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## Strategic Partnerships and Development Assistance Policy

**Policy Number:** 1.6.4.26  
**Responsible Officer:** Manager, Strategic and International Partnerships  
**Policy Editor/Contact:** Manager, Strategic and International Partnerships  
**Approving Authority:** Vice-Chancellor & President  
**Date approved:** 09 April 2025  
**Review date:** 09 April 2028

### 1. Purpose

This Policy provides a strategic and structured framework for the University of the South Pacific (USP) to engage in partnerships and development assistance initiatives that support its role as a premier provider of higher education and research, and a catalyst for regional development and community impact in the Pacific.

Over the years, USP has built strong relationships with regional organisations, development agencies, universities, and governments. Since its inception, USP received core funding and project funding from its Member Countries and other countries, organisations, and individuals. This Policy seeks to formalise and strengthen those relationships by establishing principles, processes, and responsibilities that promote effective, ethical, and sustainable partnerships.

### 2. Objective

The objective of this Policy is to ensure that all partnerships and development assistance initiatives:

- Align with USP's Strategic Plan and regional development goals;
- Contribute to institutional excellence in research, education, and innovation;
- Promote sustainable development and Pacific-led solutions;
- Are governed by clear principles of transparency, accountability, and mutual benefit;
- Maximise the positive impact for USP students, staff, member countries, and communities.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all formal partnerships and development assistance engagements involving USP, including but not limited to:

- Bilateral and multilateral donor assistance
- Research and academic partnerships and collaboration
- Capacity development and training initiatives
- Joint funding or grant applications
- Infrastructure and technology support
- In-kind and financial contributions
- Public-private partnerships
- Community or regional development programs and initiatives

#### 4. Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Strategic Partnership	A formalised collaboration between USP and an external organisation aimed at achieving long-term, shared goals in education, research, or development by undertaking joint initiatives and/or collaborative engagements.
Development Assistance	Financial or in-kind contributions, technical support, or capacity-building assistance provided by partners to support USP’s mission.
Development Partner	A non-member country, any external individual or organisation, including donors, universities, private sector entities, governments, or NGOs, that enters into a formal relationship with USP with a commitment to provide funding.
Development Cooperation Unit (DCU)	The Development Cooperation Unit (DCU), which is the University’s official Point of Contact for liaison with Development and Strategic Partners. While all formal offers of assistance must be provided in writing and addressed to the Vice-Chancellor and President as the official Point of Contact, DCU is the official Point of Contact for enquires, documentation queries, signature ceremonies, and post-signature management of the Agreement or the relationship between USP and its Development and Strategic Partners.
Strategic Partner	Any university or external agency that enters into a funding partnership with USP for joint initiatives and collaboration.
Project Funds	Funds provided by any Development or Strategic Partner for the delivery of a specific project(s).
Due Diligence	The process of assessing a potential partner’s legal, financial, operational, and reputational status prior to formal engagement.
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)	Memorandum of Understanding – a non-binding formal document that outlines the intentions and commitments of both parties to collaborate and undertake mutually agreed tasks.
Partnership Agreement	An agreement, with a Development Partner, that provides core funding to the University.
Letter of Agreement (LoA)	Specific agreements (legally binding) between USP and any other university and institution that include deliverables with set timeframes. Such Agreements are based on financial commitments to undertake agreed tasks and responsibilities.

#### 5. Policy Statement

##### 5.1. Partnership and Development Assistance:

**5.1.1.** USP is committed to fostering strategic, mutually beneficial partnerships that enhance its role as the Pacific’s premier institution for higher education, research, and regional development. All strategic partnerships and development assistance engagements must:

- Reflect shared values and common goals;

- Support Pacific-led solutions and sustainable development;
- Enhance institutional capacity, innovation, and impact;
- Promote ethical engagement, transparency and accountability; and
- Strengthen USP's position as a regional and global knowledge hub.

**5.1.2.** All proposals for Development Assistance or linkages with Strategic Partners and all agreements, Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) and Letter of Agreement (LoAs) must be approved and signed by the Vice-Chancellor and President (VCP) or a delegate assigned by the VCP. The VCP is USP's official Point of Contact for offers of Development Assistance and Partnerships with external parties.

**5.2. Guiding Principles:** All strategic partnerships and development engagements must adhere to the following principles:

- **Strategic Alignment:** Partnerships must support USP's mission and strategic objectives.
- **Pacific Leadership:** All initiatives should centre Pacific voices and priorities.
- **Mutual Benefit:** Partnerships should deliver value to both USP and its partners
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Engagements must be inclusive, ethical, and gender-sensitive.
- **Sustainability and Accountability:** All initiatives must be results-driven and monitored

**5.3. Governance and Oversight:**

**5.3.1.** The University Council oversees institutional partnerships of major significance.

**5.3.2.** Vice-Chancellor and President provides executive oversight over partnership strategy and implementation.

**5.3.3.** Responsible Senior Management Team (SMT) Member leads the overall supervision and implementation of initiatives funded by Development and Strategic Partners.

**5.3.4.** Development Cooperation Unit is responsible for partnership coordination, record keeping, due diligence, and compliance monitoring.

**5.3.5.** Project Coordinators and Managers are:

- responsible for the oversight and management of project operations; and
- accountable for the proper disbursement of project funds and proper implementation of projects within the agreed timeframe.

**5.4. Partnership Development Process:** All partnership proposals must follow the structured process in the Strategic Partnership and Development Assistance Procedure.

**5.5. Risk Management and Compliance:** USP will maintain a risk-based approach to partnership and development assistance engagement. All activities must comply with:

- USP's governance policies and financial regulations
- Donor requirements and international standards
- Ethical and conflict-of-interest protocols
- Safeguards for environmental, social, and cultural integrity

- 5.6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting:** All partnerships will be subject to regular performance monitoring. The Development Cooperation Unit will:
- Maintain a partnership register;
  - Coordinate quarterly reporting to the University Risk Executive Committee;
  - Coordinate annual reporting to the Executive and Council;
  - Support partners in achieving agreed outcomes and accountability;
  - Provide oversight on compliance to MoUs, Partnership Agreements and LoAs; and
  - Ensure that MoUs, Partnership Agreements and LoAs align to the University’s strategic plan.
- 5.7. Continuous Improvement:**
- 5.7.1.** Feedback mechanisms and stakeholder consultations will guide policy reviews and strengthen the institution’s leadership in the development landscape.
- 5.7.2.** This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required to reflect changing strategic directions, donor landscapes and regional priorities.
- 5.7.3.** The Development Cooperation Unit will develop appropriate procedures and guidelines consistent with this policy to ensure operational efficiency, effectiveness and the proper administration of this policy. Policy procedures and guidelines will be approved by the Vice-Chancellor and President (VCP).
- 5.8. Breach of Policy:** Any breach of this policy, whether intentional or accidental, may result in appropriate disciplinary action as per the Staff Disciplinary Ordinance.
- 5.9. Procedures and Guidelines:** This policy must be read in conjunction with any procedures and guides that support this policy.
- 6. Related documents**
- a) Strategic Partnerships and Development Assistance Procedures
  - b) Register of Delegations
  - c) Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedures
  - d) Terms of Reference – USP OREC and RMC
  - e) Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures
  - f) Finance Regulations and Policies
  - g) Project Management Framework
  - h) Development Assistance and Research Project Management Policy and Procedure
  - i) Ordinance for the Discipline of Staff

*Annex: Procedures and Guidelines as per 5.7.3*