

A photograph of two surgeons in an operating room. They are wearing green scrubs, blue surgical masks, and green bouffant caps. They are looking down at a tablet computer held by the surgeon in the foreground. The background is slightly blurred, showing surgical lights and equipment. A large, dark blue diagonal shape is overlaid on the left side of the image, and a red triangle is in the bottom right corner.

**Strengthening
healthcare
through strategic
alliances**

BDO

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Embracing collaboration in an evolving healthcare landscape

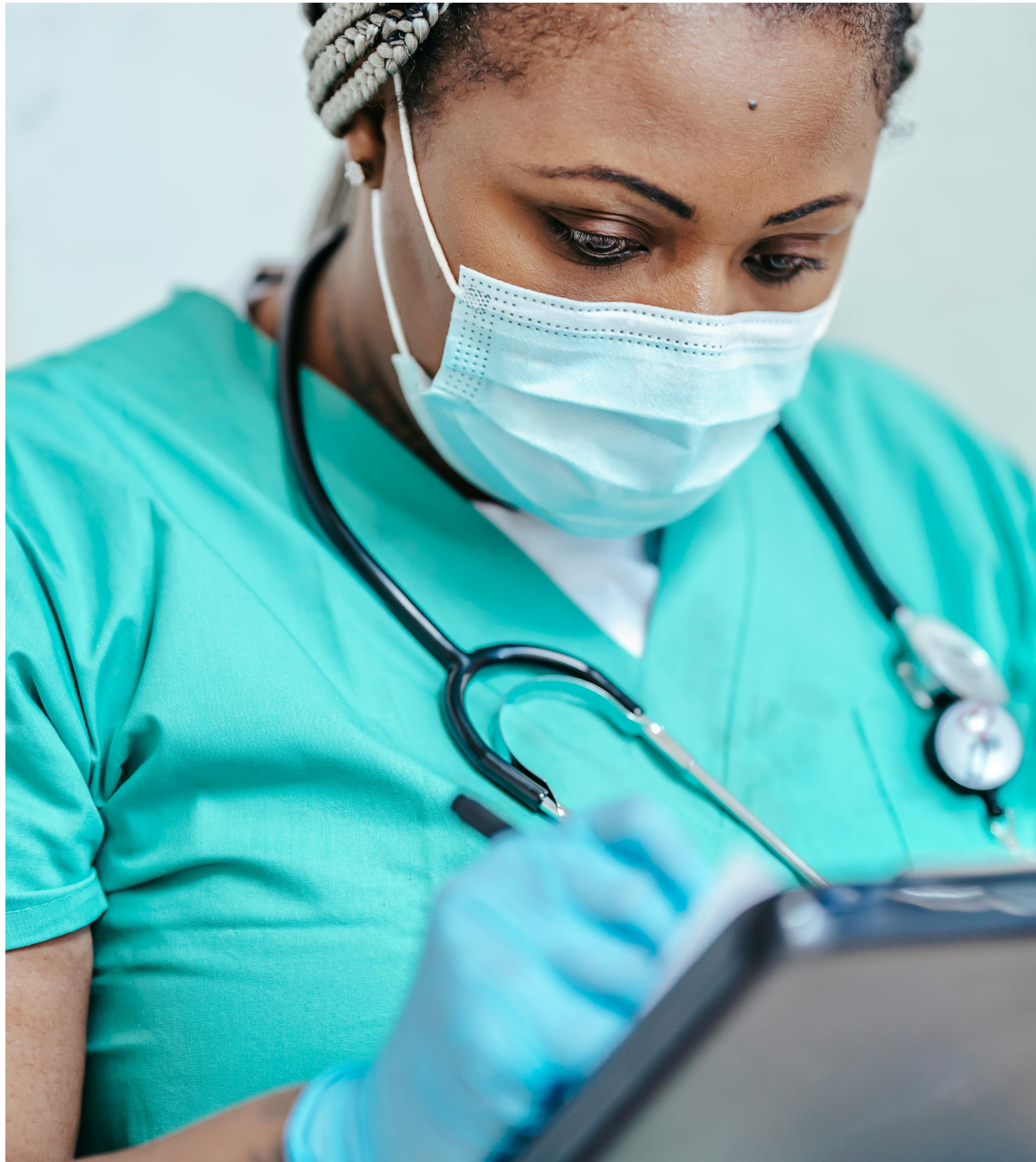
The healthcare landscape is evolving with increasing complexity, presenting challenges that no single organisation is equipped to address in isolation. The current consensus underscores the necessity of strategic alliances, valued for their impact and the meaningful benefits they can provide.

These public partnerships or public-private partnerships, however, come with their own set of intricate challenges, from choosing the right partners and aligning objectives, to formalising agreements and establishing robust governance frameworks.

To shed light on these complexities, we interviewed a wide range of Dutch operators in the healthcare sector. Their real-world experiences and insights are distilled into practical guidance in this article, offering you a roadmap to navigate the complexities of strategic alliances and ensure your collaborative efforts yield the meaningful impact the healthcare sector needs.



Emerging trends shaping healthcare today



STAFFING SHORTAGES

The healthcare sector is confronting a severe staffing shortage, accentuated by an ageing population and workforce. With rising healthcare demands, this staffing crisis is expected to continue into the future.



PREVENTION AND SELF-RELIANCE

There is a growing focus on preventative care and self-reliance. Governments, healthcare providers and insurers are prioritising early intervention to prevent diseases and reduce the long-term burden on healthcare systems. Providers must adapt their services to support individuals in self-managing their health with less reliance on professional care.



IT AND DATA

Technological advancements offer significant potential in healthcare, from digital health innovations that ease the staffing burden to opportunities presented by artificial intelligence for early disease detection. Strategic alliances can amplify the benefits of technology, making advanced solutions more accessible and affordable.



INNOVATION

With growing pressure to reduce costs and improve patient outcomes, strategic alliances enable healthcare organisations to pool resources and expertise to drive innovation. Such partnerships facilitate the sharing of knowledge, resources, and risk, fostering the development of new products and services that improve patient care. For example, collaborations between research institutions, governments and pharmaceutical companies were critical in the fight against COVID-19. These collaborations enabled the development, approval and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

A roadmap to successful alliances

BDO'S STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

BDO has developed a step-by-step plan to help partners maintain clarity and prevent the premature dissolution of potentially valuable partnerships due to ambiguity. This approach, while not exhaustive, is designed to be a practical roadmap for alliance formation.



01

ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

Begin by identifying your organisation's 'pearls' — the core strengths — and 'blank spots' — the areas of weakness. Understanding these will guide your strategic decisions.

02

ALLIANCE STRATEGY

Decide whether to enhance your services internally or seek external growth through procurement or collaboration. Determine how an alliance aligns with your goals.

03

PARTNER SEARCH

Initiate the search for cooperative partners that align with your objectives and criteria, narrowing down from a broad longlist to a targeted shortlist.

04

BUSINESS CASE AND FORMS OF ALLIANCE

Consider legal aspects, control mechanisms, structural design, synergies, financial implications, and risks. Collaborate with your prospective partner to develop a robust business case.

05

DUE DILIGENCE & AGREEMENT

Perform a comprehensive risk analysis or due diligence to understand potential risks thoroughly. Following this, finalise and close the agreement.

06

BUSINESS PLAN

Craft a detailed business plan that incorporates risk considerations from the due diligence phase, ensuring a strategic roadmap for the alliance.

07

ALLIANCE ESTABLISHMENT WITH PROJECT STRUCTURE

Manage the alliance by executing the business plan within a project framework, balancing development with ongoing operations.

08

ALLIANCE EVALUATION

Conduct regular evaluations with your partner to assess what is working well and identify areas for improvement. This should be an iterative process for continuous enhancement.

Strategic recommendations for building effective healthcare partnerships



ENGAGE PATIENTS AND CITIZENS EARLY

Incorporating the perspectives of patients and citizens from the beginning is crucial. Typically, citizens are informed about impending changes only after decisions have been made, leading to unforeseen consequences.



STRATEGISE FOR EFFICIENT COLLABORATION

Entities should pursue strategic collaborations to redistribute and streamline work more intelligently and efficiently. This involves making strategic decisions about core activities — determining what should be kept in-house, what should be divested, and the scope of operations.



DEEPEN INVESTMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP

For alliances to succeed, investment is key — not just financial, but also in building a strong relationship with partners. The goal is to align objectives, share a common purpose, and understand the necessity of the alliance.



LEAD WITH VISION AND COURAGE

In challenging times, a strategic alliance without vision and courage is likely to fail. Leaders must be visionary, capable of presenting a compelling rationale for the alliance as the path forward. They must also have the courage to prioritise the collective benefit over their organisation's interests, even when faced with tough decisions, such as closing a healthcare facility due to regional sufficiency.



PRIORITISE SUBSTANCE OVER FORM

Experience repeatedly shows that successful strategic alliances are founded on substance rather than form. A clear, shared vision and the rationale behind the cooperation should be established first, with agreements naturally following.



BUILD TRUST AS A FOUNDATION

Trust, though seemingly intangible, is fundamental. As one client aptly put it, "Culture is a soft value that can become crucial later on." The same holds true for trust. It's a vital link and a prerequisite for any alliance, yet it remains a challenge for many entities.

Powered by BDO: strategic alliance success stories

CASE STUDY: COLLABORATIVE EFFORT IN DISABILITY AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

THE CHALLENGE

Two distinct organisations — one providing care for individuals with chronic brain injuries and their families, and the other supporting those with long-term mental health challenges and barriers to employment, including the homeless — sought to develop a comprehensive business plan for their proposed collaboration. The challenge involved defining the cooperation in terms of target groups and services, envisioning organisational and legal structures, assessing impacts on staff, finances, and risks, and charting a transition path — all while considering stakeholder perspectives.

BDO'S APPROACH

BDO facilitated the creation of a business case to evaluate the proposed collaboration's viability, legal and fiscal implications, organisational structure, financial outcomes, and potential risks. Through a guided process, BDO helped the organisations establish criteria, explore scenarios, and reach an informed decision, leveraging BDO's multidisciplinary knowledge.

THE RESULT

The business case affirmed the collaboration's value, highlighting benefits such as increased employment opportunities, knowledge sharing among staff, and new commercial opportunities to offset decreasing social funding. The collaboration culminated in a merger effective January 1, 2024, with BDO assisting with the legal and fiscal implementation. This partnership not only serves the immediate interests of both organisations, but also sets the stage for sharing insights with others, ultimately benefiting the broader region through enhanced combined services.



Powered by BDO: strategic alliance success stories

CASE STUDY: ENHANCING NIGHT CARE THROUGH ELDERLY CARE COLLABORATION

THE CHALLENGE

Two elderly care organisations faced the task of organising efficient and effective regional cooperation for unplanned night care. The complexities included integrating access to records, expanding cooperation with other healthcare providers, and unifying their vision for night care. Additionally, they needed to address collaboration agreements, accessibility, management information, safety, and establishing reliable contact points.

BDO'S APPROACH

BDO assisted the organisations in crafting a shared regional vision for unplanned night care within the framework of the Health Insurance Act. The goal was to create a cohesive and practical strategy that all regional healthcare providers could recognise and adopt. This comprehensive approach considered the needs and preferences of all stakeholders and evaluated existing inter-organisational collaborations to propose suitable working arrangements.

THE RESULT

The collaboration led to a unified regional vision for unplanned night care that was practical for all healthcare providers involved and aligned with the expectations of all parties. This vision has laid the groundwork for efficient and effective regional cooperation, contributing to the sustainability of night care services and ensuring a secure environment for healthcare professionals working overnight.



BDO: your partner for successful strategic alliances in healthcare

In the complex world of healthcare, strategic alliances are key to innovation and progress. BDO is here to guide you through forming and enhancing these vital partnerships, ensuring impactful and sustainable outcomes.



Ready to transform challenges into successes?
Contact us today.

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