Unwritten Rules Discovery Map

1 / Discover what happens in practice

Begin independently, before comparing accounts. Describe specific experiences, not what you believe should happen. Unwritten rules may help or hinder collaboration; neither should be assumed.

PARTNERSHIP: _____ **PERSPECTIVE / ROLE:** _____ **DATE:** _____

Complete this sentence:

In this partnership, if you want to get something done, you need to...

Discover everyday practices - use a real example where possible		
Participation and voice	Who is asked early? Who tends to hear about things later?	
Relationships and influence	Who helps work move forward? Whose informal agreement is usually needed?	
Communication and challenge	How are concerns really raised? What happens when someone disagrees?	
Coordination and follow-through	How do people secure cooperation, share information and resolve practical obstacles?	
Authority and accountability	What happens when responsibilities, resources or commitments are disputed?	

Keep different perspectives. Do not attribute sensitive accounts to individuals without permission.

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2 / Map the unwritten rules and their effects

Bring individual accounts into a facilitated conversation. Write observations in participants' own words. Draw connections and arrows between practices: these areas overlap, and the map is not a sequence.

Participation and voice

Whose involvement shapes what happens?

Relationships and influence

Which connections help or constrain progress?

HOW THIS PARTNERSHIP ACTUALLY WORKS

Record an unwritten rule, recurring practice or expectation. Connect it to the areas it influences.

Communication and challenge

What happens to concerns or disagreement?

Coordination, authority and action

How are obstacles resolved and commitments made?

Add observations that do not fit the headings. Mark where participants describe the same situation differently; do not force consensus.

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3 / Bring reality and representation together

Only after exploring practice, compare it with the partnership's terms of reference, delegations, protocols and stated values. A difference is a prompt for enquiry, not automatic evidence of failure.

Practice observed / reported	Formal expectation or arrangement	What does this enable, constrain or leave unclear?

Consider: whose experience is missing? Who benefits from the practice? Who may be excluded? Which practices deserve support rather than formalisation?

Facilitator note: distinguish observed practice, personal interpretation and what needs further checking. Protect confidential or potentially identifying accounts.

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4 / Decide what to preserve, question or develop

The purpose is understanding and development, not a governance audit. Discuss what helps the partnership do the right things in the right way, with legitimate authority, accountability and appropriate challenge.

What we want to preserve or support	What we want to explore or change

One or two development conversations or experiments

What will we try or explore?	Who needs to be involved?	When will we revisit it?

Questions to revisit: What has changed in practice? Whose experience differs? Are informal connections still useful and legitimate? What have we learnt?

FACILITATION GUIDANCE | Invite different roles and organisational perspectives. Consider confidential individual input before group discussion, particularly where dependencies may inhibit candour. Avoid attributing sensitive comments. Do not score, rank or label the partnership.