

Initiating Public-Private Partnerships

Partnerships connect organizations, whether they are disabled persons' organizations (DPOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), or informal groups, with peers, governments, donors, or companies. When public, nonprofit organizations enter into a partnership with private, for-profit organizations, it is called a **public-private partnership (or PPP)**.

What is involved in a PPP?

Many private, for-profit organizations *donate money* (in the form of negotiated discounted rates, pro bono services, cost sharing or financing of a project or its component, partial reimbursement, matching of funds, etc.) or *provide support in-kind* (through provision of services, goods, accommodation and transportation, and others) in order to foster good will with the local community or promote their services. In-kind contributions may be goods or services produced by the company that are provided to a public, nonprofit organization for use at an event or in other, pre-determined circumstances. PPPs may be short term or long term. Many companies have programs to promote **corporate social responsibility (CSR)**. These mandates may include increasing transparency, engaging youth or women, civic education, or any number of initiatives. CSR policies are the primary means by which companies enter into a PPP.

Entering into a PPP requires investment on the part of the DPO or CSO. Partnerships are not made over the course of months but may instead take years to develop. For this reason, it is critical to plan ahead. What are your organization's activities in the next two to three years?

How can DPOs get involved?

PPPs are not right for every DPO nor for every situation. It is important when considering a PPP to think about the impact of the program, project, or product. How would a PPP serve the beneficiaries? Would entering a PPP affect the quality of the product?

Step 1 – Identify Potential Partners

Look at the CSR policies of companies located in the area to be targeted by the programming or project. Select potential partners based on those that have CSR goals that align with some aspect of your project. The goals may not be exactly the same as that of your project, but there should be at least some element through which the company will take an interest.

Consider local small or medium businesses for an initial partnership to build PPP skills and mitigate the risk of approaching a large company.

Potential PPP In-Kind Contribution Examples

- **Tablets for Accessibility Studies on Election Day**

Paper forms may get lost or become damaged during the course of an observation, and tablets are more accessible to people who are blind. A company could donate tablets to use to fill out electronic forms.

- **Cameras for Observation**

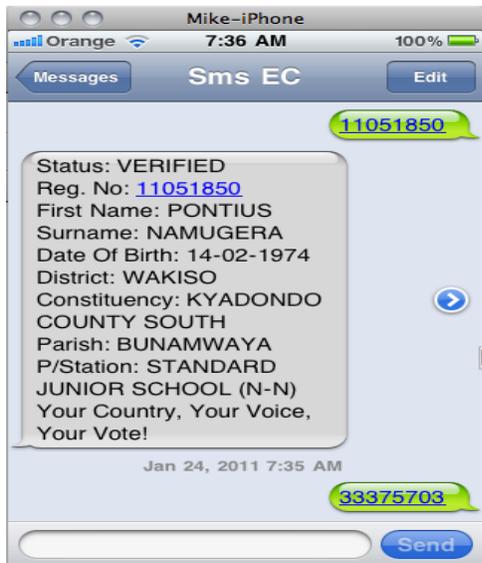
A company that makes cameras could provide them to observers to take pictures of good and bad examples of accessibility at polling places.

- **Develop an App**

In order to make it easier for persons with disabilities to find out which polling stations are accessible, a local app developer could be approached to create a service with this information.

- **Provide Food for an Event**

DPOs might approach restaurants to provide food for an advocacy training or a workshop instead of providing money to support the organization.



In 2011, the private sector was engaged in voter registration, a public sector project. An SMS service, developed by collaborating with local firm eLAAB, allowed voters to query for specific registration information in Uganda by texting "VOTE" with their voter ID number, receipt number or name and date of birth. Mobile companies also collaborated with the public sector to make the "VOTE" code available to all. Services like this one may provide better access for persons with disabilities who are not able to visit a registration location in person to ask questions.

Source: IFES

Pursuing a PPP with a large company would likely take additional time and resources, without the guarantee that it would result in a partnership. Once an organization has demonstrated its ability to engage in a PPP, it increases the likelihood that a larger company would consider a partnership.

Step 2 – Determine the “Ask”

Research previous in-kind contributions made by the company in order to get a sense of an appropriate contribution. Be mindful of what the company produces and its CSR aims. For example, if the potential partner creates mobile technology, it might be wise to find a way for that partner to contribute by donating phones for observers to use to communicate with each other on Election Day.

Make the good or service requested specific and prepare an argument demonstrating how this “ask” will both have an impact in the community and how the company will be able to show the impact to its board of directors, shareholders, or other leadership. It should not necessarily be assumed that the company will either provide the donation or nothing at all; in many cases, the person responsible for CSR at the company will be able to make a counter offer if the company wants to enter into a PPP but does not find the “ask” to be within their scope of activities. If possible, provide statistics to show the expected reach of the project and how the contribution will help reach goals.

Step 3 - Invite Potential Partners to Events

In order to provide the potential partner with a sense of your organization, it is best to invite them to attend an event that has already been planned. While a brochure with pictures can give basic background on your organization and its goals, seeing your organization in action is what “sells” its story.

Step 4 – Follow up with a Private Meeting

Prepare in advance for a private meeting with the potential partner. Practice a “pitch,” or story to sell the partner on the possible PPP. Make sure to bring examples of previous work to show former successes. It is important to work with the potential partner to develop the best model for partnership, whether it is through providing space for an event, publicity, or providing goods. The partnership should be beneficial for both sides.

Step 5 – Recognize the Partner’s Contribution

Does your new partner require that the company’s logo be displayed at events? Make sure to recognize the contribution of the partner publicly, which may be necessary for the company to count the contribution as part of its CSR strategy or policy. You should send a letter of appreciation or other thank you to the partner for their tax and corporate purposes, as well as to maintain a positive relationship.

Please see the RightsNow! Tool on Maintaining Good Donor Relationships for more ideas.