

# Chapter 8.4

## National partnerships

### The benefits of this chapter

Creating and expanding your national network is an important part of fostering the development of aquatics. Often it's about meeting and speaking to different organisations in sport, government and other public entities in your country to discuss your federation's position and strategy. Growing your network and making the right partnerships can be a challenge, but this chapter will help your federation look in all the right places.

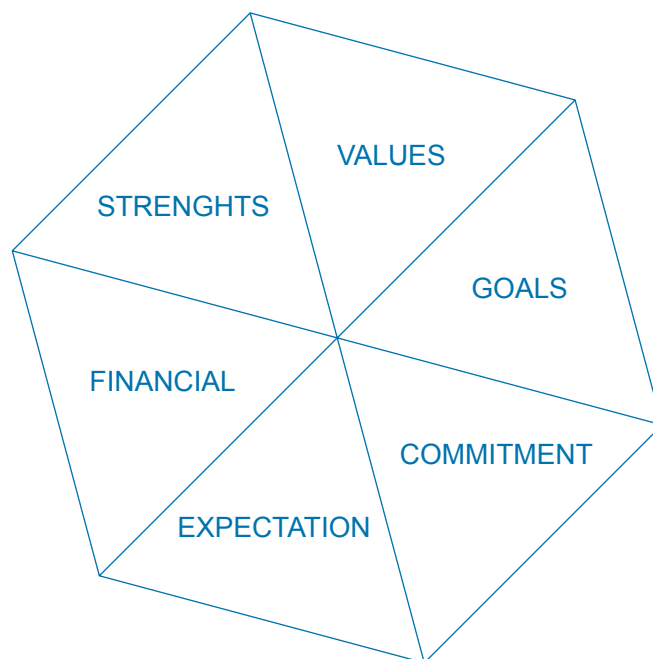
# Introduction

The right partners can provide your federation the support – both financially and developmentally – you need to expand aquatics in your country. Finding the right partner can be difficult most federations do not have any idea of where to start and what to look for. However, when you do find the right partner, you can achieve far greater levels of success faster than if you were to go ahead all on your own.

Building winning partnerships can be broken-down into six parts:

- 1/ Values
- 2/ Goals
- 3/ Commitment
- 4/ Expectation
- 5/ Financial
- 6/ Strengths

Diagram 8.4 a



## Values

Every federation has their own set of values, which you have already developed (See Lane 1). Regardless of whether you are developing a relationship with a new or current partner, your values are a critical factor that can affect this partnership.

As you have already selected your top values, you must keep in mind your commitment to them. Your values are important, but if you had to narrow down your list of top values to one, which value would you choose? This is an important question as conflicts between partnerships are not usually started because one partner believes that they are right and the other is wrong.

Instead, each party might simply have different views and values. As the aquatics federation in your country, you will need to remember the values you have chosen and why they are important to your federation. Prioritising your values and keeping them at the forefront in your discussions with partners can help you choose the right partnership. Choosing a partner who shares like common values in their daily work can help you form a cohesive partnership and help you achieve the winning success your federations strives for.

## Common Goal

Keeping the aquatic goals of your federation in mind will help you avoid distraction and disagreements when choosing the right partner for you federation.

A common mistake for some federations is to work on developing a partnership without discussing their goals. Whether you want to gain more sponsors, develop better athletes, gain national recognition within your country, you must remember your goals. Like in Open water competitions, any path will get you there, but that path might be a treacherous one if you don't plan accordingly.

## Commitment

Being part of the sports world, commitment is an important part of every day life, the same should apply when developing a partnership. Although it is beneficial to have high levels of commitment, partners do not necessarily need to share the same work schedule to affect a successful partnership. However, when deciding which partnerships to form, your federation needs to communicate the level of expected commitment to and from each new partnership so that there is a mutual understanding.

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## Expectations

One of the most important lessons when managing your federation's partnerships is to set a limit on the amount of time that you are going to dedicate to each of your partners. At the end of the agreed upon time frame, have a plan to evaluate your partnership. Create an exit strategy if the partnership has run its course. You will save a lot of heartache if both partners agree in advance on the appropriate way to renew and/or exit the partnership.

## Financial Position

It is beneficial to have a partner that can lend financial resources and experience to your federation, but be careful when choosing your partner – make sure that you are in a position to secure your federation's financial assets should your partnership fall through. While your federation may not have much experience with partners, it is important to keep your finances in good shape to ensure future success both in and out of the water.

## Complementary Strengths

Listing your strengths and those of your partners can help determine if you match up well. If your federation is lacking in one area in which your partner's strength can help or vice versa, these are often the best partnerships to build the way forward for your federation.

## The right partners and the right opportunities

### Government partners

National government partners can help facilitate your federation on many levels. Examining all political and economic aspects in your country can determine the future organisational structure of your federation as well as determine your plan for the future. Furthermore, governmental partnerships can facilitate communication of your sporting message across the country, which can be especially important for smaller federations with limited funding.

Governments can also be a great means of financial support for the development of facilities, athletes and coaches, overall sport development, event hosting and other special initiatives. Sport Canada – an agency within the Canadian federal government – is a great example.

With funding programmes available for the enhancement of all sports, a federation needs only apply and provide the appropriate documents to receive funding for development. Speaking with your government can help you make sure your federation achieves its goals of winning in water.

### Sports partners

Sports partners will also be an important focus for your federation. Establishing these relationships can help guide your federation. Combined with the structure you choose to secure, this relationship can help you make your aquatics vision a reality as your federation grows.

However, it is important to understand their role. While they will have some influence on your organisation, they should not be involved in making major decisions for your federation. That should be left to the leaders of your federation (as discussed in Lane 1). Therefore, it is recommended that they not be on the board of directors (as discussed in Lane – administration). Their focus can be side-tracked by self-interest and reduce the effectiveness of your federation.

That said, there are many ways that other sport federations can help you become a winning federation. Through knowledge and exchange forums, you can help each other be better. Although the nature of their sport may differ, sports federations share many similar experiences in terms of management, funding and administration. Learning from each other can be a great way to develop and become better as an organisation.

Take event planning as an example. All sports at one point or another put on a major event or a development programme for their sport in a city or country. By discussing the different experiences other federations have had with the same country can be beneficial in terms of learning from previous experiences, knowing who to work with and anticipating potential obstacles along the way.

### Continental partners

Continental associations provide many opportunities within your continent or geographical area. All continental associations have development programmes offered specifically to each of their members. Each Continental Association then has to decide on which continental programmes to put in place to meet the needs and priorities of each continent. The continental programmes are managed by the five offices – African Swimming Confederation (CANA), Swimming Union of the Americas (ASUA), Asian Amateur Swimming Federation (AASF), European Swimming League (LEN) and the Oceania Swimming Association (OSA).