



Tool Kit

for International Partnerships

▶ Introduction

This Tool Kit is designed as an aid to UK FE colleges and other TVET providers in planning, developing, implementing and managing international partnerships. Its development has been informed by consultation with a range of UK colleges which have substantial experience in this area as well as with the British Council's Vocational Partnerships Team in London, via a study which was commissioned by the Council: *'A Review and Taxonomy: International College Partnership Models'*

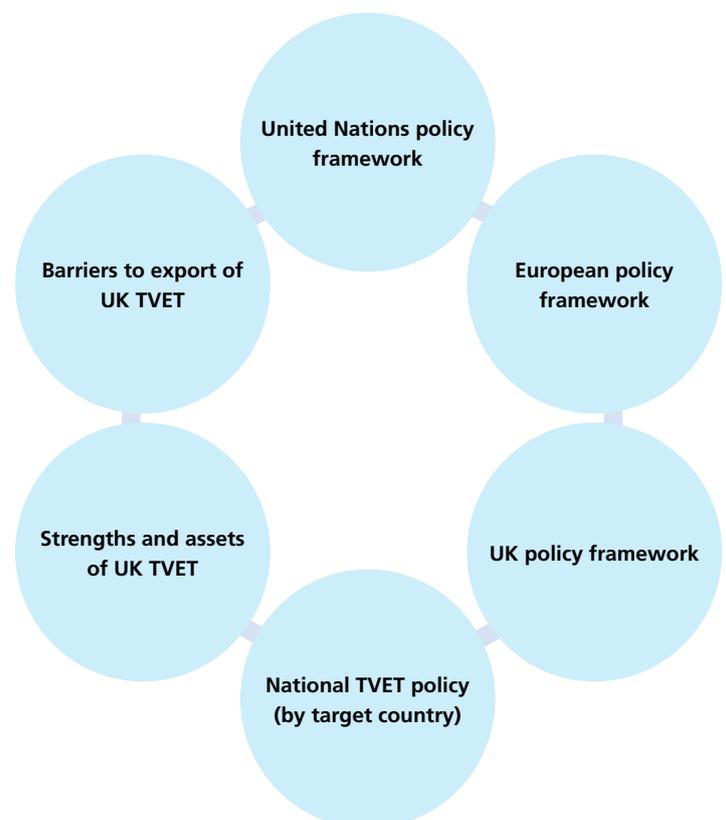
The funding and the policy landscape for the UK FE sector during recent years, in addition to increasing awareness of a range of emergent opportunities, has led to a growth in colleges' international activities. For many, a key focus of this activity has traditionally been direct recruitment of international students to the UK. However, research indicates that a combination of factors (including for example, the growth of in-country provision and competition from the USA, Australia and mainland Europe) is leading to a decline in this area of business. Consequently, more and more colleges are recognizing the business potential offered by collaborative relationships between UK and overseas education institutions and the important role which these play in the positioning of the UK TVET sector within international markets. Many colleges are also involved in capacity-building activities for partner organisations linked to strategies and frameworks for international TVET systems reform.

The international partnerships environment

Whatever the overall purpose, perhaps one of the most significant benefits of international partnerships, is their role in raising the awareness of other cultures amongst both staff and students and creating new opportunities for global mobility.

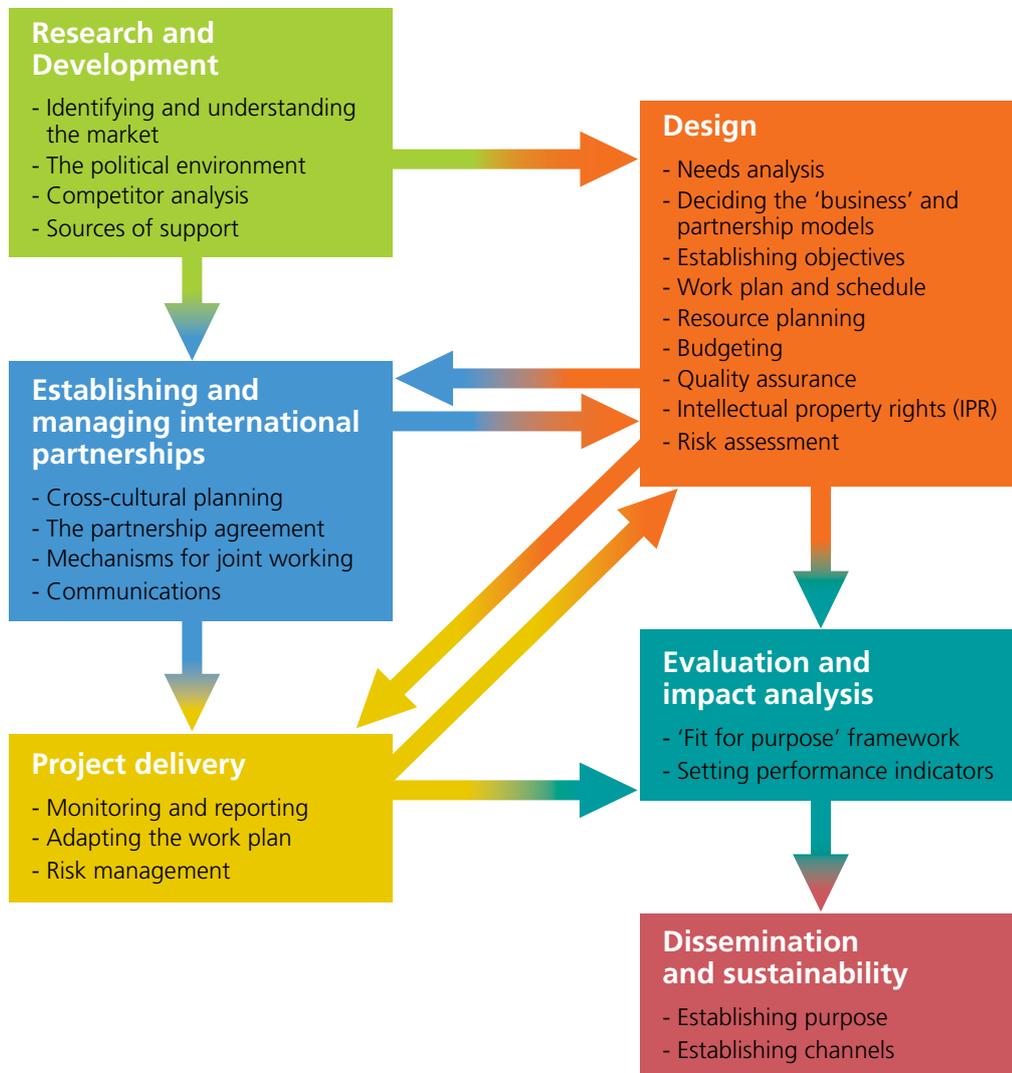
"Partnerships can bring significant benefits. They are a response to multi-faceted problems that face society and that cannot be tackled effectively by any individual body working alone. They can provide flexibility, innovation and additional financial and human capital resources to help solve problems. These are powerful incentives for organisations to work with others Partnerships also bring risks. Working across organisational boundaries brings complexity and ambiguity that can generate confusion and weaken accountability."
(*'Governing Partnerships'*, The UK Audit Commission 2005)

Though this statement refers to UK public sector partnership, the general principles are transferable to the international context. However, such 'boundaries' are then further complicated by transnational and trans-cultural factors. Issues such as country, socio-political environment, the nature of partner organisations and timing are therefore important considerations in determining the selection and design of appropriate models for collaborative undertakings. However, there are a number of general principles and elements of good practice which underpin most types of partnership and these have informed the design of the Tool Kit.



Introduction

The project cycle – overview



Who is the Tool Kit For?

This Tool Kit is not intended to be a blueprint for international partnerships in TVET but it does provide a checklist of questions based on perceived good practice relating to each stage of the project cycle as well as some tips, quotations and short illustrative case studies from representatives of colleges which have a track record in this area. In doing so, it offers a resource which may continue to be expanded and enriched by the experience of practitioners and managers within the sector.

The key target audiences for the Tool Kit are the staff of the international departments within UK FE colleges and other vocational education providers as well as those within curriculum and service departments who contribute to the planning, design, implementation and management of international partnerships. It could also serve as a useful resource for Principals and Governing Bodies who are seeking to design a set of criteria for evaluating the achievements and impact of the college's international strategy and related activities.

Whether the objectives of the partnership are commercial or not, it is useful to refer to the process by which businesses research and develop and design a new product, identify and define the market, build market understanding, undertake a risk assessment and carry out a cost benefit analysis. The following 'checklists' of questions that follow have been designed to assist users of the Tool Kit with each stage of this process as well as with other aspects of project management.

▶ Research and Development

The first step: some colleges/providers may expect the International Manager/Director to lead on the concept development for and design of projects; others may expect the lead to come from curriculum or service teams. Try to avoid developing proposals in a vacuum - undertaking some kind of consultation exercise is nearly always advisable. This could (for example) take the form of a round-table or brainstorming session or a series of informal discussions, the most appropriate model for each situation and context can be selected.

"We built the project around what we had planned to do and the key people are then involved in designing the (international) project. In our college we have a number of 'champions' for our international work among the senior managers."

- **Does your college have an international strategy and is the proposed activity consistent with the principles and action plan?**
- **Do you have 'buy-in' to the project from senior management at the college?**
- **Is your product/service clearly defined and is it a distinctive strength for your college?**
- **Have you established a clear need for your product within your target market via research and consultation (i.e. Is your venture demand rather than supply-driven)?**
- **Have you analysed competition in this market from other UK providers as well as (where appropriate) those from other countries?**
- **Can your college/consortium identify a Unique Selling Point (USP)?**

"Find your USP and put together a proposal that is unique and thus offers a commercial advantage for the partner. Avoid areas outside your expertise however attractive they might seem as you should be looking at cultivating for to five year relationship not a one year quick earner."

The USP is likely to be a 'product' but it may be a pre-existing relationship in the target country such as city or institutional twinning, established contacts via a UK employer operating in the target country or a large local diaspora community from that country, with which your college has strong links.

- **Does your college or any of your consortium partners have a track record in the target country and have you been realistic about the time needed to develop business relationships there?**

"I've been working in the Middle East since 1989 and you have to commit to at least 5 years. If you do not do this, you will achieve nothing. You have got to build the relationship - it takes a long time before they trust you but when you've got that trust the rewards are there."

Research and Development

- **Have you considered political factors within the target country which may affect the saleability and penetration of your product/service?**

"In the case of centralized systems like China and Saudi, colleges may be 'directed' to invite overseas visits in an attempt to fast-track a project....often they have been told to work with us and they have been very welcoming but they are not really sure why we are there. They haven't been given all the information so it still takes time to build the trust and understanding which will result in meaningful outputs."

- **Have you explored all potential sources of pump-priming or continuing funding for your project? Could different elements of the project be of interest to different funders?**
- **Have you consulted with key agencies (British Council, UKTI, Commissions, regional governments, your prospective international partners themselves, business associations, etc.) which may be able to offer advice on and support in the target country?**

It is useful to check the web sites and publications of government departments and national agencies regularly, for details of new funding programmes and opportunities and to compile a database of potential sources linked to your college's various areas of interest. It is also a good idea to develop personal contacts with key staff in these organisations and let them know about your college's specialisms and international objectives. They can then send you relevant information and your institution may be the first port of call when appropriate short timescale opportunities arise.

"The British Council can be very helpful; if you have good British Council staff in country they can open doors"

"The UKTI rep. in India was helpful giving us some information on institutions which helped us select our partners and they let people know what we were looking for."

"I've found it very useful to contact the High Commission and the embassies; they sent information out to local businesses to let them know that our college could help them."

- **Could a specialist consultant assist with information, contacts and negotiations in the particular country in which you are aiming to work?**

"We have a business partner who is a Chinese speaker; the Director of a travel agency, who helped us identify an area that is not saturated with other English colleges and looks set for economic growth and also (helped us) to contact a college there...If I had not had her with me, we wouldn't have made the progress we did."

"If there is one critical success factor in my view in China, it is having someone with contacts. This consultant was very well-connected with senior politicians in the province and as a result all sorts of doors opened for the college. It is nothing to do with marketing, you need someone who can help cut through the red tape."

In some countries such as China, a local partner organization through which to work is a necessity rather than simply an advantage. Seek the advice of the British Council or UK Trade and Investment.

Having researched the needs of and defined the market, you are now ready to determine a business model and strategy, including in relation to collaboration with other UK partners.

- **If the opportunities in a specific market are likely to be substantial and varied, would a consortium model be more appropriate to your business aims?**
- **What added value or reduction in risk would a consortium arrangement offer?**
- **What structures will you need to manage or co-ordinate the consortium and what are the staffing/resource implications?**

"I think partnership working is the key. If you are going for big contracts to work with big organisations then individual colleges are not usually large enough to go it alone."

"For us, the 'pros' of a combined force outweigh the 'cons' – working as a regional consortium is a strength, it gives us a clear identity overseas."

"On a tight timescale we find it much easier to work on a college to college basis."

"Where partnership project timescales are a year or less, small is good."

Even if you are part of a pre-existing consortium, it is important to review your potential service offer in the context of the target country and the project objectives. It is essential to be very clear about what you are trying to achieve via the partnership/project and how you aim to get there.

"They are delivering Edexcel qualifications; they are a centre in their own right. We are in the business of supporting that, helping them to deliver a more student-centred course and to create opportunities for travel and broadening the student experience."

- **Is the business model you are considering best suited to your product/service offer, the timescale and the culture in which you will be working?**
- **If you are a consortium, are the products and services to be offered by different members clearly differentiated and have you agreed a shared brand and a common pricing structure?**

The University of Warwick research, 'UK FE/VET – Opportunities in the International Market' (2008) identified a range of business strategies used by UK FE colleges, including for example:

- Collaborating with transnational institutions on shared course delivery
- Provision of access routes to degree courses: such as the '2+1' model
- Exporting staff of the college for in-country delivery
- Establishment of a campus or training centre in the target country (less common)
- Implementation of a 'seeding model' whereby training and validation services are provided (often linked to UK accreditation) in order to assist an overseas partner institution in running its own courses or training centre
- Developing commercial opportunities from a base of capacity-building activity, which may have been pump-primed from public funding sources
- Building on existing relationships such as local or regional twinning arrangements.

- How do your planning mechanisms ensure that all partners and relevant stake-holders can input into the establishment of aims and objectives?
- Has the potential role of each partner been considered and clearly defined? Does their track record demonstrate capacity to deliver?
- Have you established a sub-contract or another type of formal agreement with UK partners?
- Have outcomes been defined for each stage of the work plan and do these link back coherently to the project objectives?
- Have you allowed sufficient time for the pilot phase of your products and services (especially if these will have commercial value)?

"To try to give people a good understanding of the system and the context we do a pre-visit briefing."

- Have you included preparatory and development activities within the plan?
- Is the timescale for each stage realistic? Have you taken into account factors such as public holidays and festivals in partner countries? Have you assessed the time needed for each of the processes involved and cross-referenced with any key dates and deadlines (such as accreditation boards)?
- Have you built contingencies into the work plan and established clear milestones?

"In retrospect, we would have probably allocated the budget differently."

"I must say that when I was doing the match funding calculation, I was surprised how much time everything had taken."

- **Have you analysed the human, material and equipment resource requirements of each element of the project?**
- **Have you confirmed that any start-up funds or sponsorship on which the project depends is in place?**
- **Are you confident that the travel and subsistence budget is realistic and have estimates been based on checks of current prices and exchange rates?**
- **Have you made adequate provision for translation and interpretation costs?**
- **Have you established a financial contingency plan?**

Experience indicates the budget requirement for interpretation and translation is frequently under-estimated, especially as this may increase as the activities evolve: if in doubt seek specialist advice. Though it may be tempting to do so (and they are undoubtedly an asset in terms of general communication), it is not advisable to rely on staff who are participating in a visit in a different role to act as interpreters, as this is very likely to detract from their contribution.

- **Have you sought legal advice on IPR issues in relation to the target country in which you will be working, especially if your products will have significant commercial potential?**

"We had experience of IPR arrangements through our work on LEONARDO but we were not sure how this would work in China..."

Do not assume that your college IPR policy will carry any weight beyond your institution. This will be superseded by the laws of the country in which you are working which in many cases are complex and may offer you little protection. If IPR is a significant issue for your college, it is advisable to seek advice from a specialist legal advisor who has knowledge of international IPR and the of the target country. There are as yet no known 'test cases' involving UK FE.

"Blow it and you'll never work there again. It's very black and white."

Quality assurance of international activity (especially off-shore delivery) is a complex issue for UK colleges as this does not lie within the scope of UK inspection systems. However, the risk to both your institution and the reputation of UK TVET of low quality service delivery is great. A commitment to quality assurance at project level can still be ensured by a number of practical measures.

- **Are the proposed partnership/project activities covered by a formal quality assurance framework (e.g. that of a UK awarding body?)**
- **What steps can you take to extend the quality assurance procedures of your organization to the project activities?**
- **Are these frameworks/procedures compatible with any used by your UK or international partners and are there any related issues which need to be addressed through discussion?**
- **Do the staff of your own or your partner organizations require any related training?**
- **Who will be responsible for ensuring that quality assurance procedures are implemented by the staff of your college and by partner organisations**
- **Are any areas of the partnership/project activities not covered by existing procedures? If so, how will these gaps be addressed?**
- **Have you assessed the risks to the college in terms of finance and reputation of the overall failure of the project?**
- **Has a risk register with appropriate contingency plans been established (if objectives are not achieved what remedial steps could be taken and what would the potential resource implications of such actions be)?**

"We discovered that the students being referred to us had not had been taught adequate English so we had to introduce an intensive programme to get them up to speed at our own expense."

- **If the partnership is envisaged as a medium to long-term relationship, are there added costs or risks attached to withdrawing from the partnership in a shorter timeframe?**
- **If UK staff or students will be spending time at the premises of your partner organisation or employers, have you checked health & safety legislation and practice?**
- **Are there personal security issues or cultural awareness issues for which visitors to the UK or target country should be prepared?**
- **Having established an acceptable level of risk how do the benefits compare with other potential activities that could be undertaken?**

Consider the potential investment against the short, medium and long-term benefits to your college. These may include a mix of factors such as: revenue arising from the activity, building international relationships and networks, raising in-country profile, increasing student recruitment and staff development opportunities.

▶ Establishing and managing international partnerships

The partnership and business model is now agreed and the next step is turn the concept into a functioning project or venture: how can you ensure that the right staff are involved and that roles and responsibilities are clear?

Don't underestimate the value of personal chemistry. A recurring theme of review of partnership models was the importance of establishing mutual respect and trust between key personnel.

"It may not be very scientific but the best partnerships this college has been involved both in England and overseas, came out of building a personal relationship with the key people from the college. You have to feel this is a person I can do business with".

- **Can the international partners be assured of the importance of the project to the UK partners during negotiations or at the launch of a project by the involvement of a Principal, Vice Principal or Governor? (In other cultures this is often an important symbol of your intent).**

"The fact that our Principal went out and it (partnership negotiation) was Principal to Principal was very important"

"Senior management presence is very important, I would say the Principal should be on the first trip"

However good the personal chemistry, establishing a clear framework for collaboration is also very important and this can present challenges when working cross-culturally.

"My experience of China is that massive amounts can be lost in translation. This can mean you sign something that is totally different to what you understand. Greater care is required in China than in most other countries. Here, there seems to be no scope for negotiation once something is signed."

"It was difficult to translate that early commonality into a coherent workable programme of transnational activity. It was not uncommon for the needs of transnational consensus to limit the ambition of the programme."

- **Do the partnership planning mechanisms accommodate additional considerations such as the time and arrangements needed for interpretation as well as any cultural practice which is specific to the partner country?**
- **Have you established a Memorandum of Understanding or contract?**

Establishing and managing international partnerships

- **Does this agreement make explicit the responsibilities and costs to which each partner has committed? (Even if appears to be pedantic, try to leave nothing to chance or open to misunderstanding).**
- **Have you checked as far as possible that the content of the Memorandum of Agreement is clearly understood by all parties?**
- **Is the timescale realistic for all partners?**
- **Does the design ensure a mutuality of benefit among the participants?**

“Workshop activities helped break down barriers and gave a lot of Chinese staff an opportunity to use their, albeit limited, English - especially once they went into small group activities which also helped break down inhibitions and people made friends.”

“Each country is different you can’t use the same approach in each country. For example in Nigeria what we did in China wouldn’t work.”

- **Do the planned partnership activities and working methods take into account language and cultural issues and the additional time and cost requirements which may result from these?**

Effective communication and robust systems and procedures to support this are key elements of any partnership. However, some of your international partners may not have regular access to email, or fax may be the most popular means of transmitting messages. Also, various types of document may have differential status within some cultures.

“Communication is important, be explicit in your agreement: the number of visits, who is the point of contact, how they are going to communicate, when they are going to communicate....”

“Both partners had to deal with some pressing priorities and so nothing happened for a while after a period of enthusiastic activity. We realized that it is important to keep the partnership alive, even via modest means or it can lose its sense of purpose.”

- **Have you researched the specific etiquette and practice in relation to communications practice in your partner country?**
- **Are there clearly identified contacts for each partner organization?**
- **Have you assessed the way in which different media and mechanisms which are appropriate to your partnership may be used (e.g. ICT, web site, short regular update bulletins)?**
- **Have you established a ‘protocol’ for working in different languages, including in relation to the web (e.g. summary documents and headline updates to be made available in both languages)?**
- **Are all the UK partners or consortium (where applicable) aware of relevant cultural issues?**

▶ Project delivery

The staff and other resources are in place, the work plan and the budget have been agreed, the Principals or other high ranking personnel have met and have established a good working relationship, a comprehensive MoU has been drawn up with your international partners. What next?

Whilst governance, monitoring and reporting structures and processes are important factors in relation to successful project delivery and accountability, it is important to note that UK/European practice is not familiar to or well-understood in some other cultures. It is important to achieve a balance and a way of working which is realistic for all.

"There is no 'one size fits all' model of governing partnerships: governance arrangements should be proportionate to the risks involved."

- **Do project governance and management structures ensure equity of representation, influence and input as far as possible?**
- **Have you appointed a project manager and/or has a specific individual with responsibility for the project been nominated in the case each partner?**
- **Have monitoring processes which meet the requirements of any funding bodies and with which all partners are comfortable been approved and are all parties clear about expectations?**
- **Have language and translation issues been taken into account in relation to monitoring and reporting?**
- **Are formal sub-contracts/agreements between the lead and other partners in place (in the case of activities supported by public grants)?**
- **Is there a clear mechanism for re-profiling projected expenditure and income streams?**
- **Has bureaucracy been minimized as far as possible?**

"If partnerships spend too much time in meetings discussing process issues instead of focusing on achieving their objectives, the costs can outweigh the benefits."

- **Has a schedule for review of the delivery plan been established?**
- **Have you considered how each partner will participate in this process?**
- **Has the risk register been updated to include changing circumstances and have any of the inter-dependencies of the project elements shifted?**
- **Can the results and feedback from scoping visits or exchanges undertaken to date be used to inform modification of the project plan? How has this feedback been captured?**
- **If you are using a specialist consultant can they offer support or advice?**
- **Can any other members of the consortium who may have experienced similar challenges in the past offer possible solutions?**

One of the benefits of consortium working is that this serves as a mechanism for peer support and sharing expertise. This is an important resource. Use it!

▶ Evaluation and impact analysis

Now the project is up and running it is tempting to think 'Let's worry about evaluation once we have achieved more' but this is not advisable. Now is the time to consider how a cost effective process may be integrated into the delivery.

Unfortunately, the evaluation process is often neglected once a project is underway and more immediate issues need to be addressed. However without the appropriate preparation an evaluation is likely to be slower and more costly and may also be less informative.

- **What are the key areas of focus for the evaluation?**
- **Are you clear about what you want the evaluation to tell you and your partners? Have you developed appropriate quantitative and qualitative indicators which clearly link to the objectives?**

Evaluation is a key business planning tool for organizations and is also crucial in terms of informing government policy and strategy development (including in relation to funding programmes).

- **Are there any external frameworks to which the evaluation should be referenced (e.g. international benchmarking)**
- **Are any specific evaluation requirements imposed by funding agencies?**
- **What are the key factors that would enable a useful evaluation/impact analysis to take place?**
- **Has the input required from different partners and stakeholders (including beneficiaries of the project, e.g. students) been defined and accommodated within the design of the framework?**

As in the case of monitoring and reporting (above), it should be noted that international partners from some cultures may be unfamiliar with this concept as it is understood in the UK and that factors such as language issues may present barriers to participation.

"We used the UK feedback forms with our partners as their input was important, but though they were very positive about our work together, they were reluctant to complete the forms. In the end, we gave up on this approach and we just spoke to the key people involved instead."

- **Can a clear baseline be established at the outset in order that a meaningful assessment of 'distance travelled' can be undertaken?**
- **Have you agreed clear and practical systems to elicit and collate the relevant information for evaluation?**
- **Does this include collecting feedback from the international partners?**
- **If so, how will this be done in a culturally appropriate and productive manner? Could alternative approaches be used such as focus groups or electronic voting systems which minimize the need for writing/translation?**
- **Is all the required evidence paper-based or can you use electronic media such as video to capture information?**
- **Have you integrated internal review and evaluation into the project delivery plan?**

Evaluation and impact analysis

- **Is there a budget allocation for an external evaluator?**
- **How will the engagement of an external evaluator add value?**

"We commissioned an external evaluation as this was a condition of our funding contract. However, the benefits of the process only really started to make sense when we ran follow-up sessions with groups of staff after the project had finished and we were planning the next one."

- **Could the evaluation be undertaken by college/partner staff?**
- **Who are the audiences for the evaluation? Has the process (and have any materials) been designed with regard to the end users?**
- **How will feedback be given to the staff and stake-holder organisations which have contributed to the evaluation?**
- **Has the collaborative model you used clearly added value to the activities and achievements of the project or venture? Do these benefits outweigh the costs?**

'There is seldom an established means of identifying what resources organisations are committing to partnership working or of evaluating the costs and benefits of working in a partnership.' UK Audit Commission

Remember that an informative evaluation report gives you something tangible to disseminate and this can be an important vehicle for sustainability, including in relation to the leverage of public funding, investment or sponsorship!

▶ Dissemination

An effective evaluation plan is in place but how can the outcomes and products (where applicable) be exploited to maximum effect as well as the best use made of the 'lessons learned' during the delivery of the project?

Remember that not all partnership projects will have the same requirements for dissemination e.g. those with a commercial focus are likely only to disseminate top-level learning points.

- **Have you clearly defined (and agreed with partners where appropriate) what you are planning to disseminate?**
- **Are there any constraints in terms of copyright or confidentiality which need to be taken into account?**

It is important to establish who will be the 'ambassadors' and 'champions' of your project and to utilize all categories as fully as possible. These could be multi-various and could range from the Principal to students and stake-holders.

"In our college we have a number of 'champions' for our international work among the senior managers. They go on the trips and work on the project directly so it is not all down to the International Department."

- **Are there staff or student 'success stories' which can be highlighted?**
- **Will the staff involved in the partnership activity be required to produce and implement individual dissemination plans?**
- **Have you considered the potential for integrating staff development (opportunities for reflective practice, career development and team building) into the project in consultation with senior management?**

"The real benefit has been staff development. The opportunity for a group of staff to go away together and question their practice and then to improve it."

- **Could the students be involved via accessible and relevant channels such as MySpace or YouTube and other networking web resources?**
- **Could students undertake assignments based on the activities or outcomes of the project, including working with their international counterparts?**

"Our students came back buzzing – they couldn't wait to share their experiences in and out of the classroom, with other members of their course. This was the best advertisement for our project."

Dissemination

- **Does your organisation have a Marketing Team? Can the marketing staff offer advice or even integrate the dissemination into wider marketing plans?**
- **Who are the (internal and external) audiences for the dissemination?**
- **Does dissemination need to be designed and the materials presented in different ways for each partner country?**

"If colleges go the vocational partnership route then clearly the (partner) colleges and universities have status in their own communities and the (UK) college is hitting quite a significant number of teachers and students. So word of mouth, in terms of general impression, is of very strong benefit to the sector and to the image of UK education."

- **Are there a number of possible 'messages to be disseminated – perhaps to different audiences?**
- **Can these be presented in discrete 'digestible' formats which are appropriate to for specific audiences?**
- **Which channels and media can be used most effectively?**
- **Is another new and potentially costly web site really necessary? If so, has a realistic budget been allocated which takes into account potential maintenance costs?**
- **Do you really need to organize a discrete dissemination event? Perhaps opportunities to present at other relevant conferences and events could be sought.**
- **How could networks (including online) and existing publications be used?**
- **Are there other innovative mechanisms which may be specifically appropriate to your project e.g. use of sound bites or video clips?**
- **How will the outcomes of the project will be disseminated internally within your organization/amongst consortium partners?**
- **Can any regular forums/publications be utilized?**

As the last piece of the puzzle, this is always a difficult area! Users of this Tool Kit may well have written proposals which include a sustainability strategy based on a number of very optimistic assumptions that proved to be misguided. There are no easy solutions to this challenge but as in the case of evaluation, the issue should not be ignored until the activities have almost finished. Sustainability planning should commence early in the life of the project.

- **Do your project activities actually need to be sustained or will the project achievements be an end in themselves?**

“There is a misguided assumption on the part of some funding bodies that all collaboration should go on forever – sometimes the key benefit lies in a highly-focused short-term collaboration with specific outcomes.”

- **Do your sustainability aims relate to your partnership rather than the products?**
- **Have you fully explored the potential of ICT to enable you to carry on working with your partners (e.g. a shared web development tool, video conferencing?)**

“We have now done three Leonardo projects with the same two core partners. We are now so used to working together that we don’t need to meet all that often but we have constantly tried to involve more staff from each organisation.”

If your partnership received a grant to support initial joint activities, you may need to find other ways of working together without visits and exchanges when the funding ends. This may not be a problem if your working relationships have already been cemented.

- **When planning your partnership project, were assumptions made about possible future income streams? Are these assumptions still valid?**
- **Will your partnership project result in products which you and your partners aim to commercialise?**
- **If so, do your budget projections depend on commercial income from a specific point in time?**
- **Have you incorporated a contingency budget?**
- **Have you explored/consolidated initial distribution channels for your products?**
- **Have you prepared a short and medium time marketing strategy?**
- **Has a specific person been made responsible for monitoring and exploring public and private funding opportunities which could add value and revenue to the project?**

Remember that funding agencies are a key target audience for dissemination! It is a good idea to engage the support and interest of these bodies as early as the development phase.