Guidelines for Giving & Receiving Feedback

Openness is a key partnering principle and it is important in helping to create a congenial environment for building innovation from diverse perspectives and creating opportunities for breakthrough and for transformative change. Experience suggests that unless openness is actively promoted as a principle, the underlying interests (wishes, needs, concerns) of partners tend to become 'hidden agendas', which undermine the partnership and compromise its potential for change. Openness also provides a foundation for collaborative problem solving, thereby promoting the new thinking and shared risk-taking.

One of the methods of creating openness is to create a culture of giving and receiving feedback.

Feedback is defined as the following:

- *Information about reactions to a product or a person's performance of a task that can be used as a basis for improvement and / or*
- *The modification of a process or system made as a result of / effect from an action – for example, in a biochemical pathway or a behavioural response*

Purposes of Feedback in a Partnering Context

For many of us, feedback is associated largely with job performance reviews and its wider potential is not explored as fully as it might be. However, in a partnering context, feedback can have several important purposes and, ultimately, significantly strengthen the partnership. These include:

Purpose or Feedback:	Useful when:	Type of feedback:
To promote partnering principles	The responses/reactions/behaviours of one or several partners jeopardise one or more partnering principles, it may be appropriate to give feedback to those partners to explain the impact they are having	That enables partners to explore and reflect on their behaviour and responses, and their impact on others and on the partnership
To set and evolve norms and standards	A partner violates, by-passes or shows disrespect to the ground rules or norms of behaviour that they have agreed to follow	That is designed to remind partners of the guidelines/norms they have set to optimise the partnership's value and consider any potential revisions
To enhance programme quality	There are things to be learnt from the work / process in terms of design or working arrangements and/or when the implementation is critiqued	That focuses on programme outcomes and how far it is achieving its explicit and implicit purpose(s) and / or its ambition to bring about transformative change.
To express individual responses / views	One or more partner is happy with, or disconcerted by, a particular intervention or action	That is open to allow the expression of feelings, emotions and intuitive responses as distinct from rational, logical thinking
To review specific milestones or events	The partnership has reached a turning point and / or it is time for making changes on the back of what has been achieved / completed	That helps to (re)shape the partnership and ensure it is ready for the next phase in terms of both project activities and partnering processes
Any others?		

Tips for Giving Feedback:

1. Focus on **S**ituation, **B**ehaviour and **I**mpact (SBI)[1]
2. Be frank, yet aware that your feedback may generate emotional reactions – hold the space
3. Avoid generalisations – be as specific as possible
4. Do not 'sugar coat', but always give feedback with respect to the person
5. Remember, your feedback is based on your perception, there may be other ways of looking at it
6. Be prepared to use this as a way of deepening and building the relationship
7. Be prepared to reflect on your own feedback (both the content and the way you gave it), if challenged!

> **Situation** is:
> The specific event or circumstance
>
> **Behaviour** is:
> ✓ Observable actions
> ✓ Verbal comments
> ✓ Nonverbal behaviours and signals
> ✓ Mannerisms
>
> **Impact** is:
> ✓ What I (or others) think, feel, or do as a result
> ✓ I felt … I thought …
> ✓ It is not an interpretation or judgment about motivation or intention

Tips for Receiving Feedback:[2]

1. Focus on the purpose of the feedback, it's intent, and the context in which it is given – try to move away from hearing it as simply either 'positive' and 'negative' and regard it all as a learning opportunity
2. Separate the content of the feedback from the person who is giving it – try to move away from your personal feelings about, or relationship with, the person giving the feedback (or the power or authority that the person comes with)
3. Acknowledge your emotional reactions to the feedback – try and understand why you are responding this way – if necessary, give yourself time to step back and reflect further rather than have a 'kee jerk' reaction
4. Value feedback as another perspective – as an interesting addition to your own feedback to yourself. Remember, it is your choice what you take on board and that it may be that the feedback will be more valuable over time
5. Consider, what the feedback suggests that can help you to improve the way your work and will achieve the hoped-for results
6. Try to move away from taking it too personally – consider the wider implications and usefulness of the feedback to lead to greater impact
7. Give yourself permission to be imperfect!

General:

Always think in terms of feedback as a conversation not a monologue by: I

- **Asking** helpful questions (for example asking for clarification or insight)
- **Being open** to / inviting questions
- **Listening** as much as (preferably, more than) talking
- **Giving space** for what has been said to be taken on board / thought about – being silent is OK!
- **Offering** opportunities for follow up / on-going dialogue – making it part of everyday practice

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[1] The SBI model (including material in the box) is taken from CCL (Centre for Creative Leadership)
[2] Receiving feedback appropriately (in a way that is helpful to you as well as helpful for the situation / partnership) is as important as giving feedback appropriately

Prompt Sheet for Reflections – we can always get better…

Reflections on Giving Feedback	
In which contexts do I feel confident / comfortable in giving feedback? Why is this?	How can I work on my feedback skills further? What actions will I take?
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In which contexts do I feel less confident / uncomfortable in giving feedback? Why is this?	What skills, competencies, attitudes do I need to strengthen to help me give effective feedback in these contexts?
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What have a learnt about giving feedback and from the responses to my feedback that can assist me in receiving feedback in future? 	

Reflections on Receiving Feedback:
What has been my experience of receiving feedback in general? In a partnering context?
When have I found it most useful? Why is this?
When reactions did I have to receiving feedback – both when it was and when it was not useful?
How easy have I found it to receive all feedback as 'positive' (in the sense that I could see that it has been given with good intent and it has helped me to learn and change)? What gets in the way?
How can I help myself work through the challenges I have had in receiving feedback?
How can I use my experiences of receiving feedback to assist me in giving feedback more appropriately to others?