approach to Partnerships and Partnership Working

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RHL’s Approach to Partnerships and Partnership Working

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Approach to Partnerships and Partnership Working

1. Introduction

Partnership working can be a powerful tool in ensuring all available resources are made available to provide services that are tailored to the needs of individuals and communities rather than the structures of the organisations providing them.

The ability to form and work effectively within partnerships is a requirement that Rykneld Homes Ltd (RHL) has set itself. The Company recognises that not all partnerships are good partnerships and past experience in other organisations has demonstrated that not all partnerships work successfully.

There must be processes in place that can identify partners and partnerships that will further the Company's aims and the ability to monitor partnership working to ensure those aims are achieved.

This document does not deal with partnerships arising from the procurement of services from other organisations nor those which are formed when joining consortia and similar joint ventures. It is meant to describe the Company's approach to working with or utilising funding provided by others on projects that will contribute to specific service areas for a defined, sometimes fairly short, period of time. Partnership in the context of this document also includes grant aided work.

The roles and responsibilities of Rykneld staff and Board are contained in Appendix 5 part 1 of the Company's Financial Regulations; you should ensure you are fully acquainted with their requirements before proceeding with any arrangement.

2. The Rykneld Homes Ltd Approach

The Company recognises that partnership working with the private, public and voluntary sectors can prove beneficial both to the organisation and its service users; it also recognises that these arrangements need to be entered into only after establishing that benefit and after ensuring proper management processes are in place.

Before entering into any partnership or applying for a grant you must produce a business case which will require approval from Senior Management Team (SMT). Prepare and submit your case early in the process to avoid wasted preparatory work. This business case must include:

- A description of the aims of the partnership.
- Outcomes in terms of demonstrable benefit to service users and support to the Business Plan.
- The likely resource implications to RHL and where those resources are to be found.
- Tests for success.

- Plans for failure.
- The effect of the conclusion of the partnership.

It is essential to establish a link between proposed actions, benefit to customers and the Company's Business Plan. Both criteria must be satisfied, as it is possible to benefit users in ways that may not be essential to core service provision and therefore misdirect the Company's resources.

No arrangement should be entered into without relevant, clearly defined and measurable tests for success. These tests must be used to review the project and identify those that are failing. When a failing partnership is identified consideration should be given to withdrawing from it, a route for withdrawal must be planned in advance.

Where a partnership is for a limited duration or grant funding is for a fixed period then the effects on users of the withdrawal of the service being supplied by the partners must be anticipated. For a project to continue to its full term it must have been judged a success with high customer satisfaction, its withdrawal might be contentious and must be planned for either in terms of continuing using alternative resources or managing expectations.

To ensure the Company is fully aware of all the partnerships it has entered into and that appropriate scrutiny is in place all such arrangements should be entered into the Company's procurement register.

All the Company's financial regulations and contract procedure rules will apply to the partnership in general when the Company is lead organisation and to expenditure incurred by the Company on behalf of a partnership or grant funder when we are not, and staff operating within the partnership should be aware of the provisions contained within them. Grant funders and partnerships may have other rules and staff should be aware of their requirements to avoid difficulties especially when claiming grant aid. Advice on these matters should be sought from the Corporate Services Manager if you have any doubt.

It is essential that any arrangement entered into is covered by our existing insurance cover or provision is provided by other partners which is satisfactory to our needs.

3. What is a Partnership?

We take the widest possible view of the definition of what a partnership is and therefore to what arrangements these notes apply; it is; "where two or more people or organisations work together towards a common aim".

4. Why Work in Partnership?

As already mentioned partnerships are indispensable for extending and improving services and accessing new resources, other potential rewards are:

- Avoidance of duplicated effort.
- Spread risk.
- Enhanced negotiating and purchasing power.

- Combined skills finding more innovative solutions.
- Greater customer recognition and impact.

5. What makes a Successful Partnership?

The major ingredients of successful partnerships are:

- Commitment at a senior level.
- Sufficient resources and skills.
- Understanding of differing organisational cultures.
- Clear vision and shared goals.
- Well defined and achievable outcomes.
- Regular evaluation.
- Reasonable distribution of roles.

6. What are the Barriers to Effective Working?

The most common reasons for partnerships failing or under achieving are:

- Lack of commitment at senior level.
- Inability to adapt.
- Lack of clarity of aims.
- Poor information exchange.
- Inability or unwillingness to critically analyse performance.

7. Creating a Successful Partnership

The steps involved in setting up a partnership are similar to those applicable to any new project or activity:

- Ensure you have in principal support from SMT.
- Ensure your proposal fits the Business Plan.
- Agree shared aims with partners.
- Define each partners responsibility.

- Set up communications structures.
- Establish governance and financial frameworks.
- Ensure all partners have available funding.
- Design a monitoring plan.
- Formulate an exit Strategy.
- Obtain Board support and ensure other partners have same.

On many occasions it will be useful to draw up a letter of agreement between partners which should at least contain:

- Names of participants.
- A description of the aims of the partnership.
- Details of monitoring arrangements (cost and performance).
- The contribution expected from each partner.
- Structures and procedures that allow the partnership to function.
- Resources required and from where.
- Review and audit arrangements.
- Information sharing arrangements.

8. Maintaining a Successful Partnership

Partnerships should seek to achieve a balance of power between all partners to avoid those who perceive themselves to be less powerful becoming less than fully supportive.

Ensure communication and involvement by acting outside the formal framework of meetings with for example more informal workshops and e-mail releases.

Ensure all partners are sufficiently trained so they are able and confident enough to fully participate and avoid the use of industry jargon.

End user involvement is essential to drive the partnership forward and to test effectiveness

9. Measuring and Reviewing Success

It is essential that any partnership has methods to measure performance and by definition agreed objectives and targets. Progress should be monitored by the partnership who should also institute recovery programmes. The partnership must also communicate performance information to parent organisations. Partners and parent organisations must when recognising a failing organisation that is unlikely to achieve its goals be prepared to take decisive action.

It might help to review your proposed partnership using the assessment tool on the next few pages before you make a specific proposal and to ensure smooth progress when operational.

	Assessment Question	Guidance Notes	Assessment Decision Score		
A1	SECTION A: FOUNDATIONS Does the partnership have SMART objectives shared by all its partners? (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results focused & Time limited)	Strategic objectives should be clear and agreed by all parties. Test each objective against SMART objectives, identify required outcomes clearly and ensure the results have meaning in terms of impact not process.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
A2	Is the partnership accountable to anyone?	Clear lines of responsibility must be identified well in advance of commencement. Also consider other existing partnerships at this stage – avoid duplication	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
A3	Does the partnership make decisions?	Avoid a talking shop approach. A valid partnership must have targets and will probably require resources to achieve them. Ensure these resources are in place and ensure the partnerships approach to resource use is focused and flexible.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
A4	Are costs and benefits considered?	This can be subjective but attempts should be made to value outcomes or/and the costs of inaction or acting outside a partnership arrangement.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
B1	SECTION B: PARTNERS Does the partnership take into account differing cultures?	Varying organisations will have differing approaches. Ensure shared training and time spent on recognising and accommodating these differences.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
B2	Is there commitment at senior levels in each partnering organisation?	This is essential – ensure all parties are fully committed establish report by having a suitably senior manager nominated as a supporter.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
B3	Does the partnership have the required skills for success?	The set up process should define the skills required to perform and identify the source of those skills. Training and secondments can play a role.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>

	Assessment Question	Guidance Notes	Assessment Decision Score		
B4	Is the balance of power correct?	It is better to avoid a dominant partner or small group partners as this will deter others. There should be no automatic assumption that for instance RHL has a higher status than a tenants group	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
C1	SECTION C: COMMUNICATION & INVOLVEMENT Are partnership meeting effective?	Consider; attendance levels, participation levels, use of jargon, time limitations on speakers and the use of more informal forums.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
C2	Is there good communication within the partnership?	Are minutes clear, are action points identified and allocated. Avoid running the partnership in an informal way that may exclude certain partners.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
C3	Are achievements communicated to the outside world?	Events, newsletters, web sites are all useful. Also need the reaction of stakeholders to ensure correct direction.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
D1	SECTION D: MEASURING AND REVIEWING SUCCESS Are there key performance targets?	There must be performance targets that are easily understood and measured. Performance should measure product not process.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
D2	Is progress monitored and reported?	A clear framework of performance monitoring must be in place. Reports should include proposals to rectify shortfalls in performance. If prospects for improvement are small then partners must consider the partnerships continuation.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>
D3	Are arrangements regularly reviewed?	Objectives, terms of reference and membership should be periodically reviewed and revised where needed.	NO (1) action is required <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (2) could be improved <input type="checkbox"/>	YES (3) working effectively <input type="checkbox"/>