



Developing a partnership

University as a Living Lab toolkit

Once you've identified and formulated a project, you may wish to draft a partnership agreement including the following:

Partnership Agreement

- ✓ Names, roles and contact details of people involved
- ✓ Objectives for operations/professional services staff
- ✓ Objectives for student/academic researchers
- ✓ Tasks to be undertaken by each person
- ✓ Timeline of work
- ✓ How the project is funded – people's time and any other costs (will you need to bid for funding?)
- ✓ Frequency of meetings to be held and of other communication e.g. a weekly update email
- ✓ Data management plan (see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/research-support/data-management/data-management-planning>), including confidentiality and a shared place to store documents
- ✓ Agreement on what will be shared publicly e.g. a report with recommendations and some data sets, and what should remain confidential

Project management

It is often easiest if one person takes the lead in terms of ensuring meetings are held and documented, agreements are reached and documented, and generally keeping track of the work undertaken. This role may be undertaken by either a researcher or a practitioner, depending on how the project came about.

Things to consider

Collaborations between researchers and operations staff may uncover some of the following challenges:

- Different communication styles and different language e.g. theoretical or technical terminology may not be understandable to all involved – make sure everyone feels comfortable questioning things they don't understand, or interpret differently
- People's availability and levels of interest can change over time – be prepared for people to drop out, and consider a plan B
- There may be issues regarding power dynamics or trust – work on building up relationships with collaborators
- Some may wish to work more quickly than others, or communicate more often – discuss and set expectations from the start
- Operations staff may consider academic knowledge more valuable than their own, or may be concerned that others may value academic knowledge more
- Academics may be concerned that University standpoints, strategies and policies could limit their academic freedom when collaborating on Living Lab projects
- There may be disagreements on what the solutions and recommendations should be

Methodological handbooks on action research techniques may be useful in terms of developing successful partnerships.

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