Editorial Policy

Guidance Note

Partnerships

This guidance note should be read in conjunction with BBC Editorial Guidelines (www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines).

In cases of doubt, further assistance can be sought from the duty Editorial Policy Adviser by telephoning 0870 333 4550 or BBC extension (02) 81819.

All Guidance Notes can be found at edpol.gateway.bbc.co.uk/guidance_notes.shtml (BBC internal link) or www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/advice/.

Introduction

The BBC’s vision is to deliver the greatest possible public value for the people of the UK. As we have made clear in “Building Public Value”, we know we cannot achieve this vision on our own, and that it can only be achieved through working collaboratively in partnership with others. From Restoration to Freeview from Comic Relief to The Big Read, many of the BBC’s greatest recent successes have been based on team work and partnerships with outside organisations.

The opportunities are exciting. The BBC recognises the power of great partnerships and the key to their success lies in ensuring that we are open to new possibilities and new partnerships and that we manage our partnerships well.

By working with partners, we can achieve spectacular results. We can extend our creative possibilities; broaden our reach and impact; embark on projects which we would not be able to tackle as ambitiously on our own; open up access to our content; help create a fully digital Britain and engage and connect with communities in the UK and across the globe.

Partnerships with other broadcasters and technology providers are a vital part of helping the BBC deliver very ambitious digital initiatives. The experience of Freeview and the innovations of the Hull project show just what groundbreaking ideas can be achieved.

The BBC’s new Partnership Code outlines our key principles for “Building Public Value” through partnerships. It outlines our commitments to dealing fairly and equitably with partners and our new approach to collaborative working.
1. The Strength of Partnerships

A partnership is a “strategic collaboration between the BBC and one or more public, private, not for profit or voluntary sector organisations, which aims to deliver, over a sustained period, mutually beneficial public value outcomes for the BBC, our partners and the public”.

When thinking of whether to enter into a partnership project we should consider the following:

- Whether the partnership would help the BBC achieve greater public value
- Whether working with a partner or range of partners would significantly enhance the impact and resonance of a project
- Whether it would help us achieve a “multiplier” effect, so that the sum of its parts is greater than what could be achieved by any of the organisations involved on their own.

We should also consider what we are offering our partner or partners and whether it is a beneficial relationship for all concerned.

2. Partnerships –Key Principles

When entering into a partnership with an external organisation we must ensure that:

- The BBC’s editorial impartiality and integrity are not compromised and we retain editorial control of our output.
- Our choice of partners is editorially justified and will not bring the BBC into disrepute.
- We do not accept money or other services in exchange for broadcast coverage or publicity.
- We work with a range of organisations and do not unduly favour one above another.
- We do not promote or appear to endorse other organisations, products, services, views or opinions.
- We fairly credit others where editorially appropriate.

To remain within the terms of the BBC’s Charter and Agreement it is essential that no money from external partners is used for any production costs. When
entering into partnerships with others we must operate rigorous and transparent financial systems. We need to keep separate budgets for programme costs and any partnership arrangements where external organisations contribute to non-broadcast costs.

3. What a Partnership can deliver

Partners can enhance the richness of our offering by contributing to a range of initiatives. In many cases it will not be appropriate to use the licence fee to fund extensive off air activities, but the partners can contribute to the costs of non broadcast activities such as events, workshops, support material and long term social and community initiatives.

We can join together with partners to act as joint patrons for artistic and sporting endeavours and to raise money for charitable causes. We can join with other media organisations in joint editorial initiatives and to bring BBC content to the widest possible audiences for example through projects such the Big Screens initiative.

With key partners we can share ideas and resources and create new opportunities. We can enrich the cultural life of our audiences, offer innovative educational opportunities and extend public awareness of digital technology.

It is crucial that partnerships involve both the BBC and the partner/ partners being jointly involved in an activity that offers public value. A partnership must not consist merely of the BBC covering the partner’s activity or promoting its campaign.

4. Types of Partnerships

- **Partnerships which help us open up and share our content** - We want to unleash the power of our broadcast and online content and find new ways of delivering it and sharing it with a wider public. We will help people find our content more easily and to broaden their choice. *Example: The Creative Archive*

- **Big pan-BBC programming initiatives** – partnerships can extend the impact and reach of major series in innovative ways. *Example: The Big Read* - off- air activities involved publishers, retailers, libraries, literacy ad reading organisations. We can deliver greater value and more memorability by working with partners

- **Creative industry and new talent initiatives** - they lead to the creation of new, high quality television, radio and web broadcasting and the discovery of new talent. *Example: Music Live*
• **Learning initiatives** - Partnerships primarily focused on helping individuals to realise their ambitions either at national or local level. *Example: Neighbourhood Gardener*

• **Community initiatives** - We can use our network of local contacts to form long term relationships which can have a lasting impact, and can often give our audience the tools to create content. *Examples: All Together Now, a partnership between BBC Radio Leeds and Leeds LEA*

• **Charity fundraising initiatives** - Partnerships designed chiefly to raise money for local, national and international charitable purposes, UK and global. *Example: Comic Relief*

• **Joint editorial initiatives** - A joint editorial initiative is a partnership where the BBC and a partner or partners share editorial responsibility for an overall project. The BBC would normally produce the programmes or website and the partner might run a related event or publish articles to accompany the series. If the partnership is with a magazine or newspaper we must not promote the publication on air and people must not be required to buy it to take part. Editorial Policy should be consulted about the suitability of partners for a joint editorial initiative.

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5. **Who should be our Partners?**

The BBC wants to hear more from others about new and fresh ideas, we want to work with new partners and cement the relationships with our existing partners. It is important that the overall aims of the partnership are consistent with BBC values and standards.

Partners can bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to projects; they can open up access to new networks and to parts of our audience we do not serve well. We can benefit from their brand values as much as they can benefit from ours.

We should work with a range of partners and we must be seen to choose partners on the basis of clear fair criteria which are editorially justifiable.

Suitable partners will include:

- Arts and education institutions
- Voluntary bodies
- Sports bodies and those involved in the promotion of healthy lifestyles
- Community groups
- In some cases commercial organisations (if they share our public value aims)
This is far from an exhaustive list. There will be many other possible partnership opportunities. But it is important that the partnership should not bring the BBC into disrepute or bring into question the BBC’s editorial integrity or impartiality.

For this reason we would not be able to undertake public value partnerships with the following:

- Political parties (UK or international)
- Tobacco firms, or those which are mainly known for tobacco related products
- Organisations involved in pornography, escort/introduction agencies “top shelf”
- Publications
- Alcoholic drink manufacturers or suppliers
- Gun or weapon manufacturers

We would not normally enter into a partnership with a foreign government and there are some other areas where particularly sensitive decisions need to be made. Proposals to undertake partnerships in the following areas should be referred to Editorial Policy at an early stage:

- *Government departments* – the partnership should not be used as a launch pad
- for a government initiative or suggest BBC endorsement of specific government
- or party policy
- *Lobby groups and charities* - the partnership and related activities must not
  - become a vehicle to promote the charity or lobby group itself or its activities or
  - act as a fundraising platform unless it has been specifically cleared as a BBC
- *Religious organisations* – we need to take care that the BBC is not seen to
  - embrace one particular faith or doctrine.
Sometimes there could be sensitivities because of the type of BBC programming connected with the partnership initiative e.g. any partnership involving children’s output or children’s activities or News and Current Affairs.

6. What is not considered “a partnership”

The BBC works with thousands of organisations in its day-to-day business activities, many of them on a recurrent basis, ranging from the supply of goods and services to the acquisition of rights and the development of commercial activities. A myriad of contractual transactions and relationships are also undertaken daily in the course of programme research, programme production and post-production. These are not defined as “partnerships” for the purpose of this guidance.

Sponsorship activities are not considered as public value partnerships. We cover many outside events sponsored by third parties and in a few cases the BBC mounts its own outside events which take sponsorship. But these are basically financial arrangements and are not considered public value partnerships in the terms of this guidance or the partnership code.

7. What partners expect of us

We need to think carefully about partner expectations and make sure we clearly understand our partners’ objectives. Whether the partner is commercial or public sector/not for profit, we must ensure that we have joint objectives and a common goal for the project.

We also need to manage expectations, so that we do not disappoint. We do need to be clear upfront that a partnership does not mean that the partner will get favourable treatment in our news, current affairs and factual coverage. Our impartiality and objectivity cannot be compromised.

Partners may expect that BBC involvement will enable them to reach a very large audience. They may expect the partnership will be able to fulfil their requirements to access certain sections of the population; they may want us to help them make better use of new technologies. They may expect marketing support and creative, multi media opportunities. They will expect their contribution to be fairly credited and to have regular meetings to assess the progress of the project.

8. What we can offer them?

We need to make sure we are as creative and open as possible in the opportunities we offer partners. Often we may be able to offer more than it might be assumed. We can use our community and local relations, our ability to engage large audiences on all platforms, the power of our brand. We can share our ability to ensure as wide an audience as possible is excited about an initiative and to share our resources with our partners.
We need to agree between ourselves and the partner how they can promote the partnership and the related activities. It may be possible for the partner to use our brands, content and BBC material in their activities which directly relate to the partnership project, for example on third party websites designed to promote the initiative. In some cases it may be possible for partners to have access to BBC talent for example a joint sports initiative may wish to use BBC presenters.

9. Crediting

We should aim to credit partners fairly – however careful decisions need to be taken and all proposals for on air credits should be referred to Editorial Policy at an early stage.

On air credits are possible where the partner has had an editorial input into programming. For example if the BBC and an art gallery or museum had worked together to produce a series and an accompanying exhibition it would be perfectly reasonable for the partner to expect to be credited.

Key principles

- There must be a genuine editorial justification for on air credits
- No on-air credit for merely funding some supporting service or event
- Credits must not involve hyping
- For reasons of product prominence we only credit commercial partners in very limited cases
- Never use commercial logs unless part of an event logo
- Do not promote products or services – including newspapers or magazines.

Off air credits – The BBC can credit partners who have funded or editorially contributed to support material on the support material itself, and this credit could include partner logos and other relevant information.

There can also be credits on

- Signage at events
- On publicity material including press releases
- In articles and interviews about the partnership initiative
BBC Signage on partners’ material

Partners may refer to the BBC and BBC programme but we need to ensure that

- The BBC does not appear to be endorsing a particular product or service
- That there is separation between BBC logos and any commercial logo
- That we approve any material referring to the BBC or our programmes.

(For further detail on off-air signage and use of BBC logos see MC&A Guidance)

10. Referrals

Editorial Policy can give further advice on partnerships. In particular producers should refer any proposal which involves BBC programming, uses BBC material, involves a charitable initiative or mounting an event involves crediting a partner on air.

Contacts:

Margaret Hill, Chief Adviser, Editorial Policy ext (02) 81808 or

Natalie Christian, Senior Adviser Editorial Policy ext (02) 81810.

Proposals for long term strategic partnerships should be referred to

Andrew Whyte, Acting Head of Partnership Strategy ext (02) 28001.