



# BUSINESS AND **COVID-19**

## ACTION TOOLKIT

# RAPID INNOVATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

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with



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# FOREWORD

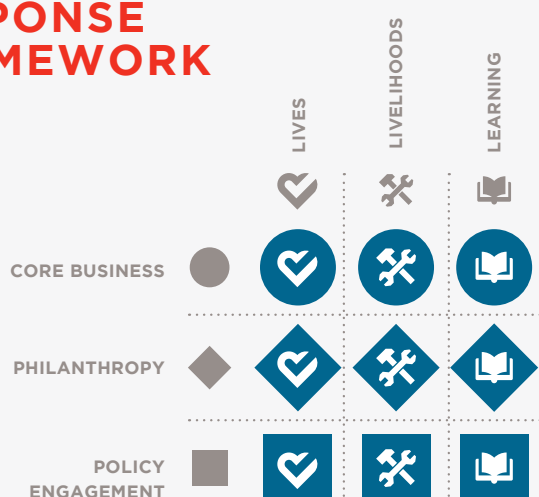
## BUSINESS AND COVID-19

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is creating the worst humanitarian and economic crisis in a generation, threatening the lives, livelihoods, and learning of people around the world. This action toolkit provides guidance on how businesses can rapidly innovate solutions in partnership with others to support the most vulnerable people.

COVID-19 poses risks for everyone and the impacts across all aspects of life will be profound and long-lasting for every segment of society. They are especially serious for those who are most vulnerable.

We recently published a COVID-19 Response Framework<sup>1</sup> that sets out guidance for how businesses can support the most vulnerable across three areas of impact: on their lives (health and safety), livelihoods (jobs and incomes) and learning (education and skills). The Response Framework set out actions that businesses can take through their core business capabilities and activities, philanthropic donations and volunteering, and policy engagement, advocacy, and support for institution strengthening. This can be visualised as a three-by-three matrix (see figure). We have separately published an online Action Mapping Tool<sup>2</sup> that sets out over 200 examples.

### COVID-19 RESPONSE FRAMEWORK



Find the [Framework rationale here](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Available in our Business and COVID-19 Response Centre: [https://snipbfp.org/C19\\_ResponseCentre](https://snipbfp.org/C19_ResponseCentre)

<sup>2</sup> Available in our Business and COVID-19 Response Centre: [https://snipbfp.org/C19\\_ResponseCentre](https://snipbfp.org/C19_ResponseCentre)

*In this Action Toolkit, which is one of a series, we build on the Response Framework to provide guidance on how companies can rapidly innovate solutions in partnership with others across the impact areas of this framework.*

In this Action Toolkit, which is one of a series<sup>3</sup>, we build on the Response Framework to provide guidance on how companies can rapidly innovate solutions in partnership with others across the impact areas of this framework.

The Action Toolkit is one part of a wider response that we are convening to crowdsource and share best-practice examples and insights from a variety of companies, industry sectors, and countries. For more information, and to get involved, visit our Business and COVID-19 Response Centre at [https://snipbfp.org/C19\\_ResponseCentre](https://snipbfp.org/C19_ResponseCentre)

Our wider work is being funded with UK aid from the UK government. We are working with an international coalition of partners, businesses and business networks. For this Action Toolkit, we are grateful for the additional support of GSK and the expert input of Endevo and The Partnering Initiative.

<sup>3</sup> Current topics include gender-based violence, vulnerable workers, micro and small enterprises, supporting NGO partners, and promoting handwashing and other preventative measures. We will be adding further topics. If you would like to suggest or support another topic, please get in touch with us at [team@businessfightspoverty.org](mailto:team@businessfightspoverty.org).



We hope that you will find this Action Toolkit useful as you frame both your immediate response and longer-term strategy for rebuilding.

**Zahid Torres-Rahman**, CEO, Business Fights Poverty

**Jane Nelson**, Director, Corporate Responsibility Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School.

# CONTEXT

## PARTNERSHIPS FOR RAPID INNOVATION

With the novel coronavirus pandemic spreading rapidly around the world, the response has needed to be equally fast and innovation has been required at many levels.

Private sector partnerships have been playing an important role in generating creative solutions. Companies can combine their own strengths with capacities of complementary partners. Innovating with partners also brings together new people with different mindsets and approaches, which can open up new perspectives and ideas. And partnerships also bring together complementary networks for input and implementation. All these ingredients can enhance the innovation process.

Since both the virus and the response to it - a global shutdown - is unprecedented, innovation is required at many levels. The private sector has an important role to play in providing solutions.

However, co-creating innovations with partners is also often perceived as risky, complex and slow. Legal issues such as intellectual property rights need to be sorted out. Governance structures need to be established and financial contributions organized. Often, there is no predefined blueprint for these decisions, which leads to long internal processes, especially in a corporate environment. As a result, partnerships for innovation can often take months or even longer to take shape.







**So, how have some companies managed to set up innovation partnerships in a matter of days or weeks in the context of the COVID-19 crisis?**

How have they managed to fast-track the partnership process, and even deliver results within weeks? How are they perceiving and managing risks associated with these rapid partnerships?

We want to learn from these collaborations to enable faster, more efficient, and more widespread partnering to address societal challenges going forward. Collaborative innovation is required to reach all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 17 specifically calls for multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of goals. Yet, these collaborations still happen too little and too slowly, especially when it comes to innovating together. Rapid innovation through partnership is one result of the global COVID-19 crisis that we should harness for the future. As the African proverb says, “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together”. The question facing us right now is how can we go far and fast together?

The innovations that are being developed in response to the COVID-19 crisis may also strengthen the companies’ value creation potential more long term. Companies stand to gain from new products and services, new use cases and markets for technologies, and new partners and collaboration capabilities. Partnerships can also help to build back better, and combine rapid response with long-term systems change.

## VOICES:

*This is a huge technical challenge. In broad terms the companies are taking a development process that would normally take 5-6 years and attempting to deliver within 5-6 weeks, and against the background of distributed teams observing government separation guidelines<sup>4</sup>.*

### Dyson

*It’s the largest combined effort by American manufacturers outside of wartime to do in weeks what would normally take medical device makers months or even years to produce<sup>5</sup>.*

### Ford and GE Healthcare

*It is, quite simply, a wonderful achievement to have gone from first meeting to regulator approval in just ten days. It shows what can be done when universities, industry and hospitals join forces for the national good<sup>6</sup>.*

### Mercedes High Performance Powertrains and University College London

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ttp.com/news/cambridge-companies-unite-to-meet-the-covid-19-ventilator-challenge>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amyfeldman/2020/04/08/how-old-school-manufacturers-learned-to-make-ventilators---virtually-overnight/#7f1ae6e65063>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theengineer.co.uk/mercedes-ucl-cpap-breathing-aid/>

# INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Most innovation partnerships to tackle the COVID-19 crisis to date focus on the medical emergency. Fewer actions have been observed in the domains of livelihoods and learning. All three domains can benefit from more collaborative innovation.

## LIVES



Most existing examples of rapid innovation partnerships address the immediate health response to the virus.

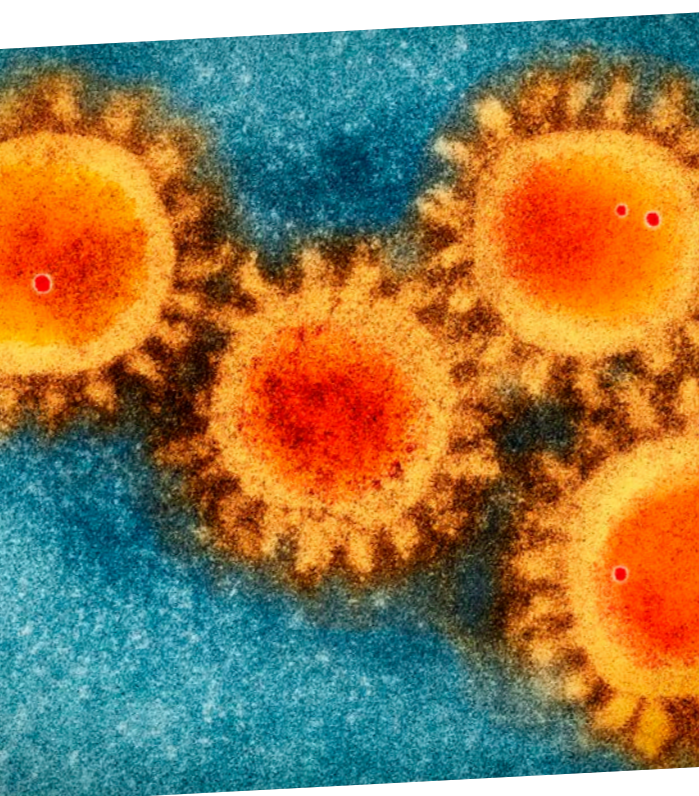
A **vaccine** against the novel coronavirus will enable health systems to protect citizens, and make social distancing unnecessary. Hundreds of research teams are currently hunting for that solution.

GSK, as one of the world's largest vaccine manufacturers, has already established several innovation partnerships to combine its own solutions with complementary ones. One of these has involved joining forces with Sanofi, one of its main competitors (see box below). In another partnership, it invested in a biotech startup to accelerate existing and identify new anti-viral antibodies that could be used as therapeutic or preventative options for COVID-19.

Opportunities for collaborative innovation also exist around the development of **effective therapies** against the disease.

For example, Johnson & Johnson is also “working closely with global partners to screen its library of antiviral molecules to accelerate the discovery of potential COVID-19 treatments.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.jnj.com/johnson-johnson-announces-collaboration-with-u-s-department-of-health-human-services-to-accelerate-development-of-a-potential-novel-coronavirus-vaccine>



## GSK AND SANOFI PARTNER TO DEVELOP A COVID-19 VACCINE

The collaboration between GSK and Sanofi illustrates how bringing together complementary capabilities can accelerate innovation. Each company brings in a critical ingredient for a potential vaccine. Sanofi contributes its S-protein COVID-19 antigen, which is based on recombinant DNA technology. This technology has produced an exact genetic match to proteins found on the surface of the virus. GSK contributes its proven pandemic adjuvant technology. The use of an adjuvant can be of particular importance in a pandemic situation since it may reduce the amount of vaccine protein required per dose, allowing more vaccine doses to be produced and therefore contributing to protect more people. Rick A. Bright, Ph.D., Director at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), states: "Strategic alliances among vaccine industry leaders are essential to make a coronavirus vaccine available as soon as possible."<sup>8</sup>



**Ventilators and respirators** exist, but new innovations - creating better solutions, applying new materials, or speeding up production - are enhancing responses to the needs of COVID-19 patients.

- Dyson has worked with The Technology Partnership to design and build an entirely new ventilator. The CoVent is designed to address the specific clinical needs of COVID-19 patients<sup>9</sup>.
- Ford has improved mainly the efficiency of respirator production in its collaboration with 3M. The new design employs existing parts from both partners, thus enabling partners to produce 100,000 units per week<sup>10</sup>.
- South Africa's National Ventilator Project (NVP), a joint initiative between government and business, aims to build 10,000 ventilators in South Africa by the end of June. Partners plan to use only parts and materials that are readily available, thus easing supply chain constraints<sup>11</sup>.
- Engineers of Mercedes High Performance Powertrains and University College London (UCL) as well as clinicians of UCL hospital have together developed a breathing aid. This respiratory device helps coronavirus patients with serious lung infections to breathe and avoid having to use 'invasive mechanical ventilation'<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/daviddawkins/2020/03/26/billionaire-james-dyson-confirms-initial-order-of-10000-ventilators-will-made-in-britain-at-raf-hullavington/#40600e961660>

<sup>10</sup> <https://techcrunch.com/2020/03/24/ford-and-3m-ge-and-the-uaw-to-build-respirators-ventilators-and-faceshields-for-coronavirus-fight/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.co.za/south-africa-ventilators-2020-4>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.theengineer.co.uk/mercedes-ucl-cpap-breath-aid/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sanofi.com/en/media-room/press-releases/2020/2020-04-14-13-00-00>

- An Italian doctor adapted a snorkelling mask by French sports retailer Decathlon for use on critical care wards. The Italian 3D printing company Isinnova printed the valve that allowed the mask to be connected to a traditional hospital respirator, based on the digital design files supplied by Decathlon<sup>13</sup>. Decathlon Indonesia decided to remove all the Easybreath masks from sales in order to dedicate them to medical needs.

**Face shields and masks** are short in supply in many places, and badly needed to keep health care providers and their patients safe

- In Bangladesh, YY Ventures collaborates with local labs like EMK Center and Wizkit to produce face shields using 3D printers. The company received the design blueprint from a Philippine partner MFI. In one week the partners went from prototyping to distribution. They are now selling the face shields to hospitals and organizations as a social business.

**Tracing apps** can enable governments to soften and focus social distancing measures. Cell phones with the required app can connect via bluetooth and save information about contacts that can later help to trace potentially infected persons.

- Apple and Google, leaders in the market for cell phone operating systems, are collaborating to enable contact tracing across technical platforms, while maintaining strong protections around user privacy<sup>14</sup>.

**Surveillance** and outbreak modelling is another ingredient to controlling the spread of the disease.

- Vodafone and other telecoms operators are providing governments with heat maps showing how population movements change before and after containment through aggregated and anonymised data. Besides providing governments with relevant data, mobile provider Vodafone has worked with the University of Southampton to create a dashboard enabling governments to model how COVID-19 might propagate in different scenarios<sup>15</sup>.

## LIVELIHOODS



Fewer partnership examples are available on innovation to support livelihoods. The needs in this space are much broader, ranging from SME support to food value chains and unemployment safety nets.

- In Brazil, the three biggest private banks, Itau-Unibanco, Banco do Brasil and Santander, participate with the national government in a national emergency response fund. Clients whose annual revenue is less than R\$ 10 million (£1.5 million) can get credit to finance up to 2 months of their payroll. 85% is financed by the Brazilian treasury and 15% by the banks<sup>16</sup>. This innovative setup helps SMEs survive and preserve jobs.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.isinnova.it/easy-covid19-eng/>

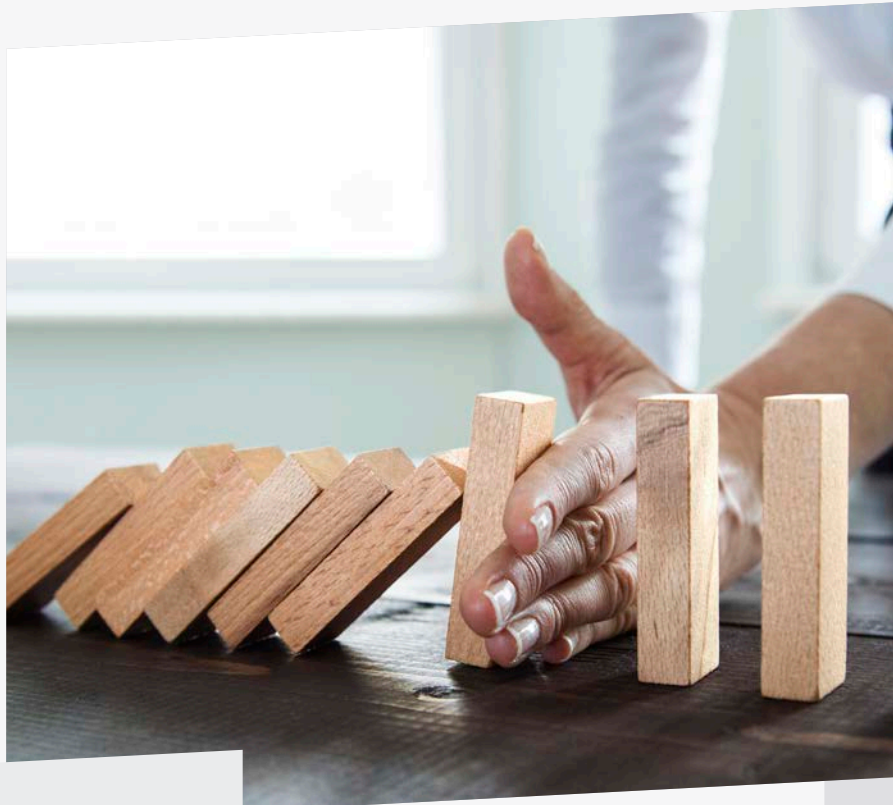
<sup>14</sup> <https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2020/04/apple-and-google-partner-on-covid-19-contact-tracing-technology/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/7cfad020-78c4-11ea-9840-1b8019d9a987>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.santander.com/en/press-room/news/bradesco-itau-and-santander-join-emergency-credit-facility-to-fund-pay-roll-of-micro-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises>



- Small shops are often the main source of supply during lockdown, and thus a potential hotspot for infections. Deliveries can help keep customers at home. Bavaria, Colombia's AB InBev beer, has launched Tienda Cerca, a digital platform which provides access to over 40 thousand small neighbourhood shops across the country.<sup>17</sup> Customers can find the nearest shop and order what they need to their homes. This service also helps show owners to keep selling. Bavaria together with other consumer good companies is providing shop owners with bicycles, delivery bags and waist wallets.



## BUILD BACK BETTER WITH POSITIVE ENERGY+

One example to “build back better” is the Innovation Challenge Positive Energy+. The challenge is intended to support start-ups in developing projects from the perspective of energy and in the fields of environmental sustainability, mobility, social impact, digitisation, and telecommunications. The initiative was launched by Spanish energy companies Enagás, Red Eléctrica, CLH, Iberdrola, BP, EIT InnoEnergy and Acciona. Others have joined the platform, including Capital Energy and Disa, as well as organizations supporting startups.

Within just 13 days, the Positive Energy+ platform has received 396 project proposals. The participating companies have joined forces to contribute, through their corporate venturing teams and innovation, to Spain's economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Each of the companies will support at least one start-up with financing and/or by offering their innovation, investment, commercial development and structural tools to them.<sup>18</sup>

Other opportunities for “rapid innovation” to support livelihoods might include:

- Financial solutions for struggling SMEs and farmers, including credit and insurance (e.g. in collaboration with government)
- Digital solutions for SMEs and farmers to stay connected to markets
- Mechanisms to keep food value chains intact and support small farmers (e.g., by using remote sensing and creating transparency in supply chains, also by digitizing money flows)
- Income opportunities for those in need (e.g. by creating digital job opportunities, including micro business process outsourcing)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.bavaria.co/tienda-cerca-bavaria>

<sup>18</sup> <https://startupsreal.com/energy-companies-promote-the-positive-energy-initiative-to-alleviate-the-impact-of-coronavirus-through-innovation/>

## LEARNING



Switching from traditional school to homeschooling for millions of pupils around the world has been a major challenge.

- In Spain, Cisco and IBM joined forces a day previous to the lockdown to be able to help schools transition to Cisco Webex virtual classrooms with a number of tools which facilitate the work between teachers and students. IBM offered support to the teaching community and 400 IBM professionals volunteered in Spain to provide tutoring for teachers so they could make the most of the platform<sup>19</sup>.

Learning opportunities are also needed for everyone who is adapting to the new situation, including health care workers, SMEs, and people who have lost their jobs or income. Innovative digital solutions could help the organizations leading these learning journeys reach people effectively.

## ONLINE LEARNING BY EDUCATE ALL

The Educate All initiative by microlearning platform EdApp and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) provides learning opportunities via free, high-quality online education. EdApp provides the platform and UNITAR contributes its microlearning courseware. The initiative is geared toward individuals and small businesses around the world, including in developing countries. It will provide free access to courses on the EdApp mobile learning platform for millions of people globally to advance their knowledge of sustainability, leadership, business skills, and more. The initiative invites other partners to join the cause and contribute courseware relevant to upskilling a global audience to the Educate All library.<sup>20</sup>



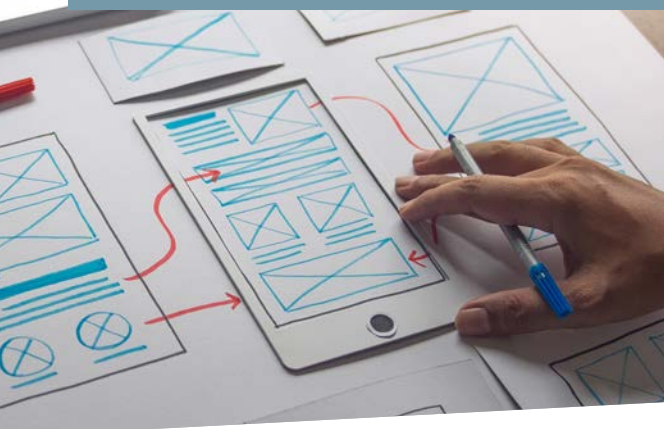
<sup>19</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ibm-y-cisco-comprometi-dos-con-las-comunidades-andreu-vilamitjana/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.edapp.com/blog/our-journey-to-impact-edapp-unitar-launch-educateall/>

# EMERGING PRACTICES TO SPEED UP COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION

In the experience of Business Fights Poverty, there are 5 factors that underpin effective partnerships<sup>21</sup>, and the urgency of the current crisis has brought these to the fore: a compelling and shared *why* - a shared goal for the partnership; clarity about *who* needs to be around the table; a laser focus on *what* needs to be created, and by *when*; and a process - the *how* - that is based on authentic co-creation.

*High-level leadership helps to speed up decision making and access to internal resources.*



To innovate rapidly, the whole partnership process (as documented, for example, in TPI's "SDG Partnership Guidebook"<sup>22</sup>) needs to be fast-tracked. There is no time for deep analysis and to build trust through repeated interactions. Rather, partners are taking an "agile" approach, starting quickly and aligning as they go. While experience with this approach is still fresh and emerging, here are some early insights on how partners have made innovation partnerships work rapidly.

In the face of so huge and urgent a threat, **risk tolerance** is much higher and the usual procedures within organisations have been fast tracked or bypassed altogether. Committees, finance directors and legal teams have signed off with far less information than they would usually demand, or CEOs have simply made the decision on behalf of the organisation.

**High-level leadership** helps to speed up decision making and access to internal resources. A joint task force typically drives the innovation process. For the GSK and Sanofi partnership, the companies set up a Joint Collaboration Task Force, co-chaired by the heads of the vaccine divisions in order to mobilise resources from both companies to look for every opportunity to accelerate the development of the candidate vaccine.

<sup>21</sup> <https://businessfightspoverty.org/articles/five-golden-rules-of-successful-partnerships/>

<sup>22</sup> Can be accessed at <http://tpiglobal.org/guidebook>

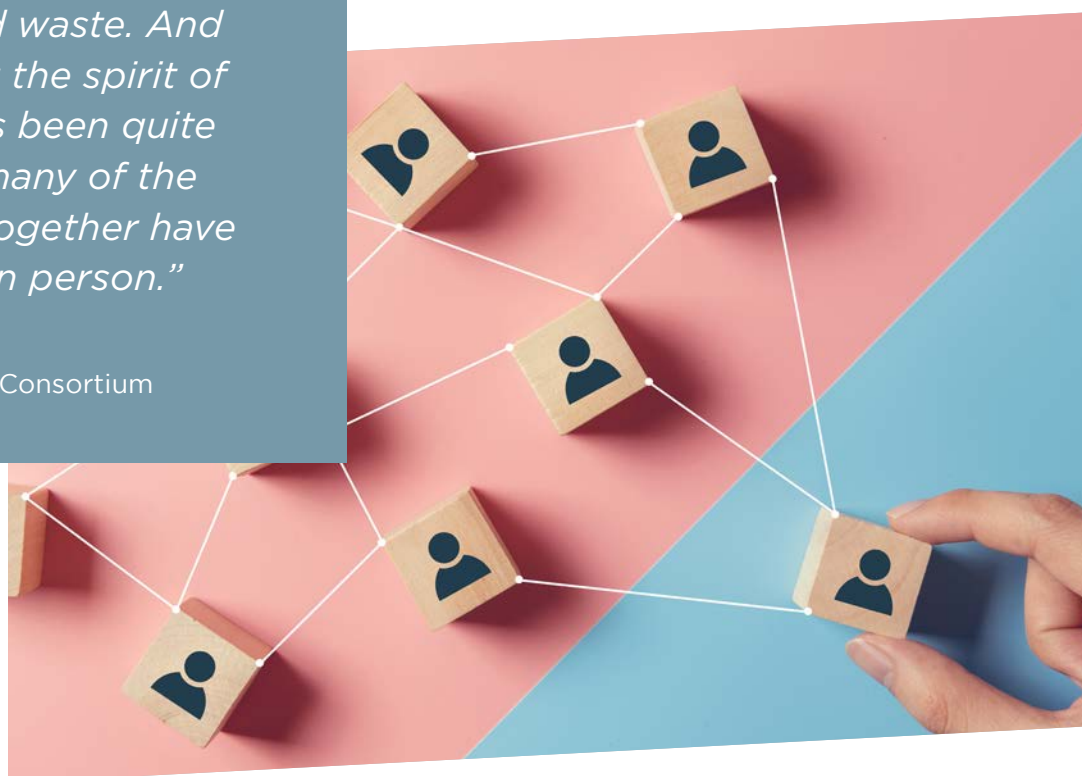
The crisis creates a '**laser focus**' – a simultaneous prioritisation by all relevant players. Ordinarily, everyone is juggling multiple priorities. Working and aligning across organizations can thus take a long time. An emergency situation also allows legal and administrative processes to be fast tracked in some cases. For example, while getting FDA clearance for a medical device typically takes 100 days or longer, emergency use authorizations can be issued in 24 hours.<sup>23</sup>

*“We’ve realised that in our daily business life there is an awful lot of noise and waste. And basically, when you’re faced with a huge challenge and huge national responsibility you’ve just got to get rid of all that noise and waste. And we’ve found that the spirit of collaboration has been quite extraordinary - many of the people coming together have never even met in person.”*

**Dick Elsy**, leader of the VentilatorChallengeUK Consortium

Teams have also put in **extraordinary effort**. UCL’s Professor Tim Baker recounts: “From being given the brief, we worked all hours of the day.”<sup>24</sup> Other teams also worked day and night to speed up development. While this level of effort is not sustainable, partnerships in normal times might also make use of “innovation sprints” to condense progress into short time windows.

Working with organisations with similar values for the **common good** can speed up the negotiation process. For example, with the GSK and Sanofi partnership, both organisations have a long history of making vaccines available to people around the world and they are committed to making any vaccine that is developed through this collaboration affordable through mechanisms that offer fair access.



<sup>23</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amyfeldman/2020/04/08/how-old-school-manufacturers-learned-to-make-ventilators---virtually-overnight/#40db82015063>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.theengineer.co.uk/mercedes-ucl-cpap-breathing-aid/>



# COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION MODELS

Innovation partnerships have used a variety of models to organize collaboration. These can be categorized into individual lead, collaborative alliance, and innovation platform.

**Individual lead:** One organization drives the process, the partner(s) support. For example, Microsoft has made computing capability available to immunotherapy startup ImmunityBio. Combining massive amounts of graphics processing power meant that a model of the spike protein of the COVID-19 virus was available within just days, instead of the months it would have taken previously<sup>25</sup>. When the support is about providing resources and capabilities, the structure of the collaboration can look much like an in-kind grant.

## CORPORATE IMPACT VENTURING

Corporate Impact Venturing is a special approach to providing this kind of support.<sup>26</sup> Here, the company invests in a venture with a promising solution with the intent to accelerate and scale up innovation. Investing in an innovation partner can make sense where there is a strategic interest in acquiring the capabilities of the partner and the perspective of long-term collaboration. Investments can be made directly by the company, or, if available, via a self-managed fund or a third party fund.

GSK made an equity investment in Vir Biotechnology, Inc. of \$250 million.<sup>27</sup> Both companies are collaborating to research and develop solutions for coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The collaboration brings together Vir's antibody platform with GSK's expertise in functional genomics. Together, the companies aim to develop therapeutic or preventative options and conduct research on vaccines to help address the current COVID-19 pandemic and future outbreaks. The equity investment shows a clear commitment to long-term collaboration and strengthens Vir's ability to accelerate and scale up its approach.

<sup>25</sup> <https://techcrunch.com/2020/04/01/immunitybio-and-microsoft-team-up-to-precisely-model-how-key-covid-19-protein-leads-to-infection/>

<sup>26</sup> Tewes-Gradl, Schmidt, Leahy Wright, Sinha (2019) Inclusive Business: Make or Buy? Corporate Impact Venturing at the Base of the Pyramid. Berlin: Endeava.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.gsk.com/en-gb/media/press-releases/gsk-and-vir-bio-technology-enter-collaboration-to-find-coronavirus-solutions/>

*High-level leadership helps to speed up decision making and access to internal resources. A joint task force typically drives the innovation process.*



**Collaborative alliance:** Two or more organizations bring together complementary capabilities in a joint innovation process. For example, Apple and Google will both have to align and upgrade their existing operating systems to interact for the tracing apps. Sanofi and GSK provide different parts of a potential vaccine solution. The COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator is a partnership that aims to bring pharmaceutical companies and expert academic institutions into coordinated research programs.<sup>28</sup> Vodafone has smart phone data and the University of Southampton modelling capacity. In these alliances, the relevant resources that need to go into the collaboration as well as the policies for using the results need to be clearly defined in a partnership agreement.

**Innovation platforms:** Hackathons and innovation challenges create a platform to crowdsource innovation. These platforms can be hosted by one or several players. Roche Canada launched a COVID-19 Open Innovation Challenge in Canada to identify and support promising solutions to COVID-19 related challenges<sup>29</sup>. It generated over 800 high quality submissions over 2 weeks. In Spain, a number of energy companies have together set up Positive Energy+,

a challenge to support “build back better” initiatives with an energy angle. Hackster.io, an open-source technology company, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have partnered to launch the “COVID-19 Detect and Protect Challenge” to create open-source technology that developing countries can leverage in the fight against this global pandemic<sup>30</sup>.

Innovation platforms generate ideas and potential partners quickly. Follow up to the actual competition needs to be planned thoroughly to reap results. This includes a clear concept and resource plan for supporting the winners, guidance on the approach to collaboration with the winning companies and internal structures to support it. If the platform is organized by a consortium, any joint follow-up activities as well as exit strategies need to be prepared.

Existing platforms can also be leveraged to provide innovative solutions collectively. The Toilet Board Coalition is a business-led platform to address the global sanitation crisis supporting market-led solutions. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the platform is pursuing a comprehensive action plan to make sanitation options available to all. This includes advancing sanitation innovations such as health monitoring.<sup>31</sup>

28 GSK will contribute by making compounds from its libraries available for screening for activity against COVID-19.” <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/TheOptimist/Articles/coronavirus-mark-suzman-therapeutics>

29 <https://www.rochecanada.com/en/funding-opportunities/covid-19.html>

30 <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2020/undp-and-hackster-io-partner-to-launch-a-global-innovation-chall.html>

31 <https://mailchi.mp/toiletboard/toilet-board-coalition-announces-covid-19-action-plan>

# RISKS OF RAPID INNOVATION PARTNERSHIPS

## AND HOW TO MANAGE THEM

In responding to the crisis, the **risk perception** around collaboration has changed dramatically. The risk of not doing anything has become clear and overwhelming. The need to launch “perfect” has also shifted.

Nevertheless, going into the partnership quickly and collaborating rapidly comes with some risks. Necessarily, not every step can be done as thoroughly as when there is more time, opening the door to mistakes. The haste might lead to missed opportunities

**IP issues:** In the normal course of developing a partnership, some form of agreement would set out clear roles and responsibilities of partners, as well as protocols that cover areas such as communication, intellectual property, and how to enter and leave a partnership. Without some simple form of agreement that covers at least some of these areas, there is a risk of creating a vacuum of ownership of the products of the partnership.

**Failure to learn and evaluate:** the cost of moving straight to action includes a high risk of failure to observe, learn and reflect. It also creates a risk of failing to document the reasons behind decisions - which, if they turn out to be the wrong decisions, could leave individuals exposed after the fact.

**False assumptions:** Where the problem is not clearly defined and understood,

the intended beneficiaries - and especially the most vulnerable - should be involved in the needs assessment. Simply “getting things done” might end up producing solutions that don’t fit.

**Duplication of effort:** With many players moving at the same time, we take the risk of duplicative efforts and competing solutions. While not everyone can collaborate and coordinate, and a multiplicity of approaches makes sense to produce solutions faster, actors should keep a wider perspective and observe who else is acting in the space.

**Treating symptoms not causes:** A focus on rapid response goes along with the risk of shallow interventions, not tackling the causes of problems effectively. For example, rushing to provide credit to farmers may expose them even more to risks as long as their challenges to access markets are not addressed. Short term actions should also incorporate a longer-term perspective and integrate assumptions about “building back better”.

**Measuring impact:** While the focus is rightly on delivery, how can we ensure that the measures being delivered are being effective? Without some basic impact metrics there is a risk that a lot of time, effort and money will be wasted. Without data, it will also be harder to draw longer-term lessons from the current situation.

# DO'S AND DON'TS

## FOR EACH PARTNER

- 1.** As a leader, communicate clearly that the partnership is an organisational priority, assign resources and give staff permission to work differently and, where necessary, question existing practices that are slowing down action.
- 2.** Agree internally on fast-track decision-making: who absolutely must sign off before commitments are made?
- 3.** Devolve decision-making down as much as possible to empower your staff to just get on with it.
- 4.** Have a senior level team meet each day for 20 minutes to be able to make rapid higher-level decisions and make sure these are properly recorded.
- 5.** Clarify internally what you want to get out of the partnership - is it purely philanthropic for the public good? Or are there business objectives that must be met? Be transparent with your partners on your needs.
- 6.** Bring your lawyers in at the beginning so they are fully up-to-speed, part of the team, and can be creative in facilitating rather than shutting down action.
- 7.** Look after your staff! They may be working double their usual time and under considerable stress. They need to feel valued, and may potentially need mental health support (including ensuring breaks from the work).
- 8.** Be open with your partners about your limitations - let them know early on if you're struggling to deliver on a commitment or staff are getting overtired.
- 9.** Look beyond the short-term engagement and consider opportunities to "build back better" and to strengthen your organizational capabilities.

## AS A PARTNERSHIP

- 1.** Look around to see what similar initiatives may be going on and see if you can join those efforts rather than creating something new.
- 2.** Create a simple, clear, compelling vision and objectives partners can fully commit to (and be willing to adapt or add to it as further opportunities come up).
- 3.** Agree ground rules, for example around confidentiality, around not using knowledge gained to be used outside of the partnership and around IP.
- 4.** Get going and iterate quickly (including bringing in additional partners with essential resources).
- 5.** Prioritise pace over perfection (while being clear where there are, for example, medical standards that absolutely must be met).
- 6.** Put in place rapid communication approaches - e.g. 20 minutes assigned at the beginning or end of every day. Use instant messaging to communicate continually during the day. Keep meetings as short as possible.
- 7.** Record how and why decisions are made and what information was used to inform those decisions: this will be valuable for those directly involved in the partnership to keep up to speed, as well as for those reviewing it later.
- 8.** Share and celebrate success!



# RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES, TOOLS AND ORGANISATIONS

BSR (2018). **Private Sector Collaboration for Sustainable Development**

[https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR\\_Rockefeller\\_Private-Sector\\_Collaboration\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Development.pdf](https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_Rockefeller_Private-Sector_Collaboration_for_Sustainable_Development.pdf)

Business Fights Poverty (2018). **Advocating Together for the SDGs**

<https://businessfightspoverty.org/articles/download-centre-133-register/>

Business Fights Poverty (2019). **Building Transformational Partnerships**

<https://businessfightspoverty.org/articles/download-centre-151-register/>

Davis, S. and Gibbons, E. (2017). **A Portfolio Approach to Social Innovation Partnerships**

[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/a\\_portfolio\\_approach\\_to\\_social\\_innovation\\_partnerships](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/a_portfolio_approach_to_social_innovation_partnerships), SSIR

Dreier, L., Nabarro, D., and Nelson, J. (2019). **Systems Leadership for Sustainable Development: Strategies for Achieving Systemic Change**,

Harvard Kennedy School  
<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/centers/mrcbg/files/Systems%20Leadership.pdf>

Feed the Future/USAID - **Practitioner's Guide on partnering for innovation**

<https://www.partneringforinnovation.org/practitionersguide>

**The Global Innovation Fund**

<https://www.globalinnovation.fund/>

**GSMA Mobile for Development platform**

<https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/>

**GSMA AI for Impact platform**

<https://www.gsma.com/betterfuture/aiforimpact>

**GSMA Ecosystem Accelerator**

<https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/ecosystem-accelerator/>

IDEO **"Power and Potential of Design in a Global Crisis"**

<https://www.ideo.com/page/the-power-and-potential-of-design-in-a-global-crisis>

**ii2030 methodology for collaboratively prototyping systems change**

[www.ii2030.com](http://www.ii2030.com)

# RESOURCES

## CONTINUED

The Partnering Initiative and UN DESA  
**Partnership Accelerator, The SDG  
Partnership Guidebook,**  
[https://thepartneringinitiative.org/  
publications/toolbook-series/the-sdg-  
partnerships-guidebook/](https://thepartneringinitiative.org/publications/toolbook-series/the-sdg-partnerships-guidebook/)

**The Partnering Initiative: Rapid  
Partnering project**  
[https://thepartneringinitiative.org/  
covid-19/](https://thepartneringinitiative.org/covid-19/)

Tewes-Gradl, C., Schmidt, A., Leahy  
Wright, M., and Sinha, L. (2019)  
**Inclusive Business: Make or Buy?  
Corporate Impact Venturing at the  
Base of the Pyramid. Berlin: Endeava.**  
[https://endeava.org/wp-content/  
uploads/2019/05/corporate-impact-  
venturing.pdf](https://endeava.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/corporate-impact-venturing.pdf)

Tewes-Gradl, C., Worthing, S. and  
Menden, A. (2016) **Capturing BoP  
Markets: Corporate Impact Venturing  
with Inclusive Businesses. Berlin:  
Endeva**  
[https://endeava.org/wp-content/  
uploads/2016/03/endeava\\_civ.pdf](https://endeava.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/endeava_civ.pdf)

**World Economic Forum (2015).  
Collaborative Innovation,**  
[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_  
Collaborative\\_Innovation\\_report\\_2015.  
pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Collaborative_Innovation_report_2015.pdf)