From their inception, urban place management organizations (UPMOs) have played a critical role in addressing issues that relate to the function and vitality of urban spaces and the investment of private funds to incentivize and benefit commercial activity in those spaces. The following report examines the nature of relationships between UPMOs and the local governments with whom they partner.

In this report, the Municipal Partnerships Top Issues Council, comprised of both professionals working as leaders in UPMOs and those working in municipal governments as UPMO partners, examines the fundamental nature of a variety of working relationships between these entities in an attempt to identify the best practices for producing the most beneficial and enterprising partnerships. The report is a useful toolkit for understanding the scope and breadth of these UPMO/government relationships, identifying the foundational characteristics of the most successful partnerships and finding inspiration in case studies from around the globe.

The Council begins by examining the context and current attitudes about UPMO/government relationships. Using testimonials from both sides and survey data, the Council characterizes different kinds and qualities of relationships, from most oppositional to most collaborative; uncovers the factors that most significantly influence partnerships; and begins to identify what the ideal end states might be as partnerships flex and grow.

The Council then presents a series of case studies that exemplify strong partnership in the areas of leadership development; organizational management; economic development; policy and advocacy; public space management and operations; planning, design and infrastructure; and marketing, communications and events. These case studies provide readers with a series of tools that they can use to tweak and improve the relationships they experience in their own UPMO/government networks. One of the features of this toolkit is access to the agreements and templates featured in many of the case studies.

Finally, the Council examines other collaborative relationships of UPMOs that organize for collective action, such as business improvement district (BID) councils or professional associations. These entities are positioned to advocate for large changes in UPMO/government relationships and can help to pave the way to improved conditions and easier partnership for both parties while magnifying the impact of UPMOs regionally and internationally. These organizations can serve as training resources for their own members and can empower other organizations pursuing similar initiatives by broadly sharing knowledge of pitfalls and best practices.

No two partnerships are identical, even for multiple UPMOs within the same municipality. This toolkit is intended to function as a blueprint and guide for creating the conditions and processes that facilitate genuine partnership. The ultimate goal is to empower both partners to work collaboratively to achieve shared goals with clear expectations and transparency.
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Amanda Elliott has served in the Gilbert, Arizona Office of Economic Development since 2012 and leads the redevelopment efforts with a focus on the downtown Heritage District. Amanda brings 17 years of experience in the public and private sector focused on real estate development and marketing. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Marketing and a Certificate of International Business from Arizona State University. Amanda is a member of the Board of Directors for the Arizona Association for Economic Development, a fellow of the International Downtown Association Emerging Leaders Program and a member of the Urban Land Institute Next Program.

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Ryan Smolar has generated transformative ideas and approaches for his consulting clients including municipal governments, business districts, visitor bureaus, schools/colleges, and arts/food nonprofits. Ryan’s work helps build local economies, expand local networks and enable community change. At Downtown Inc., Ryan directs the Downtown Santa Ana BID’s event programming, public-private partnerships, economic development, strategy, management, organizational development and community relations. He has created and managed dozens of events, programs, marketing campaigns and technology initiatives including Savor Santa Ana, the historic Santa Ana Street Breakfast and production oversight of the monthly Artwalk event.

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Emily Edwards has been a member of the New York City Department of Small Business Services’s team devoted to the Business Improvement District Program since 2016. As a Senior Program Manager, she focuses on external communications, interagency coordination, best practice sharing, and liaising with the NYC BID Association. Prior to joining the City, Emily worked for a small BID in Upper Manhattan, where she managed business marketing initiatives and public events. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies and Economics from Barnard College.

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Jennifer Lindley is the Town of Queen Creek’s Downtown Development Manager and serves as the key staff member for all downtown issues and development. Jennifer has over 15 years of experience in nonprofit leadership and economic development. Her expertise in redevelopment, economic and community development links people together to solve high profile local and regional challenges across the East Valley. Before joining the Town of Queen Creek, Jennifer was the Executive Director for the Downtown Chandler Community Partnership and served as the Vice President of the East Valley Partnership. Jennifer is a member of the Board of Directors for the Arizona Association for Economic Development, Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for Neighbors Who Care and a fellow of the International Downtown Association Emerging Leaders Program.

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Paul MacKinnon has been the Executive Director of Downtown Halifax Business Commission (DHBC), since 2002. DHBC focuses on advocacy, beautification, marketing & communication, and membership engagement for 1,600 member businesses in eastern Canada’s largest city. He is also currently serving as the President of Downtowns Atlantic Canada, was a board member of the International Downtown Association (2006-2012), and is the past chair of IDA Canada, the Canadian advocacy and research arm of IDA.
Billy Richling
Constituent & Communications Manager, Times Square Alliance

Billy Richling is the Constituent & Communications Manager of the Times Square Alliance, where he supports local businesses of all shapes and sizes. He worked with Times Square and IDA colleagues to organize the 2018 IDA NYC Ideas Forum, a two-day exploration of the relationships between place management organizations and government. Beyond Times Square, he serves on Brooklyn Community Board 14 and is involved in several community initiatives in his home neighborhood of Flatbush, Brooklyn.

Tim Tompkins
President, Times Square Alliance

Tim Tompkins has been the President of the Times Square Alliance since 2002. He is a board member of the NYC BID Association and the International Downtown Association. Prior to joining the Alliance, he was the Founder and Director of Partnerships for Parks, and has also worked at New York City’s Economic Development Corporation, the New York City Charter Revision Commission, and was briefly the Nationals Editor at the Mexico City News. He currently teaches “Transforming Cities” and “The Arts and Artist in Urban Revitalization” at the NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

Chris Watts
Vice President of Mobility, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership

Chris Watts has served as the Vice President of Mobility for the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership since April 2018. Chris has held several leadership roles facilitating public-private collaborations for community development, including as Executive Director of the National Fitness Foundation and a fellow in the Obama Administration. He earned an MBA from George Washington University and began his career working on sustainability and transportation after graduating from Carnegie Mellon University (CMU). Chris’s passion is working to improve the quality of life for the Pittsburgh area and he is actively involved with Strip District Neighbors, Walk Bike Shaler, Social Venture Partners, and CMU’s Civil and Environmental Engineering Department.
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NYC BID Association
DC BID Council
Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas
Johannesburg CID Forum

State/Province-Level Coordination
California Downtown Association
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