

TERMS OF REFERENCE

GUIDANCE

LEADERSHIP FORUM BASICS:

WHAT IS IT?

A Leadership Forum (LF) is a convening process where the leaders from two or more partner organizations meet at regular intervals, for the purpose of ensuring strong and effective collaboration at some joint endeavor (such as a complex program implementation). The corresponding Terms of Reference (ToR) is a guiding document for the LF.

WHY DO YOU USE IT?

An LF can be very helpful when partners are working on a big and/or complex undertaking together, by:

- Promoting and structuring partnership dialogue for fostering and monitoring quality;
- Building consensus for a common vision and plan;
- Ensuring joint oversight;
- Managing change, including organizational change within the partner organizations;
- Ensuring regular communication among all staff, partners, and stakeholders.

WHEN DO YOU USE IT?

An LF is most often used for significant, complex and/or large projects that are likely to have a profound impact on the participating organizations, and where leaders' engagement and coordination is essential for success. For example, in cases where the leadership for program management will transition from one agency to another, the establishment of a LF early in the life of the program has been seen to significantly improve the success of the transition, and of the program.

WITH WHOM DO YOU USE IT?

An LF is used by the leadership of two or more partner organizations as a convening among equals for achieving an outcome that is of mutual interest.

HOW DO YOU START TO USE IT?

Once a country management team determines that it could be helpful to have a mechanism to provide leadership oversight to a joint endeavor, such as a multi-partner, complex project, a LF may be established to support the partners and the undertaking. It is important that the purpose, membership and other aspects of the LF be documented in a ToR, to ensure that all members of the LF share a common understanding.

The content of the guidance and template is informed by CRS best practice as well as authoritative external sources. That being said, changes or additions to the template are encouraged to better reflect the shared understanding of the partners.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON SPECIFIC COMPONENTS OF THE TOR TEMPLATE:

A note on formatting: For ease of editing, bold teal text and the word “insert” indicates the need to include information specific to each LF ToR.

Guiding Principles: The template includes suggested principles that might prove useful—they can be utilized as is or adapted depending on the partners’ preferences. The first five have their basis in CRS’ Partnership Principles (available at CRS’ Institute for Capacity Strengthening www.ics.crs.org) the remaining four are suggested specifically for the LF ToR. What is most important is that the LF members develop principles they agree with and find useful for guiding how they will work together.

Special note on Conflict Resolution Principle: It is not uncommon for partners to experience conflict when engaged in joint initiatives. Even with the best of intentions, and a standing agreement that the partners will “resolve to work together amicably to resolve issues and prevent the kind of escalation that could put success at risk”, this is often easier said than done. If the partners are unsuccessful at resolving conflict on their own, they should agree together to seek external assistance. CRS country programs may contact the Partnership and Capacity Strengthening Unit for guidance: partnership@global.crs.org

Responsibilities: The template also includes suggested responsibilities, which like the principles, can be utilized as is or adapted depending on the partners’ preferences. It is important that the members think strategically about the responsibilities of the LF. It is fully up to the members to consider what tasks should be handled by the LF, who should handle them, and how. For example, if there are joint initiatives of a technical nature, the LF members should give special thought to establishing specific technical working groups, which can be overseen by the LF.

This section includes references to a number of relevant tools and guidance, such as the Partnership Reflection Guides, the Partnership Scorecard and the Protocol for Relations with Church Partners. The tools are available at CRS' Institute for Capacity Strengthening www.ics.crs.org. These are found on the Institute for Capacity Strengthening site as follows:

- **Partnership Reflections:** Under the Strengthen Partnerships, subtopic Maintaining Strong Partnerships, these documents are facilitator guides for a two-day and four-day reflection process;
- **Partnership Scorecard:** Under the Strengthen Partnerships, subtopic Maintaining Strong Partnerships, this site includes guidance on the scorecard methodology;
- **The Protocol for Relations with Church Partners:** Under the Strengthen Partnerships, subtopic Essentials for Strong Partnerships, this document includes important guidance on developing and maintaining a strong relationship with the in-country Church.

Roles and Composition: Having the right membership is critical to success of the LF. It is important to note that the chairs of the LF rotate and that they should be people who hold positions of authority in the member agencies. In many instances it might be most effective if the chair positions were held by agency directors, but people in other key positions can be just as effective, if not more so, depending on the situation and context. Similarly, all members should be committed to the LF, participate actively in LF initiatives and business, and be able to contribute to decision-making and other important work of the LF.

Performance Indicators: Similar to the Principles and Responsibilities sections, the Indicators included in the template are suggestions, which can and should be altered as appropriate.

Milestones: No suggestions for milestones are provided in the template, since they are so context specific. This section is intended to allow the members to identify and document specific targeted achievements for the LF, which can be established with deadlines and monitored.

TEMPLATE

INTRODUCTION

The <insert member agency names> are jointly engaged in <insert name of project or other joint endeavor>. The agency members have decided to establish a Leadership Forum (LF) and the following Terms of Reference (ToR) has been developed to guide the LF.

PURPOSE

The LF is established to ensure the strongest possible coordination of leadership. The LF will oversee the establishment, implementation and monitoring of appropriate mechanisms to ensure the consistent quality of the endeavor. The LF is responsible for oversight, and fostering a deep partnership among the member agencies.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The work of the LF is guided by certain key principles, established to ensure a common understanding of how the partners will work together:

- 1. Shared Vision:** The partners recognize that they have a shared vision for success, which is based both on the achievement of objectives, and shared leadership;
- 2. Mutuality:** The partners recognize that each brings skills, resources, knowledge and capacities to the LF;
- 3. Transparency:** The partners commit to an open exchange of information, experience, expertise and knowledge as well as ideas, suggestions and concerns;
- 4. Respect:** The partners respect their differences and commit to listen to, and learn from, each other;
- 5. Capacity Strengthening:** The partners resolve to work together to identify and address any capacity strengthening needs relevant to the success of the endeavor;
- 6. Learning Culture:** The partners commit to fostering a spirit of learning, including the embracing of mistakes for the purposes of learning and avoiding their repetition, as well as for the continual incorporation of lessons learned and best practice;
- 7. Shared Leadership:** The partners commit to sharing certain leadership responsibilities (such as representation with donors, key decision-making, etc.) in order to ensure the strongest possible collaboration;
- 8. Partnership:** The partners are committed to a strong, efficient, productive and long-term partnership;
- 9. Conflict Resolution:** The partners resolve to work together amicably to resolve issues and prevent the kind of escalation that could put success at risk.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The LF has a number of responsibilities that are designed to ensure effective implementation:

- Identify and assign tasks, including the development and tracking of indicators and milestones, the completion of related reports, etc.;
- Establish technical or other working groups as needed to implement important tasks;
- Review and approve LF plans, indicators, milestones, reports, etc.;
- Review and discuss progress against plan through regularly scheduled meetings, and hold additional ad hoc meetings as needed;
- Monitor the health of the partnership regularly through the use of the Partnership Scorecard, Partnership Reflections or other similar tools, and work together on corrective actions as needed;
- Ensure that the roles and responsibilities outlined in this ToR are understood and fulfilled;
- Facilitate/make decisions and commitments regarding LF initiatives;
- Communicate goals, plans, progress, benefits, and impacts to colleagues outside of the LF;
- Build consensus around LF initiatives within the member agencies;
- Facilitate mitigation of risks and resolution of issues;
- Manage change, including organizational change, especially with a focus on assisting staff to adapt to changing work environment.

ROLES AND COMPOSITION

- **Chair:** There are co-chairs (one from each partner), responsible for approving the agenda and running the meetings. The chairmanship rotates among the agencies, changing every <insert either “month” or “quarter” depending on preference>. The co-chairs are: <insert names/titles/agencies of each chair>.
- **Secretary:** There is one secretary, responsible for scheduling meetings; drafting agendas (through a consultative process); recording meeting proceedings and action items; preparing and distributing reports; tracking indicators and milestones; finalizing and distributing action plans; and keeping all LF documents (including meeting agenda, minutes, reports, action plans and other communications) on file. The secretary is: <insert name/title/agency of secretary>.
- **Deputy Secretary (optional):** There is one deputy secretary, responsible for assisting the secretary, and filling in when the secretary is absent. The secretary is: <insert name/title/agency of deputy secretary>.
- **Member:** There are <insert number of members>, split equally among the agencies, appointed by the agency directors. They are responsible for fully participating in LF meetings, providing input (both positive and negative), exercising tasks as determined by the chairs, and championing the leadership forum within their agencies. They are selected as members because they exercise key roles in their agencies. They are as follows: <insert full list of members per partner, including names and titles>.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Because regular meetings are fundamental to strong and respectful collaboration, the LF meets not less than **<insert frequency>**. Any of the co-chairs can and should initiate ad hoc meetings at any time if they think it is needed.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following performance indicators will be tracked to ensure appropriate management and effectiveness of the LF, as well as the identification of any challenges or issues to be resolved:

- Number of LF regular meetings held;
- Number of LF ad hoc meetings held;
- Number of LF meetings chaired by each co-chair;
- Number donor meetings attended by member agency directors;
- Percent of relevant staff expressing mid- to high level of understanding of LF purpose;
- Percent of relevant staff who rate communication among LF members as medium-to-strong;
- Percent of relevant staff expressing mid- to high level of satisfaction with the degree to which responsibility is shared among LF members;
- Percent of milestones (see next section) met within two weeks of deadline.

** Alternate or additional indicators should be developed in keeping with the priorities of the LF.*

MILESTONES

Milestones are established when relevant to help monitor progress against any objectives established by and for the LF. The LF has decided on the following milestones:

- **<Insert milestones>**

