



A Decision Making Framework for 'Responsible Health Partnering'

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Fundamental assumption of organizational ethics frameworks

Governance decisions reached in good faith by a fair, inclusive and accountable process are defensible on moral grounds



Possible decision making framework applications

- Partnering types, e.g.,
 - Revenue generation (or in kind benefit) through privileging of product/action, endorsement or advertising
 - Shared responsibility for health promotion/education
 - Cost savings through 'outsourcing'
 - Academic and research partnering



Process steps

- 1. Identify and assemble participants to form a working group of appropriate decision makers and stakeholders, e.g.,

- Executive management
- Quality services
- Communications
- Legal services
- Ethics support

Possible source of facilitator for use of decision making framework, given step 4; otherwise choose facilitator on the basis of demonstrated facilitation skills not authority



Process steps

- Appropriate participants, cont'd:
 - Consider including a Board member
 - As appropriate, include member of the public, ‘care receiver’, Dept. of Health rep., etc.
 - Suggested non-participants:
 - Individuals with obvious conflicts of interest
 - Employees whose job duties include generation of private revenue (their input comes earlier - see step 5)
 - Representatives of potential partner (their input comes earlier – see step 5)



Process steps

- 2. Establish how this partnering decision will be made, e.g.,
 - By executive management and/or CEO, Board
 - Through the reaching of a ‘can live with’ consensus by members of the working group (optimal approach, if possible and appropriate)
 - By democratic voting of working group members
As a default, in event of consensus failure or non-constructive power differentials among working group members (‘secret ballot’ best in the latter circumstances; possible use of a ‘conflict resolution process’ before this voting step)



Process steps

- 3. Reflect on your health organization's:
 - Acknowledged specific commitments
 - Mission, vision and values statements
 - Strategic plan – where should the organization be going?



Process steps

- 4. Identify and reflect on other collaboratively-identified relevant values and principles, e.g.,
 - Accountability
 - Inclusion
 - Collaboration
 - Transparency
 - Justice:
 - Distributive - fair distribution of benefits and burdens
 - Formal - alike groups treated alike, dissimilar groups treated dissimilarly, need for demonstration of '*relevant*' difference
 - Social - consider impact of partnering decision on 'most vulnerable' and core stakeholders



On 'first pass' of use of framework...

- Develop clear, absolute exclusion criteria for partnering, e.g.,
 - Privileged product/action clearly incompatible with vision, mission and values
 - Privileged product/action anticipated to be significantly detrimental to (broadly defined) 'health'
 - Partnering would clearly reduce public trust in the organization and damage its reputation
 - Privileged product known to contribute to addictive behavior



On first pass...

o Establish:

- Who will initially review the partnering proposal to identify any absolute exclusion criteria?
- Who makes the decision to reject a proposal on the basis of exclusion criteria?
- How will proposal rejections be reported, e.g., to executive management, Board, etc.?



Process steps

- 5. Description and clarification of relevant factual information about the potential partnering arrangement, including any 'fine print' conditions

Prior to use of the framework, this may require:

1) appropriate research; 2) input from organization's funding recruiter and representatives of the proposed partner; and 3) legal review of the proposal



Process steps

- 6. Identify and evaluate any inherent conflicts of interest, i.e., circumstances involving different and/or competing interests which could affect the reaching of consensus and the making of the decision re. partnering; if identified:
 - Can it/they be appropriately managed? (requires going beyond mere disclosure)?
 - Should any members of the working group be excluded from further participation?



Process steps

- 7. Identify any competing organizational obligations inherent in the proposed partnering, e.g.,
 - Private revenue generation for provision of core health services to patients (in context of limited public resources)
- vs.
- Promotion of healthy choices and lifestyles for those served by the organization



Process steps

- 8. Identify potential decision options, e.g.,
 - Partner as proposed
 - Propose new conditions for partnering
 - Reject partnering



Process steps

- o 9. Identify and rank all potential short, medium and long term **benefits** of partnering



Process steps

- 10. Identify and rank all potential short, medium and long term **burdens** of partnering
 - Does any one of these identified burdens absolutely preclude partnering? If so, return to third bullet of step 8



Process steps

- 11. Facilitated whole-group dialogue with goals of: 1) comparing and contrasting potential decision options, and 2) carefully balancing competing organizational goals and obligations



Process steps

- 12. Choose an option; if decision to partner, with or without new conditions, is made, clearly articulate how any competing organizational goals/obligations are to be balanced
 - E.g., in a maternity/pediatrics hospital setting: accept a significant, unrestricted-use money donation for the organization's clinical programs from an infant formula company, while, at the same time, enhancing education and promotion of breast feeding in a comprehensive, integrated manner



Process steps

o 13. Final checks

- Is your decision consistent with the organization's vision/mission/values and strategic plan for the future?
- Do you anticipate that the decision will stand up to public scrutiny?; if not, revisit your choice of options



Process steps

- 15. If partnering approved, establish an appropriate probation period and mechanism for: 1) monitoring and evaluating the partnering arrangement, and 2) evaluating the decision to partner



Process steps

16. Demonstrate organizational transparency and openness by:

- Announcing partnering and its conditions to the organization's internal community and the public
- Posting an accurate description of the partnering arrangements on the organization's website