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# The Huddles

A Take Note Collaboration Tool



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# The Huddles: In a Nutshell

**What are Huddles?** Communication comes in many forms, but you can't beat speaking to each other! Take Note recommends coming together as a group in a 'Huddle', in person or online, at least four times during your collaboration journey.

**Why bother?** You've all agreed you want to collaborate to make change. Coming together to check in on your partnership and how the project is going will help ensure you achieve your intended outcomes, keep communications open and build strong relationships now and for future projects.

**What do they achieve?** Each Huddle gives you a moment away from project delivery to make sure you're all heading in the same direction, working together to find solutions to any problems that you're facing. They help you strengthen the bond between partners, maximise the efficiency of your work together and harness the greatest possible impact for your project.



Take Note's approach ensured we had mutual buy-in as a group, total understanding of the project's aims and outcomes, and were all equally invested in it, which brought huge benefits. Through Take Note's additional strategic support there was a framework created to hold us as three organisations, and I have never experienced that to such an extent before.

Suffolk Artlink, Take Note partner organisation

# The Huddles: In Brief

Each Huddle is structured to allow time to be spent both on project planning and to discuss the partnership itself. This includes agreeing ways of working and creating space to reflect on how well the group is collaborating and where improvements could potentially be made.

The Huddles, plus the initial project design and preparation, follow our **Collaboration Journey**, the stage-by-stage outline of the journey designed by Take Note for partnership projects to undertake. Tools from the [Take Note Collaboration Guidebook](#) are used to help structure and frame each Huddle.





## Take the First Step: Prepare

on the first stage of the Collaboration Journey, where one partner is starting to conceive of a partnership project, undertake some preparation before the Huddles begin - first individually, then with prospective partners.

The four Huddles that follow are:



### 1 Take Time Together: Set-Up Huddle

to clarify the group's shared vision, work out how to get the funding to make it happen and acknowledge any power dynamics that might need to be addressed.



### 2 Take Action: Kick-Off Huddle

to define the group's partnership values, agree roles and responsibilities and ways of working and collaboratively plan out the project and its evaluation.



### 3 Take Time To Check In: Check-In Huddle

to review the progress of both the project and partnership using a collaborative 'health check', sharing successes and addressing any challenges.



### 4 Take the Next Step: Wrap-Up Huddle

to reflect on the impact of the project and on the partnership's strengths and challenges, and to consider ways of working together that partners would plan to take forward for the future.

## Take the First Step: Prepare

As you're getting ready to undertake a partnership project, we recommend using a number of tools from Section 1 in the [Collaboration Guidebook](#) to get things started and to plan out the idea for your project in more detail.

Because this stage takes place before the partnership has been fully shaped and agreed, it doesn't require a Huddle to bring the partners together although some provisional conversations and initial partnership development should ideally happen at this stage.

### Aims:

- To establish what you want to do and what impact you want it to have.
- To establish which partners could help you to achieve this.
- To start building the partnership and making sure all partners are aligned in what they want to achieve.

### Partnership Project Preparation:

- As an individual organisation, you can use the [Preparing for your Partnership Journey](#) tool from Take Note's [Collaboration Guidebook](#) to establish which partners you could most impactfully collaborate with.
- Individually, and together with your prospective partners, complete the [Setting your Organisation's Partnership Objectives](#) tool, to establish why you're each doing this and how your aims overlap.
- Run through the list of questions in the [Before Your First Huddle](#) tool, to make sure you're all on the same page.
- Consider which funders your organisation could approach to apply for funding for the Partnership Project.

# The Huddles: In Detail

Here you'll find a framework for each of the Huddles, including:

- the Huddle's aims
- a template agenda
- suggested relevant tools from the Take Note Collaboration Guidebook to help structure the detail of each agenda item

More detailed content exists for each Huddle, including accompanying slide decks. If you are interested in running Huddles based closely on the Take Note model, feel free to get in touch with us and we can send you these slide decks and any other advice on Huddle planning and delivery that may be helpful.



## Take Time Together: Set-Up Huddle

### Aims:

- To lay strong foundations for the partnership.
- To clarify the shared vision, aims and outcomes for the Partnership Project.
- To acknowledge and address any potential power dynamics between the partners.
- To make a plan to secure funding for the Partnership Project.

### Template Agenda:

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Time	Activity	Collaboration Guidebook Tool
10 mins	Introductions and motivations for being part of the partnership	
50 mins	Setting partnership vision and outcomes	<a href="#">Collaborative Impact Map</a>
15 mins	Addressing power dynamics	<a href="#">Approaching Power Dynamics</a>
10 mins	Funding plan	<a href="#">Tips &amp; Tricks for Collaborative Fundraising</a>
5 mins	Wrap up and next steps	



## Take Action: Kick-Off Huddle

### Aims:

- To create space for partners to connect and discuss together your detailed plans for the partnership and the project.
- To agree collaborative approaches and values, and embed these from the start of the project.
- To ensure an equitable sharing of workload and mitigate risk through clarity of plans, roles and responsibilities.
- To have discussed all the nuts and bolts of the project in order to collectively develop your Partnership Agreement after the Huddle.

### Template Agenda:

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes

Time	Activity	Collaboration Guidebook Tool
5 mins	Partnership Project recap	
20 mins 30 mins	Collaborative Project Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partnership Planning</li><li>• Project Planning</li></ul>	<a href="#">Collaboration Cycle: overview of partnership project journey</a> <a href="#">Collaborative Values</a> <a href="#">Collaborative Project Planning</a>
10 mins	Collaborative Evaluation	<a href="#">Collaborative Evaluation</a>
5 mins	Wrap up and next steps	

# Take Time to Check In: Check-In Huddle

## Aims:

- To speak openly about how the partnership is developing, to celebrate its successes and to discuss solutions to any challenges.
- To check progress against project plans and the impact map.

## Template Agenda:

Duration: 1 hour

Time	Activity	Collaboration Guidebook Tool
15 mins	Partnership Health Check discussion	<a href="#">Partnership Health Check</a>
10 mins	Impact Map review	<a href="#">Partnership Project Impact Map</a> (for review)
30 mins	Project Delivery check in and planning	<a href="#">Project Health Check</a>
5 mins	Wrap up and next steps	

## Take the Next Step: Wrap-Up Huddle

### Aims:

- To reflect on the impact of collaboration - the ways in which working together has shaped and strengthened your project.
- To reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your partnership, including strategies to take forward into future partnership projects and ways to mitigate risks potential partnership challenges.
- To agree ways of sustaining the project's outcomes and to identify next steps.

### Template Agenda:

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes

Time	Activity	Collaboration Guidebook Tool
20 mins	Partnership Project Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case Studies / Participant Reflections</li><li>• Impact of Collaboration</li><li>• Agree next steps for Impact Reporting</li></ul>	<a href="#">Looking Back tool</a> <a href="#">Collaborative Values</a> (for review)
30 mins	Partnership Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Successes and Challenges</li><li>• Strategies to take forward and / or future mitigations</li></ul>	
20 mins	What Next? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sustaining project outcomes</li><li>• Future plans</li></ul>	<a href="#">What Next tool</a>
5 mins	Wrap up	

# How to approach Huddles

In our experience, Huddles are as much about how the group comes together and creates a culture of openness and communication, as they are about the nuts and bolts of what is discussed. Here we recommend a few ways in which you can approach Huddles collaboratively to get the most out of them.



## Embrace partnership diversity

- **Acknowledge and explore any potential power dynamics** (see our Approaching Power Dynamics tool). Variations in partners' size, capacity, experience, profile and status are to be expected but by addressing these differences early on, you will create the most equitable partnership possible.
- **Be clear about workloads:** Be aware of how busy everyone is and what capacity they have to bring to the project.
- **Agree ways of working:** Talk explicitly together about how everyone likes to work and communicate, and try to accommodate a variety of these and/or agree on specific chosen ways of working as a group.
- **Make space for different experiences and backgrounds:** Remember everyone will be coming to the table not only with different levels of experience, but different kinds of experience - both lived and professional - that will shape their outlook and approach to the project.



## Create space for all voices

- **Hear from every partner:** Structure the discussions to ensure you hear from everyone at different points in the Huddle.
- **Integrate space for questions, reflection and open conversation:** In each Huddle, give time to enable different ideas and opinions to emerge.
- **Share knowledge:** Create opportunities for partners with different expertise to be able to share this with the wider group.



## Get everyone on the same page

- **Clarify ideas, actions and next steps:** Recap at the end of each Huddle to ensure everyone has understood the same things from the discussion.
- **Avoid using sector-specific jargon or acronyms:** These might not be understood by everyone.
- **Test any assumptions:** Consider whether there are assumptions that might be underpinning the partnership (or the project) and make sure these are being explicitly acknowledged and addressed.



## Consider your facilitator

- **Bring others in:** You may want to think about including an external or more objective facilitator to help you run the Huddles without being responsible for delivery of the Partnership Project.
- **Share the load:** If your organisation is leading the Partnership Project, that doesn't necessarily mean you also have to facilitate the Huddles, especially as they will require some planning and preparation ahead of time. Consider rotating the role of facilitator between the group for each Huddle.

## Huddle slide decks

A slide deck accompanies each Huddle agenda - you can see the slides for the Wrap-Up Huddle [here](#). Get in touch with us at Take Note if you'd like to see all the slide decks or chat to us about delivering your Huddles.

The Huddles: A Take Note Collaboration Tool is part of a wider suite of resources including [The Collaboration Guidebook](#) and [Funding Collaborations: A Blueprint](#). The creation of these tools has been kindly supported by Footwork and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's Grants Plus programme. They were informed and co-created through projects in partnership with:

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