

## 2.1 Thinking about a Link?

### In this Chapter:

- Initiating a Link
- Is a Link right for your organisation?

- A step by step guide:

**Step 1: Establish a group of interested people**

**Step 2: Understand the implications of your commitment**

**Step 3: Is a Link right for your organisation?**



**Step 4: Determining the aims of the Link**

**Step 5: Find a suitable Link partner**

**Step 6: Get agreement and support from your management**

- What's next?

Colour coding has been used throughout the Manual to highlight the sections which are most relevant to each:

 green for the UK  
 and yellow for the Developing Country (DC) partner.

**Links have the potential to make a valuable long-term impact on health care; but to do so they have to be based on a genuine need, have long-term commitment from their organisations and be built on solid foundations. This Chapter helps you think about whether a Link is right for your organisation and takes you through the initial steps of establishing a Link.**

### Initiating a Link

The initial drive to get involved in a Link may come from any individual or group of people within an organisation. Perhaps you have read about Links in an article or heard about them at a conference, from a colleague or perhaps you have been approached by a potential partner organisation. You may think a Link sounds like an interesting concept but how can you take the idea forward?

If a Link is to be effective it should not be entered into lightly. While the enthusiasm of key individuals is very important, remember that a Link is an organisational partnership and needs to be embedded in the structure and function of the organisation. You need to gather interest from within your organisation, including senior management, to ensure that the partnership can be sustained and bring about change in the long-term. Equally a Link cannot just be a top-down decision from senior management without support from other staff.

Six matters need to be considered before establishing a Link. There is no set order for these to happen and the sequence will depend on the individual circumstances of your organisation. This Chapter addresses each of these steps individually:

**Step 1:** Establish a group of interested people

**Step 2:** Understand the implications of your commitment

**Step 3:** Ask: Is a Link right for your organisation?

**Step 4:** Define the aims

**Step 5:** Find a suitable Link partner

**Step 6:** Get agreement and support from your management

In the case of a UK Foundation Trust, agreement from managers as well as the Board of Governors is very important.

### Step 1: Establish a group of interested people

There needs to be a group of committed people who have the skills and time to make the Link a reality. From the DC partners' perspective this may mean people who have the motivation and drive to lead the Link, communicate with partners, and think strategically about where a Link can have an input. For UK partners it may mean having the people with the professional skills, time, contacts and experience of working in a DC. Arrange to have an initial meeting to explore the idea of having a Link and establish who within your organisation is really keen and willing to become part of the Link Committee. If a Board member or chairman is enthusiastic and part of the Committee this usually makes things easier later on.



### CASE STUDY: Enthusiasm and reality in Links projects

I have been involved with health projects in Africa for more than 25 years now and still remember the excitement of my first time helping to set up a teaching programme. Since then there have been great encouragements. Probably the greatest for me has been seeing orthopaedic clinical officer students learn basic fracture treatment and then seeing them practising it in rural areas. There have also been great disappointments; probably the greatest have been when gifted students decide to leave their poor country in search of greener pastures. When one starts working together with health care colleagues in less developed countries it is tempting to think that the road ahead is one of continued improvement in services, sometimes slow, sometimes fast, sometimes hard, sometimes easy. The sad reality is that it is also sometimes downhill, and in many places where I have worked the quality of health care is lower now than it was 25 years ago. There are many reasons for this, some related to personnel, some to equipment, some to inappropriate management, some to general economic collapse, and the widening of the global rich / poor divide. I mention this, because at the outset of a Link it is easy to be over enthusiastic and it is important to temper this with realistic expectations. Over optimistic hopes or promises can be detrimental to a project and can lead to personal disappointment and destructive cynicism. I have seen colleagues who started off keen, gave much of their time and energy to a Link, then threw in the towel when problems occurred. If we are in this for the long haul we will rejoice with our DC colleagues at successes and share with them in disappointments. That is partnership.

**Professor Chris Lavy**, Orthopaedic Surgeon

### Step 2: Understand the implications of your commitment

Before committing to a Link, you and your colleagues need to be sure that a Link is right for your organisation. How might a Link be able to help your organisation? Why do you want to get involved? Can you make a long term commitment? Are you able to invest the necessary human and financial resources to running a Link?

**DC**

#### REMEMBER!

When planning a Link it is tempting to ask your UK partner “What can you offer us?” But when Linking with an organisation you should be able to draw on expertise from across their staff. You need to choose your partner carefully and ensure that they have all the skills necessary to support you. The Link need not concentrate on just one disease, one area of health care, one objective, but can help to develop different areas across your organisation. You should tell your UK Link partner “**This is what we need, let’s discuss how you can help us**”.

If you are a developing country (DC) organisation and you already have several collaborations with organisations in other countries, it may be better to strengthen these than to start another one with a UK organisation.

**UK**

#### REMEMBER!

The Link is about supporting and responding to the requests of partners in DCs. This does not mean that you need to say yes to providing the requested x-ray machine or renal unit if you do not see any evidence for these being top priorities. Neither does it mean making bold suggestions or focusing on issues that may be priorities in the UK without fully understanding the context. Instead it is about joint dialogue; what are your problems and priorities? How can these be addressed? What might we be able to offer? Might a Link with us be able to help address some of these issues?

## 2.1 Thinking about a Link?

### Step 3: Is a Link right for your organisation?

The following decision tree will help you to think through some key issues when deciding whether or not to get involved with a Link.

#### Decision tree for Link involvement

DECISION TREE	<span style="background-color: #FFC300; padding: 2px;">DC</span> ISSUES TO CONSIDER - Developing Country organisation	<span style="background-color: #92D050; padding: 2px;">UK</span> ISSUES TO CONSIDER - UK organisation	UNDER-PINNING PRINCIPLES
<p>Explore what the possible benefits of the Link will be to your organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the vision of your organisation? Might a Link be able to help you to achieve this?</li> <li>• If you don't already have a vision, might the Link help you develop one?</li> <li>• Are staff in need of continuing professional development and on-the-job training?</li> <li>• How will the Link improve services to patients?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are many staff interested in getting involved in international work?</li> <li>• Does your organisation serve a large diaspora community? The Link may help staff understand and address their needs better.</li> <li>• Is there little cross-departmental interaction? Multidisciplinary teams involved in Links may improve working across your organisation.</li> </ul>	<p>Clear rationale</p> <p>Responding to requests</p> <p>Multidisciplinary</p>
<p>Be clear about what your organisation has to offer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will your organisation be committed to leading the Link and prioritising its aims and objectives?</li> <li>• Have you considered what structures will be needed to manage the Link?</li> <li>• How will people be chosen to take responsibility and how will responsibilities be divided up?</li> <li>• Will you be able to communicate regularly with your UK partner?</li> <li>• Will your organisation be able to arrange training sessions that your UK partners can feed into?</li> <li>• Will you be able to provide your UK partner with transport and accommodation when they are visiting your organisation?</li> <li>• Is your management willing to support the changes that will be encouraged by the Link? This may involve supporting trained staff with resources, personnel, equipment, etc. in order to bring about the desired changes.</li> <li>• Will the Link be a catalyst for change?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your organisation able to release staff (e.g. 4 to 8) for at least two weeks a year to work with DC partners?</li> <li>• Have you considered what structures will be needed to manage the Link?</li> <li>• How will people be chosen to take responsibility and how will responsibilities be divided up?</li> <li>• Are staff from across your organisation willing to get involved with the Link, maybe giving some of their free time to support the Link?</li> <li>• Is your organisation willing to arrange placements for staff from your DC partner?</li> <li>• Are enough staff in your organisation willing to dedicate time to managing the Link: planning, arranging meetings, fundraising, constantly communicating with DC partners?</li> </ul>	<p>Flexibility</p> <p>Equal Commitment</p> <p>Organisationally owned</p>

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## 2.1 Thinking about a Link?

### Decision tree for Link involvement

DECISION TREE	<span style="background-color: #FFC107; padding: 2px;">DC</span> <b>ISSUES TO CONSIDER -</b> <b>Developing Country organisation</b>	<span style="background-color: #28A745; color: white; padding: 2px;">UK</span> <b>ISSUES TO CONSIDER -</b> <b>UK organisation</b>	<b>UNDER-PINNING PRINCIPLES</b>
<p>Understand where the motivation for the Link is coming from. Who will be involved? What support and buy-in is there for the Link?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the Link something that your organisation has requested, will it respond to your needs? Or is it something that has been offered to you?</li> <li>• Does the Link fit in to any organisational plans or national strategic frameworks?</li> <li>• Do management and staff alike feel that the Link would be beneficial? Are they willing to support it and get involved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the Link something that staff feel they should be involved in purely from a philanthropic perspective, or is there a real demand from overseas for the expertise that you possess?</li> <li>• Will you have the capacity to think and work strategically with partners?</li> <li>• Is there a genuine drive to work with and support partners rather than 'medical tourism'?</li> <li>• Are those involved in a Link willing to respond to partners' needs rather than imposing their own ideas and replicating what is done in the UK? Are they ready to be stretched, challenged and to learn?</li> <li>• Do management and staff alike feel that the Link would be beneficial in terms of their own personal and professional development? Are they willing to support it and get involved?</li> </ul>	<p>Demand Driven</p> <p>Capacity Building</p> <p>Long-term sustainable Link</p>
<p>Consider the scope for harmonisation with national and organisational initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the Link be able to advance national and district initiatives or objectives? Can it help national and local strategic plans?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you show how a Link can advance the objectives of your organisation e.g. staff development and training, Corporate Social Responsibility, staff retention and morale, better cohesion amongst staff (particularly if there are staff from the potential partner country)?</li> </ul>	<p>Harmonisation</p> <p>Alignment<sup>4</sup></p>
<p>What other Links does your organisation already have?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does your organisation already have ties with other organisations? If so can these be strengthened rather than initiating new partnerships?</li> <li>• Can you explain why a proposed extra Link is needed?</li> <li>• Are other local organisations or NGOs better able to help you to address the needs you have identified?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out if any other Health Links or partnerships with DC organisations already exist? Is there scope to strengthen these rather than initiating a new partnership?</li> <li>• If you proceed, is there a clear mutual understanding about how different Links can complement and support each other?</li> </ul>	<p>Avoiding duplication</p>

Continued on following page...

## 2.1 Thinking about a Link?

Decision tree for Link involvement

DECISION TREE	<span style="background-color: #FFC300; padding: 2px;">DC</span> <b>ISSUES TO CONSIDER - Developing Country organisation</b>	<span style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 2px;">UK</span> <b>ISSUES TO CONSIDER - UK organisation</b>	UNDER-PINNING PRINCIPLES
Carry out an organisational analysis - what is the capacity for long-term involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your organisation interested in long-term collaboration?</li> <li>• Will your organisation be able to help monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the work to ensure it is meeting the agreed objectives?</li> <li>• Are there people who are willing and able to create a Link Committee with a designated coordinator who has the time and commitment to sustain the Link's momentum?</li> <li>• Will you be coordinating the work with other partnerships/Links that already exist within your organisation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does your organisation have the capacity to see the Link through over a long period of time? Are there any uncertainties or questions in the future which may jeopardise the Link?</li> <li>• Will you be able to set up a Link Committee to mirror and work with the committee in your Link organisation?</li> <li>• Will staff be supported and given time to engage in Link activities?</li> <li>• Can you get the management to support those with significant Link responsibilities by having these written into their job description?</li> <li>• Is your organisation able to assess and manage any additional risks incurred by being involved in a Link?</li> </ul>	Long-term engagement

<sup>4</sup> **The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness** - endorsed on 2 March 2005, is an international agreement to which over 100 Ministers, Heads of Agencies and other Senior Officials adhered, committing their countries and organisations to continue to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid within a set of monitorable actions and indicators. Links need to be aware of the principles of harmonisation and alignment to ensure that their work is in line, wherever possible, with government plans (alignment) and that it avoids duplication of other initiatives (harmonisation).



### DID YOU KNOW?

#### The resources needed to run a Link

The resources needed to run a Link successfully will depend on the objectives and activities that you agree with your partners. When determining these, it is important to be realistic about the resources available to both of you, taking care not to raise expectations beyond what you will be able to deliver. A modest start, strengthening the foundations of the Link while you build up your fundraising capacity and Link team will allow you to deliver more effectively further down the line.

There are generally five types of resources needed to run a Link. These are:

- **Funding** (money) - to enable exchange visits, training courses and pay for other inputs such as books, journals and so on. A new Link may require about £5,000 a year to start its activities and an established one £30,000. In addition, administration time may also need to be funded. Usually the UK organisation takes a lead on fundraising with some input from the DC organisation
- **Time** - to plan, manage, undertake, and evaluate the activities of the Link
- **Expertise** - to help achieve the objectives of the Link through support and training
- **Hospitality** - to support overseas partners on training visits
- **Non-financial donations** - such as books or equipment that you secure free through donations or from old hospital stores. These come, however, with a strong warning and risk. Refer to Chapter 2.6

### Step 4: Determining the aims of the Link

Before you find a UK partner, or while in discussions with a potential partner, you will need to assess whether a Link is the right way to respond to the needs of your organisation and, if so, what the broad aim of the Link should be. While the topic of identifying aims and objectives is covered in more depth in Chapter 2.2 *Jointly Planning the Link*, it is useful for the DC organisation to have an idea about the purpose of the Link and its priorities at this stage. It will help you find a more suitable partner and ensure the relationship is demand driven. If you have carried out organisational needs assessments in the past, you can tie the work of the Link into these.

Ask yourself:

- *Why do we need a Link?*
- *What other existing collaborations do we have with overseas organisations?*
- *What can a Link with a UK organisation help us achieve?*

If you are the Director/Manager or Dean of the organisation, you might already have a clear idea of what the purpose of the Link should be. Review your organisation's 5-year plans (if you have them) as these will help identify areas where support is needed. Involve other staff members in this process as you will gain a broader understanding of the possible areas where a Link could help. This will also encourage organisational buy-in and ownership of the Link.

At this stage you will only be defining the broad aims of the Link. Specific aims and objectives **must** be developed through discussions with your UK partner. However, if you do have a clear idea of outcomes for the Link this will speed up the process of creating a Link and potential partners are more likely to take your request seriously.

When determining the aims of the Link it is worth remembering that:

- Your UK partners will not have access to large amounts of funding for this work. The main thing they can offer is **professional expertise** for training and supporting your staff. How can you best use this?

- The principal focus of the Link should be to **strengthen the capacity of staff so they can address the problems that have been identified.** Activities such as training trainers will help promote sustainability. You may want to prioritise such activities as they are forward thinking, long-term and realistic.
- There will need to be **commitment from staff and managers in your organisation to ensure that visits are followed up with action plans and changes are implemented.** The training involved in the Link will typically be limited to an average of six exchange visits per year so these need to be incorporated into a work plan to be taken forward by your organisation.

### Step 5: Finding a partner

One of the first questions people involved in Links are often asked is, how did it all start? Each Link will have a different answer. Perhaps it was through a brokering organisation which helped them to match the partners, or through personal contacts such as a returning volunteer, a health worker who has emigrated to the UK but has been asked to support his/her home organisation, a chance meeting at a conference or an existing school or community Link.

When looking for a partner organisation:

- Investigate existing contacts in your organisation. Do any colleagues have ties in relevant countries? You may be surprised at the number of

**DC**

### EXAMPLE

#### Carrying out a consultative needs assessment with your DC organisation

A consultative needs assessment involves a broad range of people. If you have not carried out an organisational-level needs assessment before and want to carry it out for the specific purpose of the Link, here are some suggestions:

- Bring together key people from within your organisation (if you are large this may include heads of department, managers, matrons, doctors, lecturers or support staff).
- Encourage people to identify gaps between current and desirable practice. Get them to specifically refer back to previous organisational or national plans. The areas selected should be those that prioritise improvements in patient outcomes rather than individual health workers. You could ask each participant to write three ideas out individually.
- Ask participants to then think about the solutions, focusing on learning/training needs.
- Each participant should then share their ideas verbally with the group, highlighting the problems they have identified and the possible solutions. Write these down.
- As a group discuss each idea and rank them in terms of priority. You may be able to group them into broad themes for example: improving neonatal services; improving management processes. Include the specific training needs you have identified in each area.
- Write these down and include the rationale for your decisions.
- Now is the time to find a Link partner!

Remember, during the next stage of planning (described in 2.2) your UK partner may ask lots of questions. You need to justify why you have chosen the areas you have chosen, while being willing to learn from the dialogue (as they should be). Through discussions with potential partners, you may decide to adjust your aims and objectives.

individual or departmental partnerships that already exist in your organisation. Share this Manual with them and assess their interest in expanding it into a wider Link.

- Consider if other organisations in your area have connections or twinnings with a particular

country. For example a School Link, Community Link or a Church Link may create a good synergy with a new Health Link in the same region.

- Speak to colleagues in other organisations who are already involved in a Link. See if they can suggest any potential Link partners for you.

## 2.1 Thinking about a Link?

- While this Manual refers to Links with UK organisations, the same principles apply to other countries. You may wish to develop a wider Link with another country. Refer to Appendix 3 for a list of other Linking organisations outside the UK.
- If you are a UK organisation you may have a preference to work with one particular country, for example, if you serve a large diaspora community from that country. Investigate existing contacts with staff and see if anyone has the contacts to 'broker' a Link. Speak to other UK Link partners already working with this country.

It is important to ensure that the relationship is demand driven (by DC organisations) rather than supply driven (by UK organisations) and that it responds to need.

If, as a UK organisation, you are suggesting the Link to a DC partner, ensure that they are given a copy of this Links Manual and encourage them to go through an internal process of assessing whether a Link is right for them (as described in Step 3). Give them an opportunity to say no if they do not show much interest.

Remember the Link will only be able to address specific issues around capacity-building and support. The DC partner may have other pressing concerns which the Link will not be able to address.



### EXAMPLE

#### Criteria for selecting a Link partner

Experience suggests that the following points can be important when finding a Link partner.

- **Match like with like.** Aim to Link with an organisation of a similar type to yours e.g. teaching hospital with teaching hospital.
- **Explore existing partnerships.** If your partner organisation already has an existing partnership, it might be better for them to strengthen this rather than start another. When resources are slender, concentrate them. However if it does seem appropriate to start a new Link make sure you are aware of what the other partners are doing.
- **Ensure there is organisational support.** Is there evidence for wide support for the Link including from senior management or are only one or two individuals engaged? An enthusiastic advocate can be useful at the beginning, but it is important to ensure that the Link doesn't become an individual project as it will not be sustainable.

### UK

And when selecting a DC partner, take into account:

- **Clear evidence of need.** Is there genuine demand from the DC partner? If the Link is to create change, the drive for it must come from those who will implement the change in the DC organisation.
- **Ethos of the organisation and rationale for Link.** Is the organisation not-for-profit and engaged in work that is for the public good? Does the organisation make provision for those on low income to access its services?
- **Geographical location.** It is sometimes tempting to think that the most useful Links are those that involve hospitals or universities in the major cities in a DC. However, these may already have a number of existing partnerships. It is often the smaller rural hospitals that have the least outside assistance and may gain the most from a Link.

As a DC organisation you need to be sure that a Link will be an appropriate response to an identified problem, providing a greater benefit than the time and resources required to run it. For example, when staff are on training courses there is an opportunity cost.



### FIND OUT MORE

Read Appendix 5. It has some key terms and health sector context information which you need to be aware of.

DC

### GOOD PRACTICE

#### Avoiding supply-driven Links

Saying no is often difficult, especially when someone offers you something that sounds like a good idea. But it is irresponsible to enter into a Link without carefully assessing whether this is right for your organisation. It could be a waste of time and resources both for you and your UK partner. Staff, who could otherwise be at the frontline treating patients, may be tied up hosting visitors or involved in training that may have little impact on practice.

Before agreeing to the Link, make sure your organisation thinks about all the issues covered in this chapter. Assess whether it is right for your organisation and what your priorities are. Will the Link be able to address these and be a catalyst for change? If you don't think it will be of significant benefit, say no.

### Step 6: Get agreement and support from your management

*"The UK should see itself as having a responsibility as the employer of a global workforce and seize the opportunity to help developing countries educate, train and employ their own staff."*

UK Government response to the Crisp Report, pg 47

For the UK Link partner, gaining Board support may be more difficult to achieve than for the DC organisation. They will need to justify why they are releasing staff for overseas work, given organisational obligations and targets.

A Link with high level support from the Management Committee, Board or Deanery is much more likely to be successful and sustainable. Such endorsement will make the Link engagement easier, as it may allow staff to take time off for visits overseas or attending meetings. In some cases, the management may be willing to go even further and support the Link financially - this might mean writing Link responsibilities into people's job descriptions or supporting visits overseas, e.g. via paid study leave.

To allocate NHS resources, such as staff time, **you will need to convince your non-executives or governors of the case for a Link**. The table on the following page sets out some of the arguments commonly used.

Unless a member of the management team has been involved in setting up the Link, you will need to make an effort to get management support. Here are some ways you might approach this:

- Communicate with them right from the beginning to get initial endorsement for the Link.
- Arrange a meeting to do a presentation on Links.
- Be clear what you are asking for. Organisational endorsement and paid time when undertaking visits may be all you need at the beginning. You will be in a better position to ask for more once you can demonstrate what the Link has been able to achieve and the benefits to staff in the UK.

The UK Board will also need to consider any legal or professional practice implications that may arise from having their staff involved in the Link (see Chapter 2.11). You may want to invite a senior person from a neighbouring organisation involved in a Link, so they can help convince your Board about the benefits of being involved in a Link and how they have dealt with any practical issues.

### UK

#### EXAMPLE

##### Making a case for a Link to your Board

Some Trust Boards may be reluctant to get involved in a Link, and may find it hard to justify involvement with overseas work. You need to produce a convincing argument, based on the experience of Links and the regional/national Government policies. Some of the key points you may want to make are:

- Establishing an international Link will provide personal, professional and leadership development opportunities (regarded by some as better than attending traditional training courses) for their staff.
- A Link will allow the staff to acquire skills in managing conditions and presentations rarely seen in the native UK population but potentially increasing in the diverse communities Trusts serve. It will also allow staff to develop greater cultural awareness as the NHS workforce and populations they serve become more diverse.
- Exchange visits give staff a new perspective on their UK work having worked in a resource-poor environment, and provide a tool for recruitment and retention, motivation and reinvigoration of staff.
- Opportunities will arise for joint research, teaching and learning.
- People from different parts of the Trust will work together in support of the Link - it is very good for interdisciplinary communications and broader team spirit.
- A Link can enhance the national and international reputation of the Trust and demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility in an attractive way, especially given the NHS history of recruiting health professionals from overseas. Links impart a sense of contributing to sustainable development in a situation where it is possible to make a real difference.
- Political support for Linking schemes is increasing all over the UK.

### UK

#### FIND OUT MORE

- Refer to Appendix 4 for a sample letter to your Trust Board (UK)

#### What's next?

When you have found a potential Link partner it is time to start discussing the remit of the Link in more depth. You will need to assess whether you are the right partners for each other and explore areas for support. This will need to involve a joint planning process (as described in Chapter 2.2). It is also a good idea to set up a Link Committee at each organisation to take a lead on the Link issues. Communication is a key element of any Link so establish good communication channels. These and other logistical issues are described in Chapter 2.3.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

##### Culture shock

The phases of culture shock when travelling to a foreign country have been well documented. These are also similar to the phases that those involved in the development of a new Link also go through. There is:

- A honeymoon phase, where everyone is a bit starry eyed.
- A negotiation phase, where there is some anxiety and disappointment (sometimes accompanied by depression).
- An adjustment phase, where people are a bit more realistic and meaningful long term work can get done.



### CHAPTER CHECKLIST

- ✓ Think carefully about whether a Link is right for your organisation.
- ✓ Work through the issues raised in the decision tree.
- ✓ DC: Establish the broad purpose of the Link through a consultative process and communicate this to potential Link partners.
- ✓ Approach your Board or management team to ask for their support.
- ✓ Find an appropriate partner.
- ✓ Now begin discussing the next steps - planning the objectives and activities of your Link.