Operational Instruction Ref. OI.PLG.2025.01 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 on 7 May 2025.

4. **Consequential changes**

4.1. This OI shall supersede and replace OI.PLG.2021.01 - Acceptance of Framework, Collaborative and Teaming Agreements.

4.2. The purpose of the update is to: (i) reflect the decision of the Executive Director to abolish the Engagement Acceptance Committee and create the UNOPS Portfolio Oversight Committee (POC); (ii) update section 6 of this OI, setting out the procedures and requirements for the acceptance and signature of Partnership Agreements, (iii) update section 7 for the operationalization of collaborative agreements through grant support, when a transfer of funds from UNOPS to its partner is required, until a more comprehensive revision of the OI is undertaken.

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1. Introduction

1.1. 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 (Partnership 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, level and type of partner (section 2); partner selection (section 3); associated liabilities (section 4); required due diligence and risk assessment (section 5) the procedure and requirements for the acceptance and signature of Partnership Agreements (section 6) and the implementation of collaborative agreements through grant support (section 7).

2. Intent and level of partnership and type of partner

2.1. The acceptance process for Partnership Agreements depends on (i) the intent of the partnership, (ii) level of partnership, and (iii) type of partner.
2.2. Depending on these elements, different delegation of authority (DOA) holders may approve the Partnership Agreements. Please refer to the Partnership agreement acceptance DOA table in Annex I (the Partnership DOA Table) for more details.

Intent of partnership

2.3. The types of Partnership Agreements UNOPS may enter into will depend on the intent of the partnership and desired outcome. The main types of Partnership Agreements include the following:
2.4. 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 UNOPS Financial Rules and Regulations), setting out the intent to utilize UNOPS services, and / or the operational arrangements governing the future provision of services by UNOPS;
2.5. 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.
- *Co-develop project proposals* and jointly implement projects, that is, when UNOPS enters into a long term agreement with a partner to mobilize their core competencies (for example expertise, technology, networks) that augment and complement UNOPS' capacity in order to develop multiple joint proposals and pursue multiple joint project opportunities over a prolonged period of time. Generally such an agreement 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 IPMG.
- *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. 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.

2.6. Teaming agreement, that is, when UNOPS and a partner wish to combine their mutual capacity strengths in order to develop and submit a single joint proposal to a third party with the intent to jointly implement an engagement. Typically this joint proposal will be in response to a Call for Proposal from a funding source where it is stipulated that they request submitting parties to collaborate or form a consortium. 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 third party. 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 IPMG.

2.7. When defining the intent of the partnership it is important to establish whether there is an intent to eventually transfer funds from UNOPS to the partner in order to operationalise the partnership arrangement. 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 funding source and disburse to the partner for them to deliver their part of the proposal.

Level of partnership

2.8. As defined in OD.EO.2017.02 – Management of UNOPS Partners and Resulting Agreements, the levels of Partnership Agreements include: global (to be implemented across multiple UNOPS regional offices); regional (to be implemented in a single UNOPS region); or local (to be implemented in a single UNOPS country office). Partnership Agreements with global programmes (including hosted entities) that fall under the Global Portfolio Office (GPO) are defined as GPO partnerships.

Types of partners

2.9. Under OD.EO.2017.02 – Management of UNOPS Partners and Resulting Agreements, UNOPS may enter into Partnership Agreements with a wide variety of partners. This typically includes:

2.9.1. 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,

2.9.2. 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 selection process is required when entering into a framework agreement (whether with UN and state or non-UN and non-state entities);

3.2. No competitive selection process is required to enter into a collaborative (with or without a potential transfer of funds) or teaming agreement with a UN or state entity. However, if the partnership is with a UN and state entity and involves co-developing a joint proposal with UNOPS as the lead agency the input and contribution to the joint proposal from the partner (including their roles and responsibilities for project implementation) should be thoroughly reviewed and accepted by UNOPS prior to submitting to the funding source.

Selection method when a partnership may involve a transfer funds from UNOPS to a non-UN or non-government partner in order to implement a joint project

3.3. Call For Partnership Proposal
3.3.1. When UNOPS wishes to enter into a partnership that may involve a transfer of funds from UNOPS to a non-UN or non-government partner in order to implement a joint project (see above) a Call For Partnership Proposal (CFPP) method should be used. The competitive selection CFPP method includes both open and limited competition.

3.3.2. In open competition, all potential applicants are simultaneously invited (to the same opportunity) to submit their proposals by a public CFPP announcement. The CFPP document shall be prepared using the UNOPS CFPP template or an equivalent alternative template that includes all mandatory sections and fields. The CFPP announcement shall be made for at least 21 calendar days, excluding the issue date but including the closing date published on the United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM) or other platforms recognized by UNOPS.

3.3.3. In limited competition the CFPP document shall be distributed only to shortlisted applicants. The shortlist can be formulated based on an assessment of market research. Valid reasons for limited competition may include the following:

- The partnership only applies to a single joint project and the amount that will be transferred to the partner is less than USD 50,000;
- If the partnership is for a one-off-joint project proposal and delivery partnership and the funding source requests in writing to use the limited competition;
- An open competition method will have negative security implications;
- The information contained in the CFPP document is sensitive and cannot be advertised

3.3.4. The evaluation and selection of the partner shall be carried out by an evaluation team formed in accordance with the OI on Grant Support. 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.
3.3.5. The input into any future joint proposal from the selected partner (including their roles and responsibilities for project implementation) should be thoroughly reviewed and accepted by relevant UNOPS units prior to submitting to the funding source.

3.4. Pre-selection by the Funding Source
3.4.1. UNOPS may enter into a partnership agreement with a partner to implement a one-off joint project that has been pre-selected by an eligible funding source in accordance with the principles and requirements on pre-selection outlined in the OI on the Acceptance of Engagement Agreements and the FRR.

3.5. Exceptions
3.5.1. Exceptions to an open competitive process may be granted in accordance with the Grant Support OI.

Selection method when there is no potential transfer of funds from UNOPS to a non-UN or government partner

3.6. Comparative evaluation
3.6.1. In cases when UNOPS wishes to enter into a partnership where there is no potential transfer of funds from UNOPS to a non-UN or government partner a comparative selection process is required. A justification to enter into the proposed Partnership Agreement 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.
3.6.2. 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 relevant Partnership DoA holder for approval.

Additional notes
3.7. For cases where UNOPS is not the lead but a sub-recipient (i.e UNOPS will receive funds from the partner) in a collaborative partnership for a joint project or teaming agreement this case should be referred to the engagement acceptance process as per the OI for Acceptance of Engagement Agreements.
3.8. 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), PCG, PLG and LG must be consulted to ensure the proposed partnership and process is in full alignment with UNOPS existing policies, legal framework and principles.

3.9. When considering whether to approve a new Partnership Agreement or amendment thereto, the relevant Partnership DOA holder shall review whether the partner selection method was adequate and the applicable process was properly followed.
3.10. Further instructions and guidance on the selection process, including required information, procedures and templates will be provided on PLG's intranet pages .

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 a new Partnership Agreement, 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 Partnership 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 Partnership DoA holder.

6. Acceptance and signature of partner agreements

6.1. Except if provided otherwise in this section, new Partnership Agreements shall go through an acceptance review process before being submitted to the relevant Partnership DOA holder for approval.

Partnership Agreements for which only Legal Group review process is required
6.2. For the following types of Partnership Agreements, the relevant Partnership DoA holder may make the acceptance decision directly with only a review from the Legal Group required and no additional reviews from other units.
6.3. This can happen when the Partnership Agreement is with a UN partner, or, if it is not with a UN partner, when all the below conditions apply:

- There is no potential future transfer of funds from UNOPS to a partner further down the line in order to operationalise a joint resource mobilization / joint project implementation arrangement,
- The due diligence assessment did not raise any concerns or there is no requirement for a due diligence assessment,
- The areas of collaboration and scope of activity are clearly in line with UNOPS´ mandate and are judged by the relevant Partnership DOA holder not to raise any reputational risks or encroach on other UN mandates,
- The scope of activity and the intent of the Partnership Agreement is clear and does not involve a high degree of complexity, and
- No exception to this OI is being requested.

6.4. In these cases it should be noted that:

- If the Partnership Agreement is closely related to a specific UNOPS service line it is advised the relevant unit responsible for the service line is informed.
- The relevant Partnership DoA holder may choose to request a review by relevant HQ units before approving the Partnership Agreement or decide to escalate its approval to a higher Partnership DOA holder should they judge the request to have significant risk

Partnership Agreements for which an acceptance review process is required
6.5. All other types of Partnership Agreements must go through an acceptance review process (to be

initiated in the JIRA portal) before the relevant Partnership DoA holder may approve them, in particular in case of the following:

- A transfer of funds through Grant support to a partner is envisioned. This type of request requires review by the Grant Support Policy owners and relevant HQ units to provide confirmation that the selection methodology is in line with the Grant Support OI and is sufficient to enable the future disbursement of funds via a grant support and under what conditions this can happen. If grant support activities are envisioned, regardless of the type of partner, the grant support selection methodology shall be agreed with the funding source and shall be included in the engagement agreement.
- The red flag due diligence assessment raised low levels of risks that have mitigation measures in place.
- The areas of collaboration and scope of activity is not clearly in line with UNOPS mandate or it raises potential reputational risks or encroaches on other´s mandates.
- The scope of activity and the intent of the partnership has high degrees of complexity or ambiguity.
- There is an exemption to this OI being requested.

6.6. Relevant HQ units to be involved in the review process will be determined by PLG by the nature and scope of the partnership request. The review process will be facilitated by PLG.

6.7. After the Partnership Agreement has gone through the acceptance review process, the acceptance decision can be made by the relevant Partnership DOA holder (see master table).
6.8. In these cases it should be noted that:

- The Partnership DoA holder may choose to escalate the approval of the Partnership Agreement to the higher Partnership DOA holder should they judge the request to have significant risks.
- After the Partnership Agreement has been approved, the submitting office should then ensure the final agreement is in line with the request and cleared by LG.

Approval by the Owner of this OI (the Partnership Policy Owner) is required
6.9. The approval of a Partnership Agreement shall be escalated to the Partnership Policy Owner when one of below conditions apply:

- There is potential future transfer of funds and the selection process outlined above was not followed (i.e. an exemption to the OI is being requested). In this case, the grant support OI owners shall be consulted to confirm that the selection methodology that has been used is acceptable under the grant support OI and sufficient for the future disbursement of funds via grant support and under what conditions this can happen. If grant support activities are envisioned, regardless of the type of partner, the grant support selection methodology shall be agreed with the funding source and shall be included in the engagement agreement.
- The red flag due diligence assessment raised a high level of residual risks that are judged by the due diligence team to be significant to the organization.
- The areas of collaboration and scope of activity are not clearly in line with UNOPS mandate or during review it is noted by the relevant unit managing the service line or other reviewing unit that it potentially raises significant reputational risks or encroaches on other´s mandates.
- Other significant risks have been identified that the Partnership DoA holder feels warrant escalation to the Partnership Policy Owner

6.10. In these cases it should be noted that:

- The Partnership Policy Owner may choose to escalate the request to the DED for Delivery & Partnerships should they judge that the proposed Partnership Agreement has significant risks or to the POC should they judge the request to be of potentially ´high stake´.
- For partnerships that require an exemption to policies outside this OI to be granted in order to be operationalised (e.g. for future grants to be dispersed), the relevant policy owner shall be consulted before the proposed partnership can be approved.

Amendments of existing Partnership Agreements

6.11. Amendments for existing Partnership Agreements may be directly signed by the relevant Partnership DoA holder without going through an acceptance review process, unless the scope of activity or level of risk goes beyond what was previously approved for the Partnership Agreement in question. Otherwise, the relevant acceptance process (as outlined above) shall be followed.

7. Implementation of collaborative agreements through grant support

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 proposal to a funding source for the joint implementation of a project or programme. 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 partnership for co-developing a proposal and jointly implement a project with one another and set out an arrangement where one provides the other with a portion of the services as outlined in the joint proposal.

7.2. If the joint proposal is selected by the funding source, UNOPS or its partner should sign the resulting agreement with the funding source (as UNOPS cannot sign agreements as a joint venture) and the signing party will transfer funds corresponding to the activities for which the other party (UNOPS or the partner) is responsible to the other.

7.3. If UNOPS is the signing party, the funds shall be transferred to the UNOPS grantee via a grant, such cases shall be reviewed by PLG and IPMG. As per section 3.2 a competitive selection process shall be followed to establish the agreement with non-UN non-government partners in line with the Grant Support OI. UN entities, intergovernmental organizations and central level governments shall follow the selection process in line with the Grant Support OI.

7.4. If grant support activities are envisioned, regardless of the type of partner, the grant support selection methodology shall be agreed with the funding source and shall be included in the engagement agreement.

Annexes

The Master Table of Authority for granting acceptance and signing Framework, Collaborative[1] and Teaming partnership requests[2] is located on the Delegation of Authority intranet page[3].

1. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y9rGOnh2FlW0G9HYDVad7eT62fkOpTMu_0mX53JRjBQ/edit?tab=t.0
2. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y9rGOnh2FlW0G9HYDVad7eT62fkOpTMu_0mX53JRjBQ/edit?tab=t.0
3. https://intra.unops.org/operations/oversight/risk-management/delegation-of-authority-doa