

Operational Instruction Ref. OI.PLG.2021.01

Acceptance of Framework, Collaborative and Teaming Agreements

1. Authority

- 1.1. This Operational Instruction (OI) is promulgated by the Director, Partnership Group (PLG), on the basis of a delegation of authority from the Deputy-Executive Director, under the authority of the Executive Director, under OD.EO.2017.02 on Management of UNOPS Partners and Resulting Agreements, of 13 October 2017.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this OI is to establish the mandatory procedures for entering into framework, collaborative and teaming agreements with partners defined under OD.EO.2017.02 on Management of UNOPS Partners and Resulting Agreements. The OI thereby supports relevant UNOPS personnel in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities through providing guidance and processes relating to: establishing the partnership intent and liability; partner selection; and acceptance and signature of agreements.

3. Effective Date

- 3.1. This OI shall become effective immediately.

4. Consequential Changes

- 4.1. This OI shall supersede and replace OI.PLG.2019.01 - Acceptance of Framework, Collaborative and Teaming Agreements.
- 4.2. The purpose of the update is to:
- Add state-owned entities that have legal personality separate from the government, to the list of partners in section 2.4.2,
 - Add that EAC submission is required for all Framework, Collaborative or Teaming agreements with a new partner; a new partner being understood as any entity with its own legal personality that is not yet included in UNOPS systems and/or has not previously received EAC approval, and,
 - Add instructions under 2.2.2 'joint advocacy in line with lessons learned from previous requests of this nature,

- Add further details under sections 3.7 / 3.8 regarding evaluation process for partnerships that could involve transfer of funds
- Add an instruction under section 6 regarding when EAC review for extensions and amendments of Framework, Collaborative and Teaming agreements is required or not.

_____ [signature redacted] _____

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Director of Regional Portfolios

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. As noted in OD.EO.2017.02 – Management of UNOPS Partners and Resulting Agreements, in order to fulfil its mandate, UNOPS may enter into different types of agreements with different types of partners to engage in and deliver activities.
- 1.2. The purpose of this OI is to establish the mandatory procedures for entering into framework, collaborative and teaming agreements with partners defined under OD.EO.2017.02 – Management of UNOPS Partners and Resulting Agreements.
- 1.3. The OI thereby supports relevant UNOPS personnel in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities through providing guidance and processes relating to: establishing the partnership intent and liability; partner selection; and acceptance and signature of agreements.

2. Intent and level of partnership and type of partner

- 2.1. The acceptance process for agreements with partners depends on establishing the intent of the partnership, including the division of liabilities, level of partnership and type of partner.

Intent of partnership

- 2.2. The types of agreement UNOPS may enter into with partners will depend on the intent of the partnership and desired outcome. As defined in OD.EO.2017.02 – Management of UNOPS Partners and Resulting Agreements, the types of agreements and underlining intents include, but are not limited to, the following.
 - 2.2.1. *Framework agreements*, that is, when UNOPS enters into an agreement in order to establish a framework for future engagements with a funding source or a client (as defined in EOD.ED.2017.04, UNOPS Financial Rules and Regulations), setting out the areas of collaboration and the operational arrangements governing the future provision of services by UNOPS;
 - 2.2.2. *Collaborative agreements*, that is, when UNOPS enters into a long term agreement with a partner to share benefits, costs and risk in relation to joint activity. Typically, this includes agreements to:
 - *Co-develop innovative new services or solutions*, that is, when UNOPS enters into an agreement to mobilize a partner core competencies (skills, expertise, technology,

networks) that augment UNOPS' capacity in order to jointly develop and implement innovative products and services that can help to address specific needs.

- *Pursue a range of joint resource mobilization opportunities*, that is, when UNOPS enters into an agreement with a partner to mobilize partners core competencies (for example skills, expertise, technology, networks) that augment UNOPS' capacity in order to pursue together multiple joint project opportunities over a prolonged period of time.
- *Share knowledge*, that is, UNOPS enters into an agreement with a partner to access and share specialized knowledge (for example best practice, networks, methodologies) in order to increase and strengthen organizational capacity to deliver projects. This type of partnership includes when UNOPS wishes to access a partner's human resources (such as the hosting of interns, volunteers or secondees). No transfer of funds can take place under such an agreement.
- *Implement joint advocacy*, that is, when UNOPS enters into an agreement with a partner to conduct an advocacy campaign in order to jointly raise public awareness and build strong support and political will to advance sustainable implementation practices in development, humanitarian and peace-building contexts. Such joint advocacy partnerships should be well aligned with UNOPS operational mandate and strategic plan. Joint advocacy partnerships involving UNOPS hosted entities should be anchored in their respective thematic objectives and aligned with the UN position on the respective area or topic. No transfer of funds can take place under such an agreement.

2.2.3. *Teaming agreement*, that is, when UNOPS and a partner wish to combine their mutual capacity strengths in order to develop and submit a joint proposal to a third party with the intent to jointly implement an engagement. Since legally UNOPS cannot enter into a joint-venture with its partner to submit a joint bid to a third party, UNOPS and the partner will, in turn, enter into a teaming agreement with one another to agree to jointly develop the proposal and set out an arrangement where one provides the other with a portion of the services as outlined in the joint proposal. This differs from procurement as any transfer of funds made directly under this agreement is a result of, and follows, a proposal that has been co-developed with the partner and accepted by the client or funding source. Generally Teaming Agreements may not be entered into when the partner is expected to deliver a construction or design element of an infrastructure project unless an exemption is granted by the relevant DoA holder.

2.2.4. *any other form of partner agreement* that may be identified and developed accordingly.

Level of partnership

- 2.3. As defined in OD.EO.2017.02 – Management of UNOPS Partners and Resulting Agreements, the levels of partner agreements include, but are not limited to: global (to be implemented across multiple regions); regional (to be implemented in a single region); or local (to be implemented in a single country or hub). Partnerships with hosted entities are defined as regional partnerships.

Types of partners

- 2.4. Under OD.EO.2017.02 – Management of UNOPS Partners and Resulting Agreements, UNOPS may enter into agreement with a wide variety of partners. This typically includes:
- 2.4.1. *UN and state entities*, such as the United Nations system organizations, intergovernmental organizations, international and regional financial institutions, governments, including at the national and sub-national levels; and,
- 2.4.2. *Non-UN and non-state entities*, such as commercial enterprises or businesses; business associations and coalitions; academic institutions; corporate foundations and philanthropic organizations; state-owned entities that have legal personality separate from the government; non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society. These entities may be of a for-profit or not-for-profit nature.

3. Partner selection process

- 3.1. No specific selection process is required when entering into a *framework agreement* (whether with UN and state or non-UN and non-state entities); or to enter in a collaborative or teaming agreement with a *UN or state entity*.
- 3.2. For *teaming* and *collaborative* agreements with *Non-UN and non-state entities* a specific partner selection process must be followed. The required selection method will depend on the specific intent of the agreement and the for or not-for-profit nature of the partner, as outlined in the table below. In these cases not-for-profit is defined as no profit margins and less than 10% of overheads charged to UNOPS, however exceptions of a partner being defined as a not-for-profit may be granted by LG and PLG.
- 3.3. Transfer of funds from UNOPS to the partner may only happen in a scenario when UNOPS and the partner have a joint proposal accepted and UNOPS is the lead agency. In this scenario UNOPS would receive the funds from the client and disperse to the partner for them to deliver their part of the proposal. As per the below table, this scenario may materialize under three circumstances: teaming agreement, a collaborative agreement to

pursue a range of joint resource mobilization opportunities, and following the co-development of new services or solutions under a collaborative agreement.

Type of agreement	Partner is for profit	Partner is not-for-profit
Teaming agreement with UNOPS as lead	Open solicitation	Request for offers
Collaborative agreement to co-develop innovative new services or solutions	Open solicitation	Request for offers
Collaborative agreement to pursue a range of joint resource mobilization opportunities	Open solicitation	Request for offers
Collaborative agreement to share knowledge	Comparative evaluation	Comparative evaluation
Collaborative agreement to implement joint advocacy	Comparative evaluation	Comparative evaluation

- 3.4. For cases where UNOPS is not the lead in a Teaming Agreement, this case should be referred to the engagement acceptance process as per the OI for Acceptance of Engagement and Opportunities.
- 3.5. In cases when UNOPS wishes to, through a collaborative partnership, access a partner's human resources (such as the hosting of interns, volunteers or secondees) Legal Group, CPG and PLG must be consulted to ensure the proposed partnership and process is in full alignment with UNOPS existing policies, legal framework and principles.
- 3.6. When considering whether to approve a new partner agreement or amendment thereto, the Engagement Acceptance Committee (EAC), as applicable (see Section 6 below), shall review whether the partner selection method was adequate and the applicable process was properly followed.

Open solicitation

- 3.7. In cases when a competitive selection process is required, the process below shall be followed:
- i. *Preparation of the solicitation document* (typically an Expression Of Interest or Request For Proposal), by which UNOPS will clearly articulate UNOPS' need, the anticipated arrangement between UNOPS and the partner and how submissions will

- be evaluated. Standard templates available on PLG's intranet and UNOPS PQMS should be used.
- ii. *Publication of the solicitation document*, shall be open for response for a minimum of two weeks. All questions by potential partners regarding the solicitation and resulting partnership UNOPS answers shall be published and made available to all interested parties.
 - iii. *Evaluation of partners' proposals*, according to clear and objective evaluation criteria, comprising both technical and financial. This may include several phases, including a first short list of potential partners and follow up questions from UNOPS. The partner shall be selected in accordance with the technical and / or financial criteria as set out in the solicitation document. The evaluation shall be carried out by an evaluation team formed in accordance with the OI on Procurement Procedures. The selection process, including the rejection of potential partners, shall be documented and recorded in writing. If only a single entity submits a proposal a full evaluation process should still take place.

Request for offers

- 3.8. In cases where a *request for offers* is required, UNOPS must identify, through desk research, a minimum of three entities in the market with the technical capacity to fulfill the partnership needs and request financial offers. The evaluation shall be carried out by an evaluation team formed in accordance with the OI on Procurement Procedures. These offers will be evaluated comparatively in order to justify the selection of the partner in accordance to the technical and financial offer.
- 3.9. If there is no competitive marketplace and only one entity has been identified, the justification for directly selecting the partner must be submitted to the EAC for consideration.

Comparative evaluation

- 3.10. In cases when a comparative selection process is required, a justification to enter into the proposed agreement with the proposed partner shall be provided in writing. This should include an evaluation of the partnership options available to UNOPS and a justification as to why the proposed partner has been selected over other entities. This may consist of gathering, analyzing and documenting publicly available information in order to evaluate such partnership options. This may also include details on past consultations and efforts to scope the areas of synergies and collaboration with the proposed partner, as well as the key attributes (skills, expertise, knowledge) that the partner possesses that meet UNOPS needs.

- 3.11. If there is no competitive marketplace and only one entity has been identified, the justification for directly selecting the partner must be submitted to the EAC for consideration.
- 3.12. Further instructions and guidance on the selection process, including required information, procedures and templates will be provided on UNOPS intranet site and PQMS.

4. Liabilities

- 4.1. When exploring the possibility of entering into a new partnership, the respective responsibilities and associated liabilities of UNOPS and its partner(s) shall be clearly defined from the outset and reflected accordingly in the proposed agreement(s).

5. Due diligence and risk assessment

- 5.1. Before entering into new partnerships, the appropriate due diligence and risk assessment of the proposed agreement should be conducted in accordance with the procedures and processes outlined in the OI on Due Diligence. Outcomes of the due diligence process will inform the acceptance decision of the relevant DoA holder.
- 5.2. Any conflict of interest for entering into an agreement with a partner must be disclosed by UNOPS personnel or staff to the applicable DoA holder.

6. Acceptance and signature of partner agreements

- 6.1. Acceptance or renewal of a partner agreement or of an amendment thereto, that is in case of substantive changes to the respective responsibilities and associated liabilities of UNOPS and its partner, shall be granted by either by the appropriate DOA holder in accordance with the table attached as Annex 1 without EAC consultation, or by the EAC, in accordance to the below.

Cases when submission to the EAC is not required

- 6.2. Cases when submission to the EAC is *not* required and may be approved by the DoA holder directly are:
 - Framework agreement with *UN and state entities* that *do not* establish standard Terms and Conditions for future activities but are merely a general agreement to consider working together in the future.
 - Framework Agreement with *UN and state entities* that establish standard Terms and Conditions to be applied to future engagements that:

- The agreement has been reviewed and cleared by all relevant units, including Legal Group, IPAS Legal, IPAS Finance, Finance Group as well as any service line units relevant to the nature of the agreement; and
 - The agreement does not raise risks in line with the EAC criteria for engagements (i.e Partners and Stakeholders, Finance, People, Process / Operations); and
 - The DoA holder has authorized signature.
- Collaborative or Teaming Agreements with *UN and state entities*.
- 6.3. These cases should be consulted with PLG to ensure no EAC submission is required. Subsequently, PLG will provide guidance on the necessary reviews.
- 6.4. Upon approval by the appropriate DOA holder and legal clearance of the contractual modality, the agreement may be signed by the DOA holder or the personnel that has been authorized by the DOA holder to sign on his/her behalf.
- 6.5. Despite the fact that no EAC review is required for these cases, it is still required that the EAC Secretariat and PLG is informed of the above agreements to enable tracking of all partner agreements at a corporate level.

Cases when submission to the EAC is required

- 6.6. Cases when submission to the EAC is required are:
- Framework agreements with *UN and state entities* that establish standard Terms and Conditions to be applied to future engagements that:
 - The agreement raises risks in line with the EAC criteria for engagements (i.e Partners and Stakeholders, Finance, People, Process / Operations); or,
 - The DoA holder has not authorized signature.
 - All Framework, Collaborative or Teaming agreements with non-UN non-state entities
 - All Framework, Collaborative or Teaming agreements with a new partner. A new partner is any entity with its own legal personality that is not yet included in UNOPS systems and/or has not previously received EAC approval.
- 6.7. The EAC shall be composed of a number of senior reviewers (depending on the type and nature of the partner agreement) and the EAC Chair (either the Executive Office or

Regional Director depending on the DoA level for the acceptance of the partnership outlined in Annex 1).

- 6.8. The partnership request and supporting documentation shall be reviewed by the senior reviewers who will provide comments on identified risks and compliance with this OI and make a recommendation to the EAC Chair.
- 6.9. The EAC Chair shall have the discretion to decide whether to accept, reject or defer a submission based on the available information. A meeting will be convened only when the Chair deems further review necessary prior to decision making.
- 6.10. Upon approval by the EAC Chair and legal clearance of the contractual modality, the agreement may be signed by the DOA holder outlined in Annex 1 or the personnel that has been authorized by the DOA holder to sign on his/her behalf.
- 6.11. Further instructions and guidance on the acceptance submission process, such as relevant senior reviewers, required documentation and templates will be provided on UNOPS intranet site and PQMS.

Amendments and extensions to existing agreements

- 6.12. The extension or amendments to existing framework, collaborative or teaming partnerships do not require EAC submission and may be directly signed by the relevant DoA holder, unless:
 - The scope of activity falls outside what was previously approved by the EAC of relevant DoA holder.
 - New EAC risk criteria is triggered by the extension or change
 - Amendments to framework agreements have not been reviewed and cleared by all relevant units, including Legal Group, IPAS Legal, IPAS Finance, Finance Group as well as any service line units relevant to the nature of the agreement

7. Implementation of collaborative agreements through teaming agreements

- 7.1. In some cases, the implementation of a collaborative agreement between UNOPS and its partner may result in UNOPS and its partner having to submit a joint bid to a Funding Source for the joint implementation of an engagement. Since legally, as explained above, UNOPS cannot enter into a joint-venture with its partner to submit a joint bid to a third party, UNOPS and the partner may, in turn, enter into a *teaming agreement* with one another to agree to jointly develop the proposal and set out an arrangement where one

provides the other with a portion of the services as outlined in the joint proposal. The decision of whether a teaming agreement is required for the development and submission of a joint proposal rests, or whether UNOPS and the partner may develop and submit a joint proposal without a teaming agreement, rests with Legal Group.

7.2. In this case, the selection and due diligence process to enter into a teaming agreement, as described above, may be waived by the appropriate DoA holder, and the teaming agreement may be approved directly by the appropriate DOA holder in accordance with the table attached as Annex 1 (DOA table), subject to below conditions. Such a request should be submitted to the EAC Secretariat to ensure the necessary conditions are met:

- The activities that the partner will deliver in the context of the joint bid are within the scope of the overarching collaborative agreement between UNOPS and the partner.
- If partner is a non-UN non-state entity that an *open solicitation process* or *request for offer* (as per Chapter 3) has been adhered to.
- One or more of the below scenarios apply to the case:
 - The joint bid will be based on delivering a product or service that has been *co-developed* by UNOPS and its partner (as per section 2.2.2) with a sharing of the risk, costs and benefits during its development; and/or,
 - The collaborative agreement is to *pursue a range of joint resource mobilization opportunities* (as per section 2.2.2) with a clear case of the partner's core competencies augmenting UNOPS capacity in delivering projects; and/or,
 - The partner is pre-selected by the Funding Source to whom the joint bid will be submitted. In this case, the Funding Source shall agree that UNOPS cannot be accountable or otherwise carry any liability for the performance of its partner and the partner has been selected by the Funding Source in accordance with its regulations and rules.

Annex I: Partner agreement acceptance DOA table

The [Master Table of Authority for granting acceptance and signing Framework, Collaborative and Teaming partnership requests](#) is located on the [Delegation of Authority intranet page](#).

Annex II: Terms of reference, Engagement Acceptance Committee (EAC)

The [Engagement Acceptance Committee Terms of Reference](#) are located on the [Engagement Acceptance Committee intranet page](#)