

Protocol for Establishing Collaborations and Partnerships



Equitable Earth Initiative

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Equitable Earth Initiative

www.equitable-earth.org

Equitable Earth Initiative connects research, policy and practice to promote governance of land and resources for sustainable prosperity.

Protocol for Establishing Collaborations and Partnerships

Introduction

The purpose of this short document is to guide partnerships between Equitable Earth Initiative and communities, community-based organizations, civil society organizations and other groups interested in working with it.

Purpose (Why to engage in a partnership with EEI?)

The aim of Equitable Earth Initiative is to help strengthen governance of land and natural resources at the grassroots and contribute to the sustainable prosperity of indigenous and local communities. This is done through the establishment of partnerships to exchange technical expertise, undertake collaborative research, and foster mutual learning and collaborative engagement in social discourse.

Levels of Engagement (What are the different types of partnerships?)

Partnerships can be understood as taking place at four different levels, depending on the immediate or long-term needs of both parties.

Level One: Occasional Interactions. To carry out seminars, information exchange, presentations, or field visits. These are one-time or occasional interactions.

Level Two: Short-term Collaborations. To do research, work on advocacy, develop policy briefs, and hold training sessions and/or other field activities within clearly defined time periods (of up to 6 months).

Level Three: Medium-Term Partnerships. For the development and implementation of bilateral or multi-stakeholder projects, where partnerships are created for the duration of a project or to achieve measurable community/organizational goals (e.g. building research capacity, supporting community-based monitoring for advocacy, etc.).

Our Commitment for Community Engagement

Equitable Earth Initiative commits to abiding by the following principles in its partnerships.

- *Service for Collective Wellbeing.* Equitable Earth Initiative's efforts are guided by the firm belief and practice that a genuine spirit of service can lead to unity in diversity, social transformation, and ultimately to collective wellbeing. Our actions are undertaken in a spirit of service, emerge from cycles of consultation-action-learning, and are aimed at supporting informed action and consensus building.
- *Community-Driven Development.* Equitable Earth Initiative is not an implementer of local development efforts. Our aim in partnering is to help build the capacity of communities and organizations to lead their own development processes, and to foster collaborative learning and analysis that enables grassroots action to inform policy and decision-making at higher levels.
- *Mutual Benefit.* Our partnerships will involve open communication of the objectives and benefits of each party. Equitable Earth Initiative will communicate clearly both what it offers and what benefit it hopes to get from a partnership, and expects its community and other partners to do the same.
- *Inclusivity and Equity.* Equitable Earth Initiative will take meaningful steps to avoid that its partnerships with communities contribute to the sidelining of underprivileged and marginalized groups within the community or to injustice or disunity among communities.
- *Partnerships not Driven by Project Funding and Timelines.* Although some partnerships may be temporary, and although partnerships may sometimes benefit from grants or other project funding that Equitable Earth Initiative receives, we will make every effort to not allow funding cycles and project timelines to be the main driver of our partnerships. We recognize that within communities and in partnerships among diverse stakeholders, time is needed for deliberation and for the building of trust. We will allow our partnerships to develop at a pace that is right for each community or organization we partner with.

Level Four: Long-term Partnerships. To support long-term, strategic goals of communities and other partners. These partnerships are guided by arrangements where timeframes for collaboration do not necessarily have end dates or are set to auto-renew as long as all parties wish to continue collaborating.

Timeframe (What timelines are needed for planning and implementation of partnerships?)

Recognizing that the process of engagement will not necessarily be linear, timeframes to establish and implement partnerships should be flexible and should take into account:

1. Initial consultations to assess the mutual interest in establishing collaboration
2. A period of time for community or organizational partners to convey and decide with their membership on the prospective collaboration
3. Project design period
4. Project implementation timeframe
5. Reporting and project assessment timeframe.

Pursuing of Partnerships (Who is involved in seeking partnerships?)

Seeking engagement in partnerships can be initiated by prospective partners and/or EEI at any given time. Initial interactions consist of informal discussions to build consensus on the steps involved in the process of establishing collaboration and the willingness to act, on the part of all partners, to make partnerships happen.

Steps (How to Engage in Partnerships?)

Once Equitable Earth Initiative and/or prospective partners indicate interest in working collaboratively, the following steps are taken depending on the level of collaboration being sought:

Consultations take place to identify the type(s) of collaboration being sought and to collaboratively develop an expression of agreement to proceed. If the partner wishes, a partnership agreement may eventually be expressed in written form as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Level One interactions can happen at any time partners agree on collaborating. An agreement with Equitable Earth Initiative at this level will be limited to a succinct description of the activity(ies), the role of EEI and of the partner, and other important details that may be needed to fulfill funding requirements and to formalize the commitment.

“Agreements describe the activity or set of actions to take place, the roles and commitments from each party, the expectations and or outputs and the mutual acceptance of the terms in it contained.”

Levels of engagement Two to Four involve an agreement that describes the primary goals of the partnership and the steps that will be taken to establish those goals. For these levels of collaboration, the development of the agreement signals that partners will work together to build consensus on the nature of the collaborative partnership. These partnerships are formalized through written documents or other types of culturally appropriate protocols which make interactions formal, binding and appraisable (for the purpose of ensuring implementation, further collaboration, reporting to funders, assessing the impacts, etc.)

“Agreements for engagement levels Two to Four: describe the primary goals of the partnership, and the steps that will be taken to establish those goals. For these levels, an agreement is the expression of consensus on working together and the commitment to formalize the partnership through the development of a plan of work.”

For more information on Equitable Earth Initiative’s areas of action and process of establishing partnership please email us at info@equitable-earth.org.