



Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit

Tool 6: Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment

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All partnerships are characterised by unequal dynamics of decision-making power. Being aware of which partners hold more or less power to make decisions is an important step in making a partnership more equitable. Increased awareness of power inequalities can provide a good foundation for the implementation of activities and/or processes that look to address any imbalances. It can also help more powerful partners to think about how they might use their power for equitable ends.

Why use the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool?

Use the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool, to increase awareness/analyse the dynamics of power within your partnership. This tool addresses equity by:

1. Identifying important decisions that will be made within the partnership, and highlighting the decisions, in which participation from some, or all partners, would be needed to make the partnership equitable.
2. Identifying inequities in decision making power, and opportunities for shifting these power dynamics.
3. Creating an impetus to address inequities in decision making power

When to use the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool?

Phase	Rating	Descriptions
Planning	•••	The partnerships power dynamics tool is ideally implemented in the planning stages.
Implementing	••	The tool can be used to assess power dynamics in the implementing stage.
Disseminating	••	The tool can also be used to assess power dynamics in the disseminating stage.
Sustaining	••	The tool can also be used to assess power dynamics in the sustaining stage.

Ratings

••• Designed for this stage | •• Can be used as is in this stage | • Can be adapted for use in this stage



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How long does it take to use the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool?

Rapid approach

- A rapid approach to implementing the tool might involve examining power dynamics for a minimal number of decisions or assessing the power of a few key partners. This might take 30-60 minutes.
- The tool could also be implemented rapidly, by having one member of the partnership complete it, and then convening a meeting of all involved, to discuss the results. This might take the individual completing the form one to two hours, and those participating in the discussion 30-60 minutes.

Intensive approach

- An intensive approach would involve implementing the tool in a group setting, and providing time for the partners to:
 - Determine the decisions to be assessed.
 - Discuss each partners' power in making these decisions.
- This approach might require two to four hours, depending on how many decisions and partners are discussed.

What other resources do you need to use the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool?

- [Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment form template](#)
- A face-to-face or virtual meeting forum with projection (screen sharing) capabilities.
- A facilitator
- A representative for each organisation in the partnership, who is familiar with the organisation's processes and interests in the partnership.



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How to use the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool?

Facilitator Guide

Preparation

1. Download the [Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment form template](#) and select the Lists sheet. Complete Section 1: Partner Details. This involves entering the names of each organisation in the partnership, and the name and position of the person who will represent them in the power assessment activity.
2. Once all partner details are entered, delete any unused rows on the Lists sheet.
3. Select the scoring sheet and delete any unused partner columns.

Group session

- Welcome participants and briefly introduce the activity.
- Display the [Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment form](#) on a screen that all participants can see (in a face-to-face meeting use a projector, in a virtual meeting use the screen sharing facility).
- Discuss and decide on up to 10 important decisions that will need to be made in the partnership, during each of the four stages of the research process. You could do this using a range of approaches, including:
 - Brainstorming and calling out.
 - Dividing into smaller groups (or breakout rooms in virtual implementation) that each identify important decisions for one stage of the research partnership.
- Select the Lists sheet. Enter each decision into one of the rows for the corresponding stage of the research.
- Select the Scoring sheet.
- Delete any unused decision rows.
- Save and share the template with all participants in the workshop, via email or shared drive.



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- Provide time for each participant to score their organisation's planned, actual and desired levels of decision-making participation, and then ask them to input this into the electronic form.
- Compile each person's answers in a single form (if using email to share). This step might best be done while participants take a break for refreshments.
- Reconvene the group to discuss the results, and their implications for equity (see below for suggested questions to explore).

Suggested questions to explore using the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool

- How equitably is decision making power distributed amongst the partners?
 - When is decision making power equitable but not equal?
 - When is decision making power equal but not equitable?
- When a partner desires more (or less) power than they actually have, does this represent inequity? Why or why not?
- For which decisions are there equitable power and participation dynamics? What makes these dynamics equitable?
- For which decisions are there inequitable power and participation dynamics? What makes these dynamics inequitable?
- What actions could be taken to make the dynamics of power and participation in decision making more equitable?

Expected outputs and outcomes from using the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool

Outputs

- A completed Power Dynamics Assessment form.

Outcomes

- Increased awareness of how decision-making power is distributed amongst partners and members in the partnership.



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- Changes in distribution of decision-making power, that make power dynamics more equitable.

Completed example of the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool

Download a [completed example of the Power Dynamics Assessment form](#).

Partners

The completed example is based on a hypothetical research partnership involving three universities and a non-governmental organisation. The Globally Northern University is a major research institution, in a high-income country, with a top-100 place in the international university rankings. The first Globally Southern University is an urban, research-intensive university, from a middle-income country, with a top-500 international university ranking. The second Globally Southern University is a rural, teaching-intensive university, based in the same middle-income country, and situated close to the rural community that may be a focus of interest for the Northern University's stud. The non-governmental organisation is based in the Global South and is also located near this community.

The results of the completed example illustrate a partnership in which the Globally Northern partner holds most of the decision-making power, despite a desire to share more power with the Southernly based partners. Although the first Southernly located University partner holds more decision-making power than the second one, the first does not participate in decision making as much as they desire. The two partners based in the study community (Southernly located University 2 and the non-governmental organisation), who were invited to the partnership because they have the best knowledge of local culture and context, have limited decision-making power. They are informed about decisions after they have been made by the partner in the Global North (sometimes in collaborations with the first Southernly located Partner). Although the non-governmental organisation does not desire equal power in many of the research related decisions, they generally have less power than desired.

Through discussion, the partners agree that the dynamics of decision-making power are inequitable, and that steps need to be taken to increase the power of the Southernly based Universities and the non-governmental organisation.

References and further reading for the Partnership Power Dynamics Assessment tool

- This tool has been adapted to the research partnerships context from Partos, 2020. *Power Awareness Tool- A tool for analysing power in partnerships for development*. <https://www.partos.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Power-Awareness-Tool.pdf>.