



ImpactEd
Group

Delivering impactful and sustainable educational programmes

Building recurring partnership revenue models to support ongoing impact

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The
Brilliant
Club

PLMR

communications + impact



Education
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Overview on a page

Leaders of growing education and purpose driven organisations are often rightly focused on understanding and evidencing the impact of their programmes. However, it is equally important that leaders think deeply about revenue and partnership approaches as well in order to build sustainable organisations that can have lasting impact.

A **recurring partnership-based revenue model** aims to create ongoing relationships with the settings and organisations that deliver their programmes through repeated engagement, whether via continuous access (subscriptions) or cyclical participation (termly/annual programmes), generating predictable revenue whilst deepening impact over time.

This document provides guidance and practical tools for developing partnership-based revenue models in order to build organisations that are **both impactful and sustainable**.



Key messages

Key message 1:

Define what you intend to achieve through your partnership-based model.

Before choosing to adopt a partnership-based model, it is important to consider why it is the right model. What will it achieve and what challenge(s) will it address?

Key message 2:

Research what participants value most before designing your partnership-based model.

Conduct research with current and past programme participants to understand what they found most valuable, what had lasting impact, and what ongoing or repeated support they need. This research should inform both your core programme design and your partnership-based offer.

Key message 3:

Plan how you will regularly refresh and update your programme content.

Develop a systematic approach to keeping your programme offering fresh and relevant.

Key message 4:

Choose a programme structure that matches both participant needs and your delivery capacity.

Consider whether participants need consistent ongoing support (favouring subscriptions) or prefer defined engagement periods with flexibility to opt in or out (favouring cyclical programmes). Balance this with what you can deliver sustainably.

Key message 5:

Ensure your partnership-based model complements rather than competes with your existing services.

Review your current offerings to avoid confusion or internal competition. Consider how the partnership-based model aligns with your programme's strategic direction and how different teams will work together to deliver it.

We have also developed the following documents that you may also find helpful to consult:

- Adopting Mission-Led Marketing and Communications
- Understanding Commercial Models for Scaling and Sustainability
- Using Technology to Support Scale

These can be accessed [here](#).

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Glossary

CPD (Continuing Professional Development): Ongoing training and learning activities that teachers and education professionals undertake throughout their careers.

Cyclical model: Structured interventions that run for defined periods with settings purchasing each programme cycle separately. Examples of cyclical models include:

Annual renewal programme: A programme running across a full academic year, with settings purchasing each year's programme separately.

Cohort-based programme: A programme designed around specific participant groups (e.g., new teachers, Year 7 students).

Modular cycle programme: A programme delivered in discrete modules that can be purchased individually or as packages.

Progression pathway programme: Sequential programmes where each cycle builds on previous learning.

Termly cohort programme: Time-limited programmes where participants join cohorts running for one term.

Legacy programme: Ongoing support offered to settings to maintain engagement and impact after core programme completion.

Renewal rate: The percentage of settings that continue with a subscription or purchase another cycle of a programme.

Retention rate: The percentage of settings that remain engaged with a programme over a given period.

Subscription model: Settings pay regular fees for ongoing access to support, resources and/or training. Examples of subscription models include:

Accreditation-based subscription: A recurring revenue model where participants maintain certified status by meeting specific criteria and paying ongoing fees.

Scaled pricing subscription: A subscription model where costs are adjusted based on partner size or participant numbers.

Steady subscription: A consistent annual subscription providing the same level of resources and support each year.

Tapered subscription: A subscription model providing intensive initial support followed by reduced-cost ongoing engagement.

Tiered subscription: Multiple subscription levels offering different combinations of resources and support.

Introduction

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) commissioned a consortium of three expert organisations (ImpactEd Group, The Brilliant Club and PLMR) to supply capability building support to EEF funded programmes in the 2024/25 academic year. The aim of the project was to support a selection of existing EEF projects to grow their setting reach longer term while maintaining quality programme delivery. This work has been facilitated through the Accelerator Fund, a DfE-funded project that is enabling the EEF to support programmes with previous evidence of impact to scale and reach more settings.

This guidance document has been developed out of this work, by this consortium, to support future EEF funded delivery teams in the area of developing sustainable revenue models through subscription models. This was selected as an area of focus in this work because:

- a) settings often require support to embed and extend the impact of a programme beyond the main delivery period, and subscription models can be an effective way to support continued implementation and impact and;
- b) it is critical that organisations develop sustainable models that allow for viable programmes over time; only by being sustainable can organisations facilitate ongoing, longer-term impact.

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is relevant to education organisations that have developed impactful programmes and are seeking to create financially sustainable models that extend beyond initial grant funding or one-off programme fees.

Using this guidance

This guidance is designed to be used as a strategic planning resource. It is recommended that organisations work through the key messages and then use the practical tools at the end of the document to plan for adopting a partnership-based model.

When ImpactEd Group works with delivery organisations on capability building, we draw on our own Impact and Sustainability Framework, which considers impact and sustainability through the lens of eight dimensions:

1. Governance	2. Strategic Direction	3. Outcomes	4. Activities	5. Revenue	6. Operating Model	7. People	8. Community
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We believe that the leaders and teams of education and purpose-driven programmes need to think deeply about these eight dimensions in order to maximise their potential as impactful and sustainable programmes. This guidance document is particularly relevant to activities, revenue and operating model. However, it should be noted that decisions made in one dimension will have implications across the others, and we encourage users of this guidance to consider its impact across all areas of their organisation.

The authors would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of this guidance. In particular, we are grateful to the delivery organisations with whom we worked closely while providing capability-building support. The insights gained through this collaboration have been invaluable in shaping this guidance, especially our work with the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), Ark Curriculum Plus, and the Schools, Students and Teachers Network (SSAT).

Partnership-based models for educational programmes: key messages

This section outlines key messages for education programmes to consider when exploring partnership-based revenue models as their approach to creating sustainable revenue streams. Sustainable revenue streams are critical for allowing educational organisations to secure their ability to deliver programmes in the long term and to support continued impact and implementation of good practice in the settings they work with.

This guidance focuses on building subscription and cyclical partnership-based models. These are not intended to be presented as the only two options to building partnership-based models – for example, education programmes may seek to build ongoing corporate partnerships or to subsidise charitable activities with traded income. Instead, this guidance focuses on subscription and cyclical partnership-based models as example approaches that may work for many education programmes seeking to build sustainable and impactful revenue streams.

What are partnership-based models?

Partnership-based revenue models involve delivering structured interventions to educational settings who pay regular fees for ongoing access or cyclical participation. These models create predictable revenue through repeated engagement with the same partners over time.

This guidance looks at partnership-based models in two main forms:

- **Subscription models** involve participants paying regular fees for ongoing access to support, resources and/or training. This may come after completion of a more intensive core programme. In this instance, subscription models ensure continued impact instead of ending the relationship after initial programme delivery. For example, a school improvement programme might offer subscribers annual access to refreshed teaching resources, termly professional development sessions and support for training new teachers who join after the original programme. Subscription models can also be a programme's core offer, such as providing access to a comprehensive library of curriculum resources with settings paying ongoing subscription fees.
- **Cyclical models** involve delivering structured interventions that run for defined periods—typically a term or academic year—with partners purchasing each programme cycle separately. Unlike subscriptions, partners make discrete purchasing decisions for each programme iteration, such as purchasing an annual leadership development programme or a termly literacy intervention for new student cohorts.

Why adopt a partnership-based model?

Many education programmes face the challenge of ensuring financial sustainability once initial funding ends or when they have reached the majority of their potential market. There are, for example, approximately 3,400 secondary schools in England, meaning that a programme that can only be sold once to each school will eventually face sustainability challenges.

A partnership-based revenue model can help to:

- Create predictable, recurring income streams that support programme planning and stability to create a sustainable organisation. The models enable programmes to track renewal and retention rates in order to effectively forecast recurring revenue.
- Maintain long-term relationships with partners to sustain and deepen impact over time. For example, through delivering a programme to multiple cohorts across a setting or providing ongoing training and support to mitigate the impact of staff turnover on programme efficacy.

Partnership-based models recognise that ongoing support or repeated delivery is often required to embed and maintain programme benefits, creating opportunities for continued engagement that benefit both the programme and participating educational settings.

Key message 1:

Define what you intend to achieve through your partnership-based model.

Before choosing to adopt a partnership-based model, it is important to consider why it is the right model. What will it achieve and what challenge(s) will adopting the model address?

For example:

- *avoiding an engagement cliff edge where partners lose all benefit once your programme ends*
- *increasing longer-term programme impact*
- *increasing organisational sustainability*

Implementing a partnership-based model

Market research and developing a value proposition

Before launching a partnership-based model, it is important to understand what programme participants want and need that ongoing or repeated engagement can provide.

In a **subscription model** this could be an offer that addresses a barrier to ongoing impact. For example, education settings frequently experience staff changes, so building training for new staff members into a subscription model can ensure sustained impact.

Worked example

Organisation A ran a successful one-off teacher wellbeing programme but wanted to develop ongoing support. Through surveys with past participants, they discovered that a significant number experienced renewed stress within 6 months of the programme ending. Further research identified staff changes disrupting the supportive culture the programme had built as a key barrier to long-term impact. During the programme schools particularly valued peer support networks and practical stress management tools.

Based on this research, Organisation A developed a subscription model that builds on the foundations of the initial programme. Schools pay an annual fee to access monthly virtual peer support sessions, quarterly wellbeing audits and a resource library with new stress management techniques.

The subscription could also offer additional benefit that is not part of a core programme. For example, services that would not be relevant to all participants can be offered as a 'bolt-on' through tiered subscription services.

It is important to consider, however, whether your subscription offer is addressing a gap within your core programme offer rather than an additional need. In this case, programmes should decide whether to integrate this into the core offer instead, especially if it has increased impact. There are valid reasons not to do this – for example, the increased cost may be prohibitive to

many partners – but an intentional decision should be made that balances impact and sustainability.

In a **cyclical model** this could be offering a replicable programme that is available to partners on a reliable timeline. For example, a programme that is specifically designed to work with Key Stage 4 pupils may be offered annually so that schools can ensure every year group has the opportunity to access it as they progress through Key Stage 4.

Key message 2:

Research what participants value most before designing your partnership-based model.

Conduct research with current and past programme participants to understand what they found most valuable, what had lasting impact and what ongoing support they need. This research should inform both your core programme design and partnership offer.

Providing ongoing value

Participants need to see ongoing value that justifies continued payments or repeat purchases. For **subscription models**, static resources quickly lose their appeal and restricting access to and sharing of resources that can be downloaded requires technical solutions that may require additional development.

For **cyclical programmes**, each iteration must offer sufficient value to justify repeated purchase, whether through serving new cohorts, addressing evolving challenges, or providing updated approaches.

Case study: The Scholars Programme¹

The Brilliant Club's Scholars Programme is run on a termly-basis. The programme offers additional value in each cycle by being available to multiple year groups and across a range of subjects. This allows schools to engage across the academic year at times that suit them. It also allows schools to run the programme across different terms – for example, they may enrol a Key Stage 4 cohort in the autumn term and a Key Stage 3 cohort in the spring term.

¹ Please note that the case studies used in this guidance do not all relate to EEF funded or evaluated programmes, but examples are drawn from across the education landscape.

Across academic years, the range of subjects available also mean that schools can choose to enrol the same pupils more than once while ensuring they receive additional value from repeat participation.

Key message 3:

Plan how you will regularly refresh and update your subscription content.

Develop a systematic approach to keeping your programme offering fresh and relevant. For subscriptions, this means regular content updates. For cyclical programmes, this means ensuring each iteration offers fresh value through updated materials, refined methodologies, or new focuses within the same framework.

Designing a subscription structure

You will need to decide between subscription and cyclical approaches and then design the specific structure within your chosen model.

Subscription structures can include steady subscriptions (consistent benefits each year), tapered subscriptions (intensive initial support followed by maintenance), tiered subscriptions (multiple service levels), accreditation-based subscriptions (maintaining certified status through ongoing engagement) or scaled pricing (pricing based on number of participants).

Cyclical programme structures can include termly cohorts (participants join time-limited groups each term), annual programmes (comprehensive yearly interventions), modular programmes (discrete components purchased individually) or progression programmes (sequential cycles building on previous learning).

A summary of different approaches is provided below. Programmes may choose to develop a model that offers a combination of multiple approaches. The key question to consider is whether the model will be your core offer or an addition to a core programme. This will inform your design and how much flexibility you build into it.

Subscription type	Description
Steady subscription	Participants pay a consistent annual fee and receive the same level of resources and support each year. This provides predictable revenue and clear value expectations for subscribers. This model can be particularly useful for programmes that offer access to resources – for example, training and teaching materials.
Tapered subscription	Participants receive more intensive support in the initial years (for example, the core programme delivery) followed by reduced-cost ongoing support that maintains engagement and impact. This legacy programme approach recognises that participants need different levels of support over time and may be offered as an optional addition to the core programme.
Tiered subscription	Multiple subscription levels offering different combinations of resources and support. This allows participants to choose options that match their needs and budgets. This can include ‘freemium’ options where basic resources are provided free with premium features available through paid subscriptions.
Accreditation-based subscription	Participants maintain accredited status by meeting specific criteria (such as having trained staff and completing annual self-assessments) and paying subscription fees. This model can include support for new members to achieve accreditation and assistance for existing members to maintain their status.
Scaled pricing	Subscription costs scaled according to partner size, making the model accessible to smaller settings whilst ensuring larger partners contribute proportionally.

Cyclical programme type	Description
Termly cohort programmes	Participants join time-limited cohorts that run for one term, with new cohorts starting each term. This provides regular engagement opportunities and allows for seasonal focus areas or addressing term-specific challenges. Works well for programmes that benefit from peer learning within defined timeframes.
Annual renewal programmes	Comprehensive programmes that run across a full academic year, with participants purchasing each year's programme separately. This allows for in-depth intervention whilst maintaining purchasing flexibility. Participants can opt in or out each year based on changing priorities and capacity.
Modular cycle programmes	Programmes delivered in discrete modules or phases that can be purchased individually or as complete packages. Participants can engage at different levels each cycle, choosing specific modules based on their evolving needs. This provides flexibility whilst maintaining programme coherence.
Progression pathway programmes	Sequential programmes where each cycle builds on previous learning, offering clear development pathways for returning participants whilst remaining accessible to newcomers. Each cycle can stand alone but also contributes to longer-term programme development.
Cohort-based programmes	Programmes designed around specific participant cohorts (e.g., new headteachers, Year 7 students, newly qualified teachers). Settings purchase the programme each time they have a relevant cohort, creating natural renewal cycles tied to partner needs rather than calendar timing.

Key message 4:

Choose a programme structure that matches both participant needs and your delivery capacity.

Consider whether participants need consistent ongoing support (favouring subscriptions) or prefer defined engagement periods with flexibility to opt in or out (favouring cyclical programmes).

Balance what participants want with what you can realistically deliver sustainably and consider how your structure aligns with educational planning and budget cycles.

Managing internal resources

Delivering partnership-based models requires ongoing investment in programme resource and different approaches to relationship management than one-off programmes.

For subscription models, you need systems for continuous engagement and content delivery. For cyclical programmes, you need strategies for maintaining relationships between programme cycles whilst respecting participants' autonomy to choose whether to re-engage.

Think about where responsibility for delivering the partnership-based model will sit within your programme and how different teams will work together. Without attention and support, partnership-based offers can become sidelined and stop delivering benefit to participants.

Worked example 2

The two examples have been included below to illustrate how careful management of internal resource is required to ensure effective ongoing relationship management. Please note these have been purposefully simplified for illustrative purposes.

Organisation B discovered their subscription model was detracting from their main programme sales when they failed to clearly differentiate the offerings internally. Sales staff were unclear which service to promote and delivery teams were competing for the same pool of facilitators. They addressed this by creating clear offer definitions, establishing a unified sales process where staff assessed client needs before recommending either the main programme or subscription model and implementing a resource allocation system that prevents internal competition. They also appointed a Partnership Model Champion at a senior level to ensure the model receives adequate attention and resources.

Organisation C operates cyclical programmes but found their partnership-based model was failing because no one had clear responsibility for maintaining relationships between cycles. Their main delivery team focused entirely on current programme participants, leaving past participants without support until the next programme opened for applications. They solved this by splitting responsibilities: the delivery team focuses on active programmes while a newly created "Partnership Development" role manages inter-cycle relationships, tracks engagement data and coordinates with the marketing team on renewal communications. This prevented the partnership-based model from being sidelined and ensured systematic relationship maintenance.

Key message 5:

Ensure your partnership-based model complements rather than competes with your existing services.

Review your current offerings to avoid confusion or internal competition. Consider how the partnership-based model aligns with your programme's strategic direction and develop appropriate systems for ongoing delivery and relationship management.

Choosing between subscription and cyclical programme structures

The choice between subscription and cyclical approaches should be based on:

Participant preferences and capacity:

- Do participants prefer ongoing access or defined engagement periods?
- How do their budget and planning cycles work?
- Do they need continuous support or periodic intensive intervention?

Your content and delivery model:

- Does your intervention benefit from ongoing access or repeated fresh delivery?
- Do you have capacity for continuous engagement or cyclical intensive delivery?
- How does your content naturally refresh or update?

Market context:

- How do similar programmes in your sector structure their offerings?
- What are the expectations and norms in your field?
- How does your choice affect your competitive position?

Both approaches can create sustainable revenue and deeper impact when designed thoughtfully around participant needs and organisational capacity.

Practical tools

Partnership-based model readiness checklist

This tool is designed to help leadership teams determine whether their programme is ready to launch a partnership-based revenue model. It should be completed collaboratively by senior leaders, delivery teams and finance staff before investing resources in model development.

The checklist is organised into three areas: market understanding, organisational readiness, and strategic alignment. Work through each section systematically, gathering evidence to support your responses.

Marketing understanding			
Relevant Key messages	Key message 2: <i>Research what participants value most before designing your partnership-based model</i>		
Checklist statements	Yes	No	If yes, key learnings and insights... If no, to complete this we need to ...
<i>You have consulted current and past participants about their ongoing needs</i>			
<i>You understand what participants found most valuable about your programme</i>			
<i>You have identified what support participants would be willing to pay for</i>			
<i>You have researched competitor offerings and pricing in your market</i>			
Next steps			

Organisational readiness			
Relevant Key messages	<p>Key message 1: <i>Define what you intend to achieve through your partnership-based model.</i></p> <p>Key message 3: <i>Plan how you will regularly refresh and update your programme content.</i></p>		
Checklist statements	Yes	No	If yes, key learnings and insights... If no, to complete this we need to ...
Your senior leadership supports the partnership-based model approach			
Your delivery team understands and supports the transition			
You have identified a team to deliver the partnership-based model			
Your finance team can manage recurring billing and partnership-based model metrics			
You have systems in place for customer support and engagement			
Next steps			

Strategic alignment			
Relevant key messages	<p>Key message 5: <i>Ensure your partnership-based model complements rather than competes with your existing services.</i></p>		
Checklist statements	Yes	No	If yes, key learnings and insights... If no, to complete this we need to ...
The partnership model aligns with your organisation's strategic direction			
You have reviewed existing services to avoid competing offers			
You have identified how the model complements other activities			
Next steps			

Partnership-based revenue model design framework

This tool is designed to guide leadership teams through the key decisions involved in designing a partnership-based revenue model. This framework is best used after completion of the readiness checklist.

The questions are organised into six themes that build logically from understanding participant needs through to implementation planning.

Value proposition

- What do participants find most valuable about your current programme?
- What aspects of your programme have the most lasting impact?
- What ongoing or recurring challenges do participants face that you could help address?
- Would participants benefit more from continuous access or periodic intensive engagement?

Model selection

- Do participants need consistent ongoing support (favouring subscription models) or prefer defined engagement periods with flexibility to opt in or out (favouring cyclical models)?
- How do participants' budget and planning cycles work?
- Does your intervention benefit from ongoing access or repeated fresh delivery?
- What are the expectations and norms in your field?

Offering structure

- Do you want a tiered approach with different service levels, or a flat-cost core offering with add-ons?
- What should be included in your core offering to provide clear value?
- What additional services would some participants value enough to pay extra for?
- How can you balance comprehensive value with sustainable delivery costs?

Pricing strategy

- How much are participants currently paying for your programme?
- What is the annual value that participants receive from your programme?
- How does your proposed pricing compare with similar offerings in the market?
- What discounts or incentives might encourage early adoption or multi-year commitments?

Delivery model

- Which benefits can be delivered digitally for cost-effectiveness?
- Which elements require personal interaction or customisation?
- How will you maintain programme quality across different delivery modes?
- What support do participants need to effectively use your offering?
- How will you keep content fresh and relevant over time?

Internal consultation

- How does the model align with your organisation's mission and values?
- What capacity and resources will be required to deliver partnership-based services?
- How will success be measured and monitored?
- What are the potential risks and how will they be mitigated?

Implementation planning

- Which participants will you prioritise to work with first for partnership-based services?
- How will you communicate the transition from one-off programmes to ongoing partnerships?
- What systems and processes need to be established before launch?
- How will you gather feedback and iterate on your offering?
- How will you maintain relationships with partners between engagement periods (for cyclical models)?



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