

Consortium Management – Challenges and Good Practice

Drawing from the experiences of DELTAS consortia directors and managers, in this month’s bulletin we present five key consortium management challenges as well as corresponding good practices and helpful recommendations. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but aims to serve as factors to consider when dealing with such situations.

Challenge	Good practice and recommendations
Differences in partner capacities, interests, priorities and expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of different partner contexts e.g. each partner’s situation and perspectives • Identify and leverage the strengths of each partner • Tailor roles and activities to partners’ strengths, needs and interests • Take into account and balance different partner needs when making consortium decisions • Coach less-capacitated partners to enable moving forward as a team • Learn from other partners by sharing knowledge and experiences
Low level of participation and engagement by partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify individual partner interests, needs and challenges; partners may be hindered by multiple factors • Make deliberate efforts to build partner relationships e.g. organise face-to-face meetings and getting to know each other sessions where possible • Promote participatory decision-making and consensus-building to promote buy-in and ownership e.g. actively encourage participation by all • Ensure each partner identifies and contributes their strengths to promote a sense of inclusion
Poor communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the free flow of information among partners through creating and consistently encouraging such a culture and setting good examples • Make deliberate efforts to build partner relationships e.g. organising face-to-face meetings and getting to know each other sessions where possible • Ensure each partner is heard and ‘draw out’ silent partners • Make use of various forms of communication (e.g. formal and informal, group and one-on-one, planned and random)
Non-adherence to consortium processes and requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote inclusive and participatory decision-making and consensus-building to promote ownership of requirements • Have clear and well-documented consortium policies, guidelines and processes • Be transparent and open at all times • Be flexible where necessary e.g. identify individual challenges and provide tailored support • Ensure consistency e.g. the same rules for all partners at all times
Restrictive host institutional processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an effort to know partners’ institutional contexts and challenges • Get institutional buy-in at all levels e.g. actively engage relevant institutional actors and be open to their inputs • Ensure regular communication and continuous engagement with institutional actors e.g. provide regular updates on consortium activities • Promote institutional ownership of consortium activities

DELTAS: Learning Research Programme

The Learning Research Programme (LRP), led by the Centre for Capacity Research, works alongside the DELTAS Africa consortia to produce research-based learning about how to train and develop world-class researchers, foster their careers and collaborations, and promote research uptake. For more information about the LRP research activities and to access the LRP resources (annual reports, in-depth newsletters and all our publications), please visit our DELTAS research page at: www.lstmed.ac.uk/projects/deltas---learning-research-programme

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Some of the LRP team at the DELTAS Africa AGM 2019