

A Stronger Alliance: Cities Alliance Members' Partnership Strategy

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Final

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Contents

1.	Context	7
2.	The added value of partnering	9
3.	Baseline: where we are now	12
4.	The Big Opportunity	15
5.	Embracing an agile Alliance model	18
6.	Members' Compact.....	21
7.	Further strengthening the partnership	23
8.	Implementation and monitoring.....	29
9.	Appendices	31

Executive summary

Introduction

Cities Alliance is an effective global partnership for poverty reduction and the promotion of cities in sustainable development. This strategy contends that, by becoming a more agile, collaborative and innovative Alliance, there is great opportunity to further scale its impact to play a key role in the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goal for cities, SDG 11. At the same time, it has the potential to 'shift the modality', to aspire to be a 'model partnership' demonstrating best practice in global collaboration in line with the spirit of SDG 17.

This partnership strategy establishes a baseline for Cities Alliance partnership working drawn from member surveys and interviews. It sets out key, common principles for partnership and recommends a series of practical actions to ensure the Cities Alliance partnership functions at its very best and all members benefit from the emergence of a positive and creative partnering culture. A template implementation plan is provided in the appendices, setting out key action points with space to complete timeframes and enablers.

A respected Alliance made up of 33¹ engaged member organisations representing a range of sectors, Cities Alliance is well positioned, perhaps even uniquely so, to combine the complementary strengths of its members to achieve its mission of a world characterised by sustainable cities without slums. It has many strengths, but it is not yet capitalising fully on the opportunities provided by partnership working.

Health check survey results

An independent member survey and interview series examining the health of the global partnership revealed good levels of trust, a sense that members feel valued and, in turn, value the Cities Alliance as global platform for action, an 'honest-broker' focussed on the role of cities in sustainable development. The essential building blocks are present. There was also a palpable sense of ambition, optimism and a willingness to engage, coupled with some understandable nervousness about what more proactive partnership working may entail for members.

The survey revealed areas for further development to enable the partnership to reach its full potential, ranging from promoting transparency and tackling competition among members head on, to more explicitly supporting members to be ambassadors for Cities Alliance's work within and external to their own organisations.

Developing an agile Alliance model

Cities Alliance has undergone major changes in governance in the past two years, considered to be positive by the membership and the Secretariat staff. However, the changes raise questions as to the intended nature of the partnership. Is Cities Alliance primarily an *institution*: a body, an actor in its own right, building a work programme and representing its members with a distinct voice of its own? Or is it first and foremost a platform for partnership, playing a facilitating role in connecting its members to exchange knowledge, collaborate, innovate and implement? This is a fundamental question not just for the membership, but for the Secretariat, whose staff currently fulfil a valued role in managing the Cities Alliance work programme and its operations.

This strategy recommends that Cities Alliance can and should act both as an *institution* and a platform for partnership – indeed its four business lines require just such a flexible approach. Both depend upon an engaged and proactive membership to reach full potential and the Secretariat must play an important supporting role in each. In both cases, it must be agile, playing a horizon-scanning and connecting role to take advantage of the current window of opportunity, access available funds relevant to its mission and promote the role of cities in sustainable development.

Accordingly, a three tier model is set out, delineating Core (Tier 1) Additional Strategic (Tier 2) and Platform Activity (Tier 3) as follows:

¹ Membership in May 2016

Table: The Cities Alliance Three Tier Model

Tier 1: Core Activity	Tier 2: Additional Strategic	Tier 3: Platform Activity
Work programme approved by Management Board, based on the Medium Term Strategy approved by Assembly. Can be CA-Sec or member-lead.	Additional (non-core) projects identified through coalescence of member interest	Activity/in-country partnerships facilitated by Cities Alliance Secretariat and implemented by members.
Primarily funded by core membership contributions, and augmented by non-core where possible.	Funded primarily through a mix of core, additional member contributions and/or other sources, approved by the Board.	Work programme set up, funded, and managed outside of Secretariat annual work plan. Minimal staff time. Learning is fed back and tracked.
Fundraising focus tied to Medium Term Strategy. Core resources raised from regular member contributions and strategic membership growth	Fundraising focus should be on encouraging members to proactively pool resources and identify overlaps where possible. Innovation Labs ² will support this. Local funder engagement roundtables could also play a part for certain projects.	Fundraising focus on trialling and developing local funder engagement roundtables, involving non-member interested investors as well as implementing members present on the ground.

The third tier, (Platform) presents an opportunity for Cities Alliance to grow its impact on the ground, access additional funding and fully capitalise on its diverse network. Multi-stakeholder platforms form an essential part of the infrastructure that is necessary to scale up collaboration for Agenda 2030. Cities Alliance is very well placed to grow its capacity here, and this strategy recommends that the platform role is consciously prioritised and developed.

Recognising that the Secretariat currently plays a valued and knowledgeable coordinating and facilitating role, yet members are keen to take a more proactive, leadership role where capacity allows, a flexible approach should be taken as appropriate to the needs of each project.

A new Members' Compact

A central recommendation of this strategy is for the creation of a new Members' Compact, enshrining the collaborative ethos of Cities Alliance and making clear how members can act to get the most out of the partnership and maximise value. This should be discussed and agreed by members, and will support the emerging partnership culture members have signalled they are keen to see. The Members' Compact highlights the three core partnering principles of **Transparency, Equity and Mutual Benefit**, describes the desired partnering mindset and sets out specific behaviours that will help members to manage competition issues, seize opportunities for joint-working and act as ambassadors for Cities Alliance where appropriate.

Developing the Cities Alliance Unique Value Proposition (UVP)

To take a full and active role in the New Urban Agenda and implementation of SDGs 11 and 17, as well as the full range of SDGs with relevance to cities, Cities Alliance will need to clearly state its unique value and place alongside other global initiatives. Developing Cities Alliance's unique value proposition (UVP), or 'elevator pitch' in conjunction with members will allow the membership to more clearly communicate the value of the partnership within their organisations and externally, unlocking funding opportunities, supporting institutionalisation and enhancing impact. This strategy recommends a short one to two-page document should be drafted setting

² Innovation Labs promote new collaborative member projects and explore creative joint-funding approaches

out Cities Alliance's ambition, niche and UVP. The four focus areas below, which describe Cities Alliance's role in a way that incorporates the four established business lines but can be clearly communicated externally, should be used to aid this process:

- i. **An effective global platform for partnership**, facilitating coherent strategic interventions, backed by innovative, collaborative projects and programmes within and external to its membership to promote poverty reduction, sustainable development and resilience within cities
- ii. Combining members' voices in a clear and representative way to facilitate **strong advocacy and policy contributions** at a global level
- iii. Acting as an efficient, relevant and thriving **knowledge and innovation exchange** for members
- iv. **Mobilising technical assistance projects on the ground, generating and disseminating learning** from these as well as from members' own activities to catalyse further action

Accelerating engagement with the private sector

Cities Alliance must seize the opportunity to develop its work with the private sector in all its forms, particularly given the increasingly visible and innovative activities being supported by an increasing number of private sector players. In so doing, Cities Alliance can benefit from financial, technical and commercial expertise and support, opening up the possibility of more innovative and impactful projects and programmes to improve the lives of the urban poor. As such, **it is recommended that a private sector working group is set up to accelerate Cities Alliance's work** in this area, building a library of successful cross-sector development partnerships involving the private sector, mapping where Cities Alliance priorities may overlap with those of private sector actors and developing a strategy for engagement.

Practical actions to promote joint-working among members

The establishment of the Members' Compact and clarifying the three tier 'agile' model will provide a sound basis for building a more dynamic, impactful and collaborative Alliance. Drawing on the themes and ideas suggested by members, this strategy identifies further practical actions that can be implemented to strengthen the partnership and promote joint-working. These include:

- Trialling **innovation labs** to promote new collaborative member projects and explore creative joint-funding approaches
- Trialling **local funder engagement 'roundtables'** drawing together non-member organisations with members taking the lead on city-level projects to access additional resources
- Drafting a **fundraising strategy based on the three tier 'agile' model**
- Providing members with more opportunities to meet and build relationships in person, initially through **regional gatherings** to be hosted by willing Alliance member organisations, complemented by **'virtual platforms'** facilitated by the Secretariat
- **Country Programmes and Joint-Work Programmes (JWPs)** deliver high specificity of interest for those involved and should be refined, developed and prioritised
- Agreeing the **level to which Cities Alliance intends to grow its membership**, using the Members' Compact to help filter and select appropriate and willing new members
- Considering **building partnering skills and competencies** for the Management Board and/or the wider membership through a tailored training to which external partners may be invited to maximise relationship building opportunities

Guiding implementation

A simpler version of the health-check survey, carried out at yearly intervals, revisiting the same numerical scores as those used for the baseline will provide a good indication of direction of travel in the medium-term. However, the specific action points recommended in this strategy and in the implementation plan will require oversight from the Management Board, which should track progress against agreed implementation timeframes. Key partnership indicators should be

included in the new Cities Alliance results framework to ensure that progress is measured alongside programmes and impacts.

An inspirational global partnership maximising value for all

The core message of this strategy is one of great opportunity. Cities Alliance benefits from a diverse and engaged membership and a strong and supportive Secretariat. The 2016 Assembly, where members first discussed this draft strategy, showed that members are far from complacent, and would like Cities Alliance to be bold and transformative in its partnership activities. Cities Alliance has all the elements of an inspirational global partnership for sustainable cities that others may learn from, and this document seeks to translate the goodwill and energy of members into concrete actions to strengthen the Alliance and maximise value for all.

1. Context

Since its launch in 1999, Cities Alliance has established itself as a leading global partnership for urban poverty reduction and the promotion of the role of cities in sustainable development. The long-term vision of the Cities Alliance is of a world characterised by sustainable cities without slums. Its mission is for cities to be increasingly characterised by effective local government, active citizenship, and delivering improved and responsive services to the urban poor.

Cities Alliance is first and foremost a membership-based partnership, benefitting greatly from the diversity of the 33³ organisations represented.

The work of the Cities Alliance is governed by its Charter, adopted by all members. This sets three overarching objectives for the organisation:

1. To strengthen and promote the role of cities in poverty reduction and in sustainable development;
2. To capture and strengthen synergies between and amongst members and partners; and
3. To improve the quality of urban development cooperation and lending.

Cities Alliance has undergone significant change in recent years, both in composition and in the expectation of its members. Following revisions to the Cities Alliance Charter in 2010 and more extensively in 2014, a framework was created for a new set of governance arrangements and new constituencies of membership. There has been a subsequent increase in members and a shift to a more democratic process and enabling approach.

Members have clearly articulated the desire for a far more creative and bold approach to the issue of partnership within the Cities Alliance, and the adoption of the Mid-Term Strategy (MTS) 2014-16 signalled the beginning of a concerted effort to strengthen the partnership, one of three key pillars. The MTS states "*Cities Alliance intends to seek out more flexible and innovative mechanisms for engaging members on a more dynamic and regular basis, rather than relying on formal, pre-arranged meetings*".

While the practical governance changes have been implemented in order to facilitate the first Assembly, which took place in April 2016, there is significant work to be done to support a cultural shift and build capabilities to support partnership working. Although, at one level, the concept of a partnership approach is both uncontroversial and uncontested within the Cities Alliance, it is equally the case that it has always been based on an assumed common understanding and philosophy. The partnering approach for Cities Alliance has never been adequately articulated, the implications fully understood and debated and universally adopted.

An increasing focus on cities in international development discourse, the upcoming Habitat III conference and the adoption of the New Urban Agenda mean that the mission and objectives of Cities Alliance have never been more relevant.

The profile of Climate Change is currently high on the global agenda, and cities, more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than at any other time in human history, must consider adaptation and resilience alongside the challenges of mitigation. Whilst daunting, the global challenge of climate change is also a unifying one, and it too requires unprecedented levels of partnership working. Here too is an opportunity for Cities Alliance to play its part.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular Goal 11 focussed on sustainable cities, presents an unparalleled opportunity for Cities Alliance to capitalise fully on the diversity and capacity of its membership, leading efforts to achieve equitable and sustainable urban development at scale. Similarly, Goal 17, which highlights partnership as a key means of implementation, is an opportunity for Cities Alliance to demonstrate the power of global partnership as a means to achieve innovation and impact.

The global development landscape is shifting. In adopting the SDGs, governments confirmed the critical role that the private sector, in all its forms, must play as a partner in development. Multi-

stakeholder partnerships between business, NGOs, the UN and government are considered key. In recent years, attention has shifted to how best to engage the private sector through more innovative partnership arrangements and the pooling of financial, technical and commercial resources. For Cities Alliance, this new philosophy represents a departure from previous thinking and an opportunity to explore new ways of working.

The Cities Alliance Mid-Term Strategy called this the most *'the most opportune time for promoting urban development in the past decades.'* If Cities Alliance is to fully capitalise on this window of opportunity, it must strengthen collaboration between Alliance members and build its ability to work in tandem with other global initiatives. In short, it must become an expert, self-aware and agile partner and promote those same qualities among its membership.

Developing the strategy

The Partnering Initiative ⁴(TPI) was engaged in January 2016 to work with the Alliance membership and Secretariat to strengthen the Cities Alliance Partnership approach, in line with the third pillar of the Mid-Term Strategy. TPI is an independent not-for-profit operating globally, dedicated to driving widespread, effective collaboration between sectors for sustainable development.

TPI designed a tailored partnership health-check survey which was sent to all members in February 2016. Completed by 25 individuals, it was complemented by a series of in-depth member interviews and discussion with the Interim Management Board and Secretariat staff. The recommendations in this strategy are drawn from the findings of the survey, interviews and discussions and a review of key Cities Alliance documents, informed by TPI's decade of experience and research into what makes a successful multi-stakeholder partnership for development.

This strategy is a starting point, a live document with a practical implementation plan that is designed to be contributed to, challenged and refined. The first meeting of Assembly in April 2016 provided the first opportunity for Alliance members to consider this strategy, discuss its implications and shape its final iteration. Initial feedback from members has been reflected in this version, as well as comments from the Secretariat.

Membership

Membership of the Cities Alliance is open to representatives from the following Constituencies:

- National governments;
- Inter-governmental and Multi-lateral Institutions, International or Regional Financial Institutions and Development Banks;
- Associations of Local Governments;
- Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organisations;
- Private Sector and Foundations; and
- Universities, Research Centres and Knowledge Networks.

The Cities Alliance governance structure is composed of three structures:

- The Assembly;
- The Management Board (the Board); and
- The Secretariat.

⁴ <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/>

2. The added value of partnering

a) A note on language

It is important, in any discussion about partnership to define a common language. There are some historical usages of partnering vocabulary which are well established in Cities Alliance as follows:

- Cities Alliance is, in fact, very aptly named. The term 'Alliance' neatly encapsulates the range of collaborative activities members can involve themselves in at differing levels. While the term the 'global partnership' has been adopted to describe the changing nature of Cities Alliance's work, this has potential to cause confusion. An Alliance is a form of partnership working and this document adopts the term 'The Alliance' as shorthand for the Cities Alliance. 'The partnership' (with a deliberate small 'p') is also used as a means of describing the relationship among members.
- 'Partners' has historically been used within Cities Alliance to refer to external, non-members with whom Cities Alliance may work on specific projects. To avoid confusion, this document refers to such organisations as '*external partners*.' It may be helpful to adopt this term in the future.
- Cities Alliance members have occasionally referred to 'Cities Alliance' when in fact they mean the Cities Alliance Secretariat. If the partnership is to be strengthened, it is important that the idea of the members *themselves* making up Cities Alliance is reinforced through the use of language. As such, 'Cities Alliance,' where used in this document, refers to the partnership made up of its members and facilitated by the Secretariat.

b) Cities Alliance rationale for stronger partnership

It has been noted that while the concept of a partnership approach is both uncontroversial and uncontested within the Cities Alliance, it is equally the case that it has always been based on an assumed common understanding and philosophy. While Cities Alliance membership literature defines partnerships as "*active and consistent collaboration between members and partners*" and the Charter states that Cities Alliance is '*primarily a vehicle for partnership*' the partnering approach for Cities Alliance has never been fully articulated.

It is important, therefore, to outline a shared rationale underpinning the Cities Alliance partnership approach. An organisation may choose to partner in order to achieve something it could not achieve on its own, or could achieve more efficiently, more effectively, more sustainably by working with others. Partnership is not an end in itself. Partnerships are (or should be) about combining resources in ways that **maximise value for all**; working together to 'grow the pie' rather than jostling for a larger slice for one's own organisation. Well-managed partnerships have the potential to harness complementary resources to achieve great impact, stimulate innovation through bringing together diverse perspectives, enhancing quality, legitimacy and sustainability.

In the case of Cities Alliance, which draws together a hugely diverse and knowledgeable global membership, the potential for partnership working to enhance the impact of its urban poverty reduction activities is significant. If close collaboration between members can be fully supported and optimised, the urban poor will reap the benefit and the most coherent, integrated and imaginative policy and practice approaches developed and shared more widely.

c) Bedrock principles: Transparency, Mutual Benefit, Equity

The body of research⁵ on global cross-sector partnering has shown that for partners to work effectively with one another, three key principles provide a solid foundation for partnership:

- **Transparency and Trust:** with partners more willing to invest, innovate and take risks

⁵ <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/publications/toolbook-series/the-partnering-toolbook/>

- **Mutual Benefit:** leading to engagement, meaning that members are more likely to sustain and build relationships over time.
- **Equity:** leading to respect for the added value each party brings

While these three principles may evolve over time or be described slightly differently within different collaborations, the breaking-down of any one of these elements can lead to challenges and ultimately to partnerships failing to reach their full potential. It is crucial that all Alliance members are aware of these three ingredients and commit to strengthening them.

d) Transactional-transformational partnership continuum

Multi-actor collaborations can range from simple, transactional relationships to more complex, transformational partnerships. For Cities Alliance, which began as a more transactional 'multi-donor coalition of cities and their development partners', now formally defined in the new Charter as 'a global partnership', it is important to consider what this means.

Below we present the 'relationship spectrum' which sets out a continuum of relationships from 'transactional' to a more transformational 'partnership' relationship. Each end of the spectrum will have its advantages and disadvantages and there is no value judgement intended on where in the spectrum a relationship would best fit – it all depends on context and aims.

Transactional		Transformational
One party decides the programme based on their knowledge / experience	↔	Co-generation based on joint knowledge / experience
One party purchases a service from – or donates to the work of – another	↔	Partners bring together complementary resources (including those such as social capital which may not be 'for sale')
Fixed contractual arrangement with clear activities and outputs decided at beginning	↔	Collaboration agreement with clear agreed expected outcomes, flexibility over how to get there
Limited engagement from parties beyond the contractual arrangement	↔	Stronger engagement and commitment beyond the contractual arrangement
Each party stays in its comfort zone, doing what they normally do	↔	Partners together create new ways of working
One-way accountability	↔	Mutual accountability
Each party expected to have full capacity to deliver	↔	One partner may support capacity development for another to deliver more effectively

Advantages

Transactional		Transformational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-defined and manageable commitment • Lower management and administration costs – requires significantly less investment in relationship building • Clear decision-making authority and unambiguous contractual relationship • Predictable procedures and outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear lines of authority and accountability • Comfortable 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger potential for innovative and transformational solutions • More appropriate/implementable approaches • More adaptable to changing realities • Better-informed decision-making • Stronger commitment from partners – willing to go the extra distance • Wider potential for influence and change • Stronger overall accountability, mutual learning

e) Obstacles to partnering

It is important to appreciate some of the factors that may hold back successful partnering. Partnership thrives on diversity and can result in innovative ideas, BUT diversity can make it challenging to work together in partnership. This 'partnership paradox' may take some concerted work to overcome. Very often, partnerships encounter difficulties when individuals fail to develop a good working relationship, or when the partnership is viewed differently between members.. The importance of personal relationships is of paramount importance, but equally important is the need for a partnership to be institutionalised such that when one key person leaves, progress does not slow or stall completely.

Obstacles to partnering can take many forms as illustrated in the table below. While challenging, most are surmountable with patience, commitment and effort. Even those that test a partnership to the point of breakdown can be used to transform it into something better and stronger. Provided partners (or in this case, Cities Alliance members) remain committed to making the collaboration work, solutions can be found.

Table 1: Common obstacles to partnering

Source of 'obstacle'	Example
Insufficient alignment of interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partnership gives far more benefit to one partner than to others or some partners are not sufficiently committed
Negative sectoral characteristics or prejudice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector: bureaucratic and intransigent • Private sector: greedy, profit-motivated
Personal limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate partnering skills • Insufficient time to put into making a partnership work
Organisational limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicting priorities • Competition (within sector)
Wider external constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political/social/economic climate • Scale of challenge/speed of change • Inability to access external resources

f) Enablers: competencies at individual and organisational level

Partnership working is not taught in schools or as part of organisational induction training. It requires a specific skill set which, in general, is not present when an individual begins working collaboratively and must be consciously developed. TPI's 'Must-Have' competencies for Effective Partnering are provided in Annex 1 for reference.

Equally important is the *organisation's* aptitude and readiness for partnering. Through its work with a range of organisations from across the sectors, TPI has developed the concept of '**Fit for Partnering**'– the degree to which an organisation is *institutionally* set up and capable of achieving its goals through partnering with excellence.

TPI's framework recognises four foundational elements: leadership and strategy; systems and processes; skills and support; and the partnering culture. This strategy does not analyse or focus on the individual Alliance member organisation's fitness for partnering, but the role of institutional culture is important to bear in mind.

3. Baseline: where we are now

During February 2016, members and secretariat staff completed a tailored partnership 'health check' survey designed by The Partnering Initiative inviting them to reflect on the Cities Alliance partnering approach and current state of the relationship among members, while also considering potential for the future.

Surveys were confidential and each member submission carried equal weight in the analysis which was carried out by TPI. The response rate of 78% was very high, particularly given the short space of time available to complete the survey. This is indicative of high-levels of member engagement.⁶

Follow-up interviews were carried out with 15 members.

Key findings from the surveys and interviews are presented below and have been used to inform this strategy.⁷ The overall message was extremely positive. There was a strong willingness to engage and members had given careful thought to their answers. Good levels of member satisfaction were reported⁸, with honesty and recognition of challenges and opportunities for improvement. There was also a clear will to step the partnering approach up a gear and strong ambition emerging tied to SDG 11 and 17, coupled with some nervousness about what a more ambitious, transformational partnering approach may entail for members.

a) Member surveys and interview findings

I. Nature of the partnership

Members were asked to place the Cities Alliance collaboration on a continuum from (1) Purely Transactional to (5) Transformational, also stating where they felt Cities Alliance should aim to position itself in the future:⁹

Transactional-transformational partnership continuum: members' aspirations



- The survey revealed strong member support and will to work towards a more transformational partnership, but concern that any new framework would need to cater for diverse members' capacities and remain inclusive
- There was a clear mandate for the partnership strategy to be ambitious, building on existing strengths of Cities Alliance collaborations and reinforcing bedrock principles

⁶ 25 individual surveys were received, 32 invitations were sent out to full and associate members.

⁷ A Summary report including numerical analysis, charts and further member quotes is available on request from the Secretariat as a separate PowerPoint report

⁸ Members report positive experiences, scoring Cities Alliance highly as a platform for action for their organisation (4.2; benefit in proportion to effort (3.8) and a sense that their contribution is valued (3.7), all rated on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree

⁹ Please refer to page 10 for a full explanation of transactional/transformational approaches. Members were asked: *Collaborations such as the Cities Alliance can range from more transactional membership organisations (where the members pay a fee for a clear set of benefits they gain) to more transformational partnerships (where members take the lead, co-creating opportunities and working together to create maximum value). Where do you see the Cities Alliance currently sitting on that continuum?*

of transparency, equity, value to all. Members were pragmatic, however about the realistic pace of change

- Members clearly value Cities Alliance's perceived neutrality, diverse membership and non-threatening forum with explicit commitment to equity and partnership. These are very positive building blocks for the partnership strategy

"What's important is that the relationships exist within a framework of integrity and honesty. If all parties approach the relationship in such a spirit then there's the potential for a transformational partnership provided that agendas overlap sufficiently"

Partnership health check survey member response

II. Role of the Secretariat

- Members clearly value the role of the secretariat and rated its efficiency, knowledge and professionalism highly
- The question of balance of responsibilities between the Secretariat leading and implementing versus the membership themselves leading and implementing elicited the greatest range in responses
- However, the majority felt that the secretariat should facilitate and connect, and a flexible approach is needed on a project by project basis (In some cases, it may make sense for the Secretariat to lead with an implementing member(s) taking over at a later stage)
- There was recognition that the Secretariat brings immense skill and does not fulfil a purely bureaucratic function. Members do not want to see its current supportive way of working change, but feel there is room for members to take the initiative in certain areas

"The Secretariat is more permanent than the members, so it should take the lead in implementation and representation but this should be flexible depending on the project"

Partnership health check survey member response

III. Members as Partners

- Members have a good level of engagement and clearly see Cities Alliance as a platform for action for their organisation
- This is not always matched by the level of understanding and political will within their own organisations
- Lack of institutionalisation¹⁰ may hamper larger members' ability to access further funds for Cities Alliance to add to the core pot

IV. Relationship among members

- Members were very open to collaboration, pragmatic about factors that may hamper this (particularly a sense of competition over funding or position) and keen to combat them
- Members felt the issue of competition should be tackled head on by acknowledging it is likely to arise and encouraging transparency
- A set of principles for working together could encourage this, and joint-funding forums considered

¹⁰ 'Institutionalisation' defined in the survey to mean members actively routinely feedback information relating to Cities Alliance work to their colleagues, and ensure relevant activities in their organisation are shared with the membership

V. Maximising Value

- There was overwhelming support for Cities Alliance to act as a focal point for implementation of SDG 11 with some citing ambition to set "a living example of SDG 17"
- Accompanying sense that members could do more to spread the word and seize opportunities to collaborate

"Cities Alliance main thrust should of course be the implementation of Goal 11, not forgetting the urban and local government dimension of the other goals, and the partnership goal (Goal 17) for which Cities Alliance should set a living example"

Partnership health check survey member response

VI. Governance

- Members are broadly content with the new governance arrangements which support collaborative working, but there was a sense that the new order of things has yet to be fully tested and this will need to be kept under review
- Some members alluded at interview to the need to keep members not on the Management Board better informed

"Cities Alliance membership is represented at a good level of seniority and influence. Its charter is robust and its SOP provides a good stage for clear and efficient decision making"

Partnership health check survey member response

VII. Joint Work Programmes (JWPs)/Country Programmes Implementation

- Whilst not all members are involved in JWPs and Country programmes, those that are see huge potential if the process can be refined
- There was a marked divide between those members who saw more value in JWPs and those who valued the on the ground impact of the Country Programmes
- It is clear that together, these programmes deliver high specificity of interest for those involved and should be refined, developed and extended

"Country Programs in which the role of organised communities is central have a truly transformative capacity. We think this is very much the comparative advantage of Cities Alliance and should be given high priority"

Partnership health check survey member response

VIII. Funding

- While members agreed that, ideally, the bulk of core funding should come from member contributions, there was recognition that current levels of donation cannot support the work programme
- There was marked concern that an increase in donor earmarked funding could unduly shape Cities Alliance's activities and compromise its independence
- There is a clear need for a new, updated funding model to be outlined in the partnership strategy and elaborated as a separate fundraising strategy
- The idea of funder engagement roundtables (local to projects) received interest and support, but there is still uncertainty around the role members should/can play in helping to leverage funds

"The main thrust for funding Cities Alliance core activities should be membership dues. But there should be a strong push to organise funding roundtables for country and city programs in order that the interventions of the Alliance translate

into tangible programs and projects on the ground. These roundtables should be open to Cities Alliance members but also to all other parties interested in investing in cities"

Partnership health check survey member response

IX. The Future

- Members endorsed the ambition that Cities Alliance should aim to be the go-to platform for donors interested in investing in SDG 11
- They also suggested a wider, more diverse membership should be targeted- with a recognition that the private sector is currently not represented and its potential untapped
- Some members were keen to see the development of an intranet or online facility to enable closer collaboration and identification of overlapping interest areas, while others were keen to see more face-to-face relationship building opportunities
- Members and Secretariat staff completed an analysis of Cities Alliance's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A brief summary is provided in Annex 2 of the Appendices

b) Emerging themes

The overall picture from the member and Secretariat staff surveys and member interviews was one of great potential. Cities Alliance's hugely diverse global membership is recognised as a great strength, and it was felt that members have a good level of opportunity to collaborate. The following themes emerged as key factors to be addressed as part of this partnership strategy:

- Development of a clear **statement of ambition** incorporating the four focus areas for partnership
- Development of **jointly agreed principles** for working together/protocol for engagement
- Clarification of the desired **balance between the Secretariat and Members**
- Development of a plan to address the issue of **competition/transparency** among members
- Options for a **sustainable funding model**
- More opportunities for high-impact, **collaborative action** on the ground and regional, face-to-face and virtual **knowledge sharing**
- **Exploration** of potential to engage the private sector

As a backdrop to these themes, TPI observed shifting emphases between Cities Alliance's identity as an actor in its own right, with its own work programmes and its own voice (which some members endorsed strongly), and its role as a global platform (or '*vehicle for partnership*' as described in the Charter), facilitating connections among members and catalysing wider action, which other members stressed should be developed. This is an important discussion and one that will be teased out and explored in more detail under section 5, which considers the value of a hybrid, agile model.

4. The Big Opportunity

a) SDGs 11 & 17

In combining on the ground, high impact activity in country with global knowledge sharing, Cities Alliance is ideally positioned to act as a platform for delivery of SDG 11 and has a clear opportunity to lead by example on SDG 17. Cities Alliance members also recognise that *all the SDGs* connect to sustainable cities and urban issues, referred to by one member at the April 2016 Assembly as the '*SDG 11+++ challenge.*' Alliance members and Secretariat staff alike feel galvanised by this and, while conscious that changes will need to be made, there is evident willingness to step up to the plate and take a more transformative approach.

b) An appetite for 'disruption'

There was notable appetite from members at the 2016 Assembly to move away from '*business as usual and consider disruptive solutions.*' The diverse membership and perspectives of Cities Alliance lends itself to the generation of new ideas, thus it is important that this strategy creates the right conditions for innovative partnerships and approaches to flourish.

c) Cities Alliance's niche in the urban space

To take a full and active role in the New Urban Agenda and implementation of the SDGs 11 and 17 in particular, Cities Alliance will need to clearly state its 'elevator pitch', its unique value and place alongside other global initiatives. Developing Cities Alliance's unique value proposition (UVP) in conjunction with members will allow the membership to more clearly communicate the value of the partnership within their organisations and externally, unlocking funding opportunities, supporting institutionalisation and enhancing impact. The four focus areas below can help in defining this.

The Cities Alliance membership has recognised four areas where a strong partnership approach supports Cities Alliance's programmes and mission:

- i. Strengthening the Cities Alliance's role as an **effective global platform for partnership**, facilitating coherent strategic interventions, backed by innovative, collaborative projects and programmes within and external to its membership to promote poverty reduction, sustainable development and resilience within cities
- ii. Combining members' voices in a clear and representative way to facilitate **strong advocacy and policy contributions** at a global level
- iii. Acting as an efficient, relevant and thriving **knowledge and innovation exchange** for members
- iv. **Mobilising technical assistance projects on the ground, generating and disseminating learning** from these as well as from members' own activities to catalyse further action

Cities Alliance's four established business lines (Country Programmes, Joint Work Programmes, Catalytic Fund and Communications and Advocacy), which are less easily communicated externally, can be mapped against these four areas as follows, with most contributing to more than one area:

<p>Country Programmes A Cities Alliance Country Programme is a longer-term, programmatic approach to addressing the specific urban development needs of a selected country</p>	<p>(i), (iii), (iv)</p>
<p>Joint Work Programmes Multi-year projects between Cities Alliance members, facilitated by the Cities Alliance Secretariat, that focus on the coordinated development and dissemination of joint knowledge products, such as studies, toolkits and e-learning courses</p>	<p>(i), (ii), (iii), (iv)</p>
<p>Catalytic Fund The Catalytic Fund (CATF) is a Cities Alliance funding instrument which provides grant support for innovative projects that strengthen and promote the role of cities in poverty reduction and in sustainable urban development</p>	<p>(i), (iv)</p>
<p>Communications and Advocacy Communications and Advocacy activities promote Cities Alliance's key messages on urban development in order to encourage policies and behaviour that contribute to achieving the vision of sustainable cities without slums.</p>	<p>(ii)</p>

d) The private sector: a missing piece

The adoption of the SDGs has highlighted the role of the private sector as an essential partner in development. Cities Alliance has not, to date, actively engaged with the private sector, and exploring this would open up many new opportunities.

The past 20 years have been characterised by increasing levels of private sector engagement with issues such as poverty, humanitarian crisis and long-term sustainable development. The acknowledgement, by leading global companies, of the need to work in the developing world with sensitivity to local context, local needs and local institutions has resulted in a multitude of initiatives aimed at reconciling the growth of developing world markets with the improvement of health, housing, welfare and education in low and middle income countries.

This process has been characterised by a shift from a purely philanthropic approach (business donating funds to communities, NGOs and the UN) to one based on the long-term business interests and core resources and competencies of companies, working in partnership with the government, the UN system, international NGOs, local small producers and community-based organisations.

At the same time, donor governments, UN agencies and international NGOs have recognised that long-term solutions to poverty, disease, housing and food-insecurity in developing countries have to include private business – in all its forms – not just through their charitable foundations but also through the impact of their core business activities.

The agreement on a new sustainable development agenda in September 2015 expressed a consensus that the SDGs can only be achieved with involvement from the private sector working alongside governments, parliaments, the UN system and other international institutions, local authorities, civil society, the scientific and academic community – and all people.

The adoption of the SDGs has highlighted the role of the private sector as an essential partner in development

“Private business activity, investment and innovation are major drivers of productivity, inclusive economic growth and job creation. We acknowledge the diversity of the private sector, ranging from micro enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals. We call on all businesses to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges”

Article 67 agreed to by all 193 UN member states

“Business is a vital partner in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Companies can contribute through their core activities, and we ask companies everywhere to assess their impact, set ambitious goals and communicate transparently about the results.”

Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General

In its governance and membership reforms, the Cities Alliance has clearly understood that failing to engage the private sector in the mission of Cities Alliance will limit the impact of its work. In working strategically and collaboratively with private sector members and external partners, Cities Alliance and people living and working in cities will benefit from the value offered by core-business activity: wealth creation, employment, technological progress and investment in human resources. (See Annex 3 for a more detailed table setting out how the private sector can bring complementary perspectives and resources to a multi-stakeholder partnership.)

5. Embracing an agile Alliance model

a) Both an 'institution' and a platform: no ordinary membership organisation

Cities Alliance began as a 'multi-donor coalition of cities and their development partners' and has consciously evolved to redefine itself as a more democratic 'global partnership', something Alliance members undoubtedly understand and support:

"A partnership where all members (governments from north and south, universities, NGOs etc. take part in the governance and work of the organization, as important global actors, independently of their capacity of donation"

Partnership health check survey member response¹¹

"More of a peer relationship among members and the Alliance staff, rather than a donor-donee relationship. Also suggests active collaboration on projects and programs of mutual interest"

Partnership health check survey member response

Cities Alliance has revised its governance procedures, hosting arrangements and member expectations to reinforce the principle of equity for all.

Against this backdrop of organisational change, welcomed by the membership but still yet to fully bed in, it has become clear that Cities Alliance achieves its impact through two distinct mechanisms:

- It is a membership organisation representing its members with its own work programme and an increasingly distinct voice – fulfilling a role that its individual members could not carry out alone;
- Yet it is also a partnership platform for its members, connecting, facilitating and catalysing projects on the ground

In this sense, Cities Alliance is no ordinary membership organisation. Yet this dual purpose should not be seen as a confused identity, but rather as an asset – a pragmatic response which allows Cities Alliance to be agile, following a clear, core work programme stewarded by the Secretariat yet still able to support opportunistic initiatives from the membership and connect members with internal and external partners when appropriate.

The model enables partnership working to happen at three levels, as outlined in Table 2, below.

Table 2: The Cities Alliance Three Tier Model

Tier 1: Core Activity	Tier 2: Additional Strategic	Tier 3: Platform Activity
Work programme approved by Management Board, based on the Medium Term Strategy approved by Assembly. Can be CA-Sec or member-lead.	Additional (non-core) projects identified through coalescence of member interest	Activity/in-country partnerships facilitated by Cities Alliance Secretariat and implemented by members.
Primarily funded by core membership contributions, and augmented by non-core where possible.	Funded primarily through a mix of core, additional member contributions	Work programme set up, funded, and managed outside of Secretariat annual work plan. Minimal staff time.

¹¹ Members were asked 'What do you understand by the term 'global partnership'?

	and/or other sources, approved by the Board.	Learning is fed back and tracked.
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It is, in fact, the term 'Alliance' which most accurately describes the range of ways in which members engage with the Secretariat, other members and external partners on collaborative work programmes, knowledge sharing and collective advocacy. It is this combination of core, additional strategic and platform activity which will allow the Alliance to function at its best and create most value for its diverse membership, and most impact from its activities.

Models and processes are being put in place by the Management Board and Secretariat to clarify and support Tiers 1 and 2. It is the third column, the Platform work, which has been explored the least to date, and has the most potential to build the role of Cities Alliance as a global broker and connector for sustainable cities, potentially opening up new, local funding sources and scaling the reach and impact of Cities Alliance's work.

Feedback from the members at Assembly in April 2016 highlighted the importance of effectively connecting the three tiers if the model is to fully capitalise on opportunities for innovation, scale and learning. For example, a Tier 3 activity championed by two members and an external partner may, having demonstrated its value, become eligible to be considered as a Tier 2 or Tier 1 project. This is an important point and flexibility should be seen as a key feature of this model. The Cities Alliance Secretariat has a role to play in ensuring that learning between core, additional strategic and platform activities is effectively shared.

It is the combination of core, additional strategic and platform activity which will allow the Alliance to function at its best and create most value

Partnership catalysing platforms

Multi-stakeholder platforms for development are an essential part of the infrastructure needed to achieve the scale of collaboration required for delivering Agenda 2030.

Platforms for partnership provide ongoing mechanisms to systematically bring together business, government, the UN, NGOs and communities around issues of societal importance, catalysing direct, innovative partnership action.

TPI's work¹² on this emerging area has identified nine building blocks of high-performing partnership platforms. These building-blocks could be used to develop Cities Alliance's role as a partnership platform further, focussing on an initial sample of countries where further on the ground action is desirable and the connections may already be in place to support a platform. This could include countries coming to the end of a Country Programme tranche of funding and in need of continuity.

Action: The three tier model
The proposed three tier model should be discussed and refined by the Management Board
The potential for Cities Alliance to extend its work as a partnership platform should be explored. Existing country programmes could be considered in the first instance to capitalise on existing connections and ensure continuity of support.

¹² <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/research-and-learning/platforms-for-partnership/>

b) The balance between the Secretariat and the membership

According to the Mid-Term Strategy, 'the primary function of the Secretariat is to actively facilitate the participation of members in the activities of the organisation'. The health check survey demonstrated that the Secretariat's role is clearly valued and considered effective.¹³ Its convening and connecting ability is considered a huge asset, and the knowledgeable staff members are thought to contribute greatly to the success of Cities Alliance, both in Brussels and the regional offices.

Members agree, however, that by and large, the balance is currently tipped towards the Secretariat leading and implementing on behalf of its members, and there is room for members to take more of a proactive role depending on the needs of the specific project and where capacity and interest allows:

"For us, in the initiatives we have been involved in, the Secretariat leads, represents and implements on behalf of members, and we are satisfied with them playing that role. This does not mean that we do not believe that partners can and should lead with support from the Secretariat. Both approaches should be used in a mixed way, depending on what is most appropriate for the project"

Partnership health check survey member response

Decidedly what is required here is not the Secretariat stepping down, but members *stepping up* to maximise value. The Secretariat alone has the time, institutional knowledge and dedicated resources to manage the work programme, generate thought leadership from Cities Alliance activities and make strategic recommendations to the Management Board. It fulfils a coordination and oversight role that its members simply cannot provide, being focussed as they are on their own organisation's operations. The Secretariat is also best suited to connecting members and brokering collaborative opportunities. In redressing the balance, therefore, we do not seek to ask members to carry out roles better suited to the Secretariat, but rather that members become more proactive in generating and building on the ground opportunities, joint-funding opportunities and knowledge sharing. We recommend that this strategic imperative is initiated and managed by the Management Board.

A flexible approach is essential to allow Cities Alliance to capitalise on opportunities and operate with agility and efficiency

Given the three tier 'agile model' outlined in the above section, it would seem logical that in some cases (namely Tier 1 activity), the Secretariat will lead and act on behalf of its members to manage the workplan, while in other cases it will naturally act as a convenor, facilitator and broker with members taking a more proactive role in line with their specific interests and implementing capacities (Tiers 2 and 3 activity). This flexible approach is, in fact, essential to allow Cities Alliance to capitalise on opportunities and operate with agility and efficiency. What is important is that the role of the Secretariat and members is discussed and agreed at the outset of each project as appropriate.

Action: Secretariat/membership balance

Clarify that in many cases the Secretariat will lead and act on behalf of its members, in other cases it will act as a convenor, facilitator and broker with members taking a more proactive role in line with their specific interests and capacities. These two distinct approaches reflect

¹³ When asked to rate the Secretariat from 1-5 where 1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly agree, members agreed or strongly agreed that the Secretariat is efficiently run (4), has appropriate power and control (3.9) and that communications from Secretariat staff are timely and effective (3.9).

Cities Alliance's agile model and should be used flexibly according to the needs of each project and member capacity.

6. Members' Compact

There is a clear need for a document underpinning the partnership ethos of Cities Alliance, setting out the core values, principles and behaviour that being an Alliance member entails. This should not simply be a tick-box exercise, but a blueprint for effective collaborative working to guide member interactions, support effective implementation of Cities Alliance work and generate the most value from the partnership.

An example Alliance Members' Compact is given on the following page, and should be discussed and agreed by members. The final version should be included as part of the Membership Guide in order that all new members are aware of the collaborative working ethos of the Alliance before signing up.

It should be noted that the Members' Compact is designed to support strong collaborative working among Alliance members. The focus is on embedding good partnering principles and practice rather than setting out the vision, mission, principles and objectives of Cities Alliance itself, which appear in the Charter.¹⁴

In discussing the case for a Member's Compact at the inaugural Assembly in April 2016, some members were concerned that a lack of resource on a member's part should not materially disadvantage them or prevent them from engaging in a meaningful way.

Assembly members also raised the question of how the Members' Compact could, or should be enforced. This is an important point. It is recommended that the Members' Compact is used as a positive, enabling document, voluntarily signed by member representatives. It should not be rigorously 'enforced' or 'policed', rather used as a guidance document for members, referenced at appropriate moments during programme and partnership development and implementation. Members should, however, feel able to hold one another to account on key partnering principles where appropriate.

The extent to which the core values of the Members Compact are 'lived' in practice should be monitored as part of the overall Cities Alliance evaluation framework. (See section 8.)

Action: Members' Compact
A Members' Compact should be developed and agreed with the membership to underpin and strengthen the Cities Alliance partnership approach

¹⁴ One Alliance member has recently proposed a specific set of principles strengthening the role of the urban poor in Cities Alliance decision-making and work programmes. These would need to be developed separately to the Compact.

Cities Alliance Members' Compact

EXAMPLE DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

We are the Cities Alliance.

We understand the scale and complexity of the challenge of sustainable, inclusive and resilient cities, and believe that by working together we can create value and achieve impact far beyond the resources and capacities of our individual organisations.

To achieve this, we must work differently. To become an exemplar of a vibrant, collaborative alliance that together maximises opportunity and value creation, we commit to the following set of principles and approaches:

Core partnering principles

- **Transparency:** We will be open about our interests, obstacles to engagement and openly raise and work through potential conflicts of interest
- **Equity:** We appreciate that all Members bring value to the Cities Alliance, regardless of size, implementing capacity or financial contribution, and so deserve recognition, respect and a seat at the table
- **Mutual benefit:** We recognize the obligation, and will help to ensure, that all actively contributing Members gain value from being part of the Cities Alliance

Being a 'good' partner

We will strive to:

- Look outwards to more systematically seek opportunity for collaboration wherever net value can be gained;
- Appreciate the diversity of member organisations and seek to understand their interests, different approaches and institutional cultures;
- Be open to thinking differently and innovatively in our approaches;
- Look beyond purely our own organisational interests to seek to create value simultaneously for our organisation and for other members;
- Work together to navigate challenges of capacity and time

Competition and opportunity

- We recognise that competition may arise among members for funding or positioning within the Cities Alliance work programmes and, significantly, as part of the wider urban context
- We appreciate that, when healthy, competition can effectively encourage members to perform

at their best and help ensure the most appropriate resources be deployed in any particular situation. We also appreciate that over-competitiveness can stifle collaborative action and lose opportunities.

- Where there is likely competition for specific funding sources, we commit to exploring with other members whether joint approaches could create a more compelling and more value-creating proposal.
- Where we are developing major new programmes, where relevant we commit to exploring the landscape and consulting with other members to help avoid duplication and seek to build on and/or connect with existing initiatives and experience wherever valuable.

Learning

- We commit to sharing learning from projects and programmes, both within our organisations and the Cities Alliance membership, highlighting success factors as well as learnings from challenges and failures

Acting as an Alliance Ambassador

We commit to:

- Bringing the work of the Cities Alliance into our own organisation and vice versa, to build value and ensure that the connection does not rest with one individual;
- Where relevant, talking about the work of the Cities Alliance at events and conferences, ensuring to attribute Cities Alliance as a supporter of projects where we have worked together;
- Being an ambassador for the Cities Alliance, making connections and encouraging new members to explore joining.

Cities Alliance as a partner

- We support Cities Alliance as a whole to embody these partnering principles in the way it works with others in the urban space. This includes working inclusively with all stakeholders, from donors to the urban poor as valued partners
-

7. Further strengthening the partnership

Cities Alliance partnership approach. However, the members' survey and analysis have identified specific areas where action is recommended to strengthen the partnership. These are addressed in more detail below.

a) Clarifying ambition and niche

The power of partnership is the bringing together of different but complementary resources in pursuit of a common goal. It is crucial that Alliance members have a clear and shared view of the scale of Cities Alliance's ambition and the role it can play alongside other global initiatives. It also requires an understanding of Cities Alliance's comparative advantage – how its value proposition makes it distinctive. This is important not only to enable Alliance members to speak confidently about their involvement within and external to their organisations, but also so that Cities Alliance is able to effectively play its part as a global partner:

"[How Cities Alliance interacts with other global initiatives implementing the SDGs is a] complex challenge. It requires creating a stronger shared idea of CA's specific added value. Is it a credible clearing-house for funding? For knowledge exchange in ways that other partners cannot provide? For broader engagement with a spectrum of actors outside municipal authorities?"

Partnership health check survey member response

The Mid-Term Strategy (2014-17) highlights that "one of the core strengths of the Cities Alliance is that it has retained a very sharp and consistent focus in its work since its creation in 1999; citywide and nationwide slum upgrading, city development strategies, and national urban policies. This consistency has allowed the partnership not only to develop a unique portfolio and institutional memory, but has also allowed it to become increasingly clear in identifying which policies are most effective."¹⁵

The members' survey has demonstrated that this historical sharp focus must be complemented by the development of Cities Alliance's Unique Value Proposition (UVP). This UVP must articulate Cities Alliance's value as a partnership and answer the question: *what is it about Cities Alliance that makes it uniquely placed to deliver?* The strong articulation of this UVP will give members a simple and common description for the value of the partnership, aiding members to more effectively institutionalise the work of Cities Alliance within their own organisations:

"A higher recognition of the value and virtues of the Cities Alliance by the top-management and political leadership of (my organisation) would be helpful in order to strengthen involvement and contributions to the Cities Alliance"

Partnership health check survey member response

The member and Secretariat staff surveys highlighted several elements as being unique to Cities Alliance- namely its respected status as an 'honest broker', and value as a high quality facilitation/partnerships platform providing a safe space to work with others. Some members particularly highlighted the complementary nature of its activities as a selling-point:

"Cities Alliance is one of the most creative, forward thinking organisations in this space which can think about policy, practice and politics simultaneously. I appreciate that there is on the ground work and that complements but

¹⁵ Cities Alliance Mid-Term Strategy 2014-17, p2

doesn't overwhelm the thematic work"
Partnership health check survey member response

It is recommended that this feedback, alongside the four focus areas identified in Section 4c should be used to help members frame a UVP. Feedback from surveys and from the workshop session at the Cities Alliance Assembly in April 2016 suggest that the UVP could be built into an elevator pitch. The example below is given as a starting point only, to be refined with member input.

Example Elevator Pitch

Cities Alliance is the go-to global platform for those wishing to contribute to or invest in Sustainable Development Goal 11, Sustainable Cities. Cities Alliance facilitates innovative, collaborative projects and programmes to promote poverty reduction and sustainable development within cities.

It is unique in the range and diversity of its membership. Cities Alliance emphasises equity among members and provides a safe space for knowledge sharing and partnership building. Its global reach creates opportunity and convenes key players in the co-development of the new urban agenda.

Cities Alliance combines members' voices in a clear and representative way to facilitate strong advocacy and policy contributions at a global level, and acts as an efficient, relevant and thriving knowledge and innovation exchange for members.

Cities Alliance mobilises the power of its members to deliver technical assistance projects on the ground, generating and disseminating learning from these as well as from members' own activities to catalyse further action.

This combination of effective, on the ground projects and collaborative thematic work allows members to engage in issues of most relevance to them.

Action: Clarifying ambition and niche

A short, 1-2 page document outlining Cities' Alliance's ambition as a partnership platform for delivery of SDG 11 and a living example for SDG 17 will be presented at the July Board meeting. This document will set out Cities Alliance's Unique Value Proposition (UVP) within the urban space as a high quality global facilitation and partnership platform. Based on feedback, the Secretariat will then develop talking points for members to use when describing Cities Alliance to important stakeholders within and external to their organisation.

b) Promoting transparency and spurring innovation

It is almost inevitable that a partnership made up of a diverse range of actors all operating in the urban space will encounter competition issues which may hinder collaborative efforts. Members demonstrated awareness and recognition of this in the survey:

"...there is a sense of more collaboration and improvement of trust among members, but there is still need for a sustained effort to avoid competition between members, improve equity and transparency among members"
Partnership health check survey member response

"Developing stronger mechanisms for the members to collaborate amongst themselves might help- having a space or regular opportunity for members to

discuss funding and joint fund-raising to promote transparency"
Partnership health check survey member response

In fact, good trust levels and willingness to collaborate¹⁶ among Alliance members indicate that Cities Alliance is seen as a safe forum which, with the help of the Secretariat, can help to ease competition issues experienced more widely in the development arena, creating positive joint-working initiatives from overlapping agendas. This sense was reflected in the member interviews and should be capitalised upon.

As outlined in the draft Members' Compact in section 6, competition is often healthy when it leads to the most well qualified member being selected to implement a project, for example. In the Cities Alliance partnership context, competition between members becomes damaging when it leads to a breakdown in trust and prevents members from working openly and constructively with one another, which may lead to missed opportunities.

The issues of competition and transparency are often bound up closely with funding concerns, even more so now that core funding is increasingly hard to secure. As suggested by one member in the quote above, creating a space for members to discuss funding and joint-approaches can help to promote transparency and develop new opportunities and approaches. A facilitated 'Innovation Lab', preferably in-person but virtual if circumstances demand, can help build understanding of members' overlapping interests and encourage creativity, build connections and spark new partnership and joint-funding ideas.

Good trust levels indicate that Cities Alliance is seen as a neutral, safe forum which can help ease competition issues experienced in the development arena

Action: Promoting transparency and spurring innovation

A commitment to transparency and articulation of how competition can be acknowledged and managed to be included in the proposed Membership Compact

Trial Innovation labs

c) Building a sustainable funding model with support of membership

Cities Alliance, like other international multi-stakeholder collaborations, operates in a challenging fundraising environment. It is increasingly difficult to access core funding and a creative approach is needed to secure Cities Alliance's future sustainability, growth and impact.

The basis for the Cities Alliance agile, three tier activity model has been set out under section 5, which gives some pointers for how Cities Alliance might develop its funding model accordingly. Member feedback recognises that the current system will not adequately support Cities Alliance's ambitions:

"I think we need to get bigger funding for more ambitious projects and charge staff salaries and administrative costs to those budgets. We need this in order to create big ambitious exemplary projects on the ground but also to create a continuing funding stream that secures the staff and administrative costs. Members funding contributions are an important source of funds and sign of commitment but will never be enough"

Partnership health check survey member response

The three tier model is reproduced below, with an additional row setting out where the fundraising focus could lie. This model's strength from a fundraising perspective lies in its flexibility. There is a variety of ways in which Cities Alliance can source and commit funds towards its mission,

¹⁶ Members rated Willingness to Collaborate as 3.9 and Trust Among Members as 3.5 on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

increasing its agility without compromising its integrity. This is essentially a hybrid approach, a membership-fee model, with organisational core-costs and certain priority workstreams (agreed by the Board) funded from those fees, with additional programmes undertaken only where there is a coalescence of interest (and funds) contributed by, or sourced by members to undertake them.

Note that Tier 3, Platform Activity, opens up the possibility of bringing in external, local non-member funds and expertise by means of funder engagement roundtables in-country. This idea, suggested by a member via the health check survey, received interest and support from the membership and represents a promising avenue through which local private sector actors could be engaged.

Table 3: The Cities Alliance Three Tier Model and suggested funding focus

Tier 1: Core Activity	Tier 2: Additional Strategic	Tier 3: Platform Activity
Work programme approved by Management Board, based on the Medium Term Strategy approved by Assembly. Can be CA-Sec or member-lead.	Additional (non-core) projects identified through coalescence of member interest	Activity/in-country partnerships facilitated by Cities Alliance Secretariat and implemented by members.
Primarily funded by core membership contributions, and augmented by non-core where possible.	Funded primarily through a mix of core, additional member contributions and/or other sources, approved by the Board.	Work programme set up, funded, and managed outside of Secretariat annual work plan. Minimal staff time. Learning is fed back and tracked.
Fundraising focus tied to Medium Term Strategy. Core resources raised from regular member contributions and strategic membership growth	Fundraising focus should be on encouraging members to proactively pool resources and identify overlaps where possible. Innovation Labs ¹⁷ will support this. Local funder engagement roundtables could also play a part for certain projects.	Fundraising focus on trialling and developing local funder engagement roundtables, involving non-member interested investors as well as implementing members present on the ground.

The Management Board needs to establish parameters within which softly or strongly earmarked funding can be accepted. A matrix to support these decisions and the proposed fundraising strategy will also reflect these guidelines. To support the above model, it should be clear that earmarked funds can only be accepted when additional to core membership contributions, and where the intended use fits within Cities Alliance's mission and priorities.

Member feedback from Assembly in April 2016 suggested that including explicit provision for collaborative working in new funding proposals would help to address time capacity concerns and support effective partnerships. It is recommended that this is included in the proposed fundraising strategy.

Action: Building a sustainable funding model
Draft a fundraising strategy in support of a hybrid funding model setting out three tiers of activity and associated funding

¹⁷ Innovation Labs promote new collaborative member projects and explore creative joint-funding approaches

Trial local funder engagement roundtables to support tiers 2 and 3

d) More opportunities for high-impact collaborative action on the ground and regional knowledge sharing

While members rated opportunities for collaboration relatively highly in the health check survey¹⁸, there was recognition that more face-to-face interactions would be helpful to build personal relationships, a cornerstone of successful partnership working. Many members felt that if they were not serving on the Management Board, the single annual meeting did not allow sufficient opportunity to get to know other members and explore joint-working potential.

Specifically, it is recommended that more informal gathering opportunities are trialled to allow members to build working relationships. Members should be invited to consider hosting a regional gathering, where capacity and enthusiasm exists. (Several members indicated willingness to do this in the surveys and interviews.)

In addition, virtual gatherings would be useful and a relatively low-cost, inclusive option for those members unable to budget funds and time for travel. Members who had taken part in Cities Alliance Secretariat moderated 'virtual platform' discussions felt that these had been very useful and should be rolled out more extensively.

The idea of a Cities Alliance hosted, interactive member activity map should be explored, giving Alliance members the opportunity to see at a glance where fellow Members are operating and where potential overlaps and collaboration opportunities may lie.

The role of the Country Programmes and Joint-Work Programmes (JWPs) were considered key, high-potential mechanisms for engaging Alliance members in collaborative work, albeit additional refining of process is needed. These two business lines deliver high specificity of interest for those involved and should be refined, developed and prioritised.

Action: Opportunities for collaborative action and knowledge-sharing
Trial informal gathering opportunities- invite willing Members to host regional network events
Develop an interactive map featuring member activities to encourage collaboration
Set up a programme of Cities Alliance issue-specific moderated discussions (virtual platforms)
Continue to prioritise development of Country Programmes and Joint Work Programmes

e) Private sector engagement

The growing importance of the private sector as a partner in development has been outlined in Section 4d. The member survey demonstrated that Alliance members see the case for further private sector involvement. However, there was marked uncertainty about how best to engage. The question of private sector involvement was discussed at Assembly in April 2016, and members highlighted the need to understand the potential multiple roles business could play as an external partner, investor or constituency member. What should the rules of engagement be? These questions must be addressed.

Work has already begun to increase knowledge of the value the private sector can bring to development partnerships. This should be prioritised and formalised with the appointment of a Private Sector Working Group and the development of a private sector engagement strategy.

Attention should be given to increasing knowledge levels and addressing reservations members and Secretariat staff may have about working in partnership with the private sector. A library of case studies, demonstrating where private sector actors have worked successfully within multi-stakeholder partnerships to deliver innovative development outcomes should be developed and

¹⁸ Members rated 'Sufficient Opportunities to Collaborate' as 3.4 in the health check survey, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

shared. Members whose own organisations have experience of working collaboratively with business should be encouraged to share their knowledge.

It is recommended that a mapping exercise is carried out to identify where private sector interests, both geographically and strategically, cross over with existing and planned Cities Alliance work programmes. Both the mapping exercise and the case studies should be shared with Alliance members and Secretariat staff.

Action: Private Sector Engagement
Appoint a Private Sector Working Group to develop a private sector engagement strategy
Develop a library of existing, successful private-sector partnership case studies
Carry out a mapping exercise pinpointing overlap between Cities Alliance priorities and potential private sector partners and members

f) Growing and diversifying the Alliance membership

Cities Alliance has stated its intention to grow and diversify the membership as set out in the Draft Membership Strategy 2015. The members' survey revealed some ambitious visions for growth, while others were more measured:

<p><i>"In three years, Cities Alliance should aim for a wider and even more diverse membership, cascading fees"</i> Partnership health check survey member response</p> <p><i>"In three years, Cities Alliance should double membership and staff, triple budget and activities"</i> Partnership health check survey member response</p>
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The 2015 Membership Strategy set out suggested criteria that could be used to grow the Cities Alliance membership in a *'deliberate, purposeful and strategic manner'*.¹⁹

The section above has highlighted the importance of extending membership and external partnerships with the private sector. A further conversation is needed, however to agree how large Cities Alliance wishes to grow its membership, thinking particularly about the inherent tension between building a large, diverse, potentially hugely impactful Alliance against the challenges of running a larger collaboration efficiently and inclusively.

It is recommended that the Members' Compact, when finalised, is used as a tool to allow potential members to self-select, ensuring those who join are committed to key partnering principles as well as to the core mission and objectives as set out in the Charter.

Action: Growing and diversifying membership
The Management Board must discuss and agree the level to which Cities Alliance wishes to grow its membership

g) Building partnering skills and competencies

The evident care taken by Alliance members in completing the partnership health check survey honestly and thoughtfully suggests that representatives are fully engaged in the partnership development process and committed to strengthening collaborative working practices. The

¹⁹ The priority areas for membership expansion identified in the 2015 Draft Membership Strategy were as follows: 1. Governments where the Cities Alliance is implementing a Country Programme to become members; 2. Cities Alliance membership to better reflect the rapidly changing international aid architecture such as new actors in the private sector and philanthropy; 3. Pressing need for the Cities Alliance to both diversify and strengthen its implementation capacity

questions in the survey were tailored to encourage members to think about the elements of a well-managed partnership and a high-degree of self-awareness was shown.

A useful next step would be to run a more in-depth reflective training on partnering to build skills and competencies, perhaps opened up to external partners to encourage a range of perspectives and experiences and make the most of relationship-building opportunities. Alternatively, the Management Board could receive more tailored training in the first instance, each representative ensuring it was shared with their constituencies as appropriate.

As the new constituencies develop and mature, it will be useful to monitor how effective they are in supporting partnership working. It will be particularly important that information flows from constituency representatives on the management board and those members not on the board are strong. It is recommended, however, that there is not undue emphasis placed on building constituency relationships. While very useful as a democratic, representative tool in the new governance framework, focussing too much on relationships between members of the same constituency could encourage silo thinking and hinder the wider, collaborative more innovative cross-sectoral working Cities Alliance is so well placed to support.

Action: Building Partnering Skills and Competencies
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More in-depth training should be considered for members (or initially the new Management Board) to build partnering skills and competencies

8. Implementation and monitoring

a) What does success look like?

How will we know when Cities Alliance is functioning at its best as a partnership? Members gave a variety of responses as to how they hope to see Cities Alliance functioning at its best in three years' time. They were not, on the whole contradictory and emphasised open exchange of information, strong workstreams, new, high-impact member-generated projects and leadership from the Chair and Management Board supported by a strong Secretariat.

Other members envisioned Cities Alliance emerging as a strong, recognised 'go-to' platform for donors and partners interested in investing in sustainable cities. It is perhaps this last point which encapsulates most neatly the value a successful partnership approach will bring. If Cities Alliance successfully combines the complementary resources and strengths of all its members to demonstrably create greater impact than if each organisation were acting alone, it will be recognised as such by the global development community as an efficient platform for investment in sustainable cities. If impacts are measured and communicated well, this will trigger more regular funding to scale the impact of Cities Alliance's activities.

"Partners interacting at a regular basis, exchanging information openly. But also the secretariat with a strong role, checking quality, ensuring reporting, ensuring coordination."

Partnership health check survey member response

"I hope there would be proactive initiatives from different groups of partners generating exemplary projects and crucial knowledge"

Partnership health check survey member response

"Being a credible platform which partners and donors turn to as a means to coordinate joint and collaborative action in cities."

Partnership health check survey member response

b) Oversight and monitoring

A simpler version of the health-check survey, carried out at yearly intervals, revisiting the same numerical scores as those used for the baseline will provide a good indication of direction of travel in the medium-term. However, the specific action points recommended in this strategy will require oversight from the Management Board on behalf of the membership to guide implementation, tracking progress against agreed timeframes. It is also important that monitoring of the partnership's development is integrated within the overall Cities Alliance monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Alliance members should have an opportunity to contribute to partnership indicators to be included in the Cities Alliance monitoring framework. The following themes should be considered and indicators developed in accordance with the overall framework. (Note that some of these measures will necessarily be attitudinal.)

Members' Compact:

- Extent to which Cities Alliance exemplifies the values and behaviours described in the Members' Compact (on a self-assessed scale), referencing:
 - Core Partnering Principles (Perceived levels of Transparency, Equity, Mutual Benefit)
 - Being a good partner (members)
 - Competition and opportunity
 - Learning
 - Acting as an Alliance Ambassador
 - Cities Alliance as a good partner

Opportunities for collaboration:

- No. of members actively involved in collaborative activity with other members (for example JWPs, Country Programmes, knowledge-share, specific initiative)
- No. of new partnerships successfully brokered/in progress among Cities Alliance members
- No. of regional meetings allowing space for member collaboration (Set target no.)
- No. of innovation labs (Set target no.)
- No. of virtual platforms held allowing space for member collaboration (Set target no.)

Secretariat

- Degree to which the Secretariat effectively facilitates partnership working (scale)

The action points outlined in this strategy are drawn together in the template Implementation Plan in Annex 4, for completion and adoption by Cities Alliance members.

Action: Implementation and monitoring
Responsibility for tracking Implementation of the partnership strategy recommendations and monitoring progress against the Strategy action points should be assigned to the Management Board
The Implementation and Monitoring Plan should be integrated, where possible, with the existing Cities Alliance Monitoring and Evaluation framework

9. Appendices

Annex 1: TPI's 'MUST-Have' competencies for effective partnering

M indset	U nderstanding of other sectors	Human / relationship S kills	T echnical partnering knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humility to realize others may have more appropriate knowledge / resources • Inclination to reach out to work with others • Willingness to give up autonomy of decision-making • (Measured) risk taking • Propensity for innovation • Ability to work for the benefit of the partnership as a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture • Interests • Motivations and drivers • Resources and capabilities • Capacity limitations • Legal limitations • AND Understanding of your own! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to look from others' perspectives • Networking and connecting • Approaching and engaging potential partners / selling ideas • Relationship / trust building • Interest-based negotiation • Facilitation • Communication • Coaching / mentoring • Mediation / conflict resolution / troubleshooting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the partnering lifecycle • Key principles of partnering • Best practice approaches to setup and governance • Ability to assess critically when and when not to partner • The partnering black box of trust, equity, and power • Partnership agreements • Reviewing partnerships • Developing exit strategies

Annex 2: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

A summary of the most common factors highlighted by members in the partnership health check survey:

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity • Convening power • Engagement on ground • Strong Secretariat 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of succession planning • Funding model • Outdated slogan
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Urban Agenda momentum • SDG 11, SDG 17 • Private sector engagement • Harness diversity & capacity of membership 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further drop-off in core funds/rise in earmarked funding • Dependency on Director • Potentially losing voice, failing to find niche in a crowded arena

Annex 3: Complementary resources in a multi-sector partnership

Complementary resources...

<p>NGOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Technical knowledge / capacity ✓ Access to and deep knowledge of communities ✓ Legitimacy / social capital ✓ Passion and people-focus <p>Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Brands and access to customer base ✓ Business planning and project management ✓ Innovation / efficiency ✓ Value chains ✓ Infrastructure / logistics ✓ A market-based / value creation approach ✓ Financial and in-kind contribution 	<p>Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regulatory framework (e.g. licenses for water etc.) ✓ Integration with public systems / long term planning ✓ Taxation policy ✓ Capacity building (e.g. agricultural extension services) ✓ Provision of land and supporting infrastructure <p>United Nations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Political connections ✓ Technical support ✓ Legitimacy and impartiality ✓ Global network with ground presence <p>Donors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Technical support ✓ Funding
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Annex 4: Draft implementation framework for completion

Action	Enablers/ Resources Required	Owner	Priority Status (1-5 where 1=low priority and 5=high priority)	Agreed Timeframe for delivery
The Management Board to assume responsibility for monitoring implementation of the Strategy action points				
Members' Compact developed and adopted to support good partnering practice				
The proposed three tier model discussed and refined by the Management Board				
The potential for Cities Alliance to extend its work as a partnership platform should be explored				
Clarify that in many cases the Secretariat will lead and act on behalf of its members, in other cases it will act as a convenor, facilitator and broker with members taking a more proactive role in line with their specific interests and capacities				
1-2 page document outlining Cities' Alliance's ambition as a partnership				

platform for delivery of SDG 11 and a living example for SDG 17, also setting out Cities Alliance's Unique Value Proposition (UVP)				
Trial Innovation Labs				
Trial informal gathering opportunities- invite willing Members to host regional network events				
Develop an interactive map featuring member activities to encourage collaboration				
Set up a programme of Cities Alliance issue-specific moderated discussions (virtual platforms)				
Continue to prioritise development of Country Programmes and Joint Work Programmes				
Draft a fundraising strategy in support of a new model setting out three tiers of activity and associated funding				
Trial local funder engagement roundtables				
Appoint a private-sector working group to develop a private sector engagement strategy				
Develop a library of existing, successful private sector partnership case-studies				
Carry out a private-sector mapping exercise				
Management Board to discuss and agree scale of intended membership growth				
In-depth partnering training for Management Board and/or wider membership				
Partnership strategy monitoring integrated with Cities Alliance overall evaluation and monitoring framework				

Annex 5: Capturing additional ideas from the health check survey

The bullet-points below set out ideas and comments from the survey TPI believes may warrant further discussion by the Alliance membership. These points are considered outside the scope of the Partnership Strategy, but it is important they are captured and followed-up as necessary.

- Two members felt that the tagline 'Cities Without Slums' should be revisited as it is no longer representative of the Cities Alliance remit
- One individual felt the name 'Secretariat' was not appropriate for the active and knowledgeable role the staff undertake and instead implies a more bureaucratic, old-fashioned set-up
- One member considered that Cities Alliance should consider funding innovative start-ups and social enterprises in cities, where even small grants can make a huge impact
- There was concern from members that a strong succession plan be put in place to ensure that when the Director moves on, the momentum and knowledge he has built up is not lost
- One member felt very strongly the Cities Alliance regional offices should be supported and extended