FROM DIALOGUE TO DELIVERY

A Practical Guide to Public-Private Collaboration for Value Chain Upgrading

International Trade Centre

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About the paper

This document builds on a previous technical paper on the core principles to manage the implementation of trade strategies successfully. It draws on various International Trade Centre (ITC) and non-ITC example of public-private collaboration for value chain development. These principles reflect the process and methodology developed by ITC to support strategy implementation management as part of its trade development strategies programme.

ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. As part of ITC's mandate of fostering sustainable development through increased trade opportunities, the Strategies and Policies for Trade and Investment Section offers a suite of trade-related strategy solutions to maximize the development payoffs from trade. ITC-facilitated trade development strategies and roadmaps are oriented to the trade objectives of a country or region and can be tailored to high-level economic goals, specific development targets or specific sectors.

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Publisher: International Trade Centre

Title: From Dialogue to Delivery: Practical Guide to Public-Private Collaboration for Value Chain Upgrading

Publication date and place: Geneva, March 2026

Page count: 48

Citation: International Trade Centre (2026). *From Dialogue to Delivery: Practical Guide to Public-Private Collaboration for Value Chain Upgrading.* ITC, Geneva.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CNE	National Council of Exporters of Côte d’Ivoire
EAC	Export Advisory Committee
ITC	International Trade Centre
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NES	national export strategy
PPC	public-private collaboration
PPD	public-private dialogue
SAC	Sector Advisory Council
SIMT	Strategy Implementation Management Tool
SLASSCOM	Sri Lanka Association of Software Services Companies

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Introduction

In many countries that ITC works in, it is not unusual to find a disconnect between the public and private sectors: they do not always work closely on strategic approaches to improving a sector's competitiveness or upgrading a particular value chain. The realization may come too late that closer, and collective, deliberation by private and public sector actors could have achieved a better outcome for a sector's future. That public-private *dialogue* (PPD) can improve policy and strategy outcomes is well established, but this paper serves to re-introduce the concept of public-private *collaboration* (PPC) as a more systematic, organized and methodical approach to driving value chain upgrading and boosting sector competitiveness.

This guidebook explains how PPC can be used to solve the coordination problems that slow value chain upgrading and sector competitiveness. It clarifies when lighter-touch PPD is sufficient, and when the complexity of constraints and the need for sustained follow-through make a more structured PPC platform the better choice.

This guidebook shows what makes PPC credible and effective in practice. It highlights the success factors that determine whether platforms deliver and the guiding principles that protect trust and keep collaboration solutions-oriented. It also introduces the PPC lifecycle, to help practitioners set realistic expectations and adapt the platform as it matures.

Finally, this guidebook provides a practical, step-by-step approach to building and improving PPC platforms. It offers tools to diagnose readiness and the collaboration landscape, guidance on inclusive representation across the value chain (including strengthening private-sector advocacy capacity where needed), and practical methods for managing and monitoring PPC performance.

When these elements are integrated, PPC can shift engagement from discussion to delivery, and become a durable vehicle for upgrading, export growth and more inclusive outcomes.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- If you're deciding whether PPC is needed (or whether PPD is enough): start with Part I.
- If you're designing a new platform or strengthening an existing one: start with Part II, then go to Part III for the step-by-step tools.


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Part I. Why PPC: Solving the coordination gap in value chain upgrading

The need for the private sector and public sector to collaborate or coordinate to drive the growth and competitiveness of a sector or value chain is well established. Even so, we often assume that this collaboration will happen on its own. It is not always that straightforward.

In many countries that ITC works in, it is not unusual to find a disconnect between the public and private sectors: they do not always work closely on strategic approaches to improving a sector's competitiveness or upgrading a particular value chain. The public sector sets about formulating and introducing strategies, policies and regulations without due consideration for their impacts on businesses. The private sector may not always articulate effectively and constructively the changes they need addressed in order to stay, and become more, competitive; or how to achieve those changes. Even when reforms are well identified, they may not be prioritized systematically and logically.

Better outcomes are possible when collaboration is pursued deliberately. Part I re-introduces PPC as a systematic approach to value chain upgrading and sector competitiveness, and equips readers with the foundations to use it well. By the end of this part, you will be able to:

- Explain what PPC is and the role it plays in sector and value chain development
- Identify the coordination problems PPC is designed to solve
- Distinguish when PPC is the right tool
- Draw lessons from illustrative international examples of PPC platforms in practice

Why upgrading stalls: The coordination problem PPC is built to solve

Problems associated with productive development are formidable and require broader strategic approaches. Long-term solutions require significant coordination across numerous actors but there are often serious coordination failures both between the private and public sectors, and sometimes within different sections of them. Communication between them can be fraught with concerns around rent-seeking and regulatory capture, information asymmetry, lack of understanding of complex government operations and policy ecosystems, limited appreciation for trade-offs and compromise, and mutual distrust.

To formulate and implement effective sector development strategies and policies, governments need access to information held by private stakeholders regarding markets, opportunities and key constraints. Without this input, accurately identifying challenges and opportunities –and designing effective programmes and policies– would not be possible. As Rodriguez-Clare (2004) observed, 'Even the best-intentioned government cannot succeed without a collaborative and motivated private sector'.

Similarly, the private sector is aware of the systemic challenges they face but often rely on the public sector to address these issues. The public sector possesses broader information and perspective, which complements the insights of private actors. For collaboration to be effective, the private sector must be willing to engage with government, while the government must be open to listening to and acting on the feedback received. In some instances, neither side has all the necessary information, and only through ongoing interaction, shared discovery and joint implementation of solutions can these gaps be addressed. This iterative process –described as a 'viable process and institutional framework of voluntary collaboration between government and business' (Rodrik, 2004)– is at the heart of value chain development and modern industrial policies (see Box 1).

Box 1: Value chain development and modern industrial policies as a driver of productive growth

It is important to recognize that upgrading value chains to boost sector competitiveness and growth through strategic interventions is linked to industrial development. Modern industrial policies are focused on identifying and removing constraints to the growth of productive sectors, which implies providing public goods and fixing market failures related to those sectors. To do this, policymakers need to access the knowledge held by private producers so they can learn about market failures and binding constraints, and formulate the right policies to address them. Likewise, private-sector stakeholders may need governments to help solve systemic issues they face.

Recent literature concerning modern industrial policies (sometimes called 'productive development policies') and interventions by development institutions such as ITC, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the World Bank have stressed the significance of coordination and structured PPC mechanisms relating to economic policy to develop and implement industrial policies. For instance, Rodrik (2004) notes that 'the right way of thinking of industrial policy (or productive development policy) is as a discovery process – one where firms and the government learn about underlying costs and opportunities, and engage in strategic coordination designed to elicit information about objectives and distribute responsibilities'. Devlin (2014) points out that 'such alliances supporting problem-solving dialogue would constitute a more effective way in which to gather knowledge and understanding among market players to develop industrial policies than if governments, alone, were to select the policies and related initiatives'.

What PPC delivers: Five outcomes

Building on the coordination problem outlined in the previous section, this section clarifies that PPC is ultimately a practical mechanism to identify upgrade pathways, improve sector governance, and convert shared diagnosis into action. In value chains where constraints span firms, regulators, service providers and multiple ministries, PPCs create a structured space to surface issues early, align on priorities and follow through on solutions, moving from discussion to delivery. The five objectives below set out the main results PPCs are designed to achieve, and they lead directly to their operating logic as a reveal-raise-resolve process.

1. **PPC can help collaboratively discover pathways for growth, value chain upgrading and competitiveness.** A PPC would review existing value chain performance and identify strategies to upgrade, including new product and market orientations, new investment opportunities, and new competitiveness opportunities and constraints.
2. **PPC can improve governance of the sector.** A PPC mechanism is useful to ensure fairness, transparency and credibility in the government's engagement with the private sector, and to avoid risks of decision-making being centred around the views of a few firms or entrepreneurs. It can ensure organized, formal and regular engagement between government and the sector that can guide policymaking.
3. **PPC can detect and manage crises and inform recovery pathways**. PPC can help capture early warning signals of possible fallout on the sector –for instance, a looming new import regulation in an export market that threatens loss of market access, or an ill-conceived domestic policy change that negatively affects the sector (see the *Spotlight* below)– and take defensive actions to mitigate the impacts. PPC can also help chart ways out of a crisis and reduce recovery time, by quickly identifying and implementing recovery strategies (e.g. the impact of a pandemic on supply chains).
4. **PPC mechanisms can serve as safe spaces to listen and discuss key issues.** PPC can foster an open exchange of views between the private and public sectors; there is opportunity for public sector officials to indicate policy direction and inform the private sector; and an opportunity for the private sector to flag key concerns and make suggestions. They serve as platforms to reveal issues faced (by either side), which are then followed up by the secretariat calling meetings with relevant other stakeholders to resolve issues. Once issues are revealed (through well-curated meetings) and raised (with balanced opportunities given to different actors), the focus can shift to how to resolve specific issues.
5. **PPC can help resolve key issues, or oversee / follow up on the resolution of issues by implementing agencies.** Once issues are raised, PPC meetings can shift to active and collaborative working sessions rather than passive consultation or discussion meetings. The focus is on resolving something specific in some way, especially when there is debate on the root cause(s). The work goes from a 'first-best' solution to 'first-doable' solution. In this, participants could consider adopting a 'problem-driven iterative adaption' approach (Andrews et al., 2012) to better understand and unpack the problem, work out the options for solutions, map out implementation next steps and assign responsibilities.

Taken together, 4) and 5) outline a process to reveal, raise and resolve issues ('Triple R Process'). In the context of trade competitiveness or export growth, the 'Triple R Process' (see Annex 2) can be a structured mechanism/s to reveal, raise and resolve matters that impact the export and import community as a whole (e.g. formulating a trade strategy or national export strategy (NES)), or matters that affect a particular value chain or sector (e.g. value chain of avocados), or matters that affect a particular area of trade facilitation (e.g. air cargo logistics).

Spotlight: East Africa coffee industry

In East Africa, efforts to enhance regional coffee trade and de-risk cross-border transactions under the African Continental Free Trade Area have resulted in the establishment of regional PPC mechanisms (Coffee Advocacy Working Group) at the East Africa Community level, bringing together national stakeholders in East Africa Community countries, with the support of ITC. Issues discussed at this level are then linked to strategic efforts at regional bodies like the Africa Fine Coffees Association and the Inter-Africa Coffee Organization. PPC meetings at the East Africa Community level have been able to better identify what issues need to be addressed at a national versus regional level; and recognize the role of domestic players, not just international trading companies and brands.

When PPC is worth the weight: Choosing PPC versus lighter PPD

PPC is not a one-off or ad hoc engagement between government and business. It is a sustained, structured way of working together to solve coordination problems and deliver measurable progress in sector competitiveness, resilience and value chain upgrading.

This is what distinguishes PPC from the broader idea of PPD. PPD is an important umbrella concept for engagement on thematic issues, and in many contexts it can be fit for purpose. PPC, however, goes further: it is designed for consistent, strategic and structured collaboration, anchored in clear goals and followed through over time. In other words, PPC is not 'soft dialogue' for its own sake. It is a formalized platform that enables the public and private sectors to jointly identify priorities, make decisions and oversee implementation, so that constraints are not only discussed but addressed.

Figure 1 summarizes the distinction between more ad hoc engagement (such as one-off PPD meetings) and the more systematic, delivery-oriented PPC that this paper advocates.

Figure 1: Key features of ad hoc versus systematic approaches

Ad hoc PPD engagement	Systematic PPC framework
• One-off dialogue scheduled on a needs basis, and gaps between meetings • Spontaneous needs-based agenda • Varying composition of participants • Trust-building can be challenging • Issue-specific progress can be achieved • Progress is measured at issue level and longer-term results may be difficult to track	• Periodic/regular meetings at predictable intervals • Consecutive and evolving agenda • Inclusive composition of participants • Continuous collaboration builds trust • Industry/sector competitiveness seeks achievements over time • Organized tracking of progress, and able to demonstrate results

Source: Compiled by ITC.

Definition: PPC for value chain upgrading

Having established why PPC goes beyond ad hoc dialogue, the next step is to define what PPC means in the context of value chain and sector upgrading. In this guide, PPC is not a label, it is a set of design features that make collaboration credible, inclusive and capable of follow-through.

PPC is defined as 'structured mechanisms, comprising a balanced range of public- and private-sector actors, anchored at the highest practical institutional level, coordinated by a light but effective secretariat, that is proactively facilitating sector development – by identifying, filtering, accelerating and measuring competitiveness actions and policy reforms'.[1]

This definition has five essential elements:

- Structured mechanisms: These are designed so that the public sector interacts directly with the private sector, and businesses communicate with the government in an organized manner, rather than relying on ad hoc advocacy or lobbying for narrow interests. Sometimes, business groups meet privately with politicians to promote specific agendas that may benefit only certain companies, rather than the wider sector or economy. In contrast, a PPC platform offers a fairer and more sustainable approach.
- Balanced representation: In the private sector, it is not expected that just a few people can represent all views about a topic / issue. It should not be just the 'big fish in the pond' but also smaller players – representatives of different groups in the sector, not just those who reinforce vested interests or the views of large established firms (who likely have access to top officials already). Ideally, the focus should be finding representatives who have an interest in industry-wide transformation. In the public sector, it is not just the primary ministry, department or authority overseeing the sector, but other institutions that matter across the value chain. When you want to solve an issue, you need several institutions that have a bearing on it or that can push forward an action.

1.– An adaptation from Herzberg (2014).

- Highest practical level: The highest practical level for a PPC platform depends on its jurisdiction and could be a ministry, sector or regional cluster. The anchoring level is determined by what is most practical in each jurisdiction (see Box 2).
- Light but effective secretariat: An institutional mechanism to do the coordination, organize meetings, help set the agenda and conduct follow-up.
- Proactive upgrading focus: It should not be a forum for general discussion but rather for proactively identifying constraints and solutions, discussing feasible actions to be taken between the private and public sectors, and how best to facilitate the improvements to take place.

PPC mechanisms are not rigid structures to be copied wholesale from one context to another. They are best understood as a process, supported by guiding principles and a set of design features that must be adapted to local realities while preserving the elements that make collaboration credible and effective.

What PPC looks like in practice

PPC can take different institutional forms. The names vary across countries and sectors, but the underlying features and principles remain consistent. For the purposes of this paper, the following formats/models are considered relevant examples of PPC mechanisms:

- Sector engagement platforms
- Sector advisory councils (SACs)
- Industry competitiveness councils
- Value chain roundtables
- Sector competitiveness committees

Many economies –developed and developing alike– have established different types of these collaboration platforms. Often, they are written into national laws. The United States of America has some of the oldest mechanisms established under the Trade Act of 1974. The Industry Trade Advisory Committees (ITACs) were established to function jointly between the USA Trade Representative and the USA Department of Commerce, and are a formalized mechanism to engage business leaders in formulating USA trade policies. Canada has Sector Engagement Tables (formerly Value Chain Roundtables), with clear goals of creating shared understanding of the key market challenges and opportunities facing sectors, and coordinating action plans and tracking implementation progress.

There are also interesting and pioneering examples among developing and emerging economies. Sri Lanka's Export Advisory Committees (EACs, established by the Sri Lanka Export Development Act of 1978) function under the country's trade promotion organization, and have both industry as well as relevant government agency representatives. In Brazil, the Private Sector Advisory Council (Conex) has brought together government ministries and industry members. In Côte d'Ivoire, PPC is anchored to the *Conseil National d'Exportation* (CNE – the National Council of Exporters), an advisory body established by statutes. The CNE acts as a consultative mechanism between the government and the private sector on issues of export development, and was supported by ITC. In Pakistan, the Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with ITC, established Sector Advisory Councils (SACs) in 2022 under the Strategic Trade Policy Framework 2020–2025 and the National Priority Sectors Export Strategy initiative.[2]

Box 2: The PPC anchor can vary depending on the context

ITC experience shows that who anchors the PPC – private or public – may vary depending on country situations.

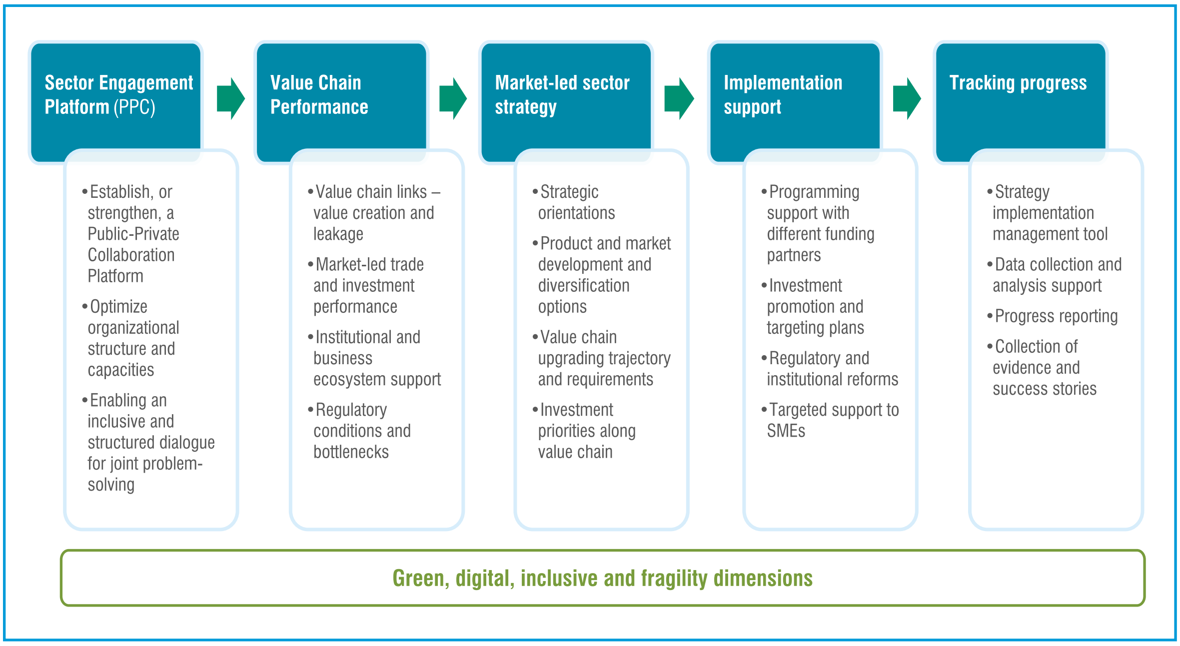
- In Pakistan, the SACs were an initiative primarily of the Ministry of Commerce and anchored by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan.
- In Myanmar, PPC meetings were organized and hosted by the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and held in their premises, with the vice-president co-chairing. However, the secretariat for these meetings was the Ministry of Commerce. Additionally, an initiative supported by the International Finance Corporation – the Myanmar Business Forum – which was a generic and sector-agnostic dialogue mechanism, was also handed over to the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry after some time.
- In Côte d'Ivoire, the CNE saw success because of strong private-sector leadership while enjoying good government backing for its work.
- In Uganda, the Ministry of Agriculture, acknowledging its limited ability to fully support the avocado platform, opted for a public-private partnership that saw the platform being established by the public sector and the secretariat assigned to the private sector for a three-year renewable period.
- In Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Agriculture joined with the Ministry of Investments, Industry and Trade to establish a PPC platform that sought to diversify exports. The two ministries developed the 2024–2026 Dried Fruits Export Roadmap together, with the support of ITC. The PPC was promoted by the President as a driver of collaborative public- and private-sector efforts.

Where PPC fits in the ITC value chain development approach

The ITC strategic approach to inclusive value chain development is centred on inclusive and consultative PPC of sector stakeholders (see Figure 2). The ITC methodology and process for value chain development ensures that thorough quantitative and qualitative analyses guide strategic planning and implementation.

Figure 2: ITC value chain development focus areas

2.– See Annex 1 for additional examples and discussion.



Sector engagement platform: We bring together all key public and private stakeholders along the entire value chain –from producers to exporters and trade/investment support institutions– to identify, prioritize, accelerate, implement and measure competitiveness actions and reforms. We support: the definition of the platform's composition, ensuring inclusiveness and representation; the preparation and moderation of structured discussions on trade and investment needs, and the building of consensus on priorities and development orientations; and inviting investors and development partners to support projects and reforms.

Value chain performance: We apply our global experience across numerous agricultural, industrial, manufacturing and tourism valuev chains –combined with up-to-date market and product information, and our comprehensive trade-related databases– to complete a detailed value chain assessment. Our diagnostic of every value chain link enables the identification of the processes, services, interactions and transactions that take place at each stage in the transformation and delivery of a product or service to market. Our comprehensive methodology and inclusive consultative techniques enable an in-depth diagnostic of challenges and opportunities along the entire value chain.

Market-led sector strategy: We assess product development and market diversification opportunities, based on consumer demand and buyer assessments, to chart a market-led value chain upgrading plan. We identify value addition, creation and retention opportunities as well as confirming investment and regulatory reform opportunities to increase competitiveness in global markets. We provide specialized technical support to achieve a cohesive sector vision and strategic orientations; guide prioritization of programmes and reforms to improve value chain performance; and leverage market and investment opportunities to best meet global market demand and standards. ITC strategies provide a clear action plan for sector upgrading, complete with measurable targets and indicative budgets to guide implementing agencies.

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Implementation support: We provide technical support to programme and activate implementation of value chain upgrading plans, programmes and reforms to foster sustainable industry growth and competitiveness. ITC specialized technical units provide support to: policymakers engaging in key reforms; trade and investment support institutions, to better serve value chain operators; and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to perform at their full potential and comply with market requirements.

Tracking and reporting progress: We provide specialized tools and technical support to track implementation and keep implementation on track. We ensure continual assessment of how implementation is progressing by supporting consistent and systematic monitoring of the progress of priority actions, based on reports or updates from institutions involved in implementation. This proactive approach is critical to ensuring implementation is moving along smoothly.

Green, digital, inclusive and fragility dimensions: Integrating green, digital, inclusive and fragility dimensions to value chain diagnostics is a core element of ITC's developmental mandate. Integrated within our overall technical offer, we promote circularity and efficiency in value chains to increase sustainability and comply with growing international requirements. We assess how climate change will affect value chains, and how to prepare for future uncertainties. Our inclusivity approach ensures that women, youth and minority groups benefit from value chain upgrading.

Having positioned PPC within ITC's value chain development approach, the next section explains what distinguishes PPCs that deliver from those that become talkshops: the success factors that must be in place, the behavioural principles that protect trust, and the lifecycle dynamics that shape expectations.


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Part II. What makes PPC work: success factors, principles and lifecycle

ITC has been working on strategic trade, sector development and small and medium-sized enterprise competitiveness for more than 20 years, supporting partners in building performing, resilient and inclusive value chains. Over this period, ITC's work –from export strategy and sector governance mechanisms to value chain upgrading methodologies– has consistently pointed to the same lesson: collaboration delivers when it is structured for follow-through, not treated as occasional consultation.

A key takeaway from this experience is that effective PPC must be conducted in a phased, long-term and inclusive manner. It should focus on targeted, measurable reforms and competitiveness actions, supported by a simple organizational structure and strong convening power, and led by value chain operators with a clear results orientation.

By the end of Part II, you will be able to:

- Identify the success factors that determine whether PPC will deliver
- Apply practical guiding principles that protect trust and keep collaboration solutions-oriented and credible
- Recognize common failure risks and how to mitigate them
- Assess where a PPC platform sits in its lifecycle and set realistic expectations
- Use the lifecycle lens to adapt the platform over time

Six success factors: The conditions that make PPC deliver

A recipe for successful collaboration requires more than just the basic ingredients of private and public actors being present in meetings and having the resources to convene regularly. Intangible or conditioning factors –such as leadership, commitment, capacity of the public and private sectors, coordination and political will– are as, if not more, important (Devlin & Petrobielli, 2016). Based on ITC experience, case studies and literature, we have identified that the following six critical factors influence the success of PPC:

1. Align on the destination
2. Keep the mandate in sight
3. Secure political traction
4. Strengthen the private-sector voice
5. Build the operating backbone
6. Get the right people in the room

ALIGN ON THE DESTINATION: SHARED VISION, EXPECTATIONS AND GOALS

Developing a shared vision for the work of the PPC mechanism is important, in order to make meaningful progress and be on the same page with regards to expectations and the goals of the process, and to set baselines to monitor progress. In countries where there is a NES, Priority Sector Export Strategy, Sector Roadmap or similar document with a multi-year Plan of Action, it is easier to identify the key activities and results that a PPC platform would work on. In such instances, some of the main goals contained in those Plans of Action must be incorporated into the goals of the platform as well. For example, if one action is a regulatory or legal reform, then getting it done needs to be one of the goals of the platform (see Part III, 3.3.2 on tracking progress). In instances where such strategies and Plans of Action do not exist, then it is advisable that the platform itself comes up with some goals.

Box 3: Setting goals and expectations

Often the first one to two meetings of a newly established platform can be tricky, as participants are uncertain as to what goals the platform should be chasing. Establishing this early on can greatly help build clarity of focus and narrow down objectives. The goals could be written as an export key performance indicator such as, 'Increase avocado exports by 15% in the next three years'; or a reform result like, 'Inform the introduction of new regulations for receiving digital payments'; or a short-term outcome like, 'Improve information availability of daily air cargo capacity utilization for cut flower exporters'. The platform could choose to focus on just one such goal initially, and add others later; or choose several goals to work on over the forthcoming year.

KEEP THE MANDATE IN SIGHT: CONTINUOUS CLARITY OF PURPOSE

It is important for participants of a PPC to have clarity on why they have been brought together. This needs to be clearly articulated at the outset – in the formulation of the terms of reference, the text of the first invitation letter/email, and at the first meeting itself; and regularly reinforced during subsequent meetings. Participants must continually be given clarity on the purpose of the PPC, so that discussions stay on track, focused and aimed at an objective. Without this, different understandings of the purpose and objective will be held by different participants, and this could lead to confusion in the group and derailment of discussions. At periodic intervals (annually, for instance), the terms of reference should be reviewed and adjusted according to evolving needs. They should be tabled and agreed by the PPC, and may be formally approved by its supervising authority.[3]

Spotlight: Tanzanian leather sector

The Tanzanian leather sector – with tripartite support from the Leather Association of the United Republic of Tanzania, the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Livestock – joined efforts to design an industry-wide strategy and establish a PPC process to manage and fund strategic reforms. Unfortunately, due to competing interests and a lack of clarity on the purpose of the PPC, the PPC collapsed. Moreover, inefficient leather industry funding meant that the strategy was not implemented effectively, leading to a steep decline in tanning capacity. Some PPC mechanisms are initiated for the government to solicit private sector feedback or to provide a general and ad hoc forum for private sector consultation, rather than fostering long-term and systematic engagement and collaboration between the private and public sectors. Consequently they lose their relevance and credibility, and are not sustained.

SECURE POLITICAL TRACTION: GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND WILL TO IMPLEMENT

Issues revealed during PPC cannot go ignored for extended periods of time. While PPC participants would not expect change to be implemented overnight, they would expect some demonstration of the government's political will to implement changes. It is vital that the highest, practical and relevant government-level leadership is given to PPC, in order for participants to realize that their deliberations can eventually end in policy reform or programmatic changes. Those government actors should commit to making steady changes (with the collaboration of PPC participants), build confidence in the mechanism and show a pathway for reforms being implemented. Having a high government official recognize the value of PPC and the role it plays can help foster this confidence.

STRENGTHEN THE PRIVATE-SECTOR VOICE: ADVOCACY CAPABILITY

When private-sector interlocutors are organized and capable of identifying their issues and strategically conveying them to the government, the likelihood of a productive dialogue increases. Particularly when there are many small and medium-sized enterprise firms in the sector, or if sector associations are new or less sophisticated, a critical success factor for good PPC is that the private sector has

3.– Depending on how the PPC is formalized, in some cases the PPC platform itself may have the authority / ability to review and approve its own terms of reference, whereas in others it may need to be approved by a higher-level authority (like a department or ministry) that the platform sits within and gets it authorization from.

advocacy capabilities. ITC work on 'business advocacy' has shown that a proper framework for capacity building is needed to empower the private sector to engage proactively in policy dialogue that addresses the needs and challenges of the value chain.[4]

BUILD THE OPERATING BACKBONE: A LIGHT BUT EFFECTIVE SECRETARIAT

Without a secretariat, the PPC mechanism will not be well organized (e.g. timely dispatch of invitations, agendas and minutes), discussions in a PPC will not receive adequate follow-up, and queries from participants will go unanswered. A secretariat also greatly empowers a Chair of a PPC mechanism to be effective. Size and staffing of secretariats can vary, depending on the requirements of the PPC and the resources allocated to it. However, it is essential that a secretariat is prioritized when planning and implementing a PPC, and is not treated as an afterthought or a 'nice-to-have' feature.

GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE ROOM: DELIBERATE PARTICIPANT SELECTION

The composition of a PPC can make or break it, so considering this carefully is vital to ensure a PPC's success. As discussed in more detail in Section 6, the selection of participants must be decided considering representation of the relevant actors in the value chain, variety of types of firms in the sector (e.g. SMEs, international firms, regional firms, etc.), and public-sector offices that have a bearing on the sector's competitiveness and growth. While the composition may change over time (as needs change, issues evolve, new actors emerge), these changes must happen in a deliberate and organized fashion (for instance, through decisions taken by/at a PPC meeting itself).

Five principles: The principles that protect trust

Success factors set the platform up; guiding principles determine how people use it, especially under pressure. Based on ITC experience, case studies and literature, the following guiding principles must be embodied in a PPC mechanism to help it become successful.

1. Self-motivation
2. Solutions orientation
3. Stewardship
4. Safe harbour
5. Mutual accountability

4.– The 'Business Advocacy Tool' designed by ITC (January 2025) aims to enable micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; sector associations; and business support organizations to engage effectively in strategic policy and regulatory reforms through adopting a 10-step approach.

SELF-MOTIVATION: SHOW UP BECAUSE IT MATTERS

Participation in PPC meetings should not be because attendance is forced or monitored, but because members see value in the engagement. Members and the organizations they represent should be actively seeking out collaboration, following up with the secretariat when meetings have not been convened for some time, and attending because they are motivated to collaborate. This may not happen in a vacuum –and indeed it may not start off this way– but can be steadily developed by demonstrating value in the early stages, and through a competent and organized secretariat.

SOLUTIONS ORIENTATION: MOVE FROM PROBLEMS TO PROGRESS

A PPC process should swiftly move on from a forum for discussing only problems to being more solutions-oriented. It is natural for initial meetings of a PPC platform to focus primarily on problems facing the sector or value chain (especially if no PPC process has existed previously), but this phase of the PPC ('reveal' and 'raise') has to be managed carefully so as not to overwhelm the process. The onus is on the Chair, and indeed members, to stick to the guiding principle that PPC must always be solutions-oriented. Even when problems and issues are being revealed, they are done so with the expressed intention of informing potential solutions and moving forward with actions. The principle that the PPC is meant for working together, collaboratively, on seeking solutions (rather than constantly raising issues about individual actors) needs to be regularly reinforced by the Chair.

STEWARDSHIP: PUT THE SECTOR FIRST

It must be established at the outset, reinforced by the Chair and demonstrated by the behaviour of private-sector participants, that the PPC process is not meant to advance individual interests – narrow firms' interests are to be 'left at the door'. Of course, a PPC process is meant to improve a sector or value chain, which in turn brings private benefits to individual firms and individual entrepreneurs. However, it needs to be clear that gains for an individual firm are not prioritized over the larger gain (e.g. gain for the sector and the economy). Any signals that a participant may be putting forward proposals that bring only narrow individual gains must be detected and dealt with early, in order to maintain the integrity of the process and retain confidence among other members.

SAFE HARBOUR: ENABLE CANDOUR WITHOUT FEAR

An important guiding principle for public-sector participants to adhere to is that they will treat fairly and objectively those firms and individuals who bring up issues that may put those agencies in a poor light. There have been instances in PPC settings where private-sector player criticism of a public sector agency's performance (with a view to informing improvements), has led to that agency taking subtle punitive actions against the business/entrepreneur (e.g. delaying approvals or excluding them from support programmes). A frank and honest revealing and raising of issues must be enabled, and a healthy relationship between private and public actors encouraged.

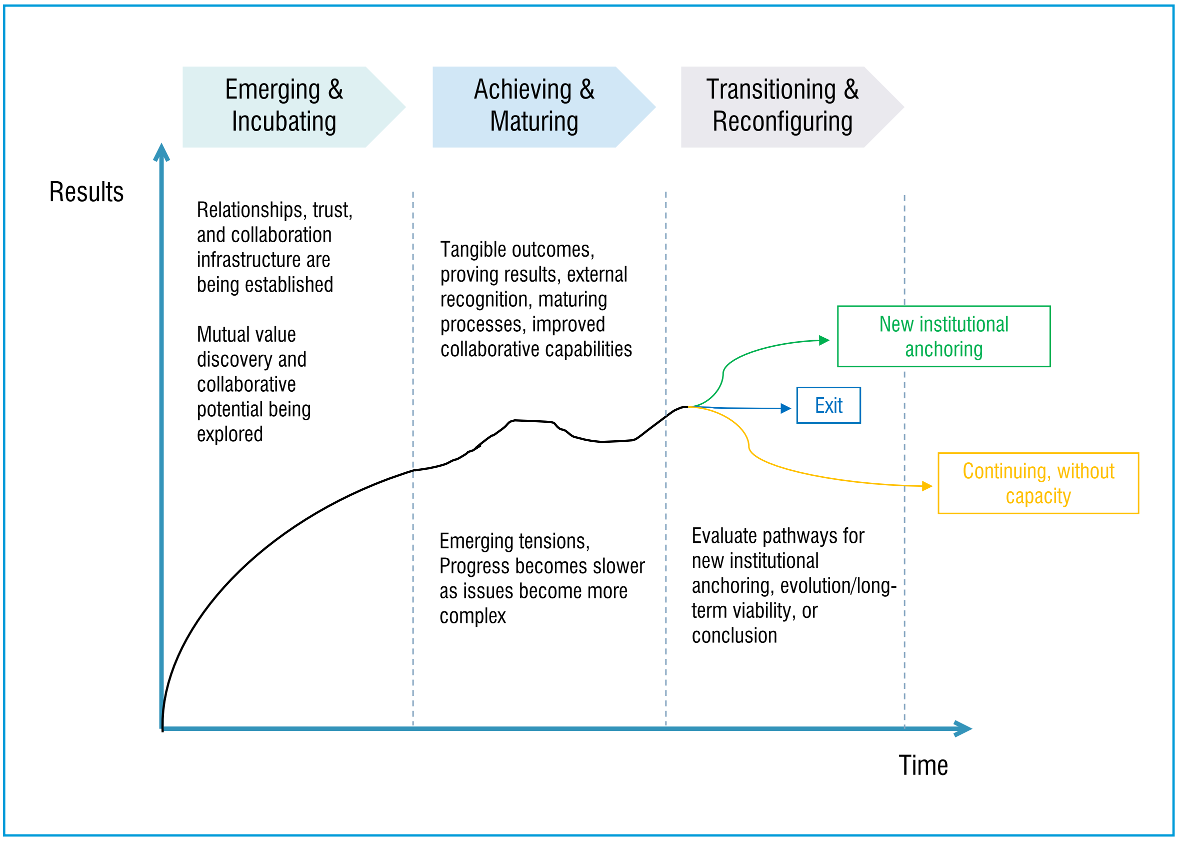
MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY: MAKE FOLLOW-THROUGH THE NORM

A PPC process can only truly work if there is follow-up from participants between sittings. The public sector will have actions to follow up on and so will the private sector. A key guiding principle must be that following up on matters discussed is taken seriously. This guiding principle is important to ensure confidence in the process and maintain active and continuous participation by members. In establishing a PPC process, the principle of genuine follow-up needs to be enshrined. An efficient and active secretariat –as outlined earlier– plays a key role in promoting follow-up.

The PPC lifecycle: What changes by phase and what to do about it

These success factors and principles matter differently across phases, so expectations and risks must be managed over time. It is important to think about the life cycle of a PPC to identify sustainability issues as well as phase-specific issues. Figure 3 (adapted from Herzberg and Wright, 2006) presents the three different phases in that life cycle: 1) Emerging and incubating phase; 2) Achieving and maturing phase; 3) Transitioning and reconfiguring phase.

Figure 3: Evolution of a PPC mechanism / platform



Source: ITC adaptation from Herzberg & Wright (2006).

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PHASE 1: EMERGING AND INCUBATING

This phase is primarily focused on establishing trust between the public and private sectors, educating stakeholders on effective collaboration, and identifying viable reform proposals. The phase can stretch from six months to two years. Key activities during this phase include setting up the dialogue process, creating a reform production process, and testing options for working groups, secretariats, logistics and the scope of proposed reforms.

In this phase, it is not realistic to expect significant economic impacts from the partnership. Instead, the focus is on achieving early results and quick wins through addressing less contentious issues. These smaller issues are easier to handle and present fewer risks, allowing partners to build confidence and experience. Attempting to tackle major issues during this phase can lead to high risks of failure and negative outcomes. Businesses may become dissatisfied if their high expectations are not met, and government officials may take offence at what they perceive as excessive demands from the private sector.

Despite the likelihood of many proposals failing, the volume of issues proposed and reform proposals processed is expected to be high. Participants are likely to utilize the new forum to address a significant backlog of issues (such as transport, tourism, visas, red tape reduction, standards harmonization, etc.) that are widely recognized but could not be advanced in the previous institutional framework.

In this phase, the following features will be observed:

- Trust is being built between private- and public-sector participants
- Collaboration infrastructure is established (secretariat functioning, meeting cadence, follow-ups and review)
- There is mutual discovery and recognition of the value of collaborating
- Potential areas for collaboration are being discovered and actively pursued
- Some early results are achieved

PHASE 2: ACHIEVING AND MATURING

This phase is typically more productive and lasts anywhere from a year to three years. Partners are motivated by early successes and have gained experience in designing reform proposals that are successfully processed, accepted and implemented. The organizational process is effective, allowing issues and proposals to benefit from focused technical input, such as assistance from development partners. Consequently, the PPC effort produces more viable reforms.

During this second phase, the capacity built among government officials and private sector representatives in Phase 1 proves advantageous. Issues addressed are likely to be of higher stakes compared with Phase 1, often involving topics like labour and taxes. Businesses, encouraged by Phase 1 results, push the boundaries of what can be proposed to the government.

On the government side, while some limits were extended with Phase 1 reforms, public officials might not feel the same pressure to comply with private-sector demands as they did initially. As a result, while the economic impacts of the partnership are at their peak during Phase 2, this phase also carries the potential for conflicts and crises. Some working groups may be dissolved and new ones may emerge. Certain contentious issues may fail to progress through to successful implementation.

In this phase, the following features will be observed:

- Tangible outcomes are being achieved
- Results are being noticed and recognized by external actors
- Collaboration processes and capabilities are maturing on all sides
- Secretariat is seen as active and effective
- There are some emerging tensions
- Issues being taken up are more complex and harder to solve than in the earlier phase

PHASE 3: TRANSITIONING AND RECONFIGURING

Each PPC mechanism is unique, and this phase is particularly difficult to predict, with several possible scenarios and options. One likely scenario is that –if the first two phases have been successful– a more permanent institutional anchor is sought to transition the platform, either to a public-sector institution (like a trade promotion organization or ministry), or to a private-sector institution (like a chamber of commerce or trade association). It will depend on where the trust and capacity that has been built up lies.

This could still end up going in different directions thereafter – either reconfiguring or being captured. Under reconfiguring, the PPC evolves and improves, after assessing how to retain and enhance relevance. Under capture, a few actors (or even the host itself) captures the process for narrow gains, and the platform loses credibility and independence, and trust and confidence break down.

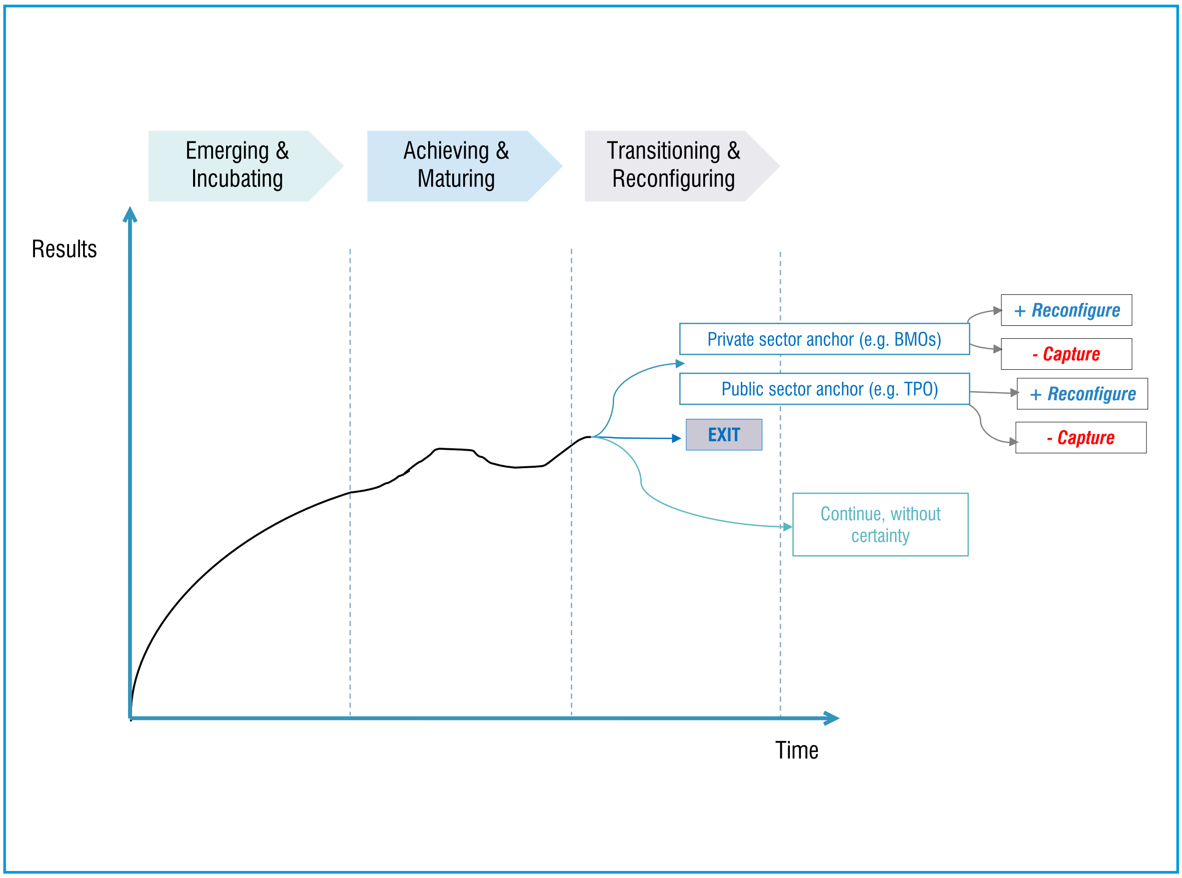
Another scenario is that an informed and organized transition does not occur, and the PPC carries on without firm anchoring and has no real capacity to continue. Funding is sparse, and this affects the secretariat functioning.

A final scenario is that participants agree to lock in the wins achieved and end the platform on a high note. Extending a partnership mechanism beyond its peak usefulness may be inefficient. Consultative mechanisms typically support specific reforms and have defined durations. Even brief, successful initiatives can become valued examples for businesses and government officials to reference with pride.

In this phase, the following features will be observed:

- Participants are evaluating pathways for institutional anchoring
- Discussions on how to evolve the platform are beginning
- Some risks of institutional capture are emerging
- There are questions of long-term viability
- Some believe 'wins' can be cherished and the platform ended

Figure 4: Evolution of a PPC platform in transition and reconfiguring scenarios



Source: ITC adaptation from Herzberg and Wright (2006).

PPC platforms must incorporate deliberate exit strategies and transition mechanisms from their inception. By establishing time-bound interventions with clear milestones, these collaborations can avoid creating dependency relationships while ensuring that capabilities and systems developed during the earlier period can become self-sustaining. This temporal dimension in design helps maintain incentives for private-sector leadership while making efficient use of limited public resources.

Photo: (cc)pexels, pexels-asia-culture-center.

Part III. How to do PPC: Build, run and adapt a platform that delivers

Part I defined what PPC is, the coordination problems it addresses, and what it is designed to achieve. Part II set out what makes PPC effective: the success factors that must be in place, the guiding principles that protect trust, and the lifecycle phases that shape expectations. Part III turns those insights into a practical sequence for action: how to build a platform that can move from discussion to delivery, and keep it effective over time.

By the end of Part III, you will be able to:

- Diagnose readiness for PPC using tools to assess trust, capacity, representation and organizational set-up
- Set the right ambition and scope based on the collaboration landscape and the platform's maturity
- Design participation that builds legitimacy, ensuring inclusive representation across the value chain and strengthening the private-sector voice where needed
- Set up an operating backbone that keeps work moving between meetings
- Track progress by monitoring both collaboration health and reform/action implementation, and using periodic reviews to adapt the platform

Step 1: Diagnose state of play, readiness and set ambition

Before structuring and implementing a PPC mechanism, it is important to assess the state of collaboration currently, and the relative capacities of the public and private sectors to collaborate. It is essential to assess whether there is a need for new initiatives and to what extent existing mechanisms can be utilized. Additionally, we would identify the sectors, topics or regions that have the greatest need and potential to benefit from such a mechanism. The approach to this diagnostic can vary depending on the country's context as well as project objectives. In some contexts, the business environment may have been extensively analysed, while in others, even basic data may be lacking. The following tools and questionnaires should be tailored to the specific local conditions.

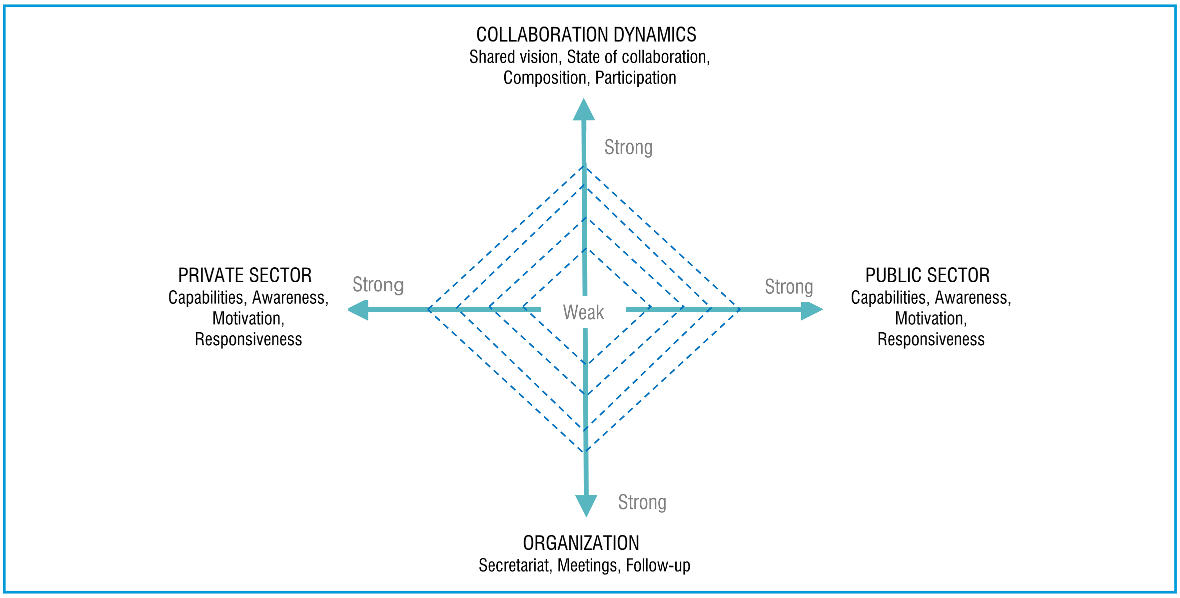
We explore two key tools for this diagnostic – the 'Landscape diagnostic' and the 'Lifecycle diagnostic'.

TOOL 1: LANDSCAPE DIAGNOSTIC – MAP THE COLLABORATION ECOSYSTEM

We use this tool as a conceptual framework[5] to map the current state of play with PPC in the country or sector, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing structures and stakeholders. It assesses four essential dimensions (and their sub-dimensions) along a vertical and horizontal axis to diagnose the current landscape.

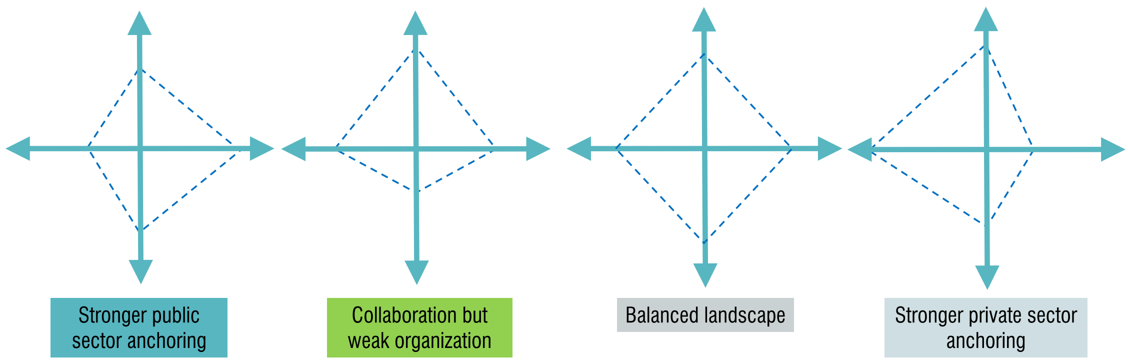
Dimension	Areas to look for
Collaboration dynamics	• If there is a shared vision for the sector • The current state of collaboration – whether stakeholders meet rarely, and issues remain unresolved; meet occasionally and on an ad hoc basis; or meet regularly, resolve issues in a steady manner, and agree and act on value chain upgrading actions • Whether the composition of the PPC group is representative and inclusive • Is participation high and consistent over time?
Public sector	• Capabilities of officers to engage productively in PPC • Awareness of the benefits of PPC and how to use PPC to improve value chains and sector competitiveness • Motivation to attend and whether they see value in the process • Responsiveness to resolving issues raised in a PPC setting and commitment to follow-up actions
Private sector	• Capabilities of key interlocutors (e.g. trade chambers and sector associations) to engage productively in PPC • Awareness of the benefits of PPC and how to use PPC to improve value chains and sector competitiveness • Motivation of industry stakeholders to attend and whether they see value • Responsiveness to contributing to follow-up actions
Organization	• Whether there is a sufficiently resourced secretariat with the skills to manage PPC • Meetings are scheduled regularly and on time, with proper agenda-setting and timely communication to members • Timely follow-up after meetings, including holding implementing partners accountable for taking actions

Figure 5: The landscape diagnostic



5.– This has drawn from the 'Diamond' framework of Herzberg and Wright (2006) and enhanced by ITC experience with assessing and supporting PPCs as part of NESs (in Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and sector value chain upgrading (in East Africa).

Figure 6: PPC landscapes with different characteristics



In practical usage, key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders (or a formal survey) would be used to gain a qualitative assessment of the current state of play along the above dimensions. An option is to use a self-assessment questionnaire process, of the type outlined in Annex 3, to ascertain the wider landscape of collaboration and trust.

Once the findings are obtained, we score each of them on a scale of between 0 (weakest) to 10 (strongest) and plot them into the corresponding axes, connecting them with straight lines to ultimately form a quadrilateral. Moving from the centre to the edge of each axis signifies an improved state in each dimension. Using this initial diagnostic tool also helps determine the potential for a PPC platform's success and identify vulnerable points that need to be addressed, such as weaknesses in the lead government agency or weaknesses in private sector associations' capacity.

TOOL 2: LIFECYCLE DIAGNOSTIC – IDENTIFY MATURITY AND SET EXPECTATIONS

As introduced in the previous section, a PPC mechanism can be in different stages of maturity (i.e. different points in the life cycle). This can also be a tool for diagnostics, especially when a PPC mechanism of some sort already exists. For instance, in an existing sector platform, it is useful to have sector stakeholders reflect on what stage the platform is at in the life cycle. This reflection exercise can help motivate a conversation about what worked in the past, what is working (and not working) now, and what needs to be done next. In this exercise, participants of the platform would be shown a blank version of the lifecycle diagram (shown in Figure 2 earlier) and would be asked a series of questions to ascertain the features of the current stage at which they are in and point to what would comprise the next stage (see Annex 3).

Ultimately, based on the discussion, you would be able to plot the information generated on the graph of where the platform is today, and in doing so, have spurred some provocative discussion of future directions and challenges.

Step 2: Represent the whole value chain

Diagnosis tells you what is weak; inclusion builds legitimacy to act. A critical design element often overlooked in PPC mechanisms is the deliberate inclusion of diverse stakeholders from throughout the value chain. Even the private sector is often treated as a homogeneous group, when in fact there are many different types of players. While lead firms may have the strongest voice and influence, effective collaboration must incorporate perspectives from smaller producers, input suppliers, service providers and even workers' associations. Special attention should be paid to incorporating the voices of marginalized groups, including women entrepreneurs and rural producers, who may face unique constraints in accessing export opportunities. In export-oriented value chains, this inclusive approach is particularly important for identifying quality, compliance and logistics bottlenecks that may not be visible from a single vantage point.

Spotlight: Burkina Faso shea sector

In Burkina Faso's PPC platform on the shea sector, representation included a spectrum of firms in the sector – from international lead firms to small women-owned cooperatives. This was coupled with strong support from the public sector to mobilize the resources required. The presence of a large international buyer in the PPC was noted as being a key factor in making the PPC productive.

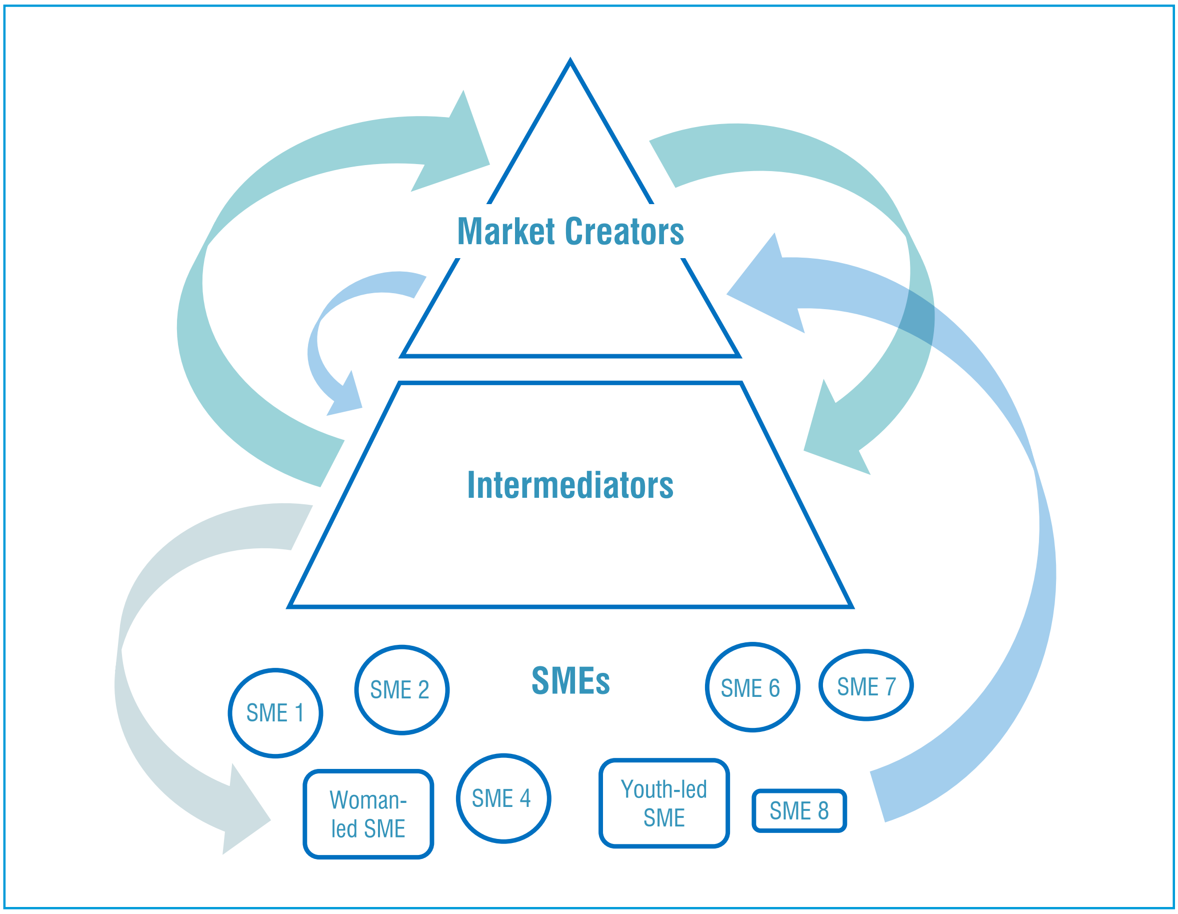
TOOL 3: THE ECOLOGY OF FIRMS – A PRACTICAL CHECKLIST FOR WHO MUST BE IN THE ROOM

In identifying private-sector actors, it is useful to understand the concept of 'ecology of firms' (see Figure 7). It refers to the different types of firms that exist in a sector or industry, and includes:

- **Market creators:** The larger, highly competitive and anchor firms that have made the best of the infrastructure, finance, regulations, skills and technologies; and have found a 'sweet spot' in the market and are succeeding in exports.
- **Intermediators:** Suppliers of inputs and indirect exporters.
- **SMEs:** An important part of the value chain, and important to consider for reasons of both inclusion and competitiveness (to tackle supply constraints). Among SMEs, we pay particular attention to the inclusion of firms led by youth and women.

In the process of identifying the members of a PPC platform and in addition to the ecology of firms, it is also important to consider having representation from along the value chain of the industry from input providers and producers to processors and exporters, as well as innovation and trade support institutions.

Figure 7: Ecology of firms



TOOL 4: ITC BUSINESS ADVOCACY TOOL – BUILD ADVOCACY CAPACITY AS A DESIGN CHOICE

Private-sector capacities for productive and credible engagement may be weak. One of the challenges faced in developing countries is the low level of sophistication and organization of the private sector. The country may have chambers of commerce and trade associations, but these may be underdeveloped, and inexperienced in dealing with organized collaboration with the public sector. There could be a lack of expertise in these institutions in conducting advocacy and dialogue with the government, consistently and over time. This may be compounded by weak organizational capabilities (e.g. few full-time professional staff), affecting anchoring of private-sector dialogue with the government.

There can also be trust deficits due to overall rent-seeking behaviour in the economy, impacting the private sector's willingness to collaborate. There may be a lack of interest among the private sector to take on issues that affect the larger industry, beyond their own individual businesses' issues. Narrow and concentrated leadership of the chamber or association (for instance, a handful of large, established, old players) may have led to lack of motivation among young and dynamic firms, and lack of opportunity for the rest of the ecology of firms in the sector. There may also be a reliance on donor projects that focus on narrow programmatic activities and do not prioritize or encourage PPC.

Spotlight: Gambia cashew sector

In the Gambian cashew sector, sector coordination was disorganized prior to the initiation of the cashew sector strategy in 2013. Steadily, private sector collaboration increased during the formulation of the strategy. The strengthening of the Cashew Alliance of the Gambia – the apex association for all cashew value chain participants in the Gambia – established a key institutional leader from the private-sector side who could maintain and structure the PPC dialogue. The Alliance, jointly with the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency, engaged regularly to facilitate PPC meetings of the cashew industry to support sector development. The Cashew Alliance of the Gambia was also able to engage in dialogue with the Africa Cashew Alliance.

To have strong collaboration between the public and private sectors, private-sector capacity building may be required. As far as possible –and especially insofar as internal capability gaps are concerned– efforts must be made to improve weaknesses. Prior to, or alongside, structuring a PPC mechanism, such capability improvements must be made so that the private sector can be a credible partner to the government in this exercise, and demonstrate a professional and methodical approach. ITC's new 'Business Advocacy Tool' helps the private sector improve their capabilities for dialogue and collaboration with the public sector through a 10-step framework.

Spotlight: Sri Lanka information technology sector

In Sri Lanka, the EAC on Information Technology services – one of several PPC groups functioning under the Sri Lanka Export Development Act (see Annex 1 for more details) – was able to more coherently represent industry views to the public sector because the industry association had matured its capacity over time. The main industry association – Sri Lanka Association of Software Services Companies (SLASSCOM) – had steadily built up its advocacy capabilities and refined its approaches to how it put forward policy proposals. SLASSCOM would systematically collate industry views, and work with think tanks and advisory firms to better frame and articulate their needs and requests. SLASSCOM also held learning and knowledge exchange sessions with more sophisticated associations, like India's National Association of Software and Service Companies, which then sharpened their own approaches for advocacy. SLASSCOM also has Committee members assigned to focus on specific pillars – like regional development, start-ups, human resources, women in tech, and sustainability.

Step 3: Run it for results

Representation creates legitimacy; operating routines create delivery. A key part of designing and implementing a PPC platform is its effective management. Here we present some vital factors for the effective management of PPC platforms to ensure impact, credibility, buy-in and success in delivering on the purpose and objective of the mechanism. ITC has developed resources to help improve secretariat performance, including providing sample terms of reference and operating manuals, conducting periodic briefings to secretariat staff, and providing online tools like the Strategies Implementation Management Tool (SIMT) for better monitoring.

The operating backbone: Secretariat roles, cadence, agenda, follow-up

Managing PPC well hinges on a motivated, efficient and adequately resourced secretariat. This includes ensuring the secretariat has the right capabilities to manage the PPC mechanism; ensuring there is good rapport between the Chair/s and secretariat staff; and the secretariat providing timely and proactive information to enrich the dialogue. The secretariat needs to handle meeting logistics efficiently, ensuring timely distribution of meeting agendas and minutes, providing information on updates and progress, and tracking follow-up actions. Secretariat staff must comprise those who understand government processes, know how to deal with private-sector stakeholders, and are entrepreneurial in their approach to solving problems.

Secretariat leadership plays a key role in getting private-sector buy-in and keeping participants motivated. Working behind the scenes and strategizing on dealing with difficult participants and/or issues are vital for smooth and dynamic PPC. The secretariat would also identify clear protocols for raising issues to higher-level authorities, demonstrating regular progress to keep the private sector motivated. Improving efficacy and performance would include checking attendance and participation; tracking the rate of issue resolution; assessing the effectiveness of the Chair and members' contributions; and assessing the effectiveness of government agencies' response quality and response times. These can all help build momentum and keep participants motivated.

Tracking performance: Process and progress

Monitoring and evaluating progress and performance is an essential design component in PPC, to maintain accountability and enable adaptive management. It must track both process indicators (measuring the health of the collaboration itself) and outcome indicators (measuring value chain improvements). The design of measurement systems should include regular review cycles with clearly assigned responsibility for data collection and analysis. Importantly, these systems should be viewed not merely as accountability mechanisms but as learning tools that inform ongoing refinement of the collaboration approach.

TOOL 5: PROCESS INDICATORS – PULSE CHECKS THAT PROTECT CREDIBILITY

To monitor broader progress in PPC and assess stakeholder satisfaction, a self-assessment review can be used. A similar semi-structured questionnaire as outlined in the earlier section (used in the diagnostic phase) could be deployed, with some key adjustments to get PPC participants to reflect on progress made, and think of progress in different terms (refer to Annex 5 for an example).

We propose using the following adapted version of the Evaluation Wheel (informed by the 'PPD Charter of Good Practice') that is essential to an effective PPC mechanism or platform. It is an M&E tool that allows one to examine data on similar aspects of different PPC platforms, or the development of one PPC platform over time. The evaluation covers the following 11 dimensions.

1. Mandate and institutional alignment: Is the mandate given to or assumed by the PPC mechanism appropriate and optimal? Is there alignment and relationships with existing institutions and/or high-level mechanisms to help drive reforms?
2. Structure and participation: Has the composition of participants (as well as changes to that) been effective? Has the structure of the PPC platform been appropriate for the purpose and objectives intended?
3. Champions and leadership: Was the platform able to incorporate champions into the mechanism, or able to successfully identify them from the wider ecosystem and help them push for reform? Was there good leadership from within the platform to enable this?
4. Cascading up of issues: Was there successful cascading up of the issues that could not be resolved at the level of the platform? Are there established/formal links to higher-level platforms and decision-making forums?
5. Facilitation and management: Was the secretariat able to provide timely and effective facilitation of meetings, and overall manage the process well? Do participants have confidence in the secretariat's abilities? Is the secretariat motivated to support the PPC?
6. Outputs and results: Was there a clear articulation of 'what success might look like' at the outset? Were there some measurable results identified? Were these achieved, or was at least substantial progress made towards achieving them?
7. Outreach and communication: Was an outreach and communications strategy part of the PPC effort? Or were there at least strategic efforts to

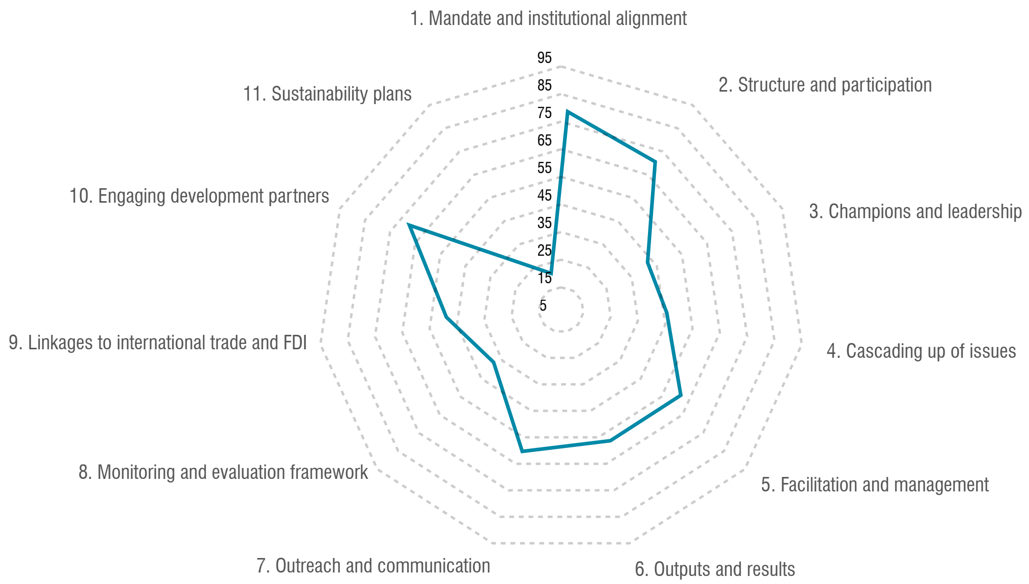
communicate to stakeholders the work and results of the PPC? Have the reach/success of communication efforts been tracked and reviewed?

8. **M&E framework:** Has an M&E framework been established/adopted formally by the platform? Is there recognition that it is an important aspect of the platform's progress and sustainability?
9. **Links to international trade and foreign direct investment:** Has the platform helped advance the country's overall trade and foreign direct investment strategies and reforms? Has the dialogue in the platform helped identify opportunities at an international level?
10. **Engaging development partners:** Has there been success in engaging development partners and donors, and finding the best role for them, now and in the future?
11. **Sustainability plans:** Is there recognition of the need for a sustainability phase, and are plans for the next stage of the platform being actively considered?

For each of the 11 dimensions, a score between 0 and 100 is calculated (by an officer of the PPC secretariat tasked with M&E), based on interviews with PPC participants and associated stakeholders. A subset of indicators can be developed and assigned to each, based on context-specific factors. The larger and more balanced the Wheel is, the more efficient the PPC mechanism is believed to be. A PPC mechanism with mostly high scores (i.e. closer to 100) for all the dimensions would depict a Wheel that is almost fully formed. In comparison, a PPC mechanism with multiple low scores would show several gaps or substantial empty spaces. This approach can quickly identify potential problems or aspects of a PPC mechanism that can be improved going forward.

Over time, the process of conducting this evaluation needs to be formally established – deciding on the frequency (e.g. every six months or annually), who would conduct it (e.g. an external facilitator or technical adviser), and how the findings would feed into improvements (an agenda item at the subsequent meeting, an action plan for improvements, etc.).

Figure 8: Sample Evaluation Wheel



Source: ITC, based on Evaluation Wheel method.

TOOL 6: OUTCOME / PROGRESS INDICATORS – A PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION AND REFORM TRACKER

Measuring the substantive results of a PPC mechanism is not easy because it often requires assessing the progress of implementation of different actions by various public and private institutions. Since a substantial portion of most PPC mechanisms would involve advocating for, informing, guiding and reviewing policy and regulatory reforms that impact a sector, assessing the progress of implementation of actions and reforms is an important aspect of assessing the results achieved by the PPC platform.

In order to track implementation of actions and reforms, we recommend using a digital tool that enables PPC members to define the specific steps and tasks required to achieve progress, and track realization of these tasks regularly. This ensures a systematic approach to implementation. Such a digital management system can allow efficient coordination, monitoring and adaptation to achieve the desired outcomes.

Since there are a few such specialized tools to track implementation of value chain development plans, strategies, policies and roadmaps, ITC has designed the SIMT as a web-based platform that tracks implementation progress (see Figure 9). This system is aligned with the reform responsiveness indicator methodology used by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development as a process-based monitoring approach.

Figure 9: Strategies Implementation Management Tool

ITC’s SIMT is a web-based digital solution to track progress in the implementation of strategies, roadmaps and action plans.

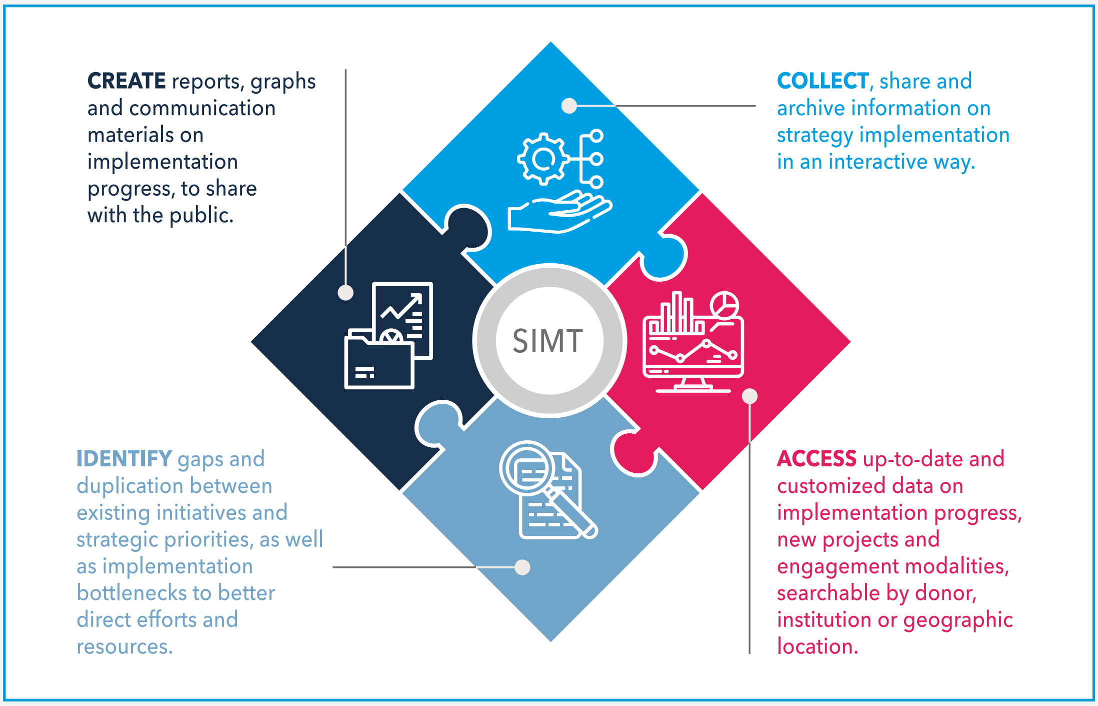


Figure 9: (cont.)

SIMT provides real-time insights and facilitates collaboration by:

- Simplifying planning and programming of implementation;
- Managing implementation among diverse public- and private-sector entities;
- Providing real-time insights for informed decision-making;
- Prompting lead implementers with actions to undertake;
- Archiving and centralizing all key information, decisions and success stories;
- Providing automated notifications and updates to keep users engaged.

SIMT aims to promotes transparency and accountability, and supports evidence-based decision-making.

For more information, visit: https://simt.tradestrategy.org/.

By using the implementation progress information from SIMT, or another equivalent system, the PPC members and secretariat are able to review the level of action or reform implementation that it has been advocating for or been involved in formulating. The actions and reforms can easily be classified to identify where a reform stands. The action or reform can be classified into six categories ranging from levels 0 to 5, and a 'traffic light' method is used to report progress in a dedicated agenda item at each PPC meeting.

0	**The government did not address the reform**
1	**The government is preparing the implementation and/or discussions are taking place**
2	**The government has taken initial steps to implement the reform**
3	**The government is implementing the reform with some initial results, and it is supported by some initial evidence**
4	**Implementation of the reform is advanced, and this is supported by a sustained set of indicators or other evidence**
5	**The reform is fully implemented**

Moreover, well-designed PPC platforms and their tracking systems should incorporate solutions for systematically capturing and disseminating knowledge generated through the collaboration. This includes documentation of intervention approaches, and lessons learned from both successes and failures. By establishing communities of practice with digital and accessible knowledge portals and learning networks, PPC platforms can extend their impact beyond direct participants (in a particular value chain) and contribute to broader capability development within the trade and export ecosystem.

In addition to measuring progress of actions and reforms, we recommend –at set intervals– formally measuring achievement on some value chain and sector growth outcomes, such as: how export volumes and values in the sector have grown; how

(cc)pexels

many new markets the sector has diversified into; which new quality and sustainability standards firms in the sector have become compliant with; how much new local and foreign investment has come into the sector; and how many new jobs have been created.

Resourcing:
External support and internal mobilization

Proper resourcing of PPC platforms can make or break their success. Without adequate and stable funding for a secretariat and the platform's meetings, interest, motivation and follow-up can slip. A PPC platform may not only require basic funds to support its operations, but also technical expertise to guide its work.

Several examples around the world show that technical support from specialized entities at an early stage of a PPC effort has substantial benefits. In the earlier sector examples outlining ITC experiences, the support to platforms in the Gambia, Burkina Faso and Myanmar in their initial stages were crucial to the development of PPC there. In Myanmar, for instance, the initial support from different donors helped strengthen PPC, while ITC support for the secretariat structured strategic implementation, tracking and reporting. In East Africa, ITC support for the regional leather industry platform has renewed collaboration efforts and brought in new focus and ambition for what a sector platform at regional level could achieve.

However, external support should not be the only, and main, source of funding-domestic resources matter. Depending on where the PPC is anchored –a government entity or private sector– they must recognize the value of the PPC process and commit meaningful resources to sustain it over time.

Conclusion

This guide has argued that effective PPC is a practical response to the coordination challenges that often block value chain upgrading. When designed well, PPC leverages the complementary strengths of government and business to overcome market failures, align investments, and create enabling conditions for export growth. However, PPC delivers only when it is built and run with discipline, through clear structure, sound governance and consistent implementation.

The guide sets out three core messages.

First, use the right form of engagement. Lighter PPD can be sufficient for consultation or discrete issues, while PPC is the better choice when constraints are systemic, require multiple agencies and value chain actors, and demand sustained follow-through.

Second, design matters. Effective PPC begins with a clear understanding of the value chain's binding constraints and the current state of collaboration, using diagnostics to identify gaps in trust, capacity, representation and organizational readiness. From there, platforms should be structured to ensure inclusive participation across the value chain, supported by a light but effective secretariat that organizes the work, drives follow-up, and keeps collaboration focused on delivery.

Third, governance and accountability determine credibility. Transparent rules of engagement, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and safeguards against capture are essential to keep PPC oriented towards sector-wide upgrading rather than narrow interests. Monitoring systems should track both the health of collaboration and progress on reforms and competitiveness actions, enabling learning and adaptation as the platform moves through its lifecycle – from early trust-building and quick wins, to tackling more complex constraints; and eventually transitioning, institutionalizing or concluding at the right time.

Finally, PPC can have impact beyond any single sector. Well-functioning platforms build trust, demonstrate that joint problem-solving can produce results, and create examples that can be replicated elsewhere in the economy. In this sense, PPC is not only a mechanism for upgrading a value chain but is also a way to strengthen the habits and institutions of collaboration that underpin sustained competitiveness.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: International examples of high-level PPC platforms

GOVERNMENTS IN ADVANCED ECONOMIES HAVE BEEN DEVELOPING AND REFINING THE MECHANISMS FOR PRIVATE-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IN TRADE AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT FOR DECADES.

In the USA, an example is the ITACs that function jointly between the USA Trade Representative and USA Department of Commerce. They comprise 15 Committees (organized by sectors) and are a mechanism for engaging business leaders in formulating USA trade policies. Crucially, the ITACs are established by their own law –Trade Act of 1974– and saw their mandate expand under amendments to the Trade Agreements Act of 1979 and the Omnibus Trade and Tariff Act of 1988. Importantly, the ITACs function within a broader ecosystem of PPC, which includes the President's Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations (where Industry Trade Advisory Committee issues get cascaded up to), the President's Export Council, and Agriculture Trade Advisory Committees. A 2009 congressional hearing on the Trade Advisory Committee System observed that changes may need to be made to broaden the range of views represented and also permit the ITACs to provide more timely and useful recommendations.

In Canada, a good example is the 'Sector Engagement and Development Programme' under Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (like a Department of Agriculture in other countries), which has Sector Engagement Tables as a core element. The Tables are a very focused and strategic effort, evidenced by this description of their role: '...create purposeful dialogue between agriculture and agrifood sector representatives and government officials to collectively advance growth and competitiveness'. Three key parts of their mandate are useful to note here – create a shared understanding of key market challenges and opportunities facing the sector; coordinate action plans to achieve those goals and targets; and track progress on implementation of agreed actions and ensure results. A 2016 evaluation of the programme found that it '...has been effective in [...] better informing sector stakeholders, enhancing the sector's capacity and leadership, and informing government policies and regulations', but also that improvements to measuring performance were needed.

THERE ARE ALSO INTERESTING AND PIONEERING EXAMPLES AMONG DEVELOPING AND EMERGING ECONOMIES.

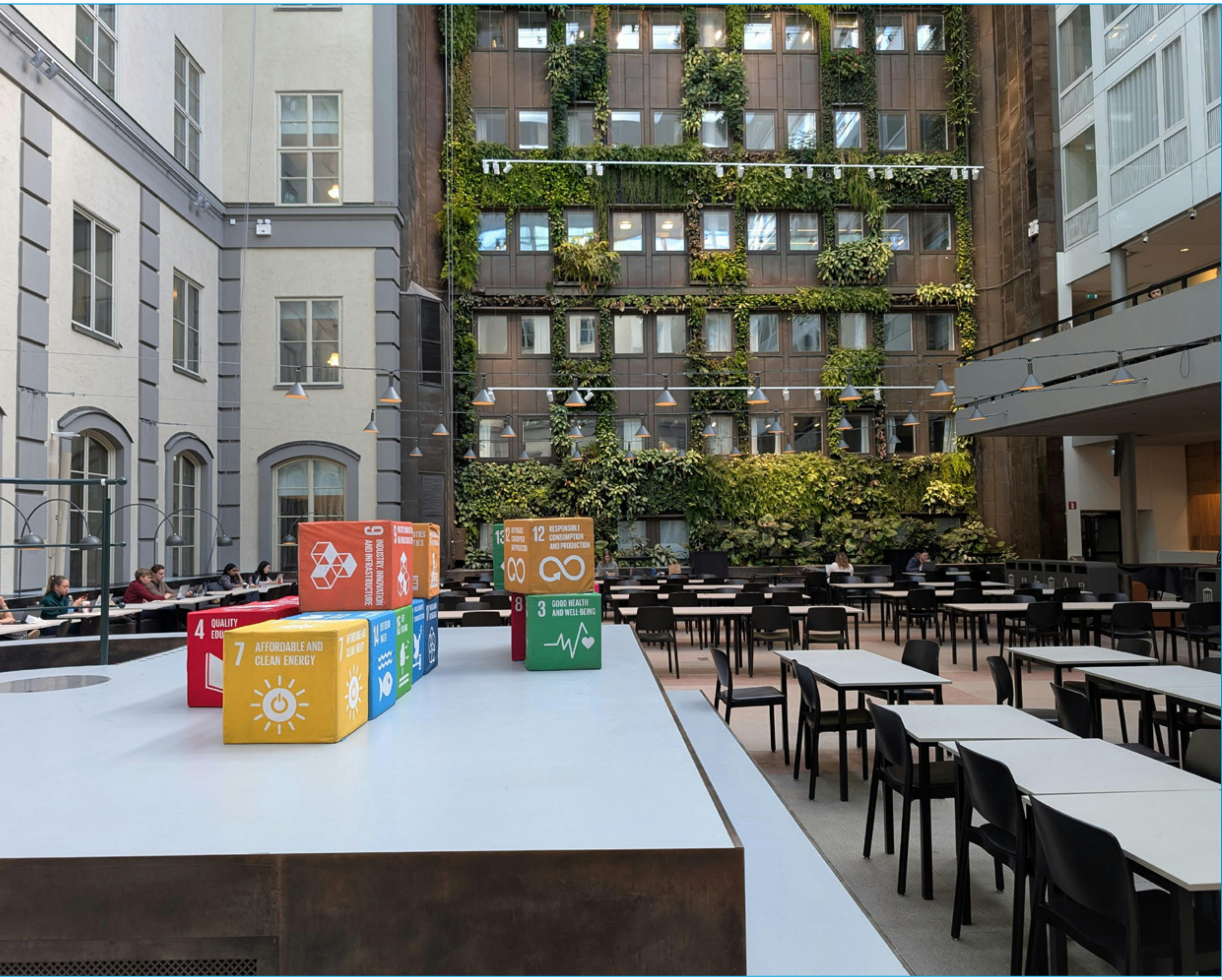
Sri Lanka's EACs were established by the Sri Lanka Export Development Act of 1978 and function under the Sri Lanka Export Development Board (the country's apex trade promotion organization). It was a pioneering institutional mechanism for its time, and among peer countries. While some sector's EACs remained throughout, there was flexibility to introduce new EACs as new priority sectors for the country emerged (including through NESs supported by ITC). Each EAC would have both industry and relevant government agency representatives. Issues raised by EACs would either be resolved by the Sri Lanka Export Development Board or would get cascaded up to higher-level decision-making entities such as the Cabinet of Ministers or the President's Office.

In Côte d'Ivoire, PPC was anchored to the CNE, an advisory body tasked with coordinating the implementation of the NES. The CNE acts as a consultative mechanism between the government and private sector on issues of export development. It was established by Decree No. 2014–372 of 18 June 2014 during the NES design process, and is overseen by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The CNE's main objective is to mobilize economic and social actors for the implementation of the NES and to discuss issues related to trade and exports at national, regional and international levels. Its responsibilities include developing implementation plans for the NES; integrating exports into national economic and development policy plans; allocating resources for the implementation of action plans; and monitoring the activities of implementing the NES. The CNE also recommends and develops revisions and improvements to the NES, proposes the development of new export strategies in new sectors, and communicates the results of the implementation of the NES. Identified key success factors included the fact that the Council was structured by its own statute; its secretariat (which enjoyed government funding) had good leadership; and there was a clear mechanism for cascading issues up to higher levels.

In Pakistan, the Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with ITC, established SACs in 2022 under the Strategic Trade Policy Framework 2020–2025 and the National Priority Sectors Export Strategy initiative. The initiative was driven by the need to create a more dynamic and responsive trade policy environment in the country, to help adapt to global market trends and domestic economic conditions. The SACs were intended to foster continuous engagement between public and private stakeholders to address sector-specific challenges and opportunities. A recent review of the SACs conducted by ITC showed that participation in the SACs was high, and participants commended the opportunity to advocate for better policy, collaborative problem-solving among stakeholders, and enhanced understanding of sector dynamics. However, weak organizational efficacy of meetings, and perceived lack of progress at some meetings, were cited as challenges.

PPC at the sector level has also been supported by ITC in several countries. In Burkina Faso, a PPC was strengthened around the shea sector. It was anchored jointly between the Ministry of Commerce and the private-sector apex association –*Table Fillière Karité*– as part of the shea sector strategy design, funded by a multi-donor trust fund and championed by the Ministry of Commerce. In addition to strong government support for PPC, as well as donor support for implementation



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of the strategy, including the African Development Bank, the presence of a large international buyer was key in making the PPC productive.

In Brazil, there have been intermittent efforts to formally foster PPC, particularly through the Private Sector Advisory Council (Conex). Over the last decade, the Council has convened irregularly –prior to 2015, and between 2015 and around 2019– and was revived in 2024. Conex is chaired by the Ministry of Development, Industry, Commerce and Services, and comprises representatives from the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs, plus 22 members from industry sectors. Conex's role is to forward studies and sectoral proposals to enhance foreign trade, investment and financing policies in Brazil. Since its revival in early 2024, Conex has focused on Brazil's trade with African economies.

Annex 2:
Reveal, raise, resolve process

The 'Triple R Process' (Wijesinha, 2022) can be a structured mechanism to reveal, raise and resolve matters that impact the export and import community as a whole (e.g. formulating a trade strategy or NES), or matters that affect a particular value chain or sector (e.g. value chain of avocados), or matters that affect a particular area of trade facilitation (e.g. air cargo logistics). The three steps of reveal, raise and resolve work as follows.

REVEAL

During the first 1–2 meetings of the platform, members would discuss the issues impeding their competitiveness and value chain development. Discussions would not focus on solutions or actions, but on better understanding the problems. There would be an organized process for revealing the issues, for instance focusing on each part of the value chain at a time. The objective of this step is to reveal issues that go beyond those that may have been constantly repeated or often cited, and truly understand the range of issues across the value chain.

RAISE

Having identified the universe of problems, participants will decide which ones are priority and how best to raise them. The secretariat anchoring the PPC platform (or an external technical expert / adviser) would help facilitate this process. They would then raise them in an organized manner in a meeting. Members would identify those issues that are possible to solve at this PPC platform level, and those that can only be solved at a much higher level of governance. The objective of this step is to raise issues in an organized manner and to identify at which level it is most appropriate and productive to raise them.

RESOLVE

Once the appropriate issues are raised to the PPC platform then the work of resolving them begins. This would happen over successive rounds of meetings – with participation of all members, or through subgroups / working groups. External stakeholders may need to be invited in from time to time, as necessary (for instance, if the action of a regulator not present in the PPC is needed to contribute to resolving an issue). Here, the convening power of the PPC platform (and by extension, the convening power of the Ministry of Department that the PPC secretariat is anchored to) becomes important. The objective of this step is to ensure that none of the issues that have been raised go without resolution, within a reasonable period.

Annex 3:
Questions to assess the maturity and phase of an existing PPC platform

As part of diagnosing the current state of play of PPC in a country or sector, it is useful to see what stage existing PPC mechanisms might be at. As suggested in that section, participants in a PPC meeting could be asked to reflect on a series of questions, which then helps identify the stage of maturity of the platform.

Are we in the emerging and incubating phase?	• Is there trust being built between stakeholders in the PPC platform? • Are stakeholders being educated on effective collaboration? • Is there some discovery of the process of engagement, and identifying viable reform proposals? • Is a process of working being set up? Is there discussion of options on things like working groups, secretariat functions and other logistics? • Are we seeing some early results?
Are we in the achieving and maturing phase?	• Are stakeholders getting more motivated by early successes, and have they gained experience in designing reform proposals? • Are more advanced ideas as well as solutions being generated? • Is the quality of the outcomes of the engagement higher than before? • Are there more instances of conflict or tension as more contentious issues are discussed? • Are results being achieved with much greater impact?
Are we in the transitioning and reconfiguring phase?	• Are there looming questions about how the engagement platform would be made sustainable? • Is there ownership being built among stakeholders, and commitment to carry it forward beyond the current phase? • Is a public or private institution stepping forward to provide a firm and credible anchor to the platform? • What are you most anxious about with sustaining the platform? Is it financial resources? Stakeholder commitment? Risk of exploitation of the platform by the new anchor? Lack of interest to reinvent and evolve to the needs?

Annex 4: Self-assessment questionnaire for private and public stakeholders

If a PPC for the sector or value chain does not exist already (or the concept of PPC platforms is unfamiliar or nascent), we may first want to get a much wider view of the landscape of PPC (across the private sector or in a specific sector or value chain) to help inform the structuring and design of a new PPC mechanism. For this, a semi-structured questionnaire can be used, either online (using the ITC e-survey tool) or in-person during a stakeholder consultation session. In both instances, the questionnaire is filled in by the stakeholders themselves. The decision on which tool to use and how to administer the survey needs to be made considering local circumstances, and tailored accordingly.

Typically, such a self-assessment questionnaire would aim to ascertain the current level of PPC in the country or in the sector; understand the stakeholders involved and their capabilities for productive engagement; identify if any bright spots of good practice exist; and draw out the objectives or aspirations of stakeholders in setting up new or improved platforms. Here are some examples of specific questions that can be included in a self-assessment questionnaire.

Extent of PPC	• To what extent is the private sector included in policy discussions and discussions about regulatory changes? • Is this done in a structured manner? • Could you explain how the dialogue with the private sector is organized in your ministry / agency? • Are you aware of any formalized mechanisms for PPC in your country / sector?
Public-sector capabilities	• Do you think that the public sector has a good understanding of how to engage with the private sector in a systematic and structured manner? • What good practices currently exist and what would you like to see improved?
Private-sector capabilities	• Do you think that the private sector is well organized and able to dialogue effectively with the public sector on trade policy and regulatory matters? • How do you think the private sector (chambers and associations) should improve its policy advocacy?
Bright spots	• Could you think of an instance in the recent past where PPD worked really well, either in resolving a particular policy or regulatory issue, or in managing a new initiative? • In your view, what were some of the reasons that it worked well?
Aspirations and prospects	• Do you think a formalized mechanism for PPC can work here? • What is required for this to happen? • What would you like to see as some benefits or outcomes from such an engagement?

Annex 5: Using a questionnaire to assess progress

Here is an example of how questions were used to assess the efficacy and performance of EACs functioning under Sri Lanka's Development Board, in the context of implementing a NES. To assess the level and nature of collaboration in the EAC, we asked the following question. Notice how the multiple-choice responses are not simply 'strong', 'moderate', 'weak', but rather have some additional text to provide further context and guide the respondent better.

Figure A1: Sample question on collaboration

6. In your opinion, what is the level of collaboration you see now, between the private sector and public sector (following the NES and Advisory Committee working over a few years).

Mark only one oval.

- O Very strong collaboration – we would meet regularly, resolve issues and implement sector plans in a structured manner
- O Somewhat strong collaboration – we would meet occasionally, resolve issues and implement sector plans in an ad hoc manner
- O Weak collaboration – we rarely met, issues would remain unsolved and implementation of sector plans delayed
- O I cannot comment on the level of collaboration now

To assess the opportunity given for the private sector to use the EACs as a useful platform, we asked the following question. Notice that, in order to provide some variation to the questions and potentially keep the attention of the respondent, the formulation of the question is phrased as a statement.

Figure A2: Sample question on usefulness of the platform

9. Would you agree with the following statement: "Private sector players in the sector are nov better able to convey, and obtain support for, the development plans for the sector from sector-relevant public officials and institutions".

Mark only one oval.

- O Strongly agree
- O Agree
- O Disagree
- O Strongly disagree
- O I cannot comment on the level of collaboration now

It is sometimes useful to ask questions for which the responses are more narrative in nature, which can then add some additional context when reporting back the results and also provide some note-worthy summary lines for PowerPoint presentations. The following question was designed to elicit such responses.

Figure A3: Sample narrative statement question

13. What would best describe your sentiments towards the sectoral Advisory Committee that you are a member of (choose up to 3).

Mark only one oval.

- O A highly effective forum for revealing and resolving issues facing the sector
- O A very useful platform to identify priorities and guide implementation of sector development plans
- O A forum where issues facing the sector get extensively discussed but no solutions are obtained
- O A platform where sector development plans and activities are discussed, with no role for guiding implementation
- O Meetings are useful, efficiently run and worthwhile attending
- O Meetings are tedious, unproductive and a waste of time

It is commonplace to formulate questions that elicit responses on a Likert scale, and most of the questionnaires may contain these, such as the following:

Figure A4: Sample question using Likert scale

11. Over the past 3 years, how effectively did private and public stakeholders in the sector work together to plan budgetary requirements and identify financial resources to implement activities?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very ineffective	O	O	O	O	O	Highly effective

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