



PSS Models of Governance



Models of Governance

Building on existing governance models

Governance has many definitions and there are numerous governance models.

It should not be confused with management, which deals with making and carrying out decisions. Governance is concerned with the range of acceptable choices available to groups, and how those choices can be made more efficiently in the long term.

The choices needed to be made relate to the following areas:

- **The structure of the leadership or the centre(s) where decisions are made** – For instance, in some governance models, all decisions are filtered or initiated by a central body (**centralised governance**), while in other models, there is a central authority/body, but decisions are distributed at different levels or units (**decentralised governance**). Alternatively, there may be many independent centres of decision-making which interact with each other and coordinate actions (**polycentric governance**). These models can take many forms, but a key aspect is maintaining a balance of ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ approaches.
- **How decisions are made** – There may be a protocol that will outline procedures. For instance, how often the different members meet, or how many members of the partnership need to be present for a decision to be validated, or if there will be a voting or a co-decision process or consultation system.
- **Who is participating in the leadership of a partnership** – Which individual(s) or organisations needs to take part in decision making, how many, who holds power to decide and over what time period. Make sure the decision-making group includes representatives of all those with relevant knowledges and interests.
- **Ethics and accountability mechanisms** – These can include considerations and agreements on who can make decisions on behalf of who, how objectives are going to be secured and monitored and how decisions can be equitable. Getting this part of your governance right will be crucial for the longevity and effectiveness of PSS.



Suggested drivers for effective governance and effective partnership working

How to design an appropriate governance model for PSS

Each area undertaking a PSS will have a different starting point. There may already be partnerships with governance structures in place that cover all or part of the issues relating to the protected site/sites. In other cases, some key stakeholders may have been collaborating but without formal collaboration structures in place or there may have never been any kinds of shared vision or central decision-making body. Determine where the starting point is (refer to Initiation stage).

The wheel does not have to be reinvented

Research what already exists and decide if and how it can be built into existing governance structures. Learn from the successes and failures of past and present governance approaches at similar ecological, geographical, temporal, and socioeconomic contexts. Observe patterns and effectiveness of existing partnerships to learn what works and what doesn't. There are examples of successful governance models in the literature, but these can also be practical examples from localities.

Building on existing at governance models

There might be existing environmental stakeholder partnerships such as a Local Nature Partnership, Catchment Partnership, Local Nature Recovery Strategy Partnership, Landscape Delivery Partnership etc (see initiation document). These may have procedures and structures in place appropriate for a PSS and members of their governing bodies could form a working group for a newly established PSS.

This could help with garnering pre-existing knowledge and relationships, be time and resource efficient and build a governance model that can confidently:

- ensure continuity in pursuing key shared goals and objectives
- build on the legacy (e.g. of ongoing delivery or reporting structures)
- infuse a sense of ownership & buy-in with local people and stakeholders

Useful links and resources



Initiation document

Starting from Scratch

If it is decided that a pre-existing structure will not be used, the rationale will need to be clearly laid out of why and what is being used instead – this will demonstrate thought and consideration has been applied. Remember most areas have seen many project groups and partnerships come and go – some of the stakeholders may expect that the PSS will be the same. If the PSS is to be different and long term, this needs to be clearly shown from the start.

If a pre-existing structure does not exist, the most appropriate governance structure for the area will need to be decided. Local knowledge can still be benefited from.

Look out for:

- Active projects or initiatives with effective governance structures.
- Key organisational relationships in the area e.g. between an ENGO, local council, local interest groups.
- 'Key individuals' that work in the area and understand how the local system operates – they probably have contacts too.

