

Sample Rules of Engagement for Nonprofit Partnerships

The below document outlines sample sections that rules of engagement for nonprofit partnerships might consider. It is not an exhaustive list, but it provides a general idea of the types of content partners should explore before undertaking a formal partnership.

1. Shared Vision & Mission Alignment:

We partner only when our missions align and there's a clear, shared goal. We agree that [program name] matters, and that it collectively advances the missions of our organizations. We agree these are the express goals we want to achieve with this partnership:

- Sample goal #1
- Sample goal #2

2. Open Communication:

We commit to regular, honest, and direct communication. All partners will be kept informed of key decisions, developments, and challenges. We agree to address concerns early to prevent misunderstandings. From the outset, we agree to the following forms and formats for communications:

- Outline cadence and types of content to be shared (e.g., We will hold a monthly program update where we'll discuss program progress, recent challenges and opportunities, etc.).
- We agree that when substantive questions arise that we will find a way to meet in-person or conduct a call to talk through the issues rather than rely on email.

3. Defined Roles & Responsibilities:

Each organization will have defined roles and responsibilities, documented at the start of the partnership. We'll revisit and adjust these as needed, but everyone should know who is accountable for what.

- Outline the roles and responsibilities for each organization, avoiding using people's names where possible so that responsibilities are tied to a role and not an individual person.

4. Transparent Decision-Making:

We will use a clear decision-making process agreed upon by all partners. Decisions will be made based on consensus or a pre-determined voting method and documented so we're all on the same page.

- Outline any details about expectations around decision making (e.g., when boards need to be involved, where records are stored when decisions are made, etc.)

5. Respecting Each Organization's Identity:

Each partner brings its own unique strengths and approach. We commit to respecting and valuing the individuality of each organization, including branding, communications, and engagement with external stakeholders.

This is a high-level example only and anyone using this reference is encouraged to review proposed terms and conditions of a potential partnership with their legal counsel, boards of directors or other stakeholders.

6. Resource Contribution & Sharing:

We recognize that contributions vary. Whether it's time, funds, expertise, or other resources, each partner's investment will be acknowledged and appreciated. Any shared resources or funding will be managed with full transparency.

At the outset, the partners agree that the expectations around resources include [reference any dollar amounts or other contributions that should be recognized).

7. Program Ownership & Intellectual Property:

If we develop new materials, tools, or programs together, ownership will be shared fairly based on contributions. We'll outline how shared resources can be used by each organization going forward.

8. Conflict Resolution:

We acknowledge that differences of opinion may arise. If they do, we agree to resolve them through direct conversation first, then involve a neutral third party if needed. The goal is to keep the focus on mission and impact.

9. Confidentiality & Privacy:

We respect each partner's confidentiality needs. Sensitive data, donor information, or other private materials will not be shared outside of the partnership without explicit consent.

10. Ending the Partnership Gracefully:

We understand that partnerships may evolve or conclude. If one partner needs to exit, we commit to doing so in a way that minimizes disruption and maintains positive relationships. We will provide at least [insert agreed-upon notice period] notice and ensure all partners are equipped to continue the program if they wish.

Signature Acknowledgement:

Before officially launching this collaboration, all partners will review and agree to these rules. This document is not intended to serve as a binding legal contract but as a mutual commitment to how we'll work together effectively and respectfully.

Signatures:

[Name], [Organization]

[Name], [Organization]