

The Local Sports Coordinator

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General Introduction

The Local Sports Coordinator is employed by and reports to the Board of the LSP, or in the case of the CDB model is employed by the Local Authority and reports to the Board. The functions ascribed to the LSP will form the basis of the work of this professional, and therefore their work will revolve around the functions described as information, education and implementation. Each LSP will decide on the priorities to be assigned to the Coordinator's work, but in general their role will be the coordination of the planning process for the LSP, and the overseeing of the agreed plan. The Coordinator will also act as secretary to the LSP, facilitate meetings of the LSP Board, and liaise closely with the ISC to act as a conduit for information between national and local developments. The Coordinator will be responsible for the implementation of the local sports strategy, encompassing elements such as education programmes and local participation initiatives.

“Many of those involved in partnerships would say that the brokers (CoOrdinators) role has been critical. However, the broker's role must be kept in perspective. Good brokering is not a substitute for good partnering. It is always the partners themselves that are central to, and ultimately responsible for, making their partnership work. So a good broker works continuously to build capacity and systems within the partnership – thereby promoting healthy interdependence between the partners rather than partner dependence on the broker.” Ref: The Brokering Guidebook (Ros Tennyson, International Business Leaders Forum)

A CoOrdinator is a catalyst, or a go-between whose objective is to mediate between different parties for mutual gain. A partnership CoOrdinator brings potential partners together and works to build and maintain a successful working relationship. The CoOrdinator can play a vital and pivotal role which requires a range of skills enabling him/her to respond to the changing environment and needs of the partnership.

Essentially the CoOrdinator performs a service on behalf of the partnership, supporting the partners in designing and implementing the project that they agree to undertake.

The CoOrdinator's primary functions are to:

- Act as an intermediary and build collaboration between the partners
- Inspire others in the initiating organisation and partner organisations to follow the partnership approach
- Encourage the adoption of behaviours that help the partnership to function effectively and grow
- Safeguard the principles and vision of the partnership.

The 4 Stages of Partnering

Based on our learning and experience from the pilot phase of our Local Sports Partnership initiative, we have found the following material best describes the diverse roles of any CoOrdinator involved at any stage of the Partnering process. In this regard we have taken the Partnering Initiatives model of the 4 stages of partnering and assigned the different roles or tasks which the CoOrdinator will undertake.

Within each of these stages there may be some specialist expertise or support required by a Sports Partnership. In this regard the Irish Sports Council are committed to providing that support through any of our relevant departments eg: Communications, HR etc.. Further to this where there is a training need identified amongst the network of LSPs the ISC will endeavor to schedule and provide appropriate training/support across the network.

Partnerships for sustainable development are not always predictable or 'textbook'. Every partnership is different and will therefore follow its own unique development pathway. However, there are many aspects of the partnering process that are universal and it is to expand on this that we use the term The Partnering Cycle.

There are different ways of describing the partnering cycle and any schema risks being simplistic, nevertheless it is important to understand that as a partnership is established and develops over time, its characteristics and requirements change – sometimes quite radically. The Partnering Initiative works with a 12-step approach. For easy reference, these 12 steps are clustered here into 4 ‘phases’ in the lifecycle of a partnership.

Phase 1 – Scoping & Building

The scoping and building of a partnership is critical. It is also important to consider the other (non-partner) alternatives before the commitment to a partnering approach is made. Cross-sector collaboration can be time-consuming and frustrating and it is important that prospective partners understand this, and identify shared (and realistic) goals for the partnership as a foundation for their working relationship.

Phase 1 of the Partnering Process incorporates four key steps:

- **Scoping:** understanding the challenge; gathering information; consulting (both with stakeholders and potential external resource providers) and building a vision for the partnership.
- **Identifying:** potential partners and securing their involvement.
- **Building:** Partners developing their working relationship by agreeing goals, objectives and core principles that will underpin their partnership and provide the basis for their activities.
- **Planning:** Partners agreeing the parameters of their collaboration and designing a programme of work.

Phase 2 – Managing & Maintaining

Once the partnership is established - even at quite an early stage - management procedures need to be agreed and adhered to; resources (both from the partners themselves and from external sources) need to be identified and secured. Only then, can the partnership move confidently into the detailed design and delivery of its agreed programme of work.

The 3 steps identified as central to this phase of the partnership typically happen in parallel rather than one-by-one. The steps in Phase 2 include:

- v. **Managing:** partners explore the structure, governance, communication systems and decision-making processes for the partnership.
- vi. **Resourcing:** partners identify, mobilise (and each commit) cash and / or non-cash resources.
- vii. **Implementing:** once resources are in place and project details agreed, implementation starts. This involves working to a pre-agreed timetable with allocated tasks and towards specific achievements and deliverables.

Phase 3 – Reviewing & Revising

Once the programme of work is established, the partnership moves into a new ‘modus operandi’. It is now likely to be in a ‘maintenance’ rather than a ‘development’ stage and therefore requiring a focus on measuring (the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the partnership’s activities) as well as some form of ‘stock-take’ (of the partnership and the partnering process). Based on these findings, it is likely that the either the programme of work or the partnership (or both) will be revised and improved. At a certain

stage the partners will need to consider issues of longer-term sustainability.

These three steps are further outlined as:

- viii **Measuring:** Is the partnership achieving its goals?
- ix **Reviewing:** What is the impact of the partnership on the partner organisations? Key others? Is it time to re-consider the role of partners and / or the introduction of new partners?
- x **Revising:** Making changes in light of experience.

Phase 4 – Sustaining Outcomes

The final phase for the partners to consider is how the outcomes of their collaboration can be sustained medium to long-term. It is the **outcomes** that are important, not necessarily the partnership itself. The two steps in this phase of the partnering process include:

- vi Institutionalising
- vii Sustaining or Terminating

In other words, at this phase, the partnership may be:

- **Institutionalised** by building appropriate mechanisms to secure long-term sustainability or **Re-constituted** as an independent organisation designed to continue to deliver the project or programme of work in perpetuity or
- **Terminated** because it has completed its agreed task and handed over responsibility for day to day delivery to another body (eg the appropriate government department or a specialist NGO) or
- **Terminated** because the partners do not believe that their (shared or individual) objectives are being met adequately or
- **Re-focused** to build on the established working relationship address new challenges

Whichever of these options is chosen, it is a time of change, readjustment and in some sense ‘moving on’. Partnership is, after all, a means to an end not an end in itself!

It is the partners themselves who need to understand and work through the various stages of their particular partnership, and of course in most case this occurs either with or without the benefit of a framework. But those operating as partnership brokers/Coordinators do have a responsibility to be one step ahead in helping partners to:

- Anticipate what is required to move the partnership forward effectively
- Recognise when they have missed a vital element of the partnering process
- Understand when it is a good time to take stock of the partner relationship or know whether or not it is right to change arrangements or direction.

Source: The Brokering Guidebook – Ros Tennyson, IBLF

Useful Contacts

<http://www.carmichaelcentre.ie/trainingandsupport/index.htm>

<http://www.chambers.ie/chambers.php>

http://www.enterpriseboards.ie/Your_Local_CCEB_map.aspx

Acknowledgements

The Irish Sports Council would like to acknowledge the help and contribution of the following with these guidelines:

- » The Network of Sports Partnerships who have contributed some of their material to be reproduced in this document.
- » The Partnering Initiative and the International Business Leaders Forum based in London. In particular Eva Halperand the use of the “Partnering Toolbook” and the “Brokering Guidebook” publications both of which have been a tremendous resource.
- » Morgan Buckley, Managing Director of ASMT Ltd for allowing us to redraft some material, which he has produced in Board Members Handbooks developed for some of the Partnership Projects.
- » Sport Scotland for some of the material and references used in these guidelines in particular with regard to the role and responsibilities of Board members.
- » Business In the Community Ireland - A non-profit organisation committed to promoting corporate responsibility to top companies.
- » The National Centre for Partnership & Performance.