

A solid business case for ReX collaboration | Road to ReX - part 7

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Make ReX profitable for all partners in the chain

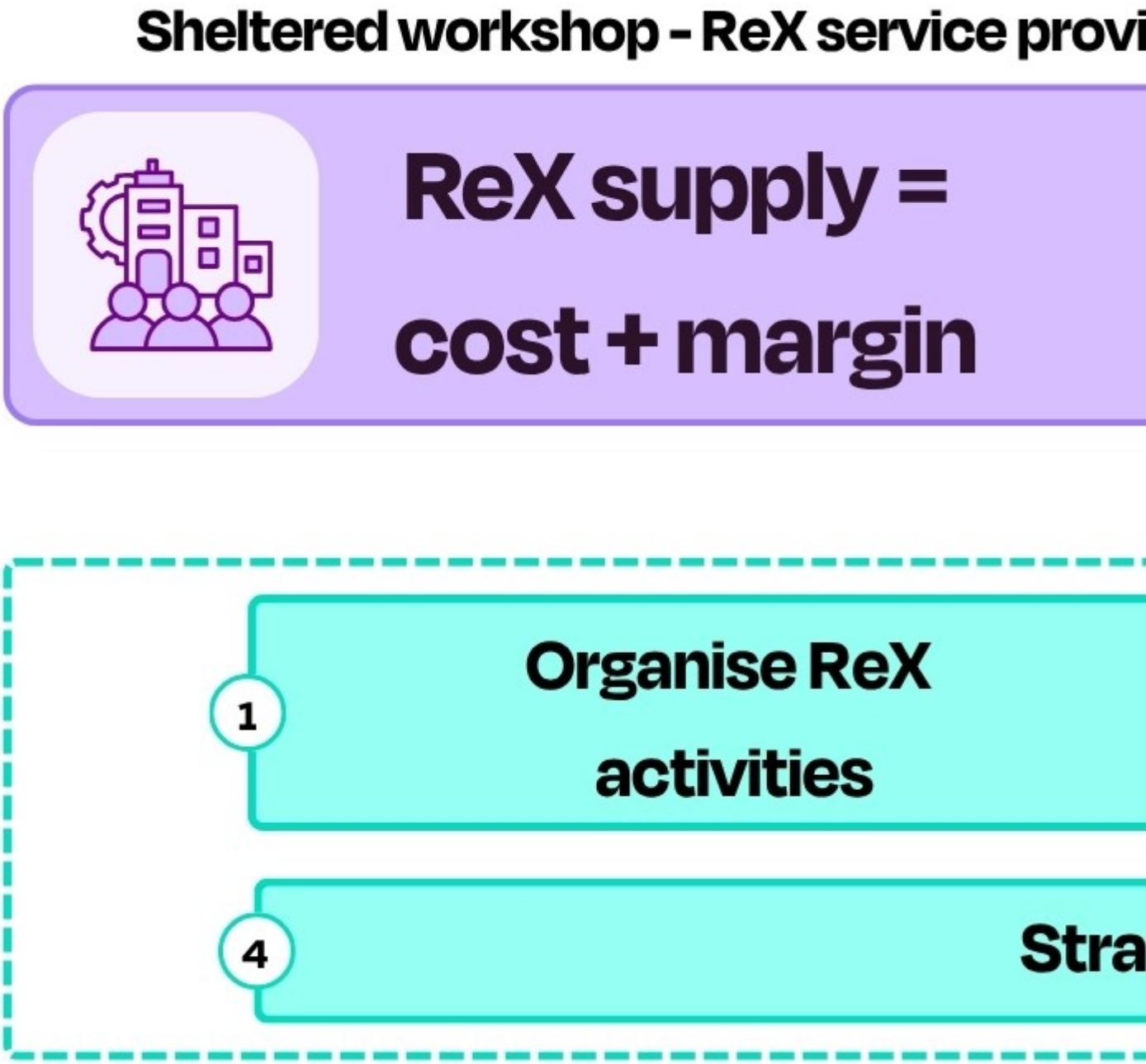
A successful ReX collaboration requires more than a good idea. It needs a business case that creates value for all parties involved, such as social enterprises and manufacturing companies. That balance is rarely present from the start. Yet this should not be a reason to delay action. ReX projects evolve. Context, volumes and products change, and profitability changes with them. By working together on a fair distribution of costs and benefits, you lay the foundation for sustainable partnerships.

Every social enterprise has its own strengths and context. This framework helps you take the most relevant steps for your situation. We have bundled all insights into one publication.

Download the full publication here

Why a joint business case is crucial

ReX collaborations differ from traditional customer-supplier relationships. In co-creation, both parties directly influence each other’s costs and revenues. Without the other, there is no business case.
A transparent, step-by-step approach strengthens mutual trust and facilitates negotiations. Start with efficiency, look for balance in cost sharing, expand value creation and weigh strategic factors.



Step 1: analyse your ReX process steps

First, examine how ReX activities are organised. The way work is divided and executed largely determines costs. This applies to operational activities such as inspection, cleaning or rework, as well as preparatory or supporting steps such as design choices, planning or data management. Product variations, volumes and batch sizes strongly affect efficiency. By understanding these variables together, you can optimise more effectively.

Example: a sheltered workshop initially charged 50 euros per unit for product rework for a manufacturing company. After improving standardisation, defining minimum batch sizes and adjusting delivery methods, the cost dropped to 25 euros per unit. The business case was not yet fully viable, but both partners made progress.

Tip: find inspiration in case studies on production organisation and efficiency at sirris.be/inspiration.

Step 2: distribute costs and benefits fairly

When the numbers are not yet balanced, transparency is essential. Discuss fixed, variable and start-up costs. Clarify which costs are influenced by decisions from one partner or the other.

You can improve collaboration through three concrete strategies:

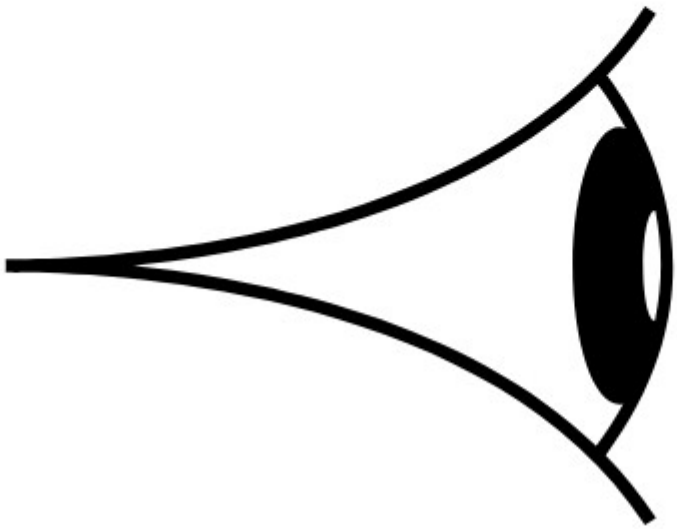
1. **Spread costs over time:** use advance payments or partial pre-financing to reduce risks
2. **Make costs conditional:** link prices to batch size, delivery frequency or quality of delivered products
3. **Shift costs where possible:** the party with the greatest interest in success can temporarily bear more

This builds mutual understanding and brings a profitable balance closer.

Step 3: increase added value

A business case is not only about numbers. By broadening the scope, you may discover new win-win opportunities. You might relieve your partner through logistics, administration, storage, packaging or data management.

Small additional services that require little effort from one partner can generate significant savings or efficiency gains for the other.



Your perspective

Example: a sheltered workshop that cleans and inspects appliances also took care of transport and intermediate storage. The manufacturing company reduced planning complexity, while the social enterprise organised batches more efficiently.

Note that additional responsibilities also involve risks, for example permit requirements. Use previous insights about your room for manoeuvre and strengths to find the right balance.

Step 4: weigh remaining risks and strategic value

After all steps, a small financial gap may remain. Continuing can still make sense. Non-financial motives such as local collaboration, social impact, strategic learning or preparation for future ReX projects may tip the balance.

By discussing this openly with your partner, you strengthen trust and take sustainable steps towards circular growth.

Key lessons learnt

- Transparency and trust increase the scope for negotiation
- A business case is rarely black and white: think in terms of "it works if..." rather than "it doesn't work"
- Revise goals or priorities in line with new insights
- Document lessons learnt: what can be improved next time in collaboration, process or scope?

Building a business case is not a straight line but a learning journey. By continuously adjusting, ReX grows into an economically and socially valuable part of your operations.

Conclusion

By working together on a transparent and balanced business case, you make ReX economically viable. You openly discuss costs, benefits and risks while seeking shared value. Small optimisations and fair agreements bring numbers and trust closer together. In this way, ReX grows into a profitable and sustainable collaboration with impact for every partner in the value chain.

Summary

A viable ReX business case requires dialogue, insight into process costs and a willingness to learn together. By negotiating transparently and actively creating added value, you build the foundation for long-term collaboration that benefits all partners in the value chain.

A look ahead at the series

Discover the other articles in the ReX series:

- Discover the full ReX series
- Part 1: ReX activities for sheltered workshops: opportunities and collaboration
- Part 2: room for manoeuvre for ReX Initiatives in sheltered workshops
- Part 3: the driving forces for ReX Initiatives
- Part 4: your strengths with regard to ReX initiatives
- Part 5: ReX goals for sheltered workshops
- Part 6: co-creation for ReX initiatives
- Part 8: one ReX revenue model, multiple business cases
- Part 9: the motivations that drives ReX forward
- Part 10: constraints that make ReX stronger
- Part 11: strengths as a Lever for ReX

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