
**Collaborative business relationship
management — Guidelines for micro,
small and medium-sized enterprises
on the implementation of the
fundamental principles**

*Management collaboratif d'une relation d'affaire — Lignes
directrices pour les micro-, petites et moyennes entreprises pour
l'implémentation des principes fondamentaux*

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 286, *Collaborative business relationship management*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Using the principles given in ISO/TR 44000, these guidelines address how collaborative working initiatives by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), together or in networks, can develop mutually beneficial engagements.

This document can assist the MSME to gain advantages through, for example:

- quick access to complementary resources, markets and new customers;
- innovation, research and development;
- economies of scale;
- sharing risk, costs and resources;
- accessing knowledge, expertise and competences;
- efficiency and stability.

The guidelines within this document can support any number of MSMEs collaborating with any number of larger organizations or each other.

Examples of possible collaborative working models include:

- collaborating one to one, where MSMEs develop collaborations with other MSMEs;
- groups of MSMEs, where MSMEs build collaborative networks;
- MSMEs or groups of MSMEs collaborating with larger organizations.

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Collaborative business relationship management — Guidelines for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises on the implementation of the fundamental principles

1 Scope

This document gives guidelines for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to use the twelve principles of collaborative business relationships given in ISO/TR 44000 to improve their collaborative capability.

This document is applicable to MSMEs regardless of what they do, where they are, their operating environment, culture, social capital and objectives.

NOTE The definition of an MSME varies widely. This document is intended for the use of any organization that identifies or is identified as an MSME.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 44001, *Collaborative business relationship management systems — Requirements and framework*
ISO 44003:2021

3 Terms and definitions

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/d86c8150-305e-428a-8060-497cd0b399d/iso-44003-2021>

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 44001 apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

4 Structure of this document

This document is based on the twelve principles of collaborative business relationships given in ISO/TR 44000.

For each principle, there are three main subclauses:

- What: a summary of the intent of the principle;
- Why: an explanation of its relevance to the MSME;
- How: guidance on its implementation.

5 Implementation of the principles of collaborative business relationships management

5.1 Relationship management

5.1.1 What: summary of the intent

Relationship management is important to managing and sustaining collaborative relationships and underpins their success. This does not need to be a complex process but should be one which can be easily understood and communicated across the organization and to external parties.

5.1.2 Why: explanation of relevance

To be sustainable and deliver value over time, a collaborative relationship needs to have a continued focus on effective relationship management. Collaborative relationships that are based solely on personal relationships, although important, are vulnerable where personnel can change over time. A documented approach enables consistency and improvement over time. Furthermore, those joining the relationship have a clear perspective on the way it is to be managed and the expectations of the parties involved.

5.1.3 How: implementation guidance

5.1.3.1 Establishment of the relationship management plan (RMP)

The owners and/or managers need to understand their market, their business environment and the expectations of their stakeholders. They should identify those areas of the external and internal environment in which the business seeks to achieve its objectives.

The starting point should be an identification and internal assessment of the current relationships within which the organization is engaged. This is likely to include customers, any external partners, key suppliers and, on occasions where there is a split responsibility across the organization (e.g. products and services), internal coordination.

If it is decided that the collaborative approach is appropriate, the owners and/or managers should establish an RMP which captures the desired business approach to collaboration (see [Annex A](#) for a list of key elements of relationship management plans). Developing an RMP can be an iterative process.

The RMP should consider:

- roles and responsibilities;
- resources;
- objectives and benefits;
- initial risks.

5.1.3.2 Relationship segmentation

The MSME evaluates the relative importance of external relationships, including current, future and those approaching the company. In developing an approach, it is necessary to understand where collaboration can be an advantage and where a structured approach to building a sustainable relationship and promoting the appropriate behaviours would occur. Each business opportunity will be different in terms of the context and the parties involved and whether this is an existing or new activity.

5.1.3.3 Developing and managing the relationship

The collaborative partners should establish the right environment to support collaborative working, including contractual frameworks or agreements, roles and responsibilities. They should establish a joint management team.

Each collaborative partner should identify the senior executive responsible (SER), or their appointed representative, to support the joint programme and define his or her role, responsibility and authority to act as a joint management team.

The joint management team should:

- a) review the joint objectives, including continual value creation;
- b) establish effective measurements that are monitored through an agreed reporting process;
- c) identify any additional objectives that can mutually benefit the collaboration;
- d) define the primary roles and responsibilities for the team members;
- e) identify what information is required to meet the objectives together with any known interdependencies;
- f) identify what resources, equipment, property and assets will be used from each;
- g) ensure, in accordance with objectives and governance, ongoing management of activities, including:
 - 1) maintaining alignment and engagement;
 - 2) overseeing initiatives;
 - 3) issue monitoring and resolution;
 - 4) risk monitoring and mitigation;
 - 5) negotiation and management of change.

NOTE The collaborative partners can benefit from the establishment of a joint RMP incorporating the above.

5.2 Visions and values

5.2.1 What: summary of the intent

The degree of alignment of vision and values provides guidance to stakeholders on the future direction, culture, ethics and behaviours to support effective collaboration.

5.2.2 Why: explanation of relevance

As each party considers the value of a collaborative relationship, the profile of the organization and potential compatibility with partners will be a factor in establishing and aligning their capabilities and joint performance.

5.2.3 How: implementation guidance

5.2.3.1 Defining what is important to your organization

The owners and/or managers of MSMEs need to have clarity and alignment on their vision and values when engaging with others. The nature of the relationship between partner organizations will be influenced by each party's perceptions of the other in terms of the level of effective engagement, perceived risks and opportunities created through a more integrated relationship. This in turn is likely to have a direct impact on the behaviours of the individuals.

5.2.3.2 Assessing and maintaining alignment

The vision and values of an organization will be a factor in developing alignment and the behaviours to work together effectively.

In a collaborative model, there should be consideration as to the ability of two or more organizations to work together and the behaviours necessary to facilitate success. When working together, it is often the case that day-to-day pressures will challenge what is important to each partner. As such, it is important to regularly ensure that the values of each partner are not being compromised. As particular engagements reach their conclusion, it is important to assess whether the way in which each party's values have been respected lays the foundation for further engagement.

5.3 Business objectives

5.3.1 What: summary of the intent

Objectives that are clear and commonly understood across the organization help engender a more efficient focus at all levels, ensuring that the collaboration's objectives can be achieved through the relationship to support continued effective engagement at all levels and sustained mutual benefit.

5.3.2 Why: explanation of relevance

Chances of success are improved when drivers for collaboration support the business objectives of each organization. Such approaches will require effort and resources to achieve the desired goals and outcomes.

5.3.3 How: implementation guidance

5.3.3.1 Establishing objectives

The owners and/or managers should identify the objectives of each specific collaborative business relationship. For each of them, they should define and prioritize the desired outcomes and evaluate the significant benefits and the risks that can arise. Defining the objectives for the operation and ensuring these are communicated across the organization is crucial, particularly where it can be advantageous to adopt a collaborative approach to achieve them.

5.3.3.2 Define a business case

Having defined what are the opportunities to be developed, the owners and/or managers should create a strategy and business case for each of them. This document should clearly identify the opportunity, objectives, value, risks, resources and partners for the potential collaborative relationship. The main results of this assessment for any specific opportunity should be incorporated into the RMP.

5.3.3.3 Aligning objectives for specific relationships

During the engagement process, it is important to address the objectives of each party and ensure that while these can be different, they are aligned and not in conflict. Ensuring that each partner's objectives can be achieved through the relationship will support continued effective engagement at both organizational and individual levels to sustain mutual benefit.

5.3.3.4 Engagement process

5.3.3.5 Identification of operational objectives and value

The owners and/or managers should assess their overall business objectives and the added value that a collaborative approach can support. A value analysis approach will help to focus development and

resources towards areas which can deliver maximum value. See [Annex A](#) for some examples of benefits to be gained from collaborative working.

5.3.3.6 Assessment of joint objectives

The owners and/or managers should identify where collaborative working can deliver shared benefits and should understand which of each partner's objectives overlap and where common goals can be achieved. The parties should jointly follow these steps:

- each party should identify their own objectives;
- the rationale behind them should be explained to the other party;
- joint objectives should be established;
- it should be ensured that other individual objectives are compatible.

5.3.3.7 Managing the objectives

Ensuring that each partner's objectives are being achieved through the relationship will support the right behaviours and continued effective engagement at both organizational and individual levels to sustain mutual benefit. Throughout the relationship, regular reviews should assess the performance and behaviours.

5.4 Collaborative leadership

5.4.1 What: summary of the intent

Appointing a senior person who is empowered and with the appropriate skills responsible for collaborative business relationships ensures support for the collaboration.

5.4.2 Why: explanation of relevance

A clear commitment to the collaborative business relationship from the owners/managers, leading by example and forging alignment to a shared vision, is essential to successful implementation. Visible participation by a senior person provides both focus and confidence for those directly involved in any collaboration, which in turn fosters the appropriate behaviours.

5.4.3 How: implementation guidance

5.4.3.1 SER role

The SER role is to ensure that the operating processes are effective and practically applied. They provide high level support in terms of oversight management and resource allocation. Their visible participation provides both focus and confidence for those directly involved in any collaboration, which in turn fosters the appropriate behaviours at all levels. The owners and/or managers should appoint an SER to drive the collaborative processes and establish their role, responsibility and authority. In a small company, the SER can be the owner himself/herself. See [5.6.3](#) for guidance on the experience, skills and competencies that can be appropriate to this role.

5.4.3.2 Establishing resource requirements

The owners and/or managers, with the SER, should allocate sufficient resources to manage a collaborative business relationship. The allocation should consider, for example:

- investment in the people, structures, processes and systems;
- personnel with capability, capacity and competence.