

Partnerships and Coordination in CET

Introduction

As already highlighted in the section on developing institutions, one way of addressing the multiple challenges that will confront the CET sector in the immediate and intermediate or even long term during their establishment is through partnerships. The types of partnerships that can be pursued are also mapped out in the aforementioned section. A broad policy framework on partnerships has been developed by the DHET CET Branch to assist colleges with among other aspects, an understanding of the legislation and policy framework governing partnerships, and the partnerships that can be entered into at various levels of government.

Possibilities for partnerships

A useful way of considering the partnerships that can be entered into by colleges and other entities is to think about the college process flow from recruitment, all the way to exit and articulation to other post school institutions or the workplace. This should then be followed by an evaluation of whether partnership would be beneficial in improving the performance of the college in each of its functional areas, particularly where there are resource or capacity constraints. The key process areas where partnerships may be required are mapped below.

Partnership Focus	Possibilities
Recruitment: Marketing and advertising	As a new institution, colleges would need to advertise themselves for recruitment purposes. This may be done through partnerships with: • Local radio stations can be vital in marketing the colleges and their programmes, informing students about open days, application processes, and conveying any other information the colleges might want extended to communities. • Community development workers can be useful for a college recruitment drives because of their community location and because they already work within communities. • National departments deploying projects focused on employment creation and redress can be partnered with so that the education and skills component of those projects is linked to community colleges. So when people apply for EPWP projects for example, they would also get information on colleges in their area where they can access education and training.
Programme delivery: Infrastructure	• Donation of land or buildings by a municipality. • Offer to have the college rent lecture space at favourable rates. • The college renting out its own space to other education and training entities.

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	• Rehabilitation of college infrastructure e.g. painting and repairs. • Addressing a key need e.g. an institution focusing on disability issues assisting with finance for ramps or equipment to improve learning for students with disabilities.
Programme delivery: Programmes	Partnerships with NGOs, SDPs and other organisations to deliver skills programmes and community programmes. This will result in cost savings as existing programmes will be utilised, with adaptation where necessary to fit the purpose.
Programme delivery: Lecturer development	• Universities can play a role in lecturer development - accredited formal programmes would be their domain. • Other organisations could provide non-formal professional development programmes including just in time training. • Partnerships could be for financing the professional development of lecturers.
Programme delivery and pastoral care: Student Support Services	• NGOs who offer sport as part of a holistic approach to growth and development can offer such sport to community college students. • Organisations that offer study skills can support college students in this regard. • Organisations that focus on spiritual and psychological wellness can also partner with colleges.
Evidence based practice: Research and evaluation	• Research organisations to conduct research on the CET sector and provide data to inform strengthening of the sector. • Funders who can fund large or small scale research and evaluation on the sector.
Exit: Articulation to other post school opportunities	• Collaboration with TVET colleges and universities to clarify requirements for progression and also work collaboratively to prepare students in colleges to articulate and succeed in TVET college or university.
Exit: Articulation to the World of Work	Partnerships with employment preparation and placement agencies to prepare students for success and adaptation in the world of work.

Roles and responsibilities in the operationalisation of partnerships

The three spheres of influence for ensuring that partnerships are realised are the DHET at National level, community colleges in their respective regions, and potential partners including municipal authorities, NGOs, NPOs and SDPs in the community.

DHET's roles and responsibilities

The DHET is responsible for developing the partnership policy framework that sets the parameters and rules of engagement on partnerships, as well as driving interdepartmental and intradepartmental partnerships. The CET Branch's coordination is needed at this level to avoid an uncontrolled influx of negotiations between colleges and national departments. If

colleges were to negotiate partnerships with national departments themselves, this could also lead to competition for resources. In this regard, it would be better if the CET Branch negotiated with other national departments and then channel and link departments with community colleges. It is important that the Branch does not lose sight of the mandate when negotiating these partnerships. If there is money to support agricultural activity for example, the colleges' role would be skills, and not anything else to do with the broader project.

Roles and responsibilities of colleges and other providers and entities

Colleges can negotiate partnerships at local level, including with the municipalities and other providers in the community. While colleges would approach other providers or entities based on their need, they should also be open to reviewing proposals from these providers/entities if approached for partnership.

Assessing the need for partnerships

An assessment of whether or not a partnership required is a critical step in making decisions about partnerships. Partnerships are best viewed as necessary if they enable achievement of what a college cannot achieve on its own. It may not always be the case that all colleges need partnerships so partnerships should not be regarded as a defining feature of all colleges.

In assessing whether a partnership is needed or not, colleges must also assess whether they have the capabilities to support the kind of partnership that they are seeking. For example, if the college wants to get into a partnership for training 10 000 EPWP beneficiaries in one year, there has to be an assessment of whether the college has the appropriate skills among its staff to deliver the required programmes; if it has the space for such big numbers and if not, if alternative adequate space can be sourced, and whether the college can continue delivering its core programmes effectively and not compromise quality because of this partnership which may have attractive financial incentives for the college. Any partnership entered into should not threaten the sustainability of the core business of the colleges.

Where partnerships are deemed necessary, all partnerships entered into should have an explicitly specified purpose.

Criteria for approval of partnerships

Colleges must be aware of the potential for abuse through partnerships. Although it is not always possible to avoid challenges in partnerships, problems can be reduced by ensuring that criteria are established to curb corruption and nepotism. The following criteria may be considered in the selection and approval of partners:

- a. Are the services/goods offered by the potential partner supporting the vision and mission and core mandate of the college?

- b. Is the partner of a reputable standing in the proposed area of partnership? Are they one of the best in the field in their area of proposed partnership?
- c. Is the potential partner free to enter into a legally binding contract with the college?
- d. Is the partner financially sound? Is the partner willing to go through a due diligence process should this be required?
- e. For programme delivery, does the partner have experience in delivering the programme at the scale they are being required to provide?
- f. If the college has space constraints, for programme delivery, does the partner have appropriate access to resources (physical and staffing) to deliver the programme?
- g. Does the partner have an acceptable record of partnership with other institutions?
- h. Does the partner have robust quality management procedures?
- i. Has the partner been subject to any allegations or convictions for fraud, bribery or corruption?
- j. Is there a reputational risk associated with the partnership (for example, the partner's business and ethical interests, the risk of being unable to deliver the project)?

These criteria help to determine the risk that the potential partnership may have, and it will help the college make the decision about whether to get into the partnership or not.

Managing partnerships

When colleges and their governance structures have reviewed their strategy and agreed that some objectives can only be met through partnerships, and they have selected partners in a transparent, rigorous and defensible manner, these partnerships have to be formalised. This can be done through memoranda of understanding (MoU), for more substantial partnerships, or through working agreements, for less substantial and ad hoc partnerships. The MoU and working agreements should be checked by the colleges' legal expertise to ensure that there are no clauses that could potentially lock the colleges into legal complications during the partnership, in ways that may affect delivery.

Partnerships should be kept on track through regular monitoring, to evaluate the extent to which the partnership is delivering on intended outcomes. Each college will develop detailed protocol on the management of the partnership. The management protocols will vary based on the scope and nature of partnerships. In order for colleges to learn from the varying practices, it may be useful for colleges to run annual symposia to share good practice and challenges to inform and to improve the management of and results that can be derived from partnerships.