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Title	Building Successful Partnerships: Suggested Best Practices

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wicked problems such as poverty, nutrition, violence, and community health are international concerns that are complex, overwhelming and interconnected when stakeholders, often from different perspectives, are searching for a solution (Conklin, 2005; Kolko, n.d). Collaborative responses to address social issues such as domestic violence, poverty, and homelessness are used in Canada and throughout the world (Huxham & Vangen, 2003). Collaboration and partnerships between business, government and the not for profit (NFP) world may be critical to the long-term sustainability of the many competing NFPs in Canada and British Columbia (BC).

The Shuswap Area Family Emergency (SAFE) Society is seeking information to assess and evaluate the potential for new short-term and long-term partnerships. One such partnership is a cooperative-run social enterprise which is a long term partnership between several other NFPs in the social service sector. The co-op was formed with the intent to share knowledge; share resources; and reduce duplication of services. The additional benefit of the formation of the co-op was the idea that the social enterprise would diversify funding sources that historically were reliant on government grants.

This project identifies and assesses the benefits and risks of a new partnership and makes recommendations on how to integrate and nurture a partnership once a decision has been made. In addition, the project creates a leadership strategy that includes assessment tools and suggests academic best practice that can guide the SAFE Society when entering into new partnerships. This review aims to improve the SAFE Society's understanding of how to identify, develop and maintain a successful community partnership.

This report's findings are the result of an extensive review of the literature on multi-sector partnerships. Information was gathered from academic journals, Google scholar databases, E-Libraries, reports, books and websites. These resources provided background information on collaborative partnerships between two or more agencies and/or institutions including multi-sector collaborative partnerships between NFPs, businesses and governments.

Of the literature reviewed organizational capacity, competency and leadership commitment were key elements needed to create an environment that was flexible enough to handle the pressures associated with a partnership relationship. Effective partnerships require each individual partner to review and assess their current structure to ensure that they have the finances and staff to effectively commit. Knowing what strengths and weaknesses exist, internally and externally, prior to the partnership can create indicators that can be used to define competencies. Competencies, like flexibility, are needed when sitting at the partnership table because there is more than one way of looking at issues. Organizations can achieve a collaborative advantage by partnering; however, formal agreements, clear expectations and ongoing and open communication are required. A stable partnership shares power, risks, and celebrates successes. Successful partnerships, no matter who is involved, share key components that help lay the foundation needed to partner. These elements are linked to the vision, mission and goals of the partnership. Relationships, like marriages, need to be nurtured and cared for as they move through different stages or lifecycles. Without these concepts and frameworks, a partnership may be destined to fail.

The literature review led to several important conclusions, including:

- While the definition of partnerships varies no matter what discipline or area of study you are reviewing there are similarities that can be applied all sectors.
- A common vision, mission and communication process are needed to engage stakeholders and clarify partnership expectations.

- Organizational capacity (time and resources), competency (knowledge and skills) and leadership style/ character are key criteria required for a successful partnership.
- Integrity builds trust that helps nurture the relationship between partners.
- Even a well developed relationship between partners may not achieve the expected outcomes or project goals because of internal or external challenges that impact stakeholders in unforeseen ways.
- There are numerous assessments, tool kits and checklists available online, in books and through consultant groups; however the majority of these are referencing partnerships between government, business and the not for profit sector. Additional information is needed for resources that assess and evaluate partnerships between not for profits and other not for profit partnerships.

There are times when values and organizational culture clash. This is often the case when NFPs partner with government agencies or the private/business sectors. Values are commonly believed to guide behavior, thus, sharing common values supports the partnership process. Ultimately, partnerships have many risks and benefits all of which are dependent on who is involved and what motivations lie behind the partnership. Consistent and competent leadership throughout the partnership life cycle helps create formal structure and develops informal relationships that engage those involved, particularly when seeking to address complex social issues. This report provides strategy and makes recommendations that can help assist the SAFE Society board of directors and executive staff when seeking, assessing or evaluating partnership opportunities.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Not for profit¹ (NFP) organizations worldwide are faced with an increasingly challenging and complex environment (Bielefeld, 2012, p. 170; Evans & Grantham, 2011; Huxham & Vangen, 1996; Pearson, 2013; Stott, 2007, p. 3). Despite increased demand for service, the social service sector faces unprecedented financial constraints (Enterprising Non-Profit (ENP), 2011, p. 2; Sinha, 2013, p. 61). Financial challenges are both internal and external. Externally, international, federal and provincial governments are restricting funding while continuing to download social service delivery away from mainstream public agencies and government-run authorities to the NFP sector (ENP, 2010, p. 4; Huxham & Vangen, 1996; Pearson, 2013; Vernis, Iglesias, Sanz, & Saz-Carranza, 2006). Competition for donations and funding coupled with the increased costs associated with delivering support services adds to the day to day stress and challenges that many organizational leaders face (Evans & Grantham, 2001, p. 2). It has never been more important for the NFP sector to seek alternative ways to plan for and address financial and social pressures while simultaneously remaining true to organizational values, vision and mission. Internally, agencies such as the Shuswap Area Family Emergency Society (SAFE), have had to reallocate funds to contend with increased costs in staffing, benefits, food, utilities and changes to federal government audit regulations (SAFE Society Board of Directors, personal communication, 2012).

Wicked problems², such as unemployment, homelessness, poverty, domestic violence, youth violence, ethnic conflict, drug abuse and a host of other social issues are among the complex problems that many NFPs are trying to address (Government Nonprofit Initiative, 2010; Huxham & Vangen, 1996, p. 5). In addition to financial constraints, social issues almost always overlap with various sectors, making it difficult—if not impossible—for any single organization to fully address a given issue. This is why some community leaders may find the collaborative partnership model appealing (Huxham & Vangen, 1996, p. 5; Wildridge, Childst, Cawthra & Madge, 2004).

Government agencies and private sector actors often have to work collaboratively to support community health and wellness by looking at issues from a holistic perspective. Each group has expertise about various community issues—all of which is needed to understand the full picture. These different entities frequently find themselves interacting with one another to address social issues without a clear framework guiding the collaborative relationship in a way that achieves mutual goals (Huxham & Vangen, 1996, p. 5). Individual sectors may share a similar mission and vision, but cross-sector interactions can be fragmented and inequitable, as well as lacking in direction, accountability and understanding (SAFE, 2013; Shirley, personal knowledge, 2013³). Within the public, private and voluntary sectors⁴ the need for

¹ The University of South Fraser (n. d.) defines NFPs as incorporated institutions such as voluntary, social, charitable, community, and philanthropic organizations that assist the government in providing services to citizens. For the purpose of this report, the term NFP refers to a registered charity governed by a board of directors adhering to the BC Society Act (Government of British Columbia, 2014b).

² A wicked problem is a form of cultural or social problem that is difficult to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements (Kolko, n.d.).

³ The author has been employed with the SAFE Society since December of 1989 in several positions. She has been the Executive Director since 1996, and is supported by the SAFE Society board of directors in many partnership ventures in the Shuswap region and abroad. She brings expertise and hands-on experience in relation to community development, board development, governance, and human resource development that will be drawn upon throughout this project.

⁴ The private sector is the sector of the economy that is run by citizens for profit. The public sector includes government-led agencies and often has elected officials. The NFP sector is a voluntary sector and is associated with charitable organizations (Quarter, Mook, Armstrong, 2009, p. 7).

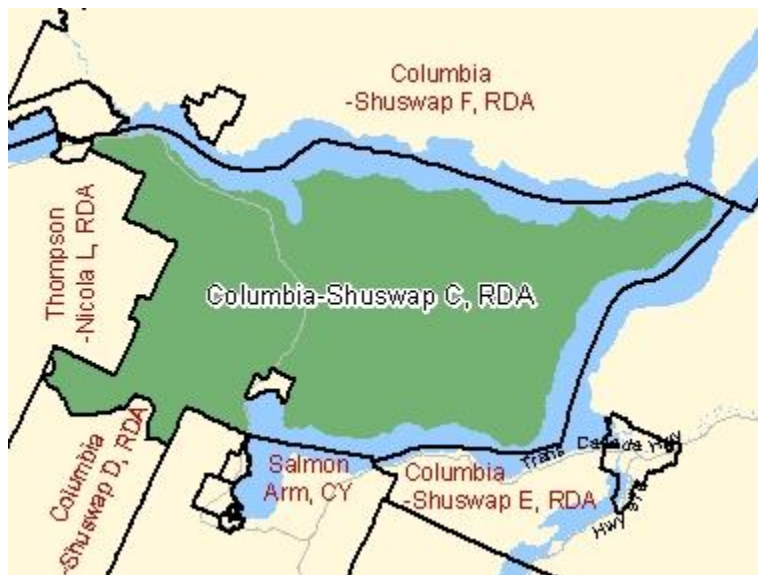
partnerships, (often cross-sectoral⁵), is recognized as a vital component of organizational success (Wildridge et al., 2004, p. 3). The aim of using a partnership model is to bring likeminded organizations, government agencies, and/or the private sector together under the guiding principle that partnerships can increase organizational efficiencies and help create new ways to improve service delivery while maximizing the use of limited resources (Evans & Grantham, 2001, p. 2; Pearson, 2013).

1.1 The Shuswap Area Family Emergency Society

The SAFE Society is a grassroots NFP established in 1979 by volunteers concerned about women's safety in the village of Salmon Arm (Shirley, personal knowledge, 2013). Despite limited financial resources, the agency sought to establish a women's shelter. This goal was realized in 1980 (Women's Shelter, 1980). Currently, SAFE employs twenty-three people and operates a budget of close to 1 million dollars (SAFE, 2013).

The SAFE Society offers services to the Shuswap/Columbia region—a region encompassing 506.34 square kilometers which includes the City of Salmon Arm, the Columbia Shuswap Regional District, and the townships of Sicamous, Malakwa, Falkland, Northshore, Sorrento, and Blind Bay. The winter population is over 40 000 often doubling during the summer months (Government of Canada, 2011). This increase in population put additional pressure on services which already run over 100% capacity. The SAFE Society is one of approximately eighteen NFPs operating a social service organization within the region. Smaller organizations located outside of Salmon Arm city limits are often isolated. The SAFE Society has long recognized that there may be a collaborative advantage in working together with other regional social service agencies to support local clients, share knowledge and information, reduce duplication of services and decrease competition for limited funding resources. Working together could help reduce the isolation of smaller NFPs in the area and improve overall service delivery.

Figure 1. SAFE covers a large area in the Columbia Shuswap Regional District.



(Government of Canada, 2011).

⁵ Cross Sectoral or inter-organizational alliances refer to the inclusion of NFPs and the private sector in social service plans to more effectively respond to social problems (Peach as cited in Apolonio, 2008, p. 13).

SAFE offices are located in Salmon Arm, British Columbia (BC), and run the following programs: Transition House (TH), Stopping the Violence (STV), Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA), Victim Services (VS), and outreach programs for victims of violence.⁶ SAFE relies heavily on government funds, deriving approximately eighty percent of its funding from provincial and regional government sources (SAFE, 2013). Each contract held by the SAFE Society has seen many staffing and funding changes since inception in 1979. There have been changes between Ministries with almost no increases in funding to match raising service costs (SAFE, 2013). For example, the TH contract has shifted between provincial bodies over the years, including the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Women's Equality, the Ministry of Social Development and, most recently, been transferred to the BC Housing Corporation portfolio (SAFE, 2013).

SAFE uses a Carver© governance model,⁷ whereby the board of directors supports the Executive Director in the operations of the Society (SAFE, 2013, p. 5). Currently the SAFE Society and its staff, have no formal assessment tools or policy to assist with choosing a community partner that may help the organization reduce social and economic pressures (Shirley, personal knowledge, 2013).

Like many NFPs, the SAFE Society's reliance on government funding leaves it vulnerable should there be cuts to core services. This vulnerability has staff and board of directors seeking a more effective and stable way of contending with the increased cost of service delivery expected in the 2014-2015 fiscal year (SAFE, 2013). SAFE Society leaders are feeling pressured to partner and seek information that will help assess, evaluate and define current and future short-term and long-term partnerships.⁸ For the purpose of this report, the term partnership implies that there are two or more organizations—(NFP, government and/or business) that make a commitment to voluntarily work together and ensure that each stakeholder develops a shared sense of purpose and vision to improve or enhance current service (Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) n. d. [a], p. 1; Wildridge, *et al.*, 2004, p. 4).

Throughout the author's time as Executive Director of SAFE, many opportunities to partner with other organizations locally and regionally have arisen and SAFE has entered into short-term and long-term partnerships with both the NFP and for profit sectors (Shirley, 2013, personal knowledge). These partnerships were established without a tangible selection, vetting and/or retention process; instead, they were based on informal relationships between Executive Directors, contractors and/or businesses. There was no framework or process to follow for partnering and this has made it difficult to replicate or re-create these partnerships with other potential collaborators and/or funders.

One such informal partnership is a joint venture between SAFE, Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Eagle Valley Resource Society (EVRS), Shuswap Children's Association (SCA), The Shuswap Family Resource Society (SFRS) and Downtown Activity Centre (DAC). The organizations formed a

⁶ Victims of power-based crimes refer to all victims of violence in relationships whether adult, youth or child, and victims of sexual assault, criminal harassment, child abuse, adult survivor of childhood abuse and child witnesses to family violence (Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2007). Domestic violence can be classed as physical, psychological, spiritual, or financial abuse often experienced in an intimate partnership relationship (Domestic Abuse Intervention Program, n.d.).

⁷ Carver (1990) created the Policy Governance Model© – a model that enables the board to prioritize issues by delegating managing control and allowing the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to lead the organization. The board speaks with one voice to minimize misunderstandings and confusion for the CEO (Carver, 1990).

⁸ It is often assumed that a partnership means each stakeholder holds equal power in the relationship. This, however, is not always the case in partnerships that are mandated or implemented by government initiatives (Peckham as cited in Wildridge *et al.*, 2004).

cooperative⁹ that was initially based on informal relationships between Executive Directors of each organization (Shirley, 2013, personal knowledge). One goal was to create a social enterprise (SE)¹⁰ in hopes of increasing the use of technology, lowering administrative costs and accessing non-governmental revenue streams. The result was the creation of the Shuswap Community Resources Cooperative (SCRC). This type of partnership has been a learning experience for SAFE, with each partner bringing to the table their own governance model, ideologies and institutional culture (SAFE Board of Directors, personal communication, 2013). There would have been value in understanding the complexities of a multiple partner project prior to entering into this agreement, as the amount of financial and human resources required far exceeded the initial business plan that was presented to the SAFE Society board of directors in 2011 (Shirley, 2013, personal knowledge).

1.2 Research Questions

The central contention of this paper is that strategic partnerships may increase operational capacity for smaller organizations, businesses, foundations and cooperatives; however, this “interactive approach” requires strategic alignments with suitable partners to increase the long-term sustainability of relationships (Quarter, 2009, p. 7). In other words, if agencies share ideas and concerns, it is possible to more effectively provide service to communities despite diminishing resources (Pearson, 2013; Shirley, 2013).

Knowing who and what motivates collaborative partnerships can have a significant impact on organizational health. Partnering with someone who has different values, beliefs and business ethics may harm or destroy organizational credibility. The aim of this project is to fill the gap in current SAFE practices around partnering by providing an assessment tool and best practice recommendations to assist the SAFE Society board of directors in assessing the benefits and risks of partnering with other organizations. Put differently, it aims to improve the SAFE Society’s understanding of how to identify, develop and maintain a successful community partnership. The recommendations made by this project can be incorporated into a partnership “best practice guide” for the SAFE Society. The guide can then be shared with the NFPs who make up the Shuswap Community Resources Cooperative (SCRC) as well as the broader Columbia-Shuswap NFP community.

With the above goal in mind, the project is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is a partnership?
2. How can organizations differentiate between a social service community collaboration and an ongoing partnership project such as the Shuswap Community Resources Cooperative?
3. What criteria can be used to identify the benefits and risks, real or perceived, when an agency has been asked to partner?
4. What best practices can the SAFE Society implement when entering into collaborative partnerships to ensure that board of directors and staff have done their due diligence to reduce risk while at the same time increasing the probability of partnership success?
5. What assessment tools are available to assess and maintain collaborative partnerships?

⁹A cooperative is owned and democratically controlled by people who use the services of the cooperative association (Government of British Columbia, 2014a).

¹⁰ Many SEs are businesses owned by NFPs that involve the sale of goods or services with the blended purposes of generating income and fulfilling a social mission (Social Enterprise of Canada, 2014).

1.3 Research Method

The methodology for this project consisted of a critical review of current literature on multi-sector partnerships. Information was gathered from the following academic online sources: academic journals, Google scholar databases, E-Libraries, reports, books and websites. Many of the sources used were directly or indirectly linked to NFP partnerships. The literature provides information on collaborative partnerships between multiple agencies and/or institutions. Most of the literature focused on multi-sector partnerships between NFPs, businesses, governments and cooperatives. Internet searches were conducted using various combinations of key terms such as “partnerships,” “community collaborative partnerships,” “successful partnerships,” “partnership tools,” “public -private partnerships,” “collaboration,” “collaborative advantage,” “trust,” “alliances” and “inter-organizational partnerships.” Information was requested from and permission was granted by *Synergisq*, a consultant company, to use the “Continuum of Joint Action”© framework—a key piece of information that will be used throughout the project to help define characteristics of a partnership (Synergisq, 2004; 2012; VCOSS, n.d., [a]., p.2).¹¹ Databases searched included *Google Scholar*, *JStor*, *Sage* and *Taylor and Francis Online*.

The literature on partnerships was evaluated for relevance and categorized into sections based on common themes or ideologies from authors in the NFP, business and government sectors. The research and information available on collaborative partnerships was broad, so the review focused almost exclusively on literature covering NFP partnerships. Nevertheless, Boydell (2007) contends that the NFP partnership literature is applicable to private and public sector partnerships as well. Initially, the review emphasized NFP collaborations in Canada, however, as the research progressed, a number of highly pertinent studies and reports from Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom emerged (e.g. Boydell, 2007; Childs, 2008; VCOSS, 2009). This literature is explored in greater detail in Section 3. The following section provides the reader some background and examples of past and present partnership from an international, regional and local perspective.

¹¹ This framework, as well as its importance to this project, will be further elaborated on in Section 4.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

In order to understand the reasons behind the shift toward a partnership approach to service delivery, the impact not for profit (NFP) organizations have when speaking about community wellness must be understood. Many NFPs have critical information about community service delivery that can be used to improve supports for community members. As such, it is often seen as a benefit to have NFPs at the table when discussing service delivery (Government Nonprofit Initiative (GNPI), 2010). Regional, national and international government bodies recognize that working with the NFP sector can help meet the challenges currently faced by NFP organizations, particularly when an agency relies on government for its core or operating funds (Stott, 2007, p. 3; Vernis et al., 2006, p. 12). A brief background will be presented that explains the scope of the NFP social service sector in Canada, British Columbia (BC) and the Shuswap region. This section argues that an integrated or partnership approach to social service delivery, while complex, may help address agency concerns. In addition, this section highlights recent trends and government strategies being implemented to address social concerns.

2.1 Current Trends

Over the past decade and beyond, business, government and NFPs shifted focus and created working groups that use a collaborative approach to solving community issues often under the umbrella term “partnership”(Peach, as cited in Apolonio, 2008; Stott, 2007). For example, federal and provincial governments are looking beyond traditional procurement structures to engage community members in collectively coming up with solutions to issues that are unique to each area (Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), 2012; Government Non-Profit Initiative (GPNI), 2009). Engaging the NFP sector is thought to improve service value and increase accountability. Typically, partnership strategies have involved shifting government responsibility for social services to frontline NFP social service agencies (Mintz, 1998, p. 10).

Collaboration, working towards the same goal, has been a cornerstone of the Canadian government’s strategy for addressing a range of social issues such as domestic violence, mental health and community safety (Ending Violence Association (EVA), 2013; Victoria Council of Social Services (VCSS), 2009). Government agencies are increasingly aware that partnering with service providing organizations increases regional and local knowledge, and helps people access a given service. Working together to meet the needs of a community is essential to effectively deliver service (Wildridge, Childst, Cawthra & Madge, 2004, p. 3). Within the public, private and NFP sectors, working beyond typical agency boundaries is recognized as a vital component of success (Wildridge *et al.*, 2004 p. 3).

2.2 Types of Partnerships

As mentioned, NFP organizations face significant challenges and seek to improve support services with limited resources. To help promote financial stability and long term sustainable development, innovative partnership opportunities can be developed which include government and/or the business sector. This section identifies and examines partnerships between NFPs and government, and between NFPs and business. Partnerships that involve stakeholders from several different sectors may bring additional challenges to the relationship as there is often unequal access to political power and/or financial resources (Coulson, 2005, p. 161).

2.2.1 Not for Profit and Government

The literature suggests that it is very advantageous for NFPs and government organizations to partner (Kalico Consulting (KC), 2012, p. 3; Mintz, 1998, p. 10). Traditionally, partnerships between government and NFPs have been largely based on contracting for a specific purpose or task. For example the Ministry of Justice had an annual grant program that agencies could apply for to help enhance community partnerships to end violence (Government of British Columbia, 2014d; Shirley, personal knowledge, 2013). This partnership was funding based and the outcomes controlled by the limitations of the grant application. There is little flexibility or adjustments that stakeholders can make because the funds are restricted by the funding agreement. NFPs that depend on government funding often adapt their mandates to ensure continued funding (Gill, 2003; Miltenberger, 2013; Luksetich as cited in McKenzie, 2008). This power imbalance and lack of control on the part of NFPs suggests that this type of partnership is not a “true” partnership, as the relationship is mandated and tied to the financial well being of one of the stakeholders (Gill, 2003; Miltenberger, 2013).

The partnership framework views partnering as a collaborative arrangement between government and the health, housing and/or community services sectors—one that is based on mutual respect and acknowledgement of the different and complementary roles and responsibilities that each partner brings to the table (VCOSS, 2009, p. 27). This acknowledgement can help improve service delivery and credibility, and influence and educate partners, staff and clients (VCOSS, 2009).

The NFP sector is often highly effective at delivering a service that the government cannot deliver on its own (Miltenberger, 2013, p. 58). Miltenberger (2013) suggests that NFPs can act as champions of service delivery and can be innovators for new ideas that address both programmatic and system demands (p. 58). Leaders who have empathy and understand each stakeholder’s point of view will be able to build and develop a more solid partnership relationship (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003; Miltenberger, 2013; Paetkau, 2008, p. 17).

Recent formal funding agreements between government and NFPs recognize that successful requests for proposals (RFP) often have some form of community partnership or collaboration for eligibility (Shirley, personal knowledge, 2014; Sinha, 2013, p. 62). The SAFE Society’s most recent RFP, for example, engaged partners from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Child Protection, Probation and Victims Services. This style of partnership crosses sector boundaries where each sector has unique governance rules and regulations. This type of lateral communication between agencies requires buy in and agreements that go beyond information sharing (Synergistiq, 2012; VCOSS, .n.d.[a]., p.2). There are concrete goals and deliverables with mutually agreed upon outcomes that help deal with a specific problem that each sector is facing and in this case it is community safety and family violence support (Boydell, 2007, p. 4).

Specifically in BC, the Government Non Profit Initiative (GNPI) (2006) was launched to help build relationships between the NFP and government sectors. The GNPI made strategies between independent organizations to help strengthen relationships between all stakeholders. A handcrafted blanket was used as a symbol of commitment that visually linked together partnership ideologies, leadership criteria, structure, process and opportunity. The blanket became “a visual representation of what was needed to make the relationship most successful” (GNPI, 2006, p. 4). The blanket was carried around the province and used as a visual reminder to groups that people are always interconnected and often working toward the same goals (GNPI, 2006).

While relationships between government and NFPs are often contractual, strategic relationships between NFPs and business continue to grow. There appears to be an increased number of opportunities for NFPs to get involved with corporate sponsors interested in social justice. These partnerships require as much if

not more analysis to ensure that the mission and vision align with the values and integrity of NFP partners. Mismatched partnerships can create difficulty for the NFP, business or government sector. The next sub-section takes a closer look at business-NFP partnerships.

2.2.2 Not for Profit and Business

Regional, national and international corporations and businesses are trying to create a collaborative advantage that links stakeholders and NFPs to the concept of social responsibility in the corporate world (Mintz, 1998). It is widely recognized that environmental, social, economic and technological problems cannot be addressed individually (International Potato Center (IPC), n. d., p. 1; Mintz, 1998; Gill, 2003; GNPI, 2010). Companies and corporations claiming to care about social justices can use a social issues campaign as leverage to attract new business or new partnerships with the hope to increase revenue. In 1999 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan launched the Global Compact Program to engage and encourage businesses to help confront human rights, labour, environmental and anti-corruption concerns (Partnering Intelligence (PI), 2007, p. 1). Royal LePage of Canada, a real-estate company, has a Shelter Foundation where each local office has community fundraisers that support this foundation (Shirley, personal knowledge, 2013; Royal LePage, 2014). Suncor Energy has a charitable nonprofit foundation that assists communities on a regional and international level (McCleans, 2014; Suncor, 2014). Pepsico advertises its commitment to human, talent and environmental sustainability (Pepsico, 2014). NFP organizations are often the recipients of these funds which help meet the needs in communities at risk. The motivations for businesses to partner, however, are often different than the motivations for NFPs. While partnerships between NFPs and businesses provide invaluable opportunities and can increase knowledge-based resources, it can still be a risk to organizational reputation (PI, 2007, p. 1; Watson, n. d., p. 1). This can be particularly true when a business or corporation is under the scrutiny for their environmental or controversial practices such as the controversy over the extraction of oil in Alberta or the production Genetically Modified (GMO) crops (Suzuki Foundation, 2014). A partnership with a business can increase program relevance, political leverage, visibility and organizational capacity by diversifying funding sources away from government grants but there may be hidden results that have a negative impact on organizational credibility (Watson, n. d., p. 3-4).

2.3 International, National and Regional Partnership Context

The role NFPs play in society is complex and often very specific to the region in which they are located. Each NFP often has its own mission and vision that relates to support services that will help address issues of poverty, hunger, violence and homelessness (EVA, 2010). NFPs in Canada and particularly BC, play a critical role in shaping the health of our communities by bringing attention to social and environmental issues that might otherwise go unnoticed (GNPI, 2009; Shirley, personal knowledge, 2014). The NFP social service sector is large and in each region plays a critical role in providing services to communities. Often these services are provided in with government funding. It becomes important for the leaders in NFP sector to understand the importance of multi sectoral partnerships.

2.3.1 International Context

The United Kingdom (UK) and Australia are widely recognized as leaders in community development, and, as such, have produced a number of practical strategies and guides to assist organizations wishing to partner, specifically in the area of NFP and government (Pearson, 2013, p. 24; VCOSS, 2009). The government of New South Wales (NSW) created a “working together agreement “ that has been signed and implemented that helps create a collaborative environment needed to partner with other NFP (NSW, n.d.). Similarly in 2000 the Government of Australia shifted focus to a more collaborative approach to

service delivery (Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee (HSPIC), 2009, p. 9; Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), n.d.,[d]). With the assistance from Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) the social service sector and the State Government Victoria worked toward reducing the competitiveness between service providers by becoming more than just the funder (HSPIC, 2009). VCOSS and service providers engaged in talks that eventually led to the signing of a partnership agreement in 2005 that formalized the vision, values and goals of a shared approach to partnership development (HSPIC, 2009, p. 9). Ideally, working together creates a “collaborative advantage” that has endless possibilities for addressing a myriad of issues that negatively impact community health (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Kanter, 1994; HSPIC, 2009, p. 9). .

2.3.2 Not for Profit in Canada

Canada faces a series of challenges in the way it sustains healthy and vibrant communities, particularly when it comes to competition for limited resources (Parker, 1999). The Canadian economy and Canadian society has changed, and government strategies for community health have shifted in recent years towards engaging local agencies and community members in solving local and regional problems (GNPI, 2009; Government of Manitoba, 2014, p. 1). This shift impacts Canada’s NFP sector—which is said to be the second largest in the world (Hall, 2005). According to Imagine Canada (2013), there are over 165 000 NFP charities, with 54 percent run by volunteers. They employ over 2 million people. This sector represents \$106 billion annually or 1.7 percent of national gross domestic product (GDP) (Imagine Canada, 2013). Charities and other community services organizations are struggling to restructure in the face of increased demands for service, shrinking resources and greater demands for accountability and transparency (Parker, 1999, p. 5). New partnerships between NFPs and government are on the rise in an effort to address these concerns (Parker, 1999).

2.3.3 Not for Profit in British Columbia (BC)

The shift to a more collaborative service delivery approach affects the NFPs in the province of BC. BC NFPs are very diverse in purpose, size and in the populations they serve. There are approximately 20 270 NFP and voluntary organizations in BC, accounting for 13 percent of NFPs in Canada (Murray, 2006, p. vi). Of this 13 percent, approximately 9 percent provide social services (Murray, 2006, p. vi). With the provincial government downloading more social service responsibility onto individual communities, a formalized body GNPI (2009) was initiated in 2007 to help facilitate partnerships between the NFP sector and the BC government with the goal of building capacity that will address current and future social issues of such as homelessness, poverty and violence (GNPI, 2009). Many NFP recognized that these social issues cannot be dealt with alone, and working in partnership is a government trend that important (GNPI, 2009; Huxham & Vangen, 2004; Wildridge *et al.*, 2004). The formalized body GNPI was able to facilitate partnership strategies between NFPs and government by focusing on the benefits of partnering and creating mutual strategies that support service delivery.

2.4 Conclusion

While NFPs play a vital role in the delivery of support service worldwide, they are grappling with significant changes in funding, accountability measures and technology. Entering into strategic partnerships has proven to be an effective strategy for responding to some of these changes. NFPs can open doors and can create new opportunities for community support service by expanding their partnership network to include the government and business sectors.

Using the literature on NFP partnerships, the next section defines, categorizes and breaks down the components needed to create a partnership framework. Advantages and disadvantages to partnering, and

motivations for partnering are organizationally unique; however, a careful analysis of the literature points to several common themes and criteria that are crucial for a successful partnership. Creating trust, and building on that trust relationship between each partner, helps develop a solid foundation on which a successful partnership can be built.

SECTION 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the report explores the literature on multi-sector partnerships between NFPs, business and/or government agencies, which are motivated by mounting social and environmental pressures on social sector actors. There is a vast amount of relevant information that can be used to define partnerships, identify motivators, compare advantages and disadvantages of partnering, and categorize types of partnerships. Several common themes and characteristics emerge from the literature. These themes included have a shared vision or goal, shared power, stakeholder engagement, open and honest communication and trust. In addition, formal policy and partnership guidelines help create structure that supports partnership efforts.

The fact that there are multiple ways of defining partnerships can lead to confusion among stakeholders and/or partnering organizations. Thus, the first purpose of this section is to operationalize the term “partnership.” The next task is to explore the purpose of a partnership—including possible motivators to partner. The final section will look at the advantages to partnering, risks and disadvantages of a partnership relationship and how character and competence, individually and as an organization, impacts the ability to successfully partner.

Despite the growing popularity of cross-sector partnerships between business, NFPs and government, there appear to be gaps in the literature particularly with regards to the impact and benefits of partnering (Serafin & Stibbe, 2008, p. 10). This is particularly true in the area of evaluations (Serafin & Stibbe, 2008, p. 8). This suggests that more research needs to be done on successful long-term voluntary partnerships.

In addition this section uses the literature to define different types of partnership relationships based on motivation/purpose, power-sharing and funding (Gill, 2003, p. 2). These categories include partnerships between government and NFPs, and business and NFPs. While each partnership is unique, partnerships require building and maintaining relationships regardless of who the stakeholders are.

3.1 Defining Partnerships

The term “partnership” is often used very generically across business, NFP and government sectors. For example, the City of Salmon Arm has financial or in kind arrangements that are called partnerships with the local museum, Trail Alliance and the Community Foundation (City of Salmon Arm, 2014). For each of these partnerships, the foundation of the relationship is typically a one way monetary transaction between the City of Salmon Arm and its partner (City of Salmon Arm, 2014; Shirley, personal knowledge, 2013). While this type of partnership may have a contractual agreement, the level of risk and decision-making authority is not the same for each partner. This creates an uneven balance between each stakeholder.

Formal partnerships often have processes, policies and governance structures that are written in a legalized contract or signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) that lays the foundation for partnership practice (Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) n. d[a], p. 6). Informal partnerships are less structured, relying on individual relationships between each party (MacAuson, 2006, p. 160). In most definitions, whether formal or informal, partnerships have a common vision that requires ongoing support, communication and evaluation.

The term partnership implies two or more organizations, working across organizational boundaries, which make a commitment to a shared sense of purpose and agenda (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 11; VCOSS, n. d. [a]., p. 1). The one key factor inherent in the term partnership is the concept of sharing. There are shared risks, benefits, goals, vision and leadership (VCOSS, n. d., [a]., p. 2). The common denominator in many definitions is the fact that partnerships are working relationships that share common objectives that help lay the foundation upon which to build a successful partnership (Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee (HSPIC), 2009, p. 12).

Caplan and Jones (2002), Huxham and Vangen (2005), and Wildridge *et al.* (2004) all agree that an ideal partnership is grounded in common goals, and has the potential to increase agency capacity and service delivery. Partnerships can be short-term or long-term, and be project specific, business-oriented, socially focused, and/or financially driven.

There are ongoing academic debates as to what constitutes a partnership, whether and how we can empirically assess the limitations and impacts of partnerships, and what conditions are conducive to success (Drost, 2012). Voluntary multi-stakeholder partnerships strive to achieve goals with the underlying assumption that pooling resources can generate results that could not be achieved on an individual basis (Drost, 2012, p. 2).

These definitions of partnership can be used in any setting whether business, agriculture, NFP or government; however, for the purpose of this report, the term partnership implies that there are two or more organizations, NFP, government and/or business, that make a commitment to voluntarily work together towards a mutual goal (Stern & Green as cited in Boydell, 2007; Wildridge *et al.*, 2004; VCOSS, n. d., [a]., p. 1).

Once an organization can define partnership, the next step is to evaluate what motivates a partnership as well as the advantages and disadvantages of partnering. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and is there equity and balance within the relationship? All these factors are important to consider prior to entering into a partnership agreement.

3.2 Reasons for Partnering

While there are many different reasons organizations move toward using a partnership model, there first needs to be a clear understanding, and common desire by each stakeholder to partner. There are a lot of time and resources required to make a partnership successful (Huxham & Vangen, 1996, 2004). This section attempts to answer the research question “Why Partner?”

Entering into a partnership with another organization or entity may be an attractive way for an organization to proactively address unexpected changes in political, social and economic environments (Huxham & Vangen, 2004; Wildridge *et al.*, 2004). For some NFPs, this may mean agency staff look to diversify funding and reduce reliance on government funding and grants (Pearson, 2013). As a result of unexpected economic pressures, a NFP may enter into a collaborative partnership role without properly assessing the suitability of the partner or clearly understanding the motivations to partner and assessing risks.

The literature often divides motivations to partner into three categories: the external environment, the organizational environment and individual partners’ incentives and disincentives (International Potato Council (IPC), 2009, p. 53). The external environment consists of the elements outside of an organization’s control such as social and economic prosperity, election outcomes and government funding procedures (IPC, 2009). The organizational environment encompasses staff, governance and internal

policies. Finally individual leader incentives to partner are often linked to some kind of financial reward or benefit (Parker, 2009).

Table 1– Possible incentives of motivation to enter into a partnership

Drivers for Partnership		Response Options
Government downsizing	—————→	Diversify funding
Increased Demand for service	—————→	Refocus on mission and ends
Accountability	—————→	Secure outcomes/impact
Competition	—————→	Build image and capacity
Sustainability	—————→	New markets for resources

(Parker, 2009).

Often drivers or motivators to partner stem from a desire to address social problems that are socially complex, cross-sectoral and require a collaborative response that creates solutions to the issue (Conklin, 2005; Wildridge *et al.*, 2004, p. 6). Rapid changes in economy start blurring of boundaries between government, the public sector, civil society organizations and the private sector, and decreased finance from government sources, can all motivate organizations to partner (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 7). While the motivation to partner may give an immediate solution that addresses the deficit or challenge, there are advantages and disadvantages that should be considered before moving forward.

3.2.1 Benefits to Partnering

Partnerships often bring people from diverse backgrounds and competing sectors to work on a common goal or issue (Conklin, 2005). There can be many advantages to partnering that engage and allow the group to think beyond traditional service delivery. There are measurable and non measurable benefits to a partnership.

Partnerships can be developed around different organizational concepts, most of which include: purpose and mission, power sharing, or funding criteria that focus on the advantages associated with partnering (Gill, 2003). Each partner brings a unique skills set to the table. This will often result in more efficient use of resources and the development of new service models that sustain the partnership, both of which are measurable (VCOSS, n. d.,[d]). The group has the ability to use this “collective intelligence” to expand group knowledge and expertise which can increase resourcefulness and creativity as the partnership develops but there must be a process that shares understanding and requires commitment (Conklin, 2005, p. 2). Partnerships can increase knowledge, experience and resource capacity that helps deliver support services.

It is difficult to identify some of the benefits of partnerships because they are often relationship-based and abstract (Boydell, 2007, p. 4). Often these abstract or “soft” advantages are difficult to communicate to boards, staff or outsiders—they are often linked to behavior or personal experience between groups or between individuals who are part of the group (Alexander & Winter, 2001, p. 165). Ongoing relationships between partners create an atmosphere that can support the growth of trust and mutual respect. Trust and respect within a partnership can enhance the partnership experience. Strengthening group solidarity and effectiveness to accomplish tasks, while difficult to measure, is an advantage (Huxham & Vangen, 2003; Wildridge *et al.*, 2004, p. 9). Benefits for each partnership are dependent on commitment, motivation and

goals. While partnering has many benefits, measureable or abstract, there are also challenges and pitfalls that will impact the partnership.

3.3 Challenges and Pitfalls

New and existing partnerships, whether it is a partnership between a NFP, government, business or cooperative, face many challenges and risks. Some are expected and others are not (Vernis et al., 2006). Kitzis as cited in ICP (2009) and Huxham & Vangen (2003) note that multi-organizational partnerships are extremely challenging, often consuming more time and money than originally thought. In addition to these challenges, each partner comes with their own unique ideas, governance structures and workplace practices that impact the creation and development of the partnership relationship (Coulson, 2005). Trust, leadership style, adequate resourcing and membership engagement are common themes throughout the literature when trying to anticipate the challenges that a partnership may face (VCOSS, n. d., [a]., p. 3). If these are not identified in advance, these differences can sabotage attempts to partner.

Undertaking a risk assessment prior to entering into a collaborative partnership can help manage issues as they arise throughout the lifecycle of the project (Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), 2011, p. 14). Partnerships can impact or change the financial, operational, reputational or environmental aspects of a partner in unexpected ways (CIDA, 2011; Xu & Morgan, 2012). Situations can change within or between organizations and this can increase the level of uncertainty felt by stakeholders. These changes, in turn, impact the relationship between each stakeholder and can impact the proposed goals and outcomes. While there are many factors that can affect an organization over the life time of the partnership, change in funding or change in leadership can impact an organization's ability to continue to commit to the original vision and mission of the partnership. Unexpected changes such as loss of funding, can damage ongoing development of a partnership (Evans & Grantham, 2011, p. 1). Partnerships need balance, consistency and constant (re)evaluation in order to adapt to change (Serafin & Stibbe, 2008). Additional complications may arise if the political environment creates pressures that partnering organizations cannot handle. The more formalized a partnership becomes, the more risk each player must accept (CIDA, 2011).

Internal factors such as the replacement of the Executive Director (ED), board change over, and/or staffing struggles can all create additional stressors that require time and energy. They can reduce the time and energy an organization has to put toward the creation, development or evaluation of a partnership. In addition, external factors that may inhibit the nurturing of the partnership relationship include: economic pressures, public pressure to change, and government competition (PI, 2006). In order to survive, partners may have to rethink partnership agreements. Kantor as cited in Coulson (2005, p. 156) lists several ways a partnership might fail:

- Shifts in strategy by one or more partner
- Absence of common framework
- Uneven levels of commitment
- Imbalances in power (e.g. over resources or over information)
- Imbalances in benefits
- Conflicting loyalties
- Under-management or poor leadership

The Partnering Initiative (PI) (2006) sorts the main challenges faced in a working partnership into four distinct categories. The categories include: personal/professional challenges, challenges within partner organizations, challenges within the partnership and finally external challenges (PI, 2006, p. 4).

Professional challenges refer to ineffective leadership at the onset of a partnership (PI, 2006, p. 4). Lack of skills and competencies to create and maintain a partnership structure can lead to difficulties and personnel burnout. Challenges within the partner organization include: a lack of understanding about partnering and partnership potential, leadership shortcomings, low level of buy in, competing organizational priorities and an inability to communicate the benefits of partnering (PI, 2006, p. 4). In addition to the above challenges, time constraints, hidden agendas, lack of/ or low commitment, conflicts between people, limited partnership skills, flawed decisions-making processes and a lack of structure can all impede partnership development (PI, 2006, p. 4).

No matter what the challenge is, change is constant and thus ongoing communication between partners is important for success (VCOSS, n.d., [a]). An ongoing engagement or commitment from stakeholders, grounded in a common vision and mission, can help maintain a partnership in the face of multiple changes to leadership (VCOSS, n. d.,[a]). NFPs must seek to balance the risks and benefits and embrace change. This can be done in part by building internal capacity to support a partnership model. For NFP to create capacity each must engage a leadership strategy that helps create a culture of acceptance that embraces new and innovative partnerships and ensures that the organization is stable enough to take on new partnership demands. Formal documents, policies and long-term contracts can help formalize the importance of the relationship. Without formalized agreements, the relationship can disintegrate very quickly and be lost forever (Miltnerberger, 2013; VCOSS, n.d., [a]).

Leadership competencies can help create an environment where collaboration is accepted and not feared. Ongoing communication, conflict resolution and relationship building create a formalized framework for partnering which, in turn, builds organizational capacity. Organizations that are seeking a partnership relationship with another organization must be in a position to effectively commit to a partnership project. While the following section defines the concept of organizational capacity, breaking down important components into six sections, capacity building requires the people and the organization to be involved (Vernis *et al.*, p. 12).

Table 2 – Comparison table of the advantages and disadvantages in a partnership

Benefits	Challenges & Risks
Diverse thinking leads to better outcomes	Financial risk
Shared workload and resources	Relational risk between all stakeholders
Build member capacity and bargaining power	Reputational risk within the community
Psychological support	Operational risks governance
Increase credibility within community	Perceived or real loss of power/control over organizational decisions
Share risks	Perceived or real loss of independence
Allow for innovative service delivery	Potential to fail
Reach larger target group	Personality conflict
Interdependence	Perceived or real loss of organizational identity
Leverage knowledge and resources	Mismatch in missions
Increase organizational capacity	Lack of resources or capacity
Improve accountability and transparency	Forced partnerships

With the growing emphasis on collaboration between agencies and sectors, this creates a need for all partners to develop capacity for working across organizational and sector boundaries. Both individual and organizational capacity is required (Boydell, 2007, p. 6).

3.4 BUILDING CAPACITY TO PARTNER

Organizational and individual capacity is an abstract term that encompasses a wide range of capabilities, knowledge and resources (Connolly & Lukas, n. d.). Capacity building requires direct engagement from people within and around the organization. Both individual and organizational capacity building are important concepts but each are often developed separately with more emphasis being on the organizational capacity rather than the individual capacity development. To create balance, capacity development needs to happen within the organization and within the individuals who are associated with the partnership (Vernis *et al*, 2006).

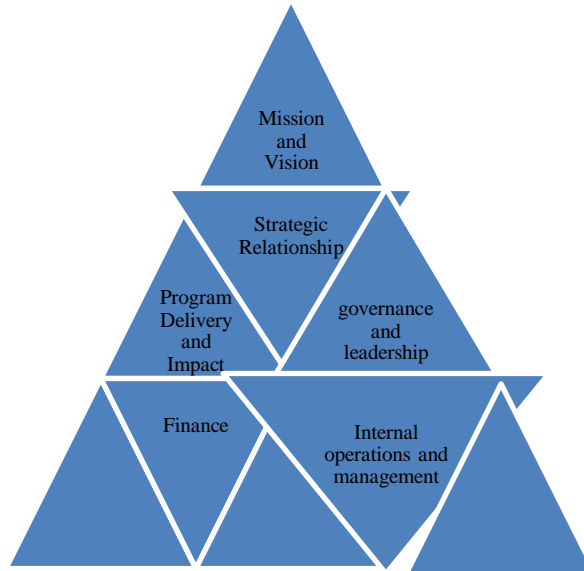
3.4.1 Organizational Capacity

Organizational capacity criteria can be broken into six components to help evaluate and assess an organization's ability to take on a partner. All six of these components are critical (Connolly & Lukas, n. d). Figure 3 summarizes the six organizational components that an organization can use to assess whether or not they have the finances, time and energy to effectively make the change (Connolly & Lukas, n. d). Since a NFP may be motivated to partner with the assumption that the partnership will help create or increase their capacity to offer better services having individual organizational capacity to partner may help strengthen collaborative relationships required to partner (Boydell, 2007, p. 3; Miltenberger, 2013; Vernis *et al*, 2006).

When the six organizational components are broken down into sections, each section is connected back to a clear mission, vision and strategy (Connolly & Lukas, n.d). These help create a common understanding of organizational purpose (Connolly & Lukas, n.d). Boards and leaders who are engaged and create governance policies, both internal and external, that are ethical and openly support the purpose and vision, strengthens the sustainability of the organization (Connolly & Lukas, n. d). Many NFP organizations are limited to grants and/or core funding to operate support services. Diversification of financial sources outside of government increases capacity (Connolly & Lukas, n. d). Most NFP organizations deliver service to the community at large, while some are specialized in areas such as poverty, housing or domestic violence, but how the program is viewed by external stakeholders impacts the ability for an organization to build capacity, especially if there is a negative view. To create community support each must require outcomes that are high quality, match mission, and are well regarded by community members to strengthen the foundation required to build capacity. An organization that is respected and active in the community creates important connections that help support mission, vision and strategic plan (Connolly & Lukas, n. d).

Figure 2 depicts a solid structure that is held together by the six capacity components necessary for a sustainable organization. Removing one of these components makes the structure unstable, unable to achieve mission and vision.

Figure 2: Organizational Capacity Pyramid



(Connelly & Lukas, n. d).

In different stages of organizational life, NFPs may be affected by many factors that inhibit or challenge their ability to create capacity. Loss of funding, changes in the political environment, and/or age or developmental stage of organization all can impact six criteria above that created the solid infrastructure that enables the organization to partner.

With the growing emphasis on collaboration and partnerships between NFP agencies, government and the business sectors, Boydell (2007) emphasizes the need for potential NFP partners to develop capacities that will help support a working-together mindset (p. 6). Individuals linked to a partnership must have unique skills and attributes that enable them to work in a culture conducive to a partnership environment (Sullivan & Skelcher as cited in Boydell, 2007, p. 6). These unique skills include the ability to build and maintain the trust and integrity required in a partnership relationship. Organizations, and their leaders, must be willing to be flexible and willing to move the partnership process forward; however, there are often internal conflicts that are unpredictable and unexpected that impact capacity.

3.5 Human Capacity

The human factor can complicate or sabotage a partnership, especially when individuals are resistant to change, mandated to partner or not willing to engage in ongoing partnership building activities (Stott, 2007). People often take change as a personal criticism of the way they have done things in the past (McArthur, 1993, p. 2018). People can create an environment that can be negative and be disruptive to the partnership process, becoming resistant out of fear or perceived loss of autonomy (Jaffee, 2008). Talking negatively inside and outside of the organization can hinder the development of a partnership. Staff needs and concerns must be taken into account as all too often top executives devote more time to screening potential partners in financial terms than managing the partnership in human terms, particularly during times of change (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010, p.3; Kanter, 1994, p. 96).

While a partnership framework can help solve the social and environmental concerns of a community or agency, some may think that it is being used merely to fill resource gaps. For example, a relationship between a NFP and business to help fund social programs may be seen by some as the government not taking responsibility for social funding (Stott, 2007, p. 3). Often the term partnership is associated with

images of one or more people shaking hands or bringing together pieces of a puzzle to make a complete picture. These images often make the assumption that each player is on the same page, has the same goals and that everyone is on board with the concepts/criteria associated with partnering; however, this is not always the case.

Change is often difficult and hard for people to embrace. Historically, changes within an organization or sector meant learning of new skills or modifying a simple system with an office or agency, however as more and more NFPs enter into partnerships, individuals within an organization are impacted at a deeper level, at times challenging their own belief or value systems (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010, p.3). Creating infrastructure within each agency that engages everyone in the partnership process, helps reduce resistance and increase success. Agencies that wish to partner must be willing to risk losing power and control over decisions and project outcomes, shifting from a “me to we” mindset (VCOSS, n. d.,[a]., p. 3).

Organizational cultures between NFPs, governments and businesses differ greatly as there are many different and often competing perspectives on any given problem (Vernis *et al.*, 2006, p.36). These differences can often jeopardize collaborations (Vernis *et al.*, 2006, p. 36). Each sector has a unique knowledge base, set of values, and language, which can complicate understandings of a partnership model (Vernis *et al.*, 2006, p. 36). A corporate culture has a different set of values and beliefs than a NFP culture. Each NFP has its own culture and values based on its area of expertise. With this in mind, it is important to “communicate and plan” throughout the partnership process to reduce misunderstanding (McArthur, 1993, p. 219).

3.6 Conclusion

Defining a partnership is often difficult and is dependent on the formal or informal relationships between stakeholders. Motivations to partner set the stage for partnership building. Motivations for partnering include: increasing organizational capacity, sharing limited resources and streamlining services. There are many advantages and disadvantages when entering into a partnership. Increasing capacity through a partnership venture requires all stakeholders—both internal and external—to embrace the partnership concept. The human factor can derail a partnership unless there is ongoing energy and communication that helps develop the relationship. Each partnership has unique motivators, purpose and processes; however, each partnership is relational relying on communication and commitment that helps build trust. The next section proposes best practices and guidelines to help partnerships succeed.

SECTION 4: PARTNERSHIP BEST PRACTICES

This section of the report considers some of the partnership indicators and best practices that can be used when preparing to partner. There are many best practice guidelines in the NFP, business and government sectors that have been successful and commonly used. This section reviews criteria and key elements that lay the foundation for a successful partnership. Key themes include: integrity, trust and leadership style. Each of these themes has then been broken down further to help the reader to prepare to partner. Communicating and engaging each stakeholder can create a synergy that promotes a higher level of human effort that can support the partnership process (Jaffee, 2008, p. 14). Conflicting culture and values within and between partnering organizations must be discussed prior to commencing relationship.

4.1 Criteria for Successful Partnerships

There are key criteria that lay the foundation upon which a successful partnership can be developed and maintained, however the most effective partnerships may be partnerships that have the right people matched with the right organization, often who have had previous partnership experiences, which commit to a common goal (CIP, 2009, p.71). Each stakeholder or partner must play a role in the success of the partnership by creating infrastructures that support growth, development and change throughout the life of the partnership. Typically this is done under the direction of a leader who has competencies that support the partnership model. This can be done through leader style, governance structure and clear communication policies. These criteria are very similar to the organizational capacity components in section 3.5, but with a focus on cross sector partnerships. Often the breakdown of a partnership is associated with power struggles between organizational leaders. In addition, relationships can become strained when a leader is less than truthful, eroding the trust needed to make the partnership work (Melendez as cited in Vernis *et al.*, 2006). A successful partnership requires formal structure that allows for the flexibility that adapts to change. In addition there are different elements that need to be considered dependent on the needs of the partnership (CIP, 2009). Each of these elements relate to success in multi-organizational partnerships (CIP, 2009, p. 49-50). Much of the literature reviewed, regardless of sector or partnership outcome, emphasizes there are key criteria for successful partnership often links back to capacity, competence and the individual character of the person assigned to lead the partnership process.

4.2 Leadership Strategy

Since partnerships are driven by people, the relationship between leaders must be strong—building on mutual respect and trust (Paetkau, 2008, p. 20). Hence there are unique leadership qualities and character traits that need to be in place in order to partner.

Organizations that are choosing to partner must carefully choose who will be representing the organization at the partnership table. Alexander, Comfort, Weiner and Bogie (2001) suggest that to have an effective partnership one must look at the style of the leader(s) within each organization. Doing the same things over and over without changing can limit the growth and development of the partnership (MacAusian, 2006, p. 160). Leaders who are tasked with creating and sustaining a partnership must be able to manage organizations, context, relationships and change (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003, p. 56). Effective leaders self analyze, self reflect, collaborate and react or change direction that supports the partnership process (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003, p. 63). Because a partnership involves stakeholders who have diverse perspectives, leadership style and conflicting motivations, leaders must be able embrace a

shared decision-making process as opposed to the traditional hierarchical process (Alexander *et al.*, 2001).

Chosen leaders and boards must be cautious that they are not entering into a partnership for the wrong reasons. Board and executive staff must ensure that the partnership is congruent with the values, beliefs, mission and goals of their organization (Miltenberger, 2013). Leaders who are making decisions about potential partnerships must assess the legitimacy and qualifications of collaborative partners (Miltenberger, 2013, p. 67).

Mintzberg and Gosling (2003) argue that effective leadership is about managing and building collaborative relationships. Using the “five managerial mind-sets” as a self-assessment tool, one can focus on the needs of a partnership from a holistic perspective (Mintzberg & Gosling, 2003, p. 56). This supports the view that effective partnerships are complex systems that require leaders to understand how each stakeholder works both independently and as a team in a partnership framework. A worldly mindset is about managing context, expanding, learning, growing and reflecting on experience from all aspects (Community Development (CD), 509, 2011). Sometimes a leader can get stuck in a mindset that limits his or her organization’s ability to successfully partner, thus stunting the opportunity for growth, change and adaptation (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2009a, p. 5; Dweck, 2006, p. 125).

Group dynamics and membership are important (HSPIC, 2009, p. 5). Partnerships are more likely to be successful if there is consistency at both the organizational and individual level. A leader who has the correct mindset to partner greatly influences the direction of the partnership, shifting views and engaging others in the excitement of a new innovative way of thinking (HSPIC, 2009, p. 5). This cannot be done without thinking about the current organizational culture and how to communicate and plan for an integrated approach to service delivery.

Historically, a partnership philosophy may not be ingrained in an organization’s culture or way of doing things. Successful partnerships are much more likely if leaders that are able to communicate the benefits and soft benefits of partnering to staff. Working across organizational boundaries is one of the most difficult activities that managers in any type of organization have to accomplish (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). Many collaborative arrangements that begin with the best intentions and goodwill nevertheless turn out to be frustrating affairs, and it is not uncommon for them to dwindle away into non-existence (Huxham & Vangen, 1996). When this happens, the benefits are lost and a great deal of resources and effort are wasted (Huxham & Vangen, 1996).

Leadership in a partnership requires dedication and commitment. Huxham & Vangen (2006) suggest that successful leaders require a balanced approach and must be able to be empathetic to the needs of the relationship while at the same time confident and skilled enough to give clear direction. This is a highly participatory and interactive approach that motivates, empowers and nurtures stakeholders whilst simultaneously paying attention to the specific details of the internal and external environment (Huxham & Vangen, 2006, p. 5).

According to Huxham and Vangen (2006), a collaborative advantage is the synergy that can be achieved by integrating the resources and expertise of one organization with that of others (p. 3). This advantage can be used to enhance a leadership plan by creating structure that is easily communicated between stakeholders. Building collaborative advantage requires leaders to be aware and sensitive to political, cultural, organizational and human needs. Relationships are a “key business asset, and knowing how to nurture them is an essential managerial skill” (Kantor, 1994, p. 108). Relationship development, particularly in a collaborative setting, is often difficult and can become more fragmented, or split, making it difficult to move forward with a working partnership project (Conklin, 2005). Trust is often an underlying component that is required to develop and nurture a partnership relationship.

4.3 Nurturing Relationships

Partnership identification, complex systems, risk, vulnerability and power imbalances can pose challenges for building and maintaining trust. Without ongoing communication, trust can be lost or never develop in the first place. A lack of trust can hinder the achievement of a collaborative advantage in a partnership (Vangen & Huxham, 2003, p. 22). Once trust has been established, it is extremely important that this level of trust be sustained given the fragility of the relationship (Vangen & Huxham, 2006). Vangen and Huxham (2003, 2006) for example, note that practitioners who wish to build and maintain a high degree of trust need to pay relentless attention to trust-building activities. Each partner has a responsibility to create a system that will help manage communication and potential power imbalances, and celebrate success (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Successful partnerships recognize that a mutual effort, in spite of conflicting views, is required when partnering (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). There may be varying levels of commitment, but each partner must prepare to nurture the collaborative relationship in ways that support continuous change (Vangen & Huxham, 2003, p. 22; Huxham & Vangen, 2006, p. 5).

Kantor (1994) defines the first stage as the courting and engagement stage. This stage is where a rapport is established between leaders. As the partnerships moves toward a formal collaboration, more concrete agreements are made and the life-long process of negotiation and day-to-day monotony sets in. Problems may surface as more and more people get involved. Some partners become less engaged as the day-to-day operations, like human resource management, overshadow the long-term vision of the project. Operational and cultural differences can emerge and create conflict. Kantor (1994) found that operational dissimilarities required time and a lot of communication between parties before they were resolved (p. 105). Throughout the partnership, structures, processes and skills need to be integrated at the organizational, cultural and interpersonal levels (Kantor, 1994, p. 106). While each of these stages or criteria is important, trust between all stakeholders in the partnership is needed.

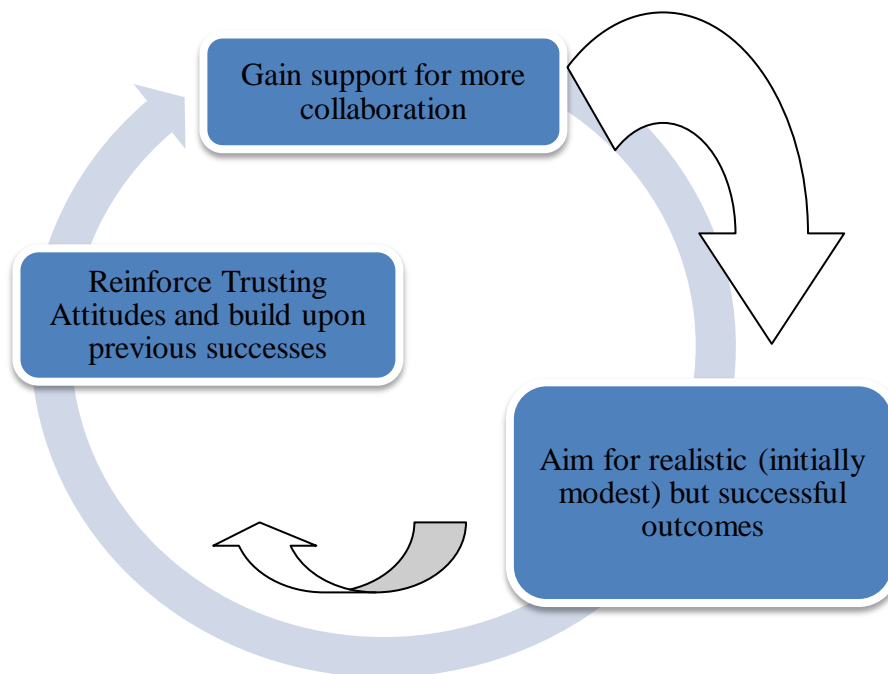
4.3.1 Trust

Trust is one of the critical components associated with the rise or fall of a partnership (Huxham & Vangen, 2003; Miltenberger, 2013; Wildridge *et al.*, 2004). The partnership literature emphasizes the importance of trust to a partnership (HSPIC, 2009; Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006; Vangen & Huxham, 2003; Vernis *et al.*, 2006). Trust in an organizational partnership is invisible and difficult to measure (Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006, p. 1). Researchers Huxham and Vangen (2003) believe that trust is developed after successful interactions, transparency, inclusiveness, compromise, and communication. Huxham and Vangen (2003) conclude that building trust requires stakeholders to invest time and carefully think about the purpose of the project, power differences and sharing success, and place checks on leaders who may wish to take over. Power struggles between individuals and organizations can contribute to mistrust and hamper the trust building process, thus it is vital for partnership success to have a conflict resolution strategy (Huxham & Vangen, 2003, p. 13). Trust, while abstract, can be expressed at an individual, organizational or system level described as the “social glue that can hold different kinds of organizational structures together” (Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006, p. 2; Atkinson & Butcher as cited in Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006, p. 2). While there are different definitions and models when researching the concept of trust, underlying themes that create a trust environment include personal and professional integrity, skills and competencies that get a job done, open and honest communication, and reliability (Bielefeld, 2012; Covey, n.d. ; Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006, p. 2). These characteristics are linked to the belief that the other people or organizations “will not through words, actions or decisions – act opportunistically” in the partnership setting (Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006, p. 2).

Huxham & Vangen’s (2003) trust building cycle depicts the process necessary for building trust (See Figure 4 below). Building trust among partners must be managed carefully, going through the cycle that

builds on successes. Successes help build partnership confidence. Confidence is often based on individual character traits and competence capabilities (Covey, n.d., paragraph 7). The development of trust and maintenance of a trust in a partnership can be done by looking at all the aspects of the collaborative process by engaging all stakeholders in a communication network (Huxham & Vangen, 2003, p. 24). Partners need to identify power imbalances, address conflicting views and communicate solutions throughout the project to reinforce trust (Huxham & Vangen, 2003, p. 24). Celebrating small achievements helps build a deeper level of trust and commitment to organizational goals (Huxham & Vangen, 2003, p. 24). If one organization agrees to do something and it gets accomplished, this increases the trust between each stakeholder. If an organization's actions are incongruent with what is being said then trust between each stakeholder can be compromised.

Figure 3 - The Cyclical Trust-Building Loop



(Vangen & Huxham, 2003).

Individuals and organizational integrity and motive to partner help build trust, as does the ability of an organization and its leaders to ensure that values and principles stated remain consistent with verbal expressions and actions of that organization (Bielefeld, 2012, p. 176-7). Saying one thing and doing another is subject to internal and external scrutiny of other stakeholders. These factors form the basis of nonprofit accountability and can be damaging to the partnership relationship (Bielefeld, 2012, p. 177). In addition to fostering trust, would-be partners need to ensure that a framework for guiding the partnership is in place. Many partnerships require a high degree of integration and formality that have written policy that is designed to meet the goals of the partnership (VCOSS, n.d.,[d]., p. 4). The next section looks at the formal structure that is needed in a multi sector partnership.

4.4 Creating Structure

A formal governance framework or model is required in a collaborative partnership. As the levels of risk and commitment increase, the partnership plan becomes more detailed often in written agreements, policies, work plans and partnership expectations (VCOSS, n. d., [a]). Each formal partnership document will have its own unique language, goals, and outcomes, depending on the actors and motivations involved. A business partnering with a NFP, for example, will look different than a NFP partnering with another NFP.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) can be the document that legitimizes a partnership (Gowdell, 2012; VCOSS, n. d., [a]). It clarifies roles, responsibilities, accountability, governance, membership and budget. All parties should sign this document. Most importantly, the MOU serves as a concrete document that links mission and purpose, and drives partnership success (VCOSS, n. d., [a]). This mission and purpose can be used to promote commitment and consistency as the partnership moves through the project lifecycle (Masters of Community Development (MACD) 512, Notes, 2011; VCOSS, n. d., [a]).

Within this governance structure, day-to-day operations can be formalized by terms of reference (TOR) documents that guide operational arrangements between partners (VCOSS, n. d., [a], p. 6). This document may include job descriptions, timelines, communication strategy, marketing strategy and priorities.

The need for a formal governance structure to oversee operations of any partnerships is critical for sustainability and continuity (Human Service Partnership Implementation Committee (HSPIC), 2009, p. 27). This structure defines roles and elaborates strategies to help resolve conflicts that may arise within or between organizations (HSPIC, 2009, p. 27). Ideally, a governance structure should establish: a common definition of partnership; TOR; a MOU; and a protocol for grievances and conflict. In addition, the governance structure must have shared vision; shared purpose and shared decision-making power to be effective (VCOSS, n.d., [a,b,c,d]). Understanding the governance structure and expectations associated with the collaborative partnership process can help organizations plan.

4.4.1 Partnership Framework

For an organization to be able to plan or strategize there first must be an understanding of what is required from each stakeholder. The Continuum of Joint Action/Joint Effort Framework© is a tool that is used to understand the different expectations that come in participatory group settings. The process of networking, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and partnership are each unique (VCOSS, n.d., [a], p. 2).

Organizations can use this framework to better understand the level of commitment required, relationship expectations and how to mitigate risk in collaborative partnerships. The continuum of joint effort is a framework that creates competencies and lists expectations that organizations can expect seeking multi sector partnerships. This framework helps users monitor the degree of intensity and commitment required when partnering. This links expected processes and tasks with the degree of commitment, risk and intensity. The closer one is to a strong partnership, the more formalized the process. The level of time commitment and risk increase as the collaborative effort moves up the scale. Using this continuum will help the client organization to define, within its own context, what characteristics exist in a partnership, and how these characteristics can be identified, evaluated and recreated from project to project.

Figure 5 breaks the framework into categories that allows the reader to identify the key characteristics of collaborative projects.

Continuum of Joint Effort						
Participatory Consultation						
Process for empowering participants through their involvement in the decision making process						
	Informal	Network	Cooperation	Coordination	Collaboration	Partnering
Degree of intensity and commitment						
			Low risk	More formal understanding	Durable relationship	Sustainable relationships
		No risk	Low investment	Longer term relationships	New structures/processes	Formal contracts
		Dialogue	Low commitment	Planning effort	Comprehensive Planning	Shared vision grounds organizations
	Info sharing				Commitment of effort	Interdependence
	Low commitment	Low commitment	No change required		Commitment of resources	Detailed business plan
					Pooled resources/shared	Clear roles and expectations
						Joint Planning
Relationships and trust increase with intensity and commitment						

The continuum of joint effort© identifies six different degrees of participatory consultation each with varying degrees of risk and commitment, with partnerships requiring the highest degree of risk and commitment from stakeholders (VCOSS, n.d., [a]., p. 2). The focus of this project is partnerships; however it is worth while to briefly explain how the continuum differentiates:

- 30

5. Collaboration: Collaboration is a long-term relationship between two or more organizations that wish to improve service outcomes. This type of effort has a shared vision and mission, with a high level of both commitment and risk for participants.
6. Partnering: Partnering is defined as a long-term relationship between two or more organizations who share a vision and purpose. This is the closest relationship short of a merger. Each organization is open and honest about all interactions. There is a formal framework. Throughout the partnership, each organization is open to learning from differences, addressing conflict and changing the partnership relationship as needed to achieve goals. Communication, negotiation, and strategic thinking are required to achieve a successful partnership. There are often new structures and systems that have formal agreements and MOUs put into place to guide and govern the partnership.

Once the collaborative process has been defined, in the case a partnership, implementation and assessment by leaders helps build the foundation required to successfully partner. Partnership success is dependent on the ability of each partner to balance partnership mission, goals and objectives. Character, competence and capacity, within the individual and the organization, must grow and develop relationships that can create solutions that achieve more than could be achieved working alone. Figure 6 shows criteria that are needed to partner with vision and commitment laying the foundation.

Figure 5 – Finding a Partnership Balance

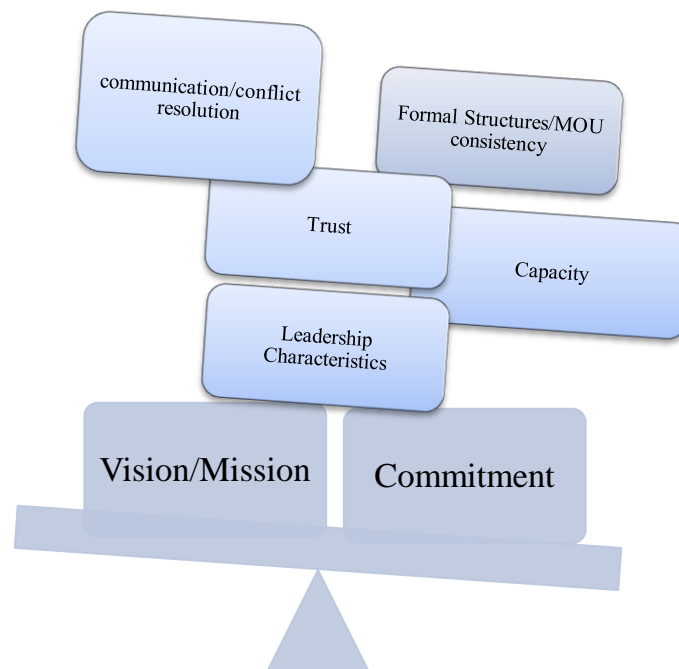


Table 3. Summary of the literature which identifies important elements that help create a successful partnership

1. Organizations that are partnering must seek leaders who are strong and committed, in both time and energy, to the partnership.
2. Organization must ensure that they have the capacity, time and resources , required to partner.
3. Organizations that are seeking or being asked to partner must ensure that they are selecting the right partners and that these partners can align with the individual organization's vision and mission.
4. Collectively the stakeholders involved in the partnership must create and adopt a common vision and mission that becomes the driving force behind the purpose of the partnership.
5. Together partners must immediately begin negotiating goals, objectives, performance indicators, and specify decision-making processes. Formalize all of the outcomes in policy.
6. Discuss and define the risks and benefits associated with partnering.
7. Create policy that helps deal with conflict.
8. Take time to build trust and develop relationships.
9. Create systems that communicate and share information among partners and stakeholders.
10. Involve stakeholders and all levels and continually recommit to the mission and vision of the partnership. This is particularly true if there has been a change in leadership, board or recent conflict.
11. Stakeholders in the partnership must define roles. Clear and open decision-making process with shared power and equity
12. Partners must create an environment where each organization is mutually accountable and open and honest (transparent) about all the information that is being presented at the partnership table.
13. Partners must celebrate and share successes, and recognize the good work of each stakeholder.

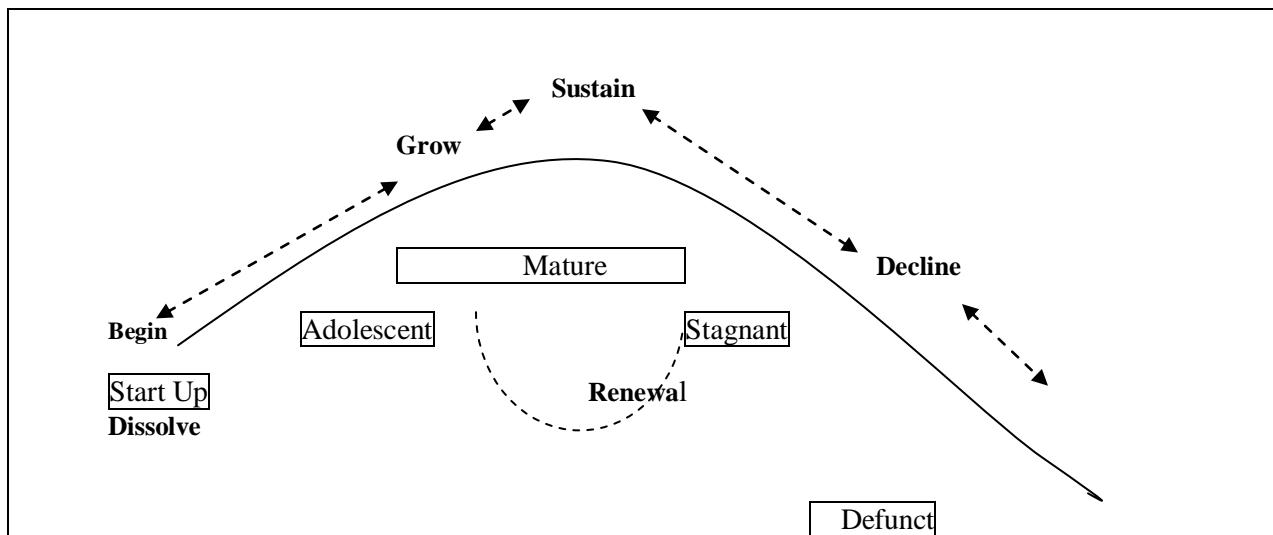
(Austin as cited in Vernis *et al.*, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2003;Drost, Wjik, Mandeto, 2012, p. 4;Vernis *et al.*, 2006, p. 34).

Formal partnerships are grounded by the mission, vision and commitment of the stakeholders balancing the needs and demands associated with the changing environment. Partnerships often come with a beginning, middle and end for a variety of reasons so can be tracked by using a project cycle. At the same time each independent stakeholder is growing and developing within their own context or organization which often complicates the development of the partnership. It is of value to understand that there is a not for profit life cycle that can impact partnership success and a partnership project lifecycle both of which are highlighted in the next section.

4.5 Not for Profit Lifecycle

Individual organizations are said to have a lifecycle similar to that of humans (Evans & Grantham, 2011; TCC, 2006). There is a start, middle and end, and each point has specific needs that require special attention (TCC, 2006). Understanding the NFP lifecycle process is critical when considering a multi-sector partnership. It is often difficult to recognize that stakeholders have their own lifecycle independent of the partnership. Imbalance between organization responsibilities can cause burnout and partnership fatigue that can negatively impact partnership development (VCOSS, 2009, p. 108). This burnout can negatively impact the growth and development of the organization. There are times when partnership challenges cannot be resolved and the relationship reaches the end of the project lifecycle (VCOSS, n.d.[d]., p. 20. Each organization involved in a partnership must strive for a suitable balance between partnership goals and organizational goals. If an organization is internally in a state of crisis, it may not be the best time for an external partnership because time, energy and commitment are essential for successful partnerships. Figure 7 depicts the lifecycle of a NFP organization. TCC (2006) suggests that mature organizations are often better positioned to become a partner than organizations in decline or just starting up (p. 3). This is because mature organizations typically have governance and human resource systems in place. An organization that is new or struggling is unlikely to have the capacity for the increased workload associated with partnering. In Figure 7 below, if an organization is on the decline, its motivation to partner may not be congruent with the motivations of a mature organization.

Figure 6 -The Nonprofit Organizational Life Cycle Model



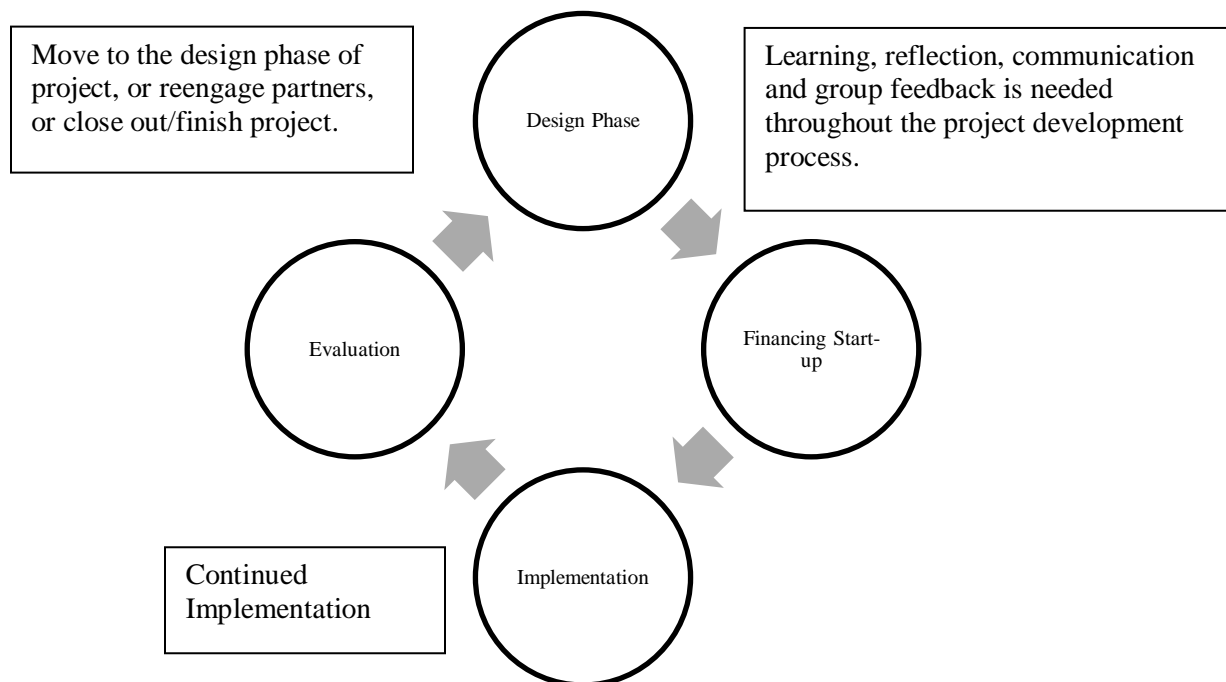
(TCC, 2006, p. 3).

Partnerships are built on the hopes and dreams of those involved. Kantor (1994) and other researchers suggest that an alliance/collaborative partnership goes through the same stages of development as a human romance or marriage (p. 102). Knowing where an individual organization is at in their own life cycle may help each partner understand if they have the capacity, energy and time to take on a partnership.

As a NFP lifecycle progresses, the partnership lifecycle must also move forward. The process can be quick or slow depending on the vision, mission, purpose and stakeholder makeup of the partnership. No

matter which format one chooses to use, it is recognized that it is important for partners to understand that these different stages are normal, and that these stages may include growing pains such as increased costs and partnership conflict.

Figure 7 – Partnership Project Lifecycle



(Masters in Community Development (MACD) 512, notes, June 27, 2011).

VCOSS (n. d.,[c]) uses a lifecycle model for organizational behavior to identify five common lifecycle stages (p. 2). This model can help explain identify the group process of development. Stage 1 is when a group first comes together. Members are often reserved and extremely polite. This stage is called forming. In stage 2, partners become more comfortable with each other, and often have more conflicts and differences as individuals vie for position or authority. This so-called “storming stage” can go on for a long time, so it is important for conflict resolution processes be in place to address this developmental stage. Stage 3, the “norming stage,” is where group members understand operational procedures, and a more productive partnership can occur. Stage 4 is the “performing stage,” a mature stage of the lifecycle where there is a balance of flexibility and control. This stage welcomes change, thus paving the way for innovation and growth. The fifth and final stage is the “adjourning stage” where members move on once the partnership has been completed. If the partnership is ongoing, then this is the stage when partnerships can and ought to be re-evaluated (VCOSS, n.d., [c], p. 3).

Figure 7 and 8 in the above section illustrates the belief that organizations, like humans, evolve over time and require care. Knowing where an organization is at will better prepare agencies looking to partner.

Once an organization has bought into the value and the mission, vision and parameters of partnership, depending on the complexity of group dynamics, a monitoring and evaluation process must be developed and used on an ongoing basis (VCOSS, n. d., [a:d]). Organizational Capacity, competence, and leadership character have been identified as key criteria however formal monitoring and evaluation of partnership in each of these areas is important.

4.6 Evaluating Partnerships

People often assume that collaboration will be more effective than working alone. This may not always be the case as the amount of time, energy and financial resources needed to meet partnership goals may outweigh the advantages to partnering (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Ongoing assessment and evaluation of partnerships is a must (Serafin & Stibbes, 2008). Research suggests that cross-sector partnerships often lack the finances and tools required to effectively implement evaluation for the duration of a partnership project (Serafin & Stibbes, 2008, p.9). Competing perspectives and differing motivations also make evaluation difficult (Serafin & Stibbes, 2008, p. 9). Additional challenges arise when differing opinions around success indicators slow the evaluation process and increase the time needed to achieve partnership mission and goals (Boydell, 2007, p. 3).

Measuring the effectiveness of a multi-sector partnership can be a challenge as each stakeholder comes to the table with their own strengths and weaknesses. Caplan and Jones (2002) have formulated a set of partnership indicators that can be used to measure expectations, limitations and considerations. They identify the following as key building blocks for success: partner respect; responsibility; responsiveness; and flexibility (p. 3). Each one of these factors can be used when evaluating a successful partnership.

Useful evaluation tools in a cross-sector partnership need to accommodate different partnership strategies (Serafin & Stibbe, 2008, p. 10). If done systematically, evaluation enables partners to understand the benefits of the partnership and increase buy-in (Serafin & Stibbe, 2008, p.10). Evaluating a partnership is not a onetime occurrence, but an ongoing systematic process throughout the lifecycle of the project (Serafin & Stibbe, 2008, p.10).

4.6.1 Sustaining and reviewing partnership practice

To sustain long-term partnership excitement and engagement, partners need to come up with strategies that will nurture relationships, recognize and reward members, celebrate success, combine planning with achievable action plans and create an environment where partners can learn from one another (VCOSS, n. d., [c], p. 1). Strategies may include:

1. Understanding project, organization and partnership.
2. Consistently communicating between each party to clarify roles, share responsibilities, and review expectation and goals.
3. Reporting all progress.
4. Allowing for learning to occur between each party.
5. Reflecting and sharing positive and negative experiences.
6. Monitoring success and addressing conflict.

There are times when the idea of partnership appears more advantageous than is actually the case. Once the partnership is put into practice, unforeseen difficulties such as funding cuts, staff changes or board changes can upset the foundations of a partnership.

VCOSS's Partnership Practice Guide (n. d.,[c]) suggests these steps:

- A re-evaluation and recommitment to vision and goals of the partnership.
- Careful revision of work and strategic plans based on the internal and external changes.
- Seek outside support.
- Review type of partnership using the Continuum of Joint Effort as a guide.
- Reorganize or make changes to current structures.

- Terminate or discontinue partnership.

Ask reflective questions to re-evaluate position, understandings and commitment.

1. Why did we decide to partner? Is this still valid?
2. Did we achieve what we set out to do?
3. What else has happened as a result of our working together? What have been the soft benefits?
What have been the impacts on our organization, clients and community?
4. Are the achievements worth the expenditure of time and money?
5. What have we learnt? Is this a learning environment?
6. What revisions need to be made to make the system more efficient?
7. Are we nurturing the relationships throughout the lifecycle?

Of all the criteria and conditions noted in this section, several conditions are common, and all can be linked back to the importance of communication between leadership. The next section highlights the fact that leadership style helps build trust in ongoing relationships. This is specifically evident when all stakeholders are flexible willing to commit time and energy to a common vision or mission.

SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

This section makes recommendations for the SAFE Society that helps its organizational leaders understand what organizational capacity, competencies and leadership character are needed when seeking or entering into new partnerships. In addition, it recommends that ongoing monitoring and evaluating of current partnerships may establish missing criteria that is needed to successfully partner. Partnerships are thought to increase organizational capacity to address social issues that negatively impact community health and wellness. Partnering comes with complexities of a multiple relationships that are shifting because of internal and external demands.

There are several recommendations, tools and best practice strategies that can be used to help partners better understand the partnering process. These can be implemented and adapted to existing partnerships and used when seeking or forming new partnerships with government agencies, NFPs or the business private sectors. The following recommendations are in no special order and all can be used at any time throughout the life cycle of the partnership.

Recommendation 1: Prior to entering into a new partnership the SAFE Society client organization should use the NFP lifecycle, referenced in section 4, to identify if the organization is in a stable enough position to take on a new partnership. The organizational lifecycle model can be adapted and used to help the client organization assess the suitability of would-be partners.

Recommendation 2: The client organization should review the Continuum of Joint Effort®, referenced in section 4, figure 4, Appendix 1, to understand the differences between an informal meeting, community collaborative and partnership. This will ensure a concise and clear understanding of the expectations and level of commitment required from stakeholders at each level of interaction.

In a partnership the commitment and additional stress the organization may experience throughout the life of the partnership may outweigh the perceived advantages. This must be taken into consideration from the beginning. Building a successful and sustainable relationship is based on trust, transparency and shared power. This is difficult to achieve particularly when one organization has more resources than another. This must be assessed and reviewed throughout the life cycle of the partnership.

Recommendation 3: Prior to partnering, the organization should ensure that the leader or appointee to the partnership project has the necessary expertise and knowledge to build a successful relationship with all stakeholders. The SAFE Society structure and governance model mandates that the Executive Director (ED) take on these responsibilities. Leadership skills required include the ability to embrace a shared leadership style that is flexible, open and honest while staying committed to the vision and mission of their own organization.

Recommendation 4: Conduct a group exercise with current board and staff to identify cultural norms associated with the concept of multi-sector partnerships. What does the staff have to gain and what does the staff have to lose in a multi-sector partnership?

This would include participating in a self-assessment and clearly understand how a partnership will impact an organization. Use this project to do a Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the partnership and ask questions like:

- Should we partner?
- What is the overall purpose of the partnership?
- Do we have the human and financial resources required?
- What is the time commitment?

- Are we being pressured into this because of government constraints? If not, what are other motivations to partner?
- Does/do partner(s) align with your organizational vision and mission?

Recommendation 5: Understand and fully investigate the potential partner organization(s). Ask the following questions:

- Does the leader and the agency partner(s) have a favorable partnership history and reputation (Global Environmental Management Initiative (GEMI), 2008, p. 10)?
- Does the leader(s) have the core competencies that support a collaborative partnership process? Does the partner have a other successful partnerships?
- In a multi-sector partnership, identify the stakeholders, and is this alliance of equal advantage to all parties? What are the motivator's to partner?
- Does the proposed partnering agency share similar values and mission as SAFE?
- Are potential partners in good standing with their funders including the BC Society Act, Tax Canada, Employment Standards, Human Rights, Better Business Bureau (BBB)?
- Where are potential partners located in the organizational lifecycle? Is it possible to identify if potential partners are in the adolescent phase, mature phase or stagnant phase (TCC Board Source, 2006)?

Recommendation 6: Follow the Partnership Practice Guide 1-3 (n. d), Appendix 1, which includes sections on preparing to partner, commencing partnership and sustaining partnership. This guide has templates that can be used to facilitate growth and development of partnerships.

Recommendation 7: The client organization, in conjunction with the Partnership Practice Guide (PPG 1-4) Appendix 1, should use the partnership life cycle, figure 8, to assess the growth and development of the partnership VCOSS, n.d.,[a;b;c;d]. It is recommended that these tools be used to assess current relationships with Shuswap Community Resources Cooperative (SCRC) and to include the following questions:

- Are the partnership stakeholders still committed to the original vision and mission of SCRC? If no what has changed?
- Is there organizational and leadership capacity within the SCRC partnership to improve processes? If so what processes need to be improved?
- Is the partnership celebrating successes and learning from its mistakes?
Does there continue to be the commitment from leaders to achieve partnership goals?

Recommendation 8: The client organization should share this report with the Shuswap Community Resource Cooperative (SCRC). This project report, or parts of this reports, can be used to understand, assess and evaluate the current partnership between the SAFE Society and the SCRC members. It can help members recommit to SCRC's original mission "working better by working together" and help assess and evaluate current status of the partnership relationship (SCRC, 2014).

Unfortunately, even if all the reported criteria or elements are present in a partnership, there is still no guarantee that the outcome or goals of the partnership will be achieved. There are times when a successful partnership process falls short and the partnership comes to an end. This is to be expected and used as a learning experience for all involved.

CONCLUSIONS

Most NFPs do some collaboration in the communities they serve. Many go further and engage in formal agreements which may include “joint programming, back office consolidation, or joint ventures” (Gowdy, second paragraph, 2012). Voluntary partnerships between multi-sector organizations are complex and challenging. Strategic planning involves careful thought and consideration of internal and external factors that can impact a partnership relationship. With the provincial and federal freeze on spending in the social sector, agencies are seeking alternative ways to raise funds to continue service. Competition for limited donation dollars adds to the stress and challenges NFP face. Entering into partnerships to address these complex concerns is one way the NFP sector can continue to offer service. The relationship between partners is crucial in order to achieve Huxham’s (2006) collaborative advantage. Short-term and long-term partnerships provide low return on investment because of the considerable time and human resources required. Partners that seek immediate financial saving may be disappointed as there are often hidden costs incurred in the first few stages of development (Evans & Grantham, 2011). In reality, most collaborations are a painfully slow process for many organizations and some have been known to die without achieving goals (Huxham & Vangen, 2006, p. 3). Issues that impede success include: shifting goals, different culture, lack of communication, power struggles and lack of trust (Huxham & Vangen, 2006). All these aspects need to be managed in order for partnerships to succeed. Consult the project and organizational lifecycles to see where you are and what you can expect.

Even the strongest foundations, under certain circumstances, crack and shift. All relationships erode over time without proper care and maintenance. The literature alludes to this when referencing the concepts of trust, the importance of communication and the importance that leadership style has on the creation and maintenance of a partnership relationship. These are some of the key components for creating a strong partnership foundation. In order to sustain a successful partnership, organizations must continue to be innovative and willing to explore opportunities outside of the NFP sector. It is recommended that the SAFE Society continue to strategize and plan for the future by seeking out new partnerships, but with the understanding that partnerships can be risky. Leadership style, communication and relationships between partners are integral components of a strong, progressive partnership. Each agency must have the ability to learn, adapt and evolve as variables shift.

While there is no perfect formula for achieving a successful partnership there are several common themes, and criteria that help lay the foundation for a working partnership. Expect the unexpected, however plan for as much of the unexpected as possible. Like a marriage, partnerships between NFPs, government and business need constant nurturing.

Linking it all together takes time, energy and drive from all those who are associated with the partnership. Consistency, capacity, competency, commitment, and communication are the five ‘C’s that weave together the suggested best practice strategies that will help assess, identify and evaluate community partnerships. Strong community partnerships are needed to create commitment that helps combat current social issues such as poverty, violence and homelessness.

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Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 1: Preparing to Partner

Guide 1 Preparing to Partner

Content

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- Assessing the Need for Partnerships
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Introduction

Welcome to the first Partnership Practice Guide of a series of three guides on partnering¹ designed to provide information, tools and resources to staff in the health, housing and community services sector and government departments.

The three guides are complementary to other guides and manuals available in the sector and can be read in conjunction with a) the Memorandum of Understanding 2009–12 between the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Health, Housing and Community Sector, and b) the Collaboration and Consultation Protocol.

Who are the Practice Guides for?

The guide has been designed for any staff person or member of the partnership who has an interest in partnerships or partnering activity and is wanting an easy guide to commencing or sustaining a partnering arrangement.

1 The project was an initiative of the Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee (HSPIC) which has representatives from both sector organisations, including the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) and DHS.

The Next Guide

Guide 1: Preparing to Partner provides a description of the critical factors to consider in the preparation for partnering.

Definition of Partnership

The term Partnerships is described as two or more organisations that ...'make a commitment to work together on something that concerns both, to develop a shared sense of purpose and agenda, and to generate joint action towards agreed targets'².

In addition the commitment could include a formal agreement, for example, a memorandum of understanding, terms of reference, or partnership agreement. Finally within the health, housing and community sector, the partnership would have an ongoing service delivery focus.

It implies the sharing of decision-making, risks, power, benefits and burdens. A partnership should add value to each partner's respective services, products or situations.³ Implicit in the idea of partnership

2 Stern R & Green J (2005) 'Boundary workers and the management of frustration: a case study of two Healthy City partnerships' in Health Promotion International, 20(3): 269–276

3 Frank and Smith, 1997; Collaboration Roundtable, 2001.

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are expectations of a degree of interdependence between the organisations involved and of a time limited or long term relationship.

Why Partner?

Working in partnership across government departments and organisations and community to achieve integrated services will contribute to improving outcomes of people experiencing disadvantage.

Partnerships are a key mechanism to achieve a more coordinated service, to address service gaps and to pool resources to meet the needs of those accessing services.

Many funding bodies now specify the forming of partnerships as a condition of funding for the above reasons. Examples include Child FIRST, Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) and Front Door.

Types of Partnerships

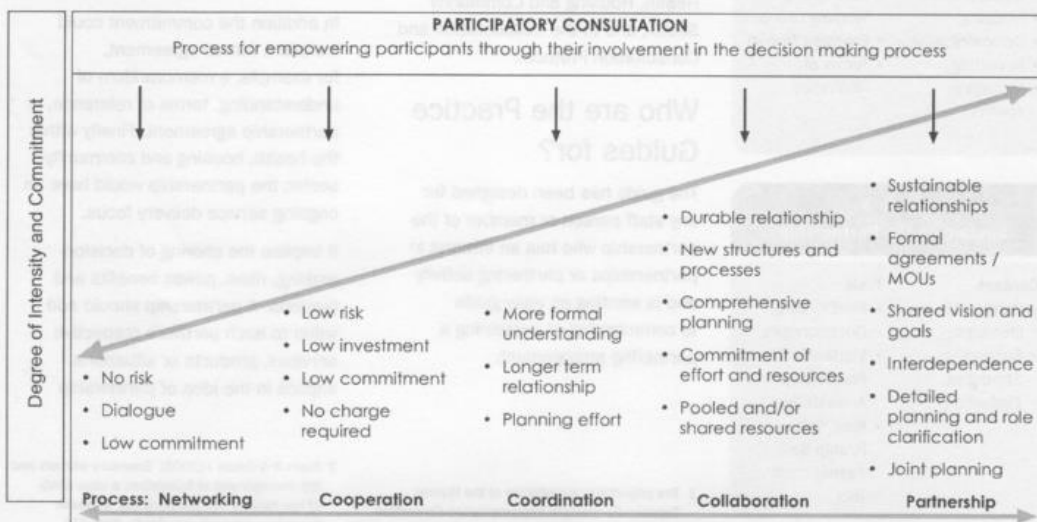
There are different forms of working together between organisations which can be represented along a continuum.

The Continuum of Joint Effort⁴ model helps to clarify the type of partnership between organisations depending on the outcomes desired.

From networking, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and finally partnership. Underpinning each of these commitments is the need for strong and effective participatory consultation with all stakeholders.

Partnership arrangements come in many forms and must be adapted to the needs and characteristics of each individual initiative and the partners involved. Different objectives will necessitate different partnership approaches. The key factor inherent in the term 'partnership' is the concept of sharing.

Continuum of Joint Effort



@ Success Works 2002

⁴ Developed by Success Works, 2002 and included in *Putting Partnerships into Practice Final Report*. Report prepared for the Department of Human Services 2004.

Benefits of Partnering

The following benefits of working in partnership with other organisations include:

- partnerships can allow for diverse thinking and values to lead to better outcomes
- partnerships provide opportunity to share a workload and resources
- partnerships build capacity of their members
- partnerships can create the environment for taking risks in developing new service models
- partnerships create the motivation for people to pull together, which in turn drives and sustains the partnership

Challenges of Partnering

The following challenges have been identified in working in partnership with other organisations:

Partnership for what?

The reasons for establishing the partnership must be clearly articulated, understood and accepted by members.

Realistic expectations and an accurate appreciation of capacities, including authorities, skills and resources of the other partner's environment is also crucial.

Trusting the other

Considerable work may be required to overcome some initial suspicions about the partnership and its purpose.

Leadership

At both an individual and organisational level, leadership is a key attribute and is required from all members of the partnership – from chair, from partners on behalf of their organisations or the group they represent, and from partners who are required to lead on particular issues⁵. To promote a sense of ownership, staff at the operational level also need to lead.

Membership of partnership

Consistency of membership from an organisational and individual level is important to maintain the connection and momentum between and across partnership members. The level of skill, knowledge and experience of members is equally important as is the role of the Chair in helping to drive the agenda.

Authority of partnership

The partnership must be able to make decisions; it must have authority; breadth of power and responsibility. The partnership must have the apparent and executive authority to ensure that partnership aims are realistic and adopted globally and within individual organisations.

Adequate resourcing of partnership

Adequate resourcing of the partnership activities is important such as administrative support (i.e. agendas, minutes and overall coordination, joint actions, initiatives, planning and evaluation). Resourcing issues should be considered from the establishment of the partnership.

Doing the Groundwork

It takes time to develop successful partnerships. Developing a trusting relationship where all partners feel that there is mutual benefit from the partnership is essential for success. This cannot be achieved in one or two meetings or where there has been a history of tension with another partner or organisation.

It requires an environment of trust, mutual respect and consensus building. Partnering moves from:

From ⁶	To
Control	Influence
'my' & 'your'	Our business
independence	interdependence
Myth of hero leaders	Shared leadership
Superficial solutions	Culture change
Changing one service	Aligning many
Focus on task	Process/attitude

⁵ Boydell, L 2001 *Partnership Framework: a model for partnerships for health*. Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Dublin

⁶ Developed by Tony Morrison *Understanding & Leading Inter-agency Partnerships Seminar* 29 Jan 2009 sponsored by Berry Street Victoria

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 1: Preparing to Partner

Below is a step by step approach to commencing the partnership:

a) Preparation within an Organisation

This is a critical first step which identified a person(s) in the organisation who will manage the partnership. The person's skill and authority (to make decisions) is of prime importance in addition to holding an understanding of governing structures and support mechanisms including role clarity.

Key partnership skills include communication, judgement, discretion, openness, integrity, loyalty, leadership, negotiation and an understanding of different partnership roles.

This step should identify how much time the person can commit (weekly, fortnightly, monthly) to the partnership. It also involves the identification of resources available (financial and non-financial) to commit to the partnership.

b) Conducting an Exploratory Meeting

Preliminary discussions should be held with potential partners including funding body(ies) to discuss relevant issues prior to making a decision that a partnership is desirable. It is important to ensure that each organisation is ready, willing and able to partner. Time spent up front in establishing a firm foundation will pay off in the long run by greatly increasing the probability of success.

The kind of support required from each organisation and the action to be taken to gain and maintain the support required should be identified up front. The benefits to each organisation of supporting the partnership should also be considered. Organisations will be more supportive if there are clear benefits to them.

At this initial meeting, the agenda might include the following items:

- Understanding each others organisation and its possible contribution to the partnership
- Possible governance structures that might suit the partnership (or is it specified in the funding agreement?)

- Resourcing – what contribution is possible (and funded?) from each organisation?
- Membership – who are the best people from which organisation for this partnership and who is best to chair?
- What protocols and communication processes will we need to make this work (Memorandum of Understanding or Partnership Agreement)?

c) Assessing the Need for Partnerships⁷

provides four key questions to consider, understand and address about partnerships and partnership building in order to make the best choices about developing these alliances:

1. Should we partner?

Partnerships should be strategic alliances, with risks and rewards weighed. Partnering is one strategic option for getting something done.

Decision Issues

Can we do it ourselves, or do we need to develop this capacity? How much control do we need over the process and output? What would partnering enable us to accomplish over and above the alternatives?

Learnings

Many partnerships are hastily entered.

Partnering often sacrifices control for the sake of unique gains.

2. What overall purposes would this partnership serve?

Partnerships may produce something special or produce it more effectively through joint work. They also often provide the legitimacy or political support that complex problems require.

Decision Issues

Who are the key stakeholders, and what are their expectations? Who has the credibility and capacity needed to act on this issue or problem?

Are we ready to hitch our *reputation* to theirs? Do we *trust* their motives as well as their competence?

How will *other* stakeholders respond?

Learnings

Taking a "multilateral" approach is often crucial for complex problems. An ineffective partnership, however, may make it harder for the individual players to "deliver the goods" that stakeholders expect.

3. How should we define success?

Too many efforts forget to evaluate the multiple dimensions of performance in partnership work. Partnerships often face great expectations and confusing demands.

Decision Issues

What *outcome* (change in the "state of affairs") do we want to create together? What measurable *outputs* (of our work) will those outcomes require? What kinds of *knowledge* and what *operational processes* will help us produce the outputs?

Learnings

Not all successful relationship building leads to improved joint output, which requires learning, risk taking, and new behaviour. Partners may also ignore the external factors that affect outcomes, creating a relational success and an outcome failure.

4. How partnered should we be?

Partnership arrangements can operate at various levels of depth or "integration" in terms of the partners' activities and resources.

Decision Issues

Based on our capacity and aims, do we envision "light" cooperation arrangements or deeper, blended activities and pooled resources? Or something in between?

Learnings

Partnerships struggle when participants have different, and often unexpressed, assumptions about the right degree of partnership.

⁷ Adapted with permission from DHS Draft Building Rural Health Partnerships: Toolkit for Success P13

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 1: Preparing to Partner

d) Structuring the Partnership

The most appropriate type of partnership structure will vary according to the nature of the partnership, pre-existing coordination arrangements and prior history of working together and other context and operating factors.

The structure needs to suit the purpose they are to achieve. Simplicity is the most powerful criterion. Partnerships require a structure through which the participating organisations are able to communicate and negotiate agreements. This might include working groups to work on particular issues.

Partnerships work best when supported by clear structures and formal written agreements developed collaboratively, that clearly set out partnership purpose, common goals, joint objectives, roles and responsibilities, performance expectations, review mechanisms and an exit strategy.

It requires a clear governance structure that states how the partnership is controlled, and the systems and practices in place to manage this partnership. Members benefit from agreements on how they will communicate, protocols to guide their work, and a means for dispute resolution when things go wrong.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

An MoU describes the goals, governance structures and management arrangements of a partnership. It is not a legal document and is distinct from a funding and service agreement.

An MoU might include:

- Context and Rationale
 - Mission or Purpose Statement
- Values & Principles
- Governance structure and authority
- Goals and Objectives of the Partnership – what is to be achieved in terms of the relationship
- Partnership Coordination
 - Membership
 - Structure
 - Roles and responsibilities of all partnering members, including Chair
 - Meeting schedule
- Signatures to the MoU

An MoU might also include protocols for working arrangements such as:

- Communication, information sharing and consultation processes
 - Meeting – purposes, agenda, minutes and processes
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - Resourcing meetings
 - File management
 - Accountability mechanisms – performance monitoring and reporting to the Partnership
- Complaints handling

- Problem or dispute resolution processes
- External stakeholder or network engagement across geographic areas
- Budget or resources management and allocation
- Partnership performance – monitoring, review and evaluating the partnership

Terms of Reference (ToR)

The ToR document describes operational working arrangements for the partnership. These are generally drafted prior to the first meeting and agreed for discussion and/or ratified at the meeting. These might include:

- Purpose
- Membership
- Partnership coordination and management arrangements
- Service operations – planning; day to day operations – who does what; when and how; communication and information sharing
- External stakeholder or network engagement – will the membership expand, who needs to be at the table?
- Meeting schedule
- Dispute resolution processes
- Administration and other systems support
- Review and Evaluation

d) Partnership Review

Consider how the partnership will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated. What should be in place at the beginning to ensure data and information is recorded for measuring success?

This will be discussed in more detail in Guide 3 Sustaining the Partnership.

Case Study

A State Government department is funding a number of organisations in a geographical area to work together to deliver an integrated service response.

The department wants to build a comprehensive and integrated service platform by streamlining a program so that recipients of the service receive a more accessible and targeted service. This includes a common referral process and pathway through the various service options.

The department has invited five organisations to be involved, two of whom have a history of tension with the other. Three of the organisations have met at networking sessions but have never worked together in any integrated way.

The first meeting has been arranged by the department as an exploratory get to know meeting and to more fully understand the government's intent and how the organisations might contribute. Resourcing is agreed also.

The first meeting will need to clarify a number of issues, for example, the nature of the departmental led partnership, who is at the table and what is their organisations culture, history and values; what role will each organisation play; how will members communicate between each other and back to their organisation; how to resolve issues and disputes, and finally resourcing.

The discussion around the above issues will assist members to understand how the partnership might work. In addition, tabling the four strategic questions previously discussed will help members build the partnership.

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 1: Preparing to Partner

Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership

This guide provides suggestions and tools in the early stages of the partnership. It covers systems, communication and workflow processes as a vehicle for control between members in the partnership to promote consistency and continuing commitment.

Further Resources

Boydell, L 2001, 'Partnership Framework: a model for partnerships for health'. *Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Dublin*

Boydell, L 2007, 'Partnerships: A Literature Review, *Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Dublin Ireland* ISBN 978-0-9555912-3-5

Carson, E. & Kerr, L 2006, 'Evaluating government/third sector partnerships in Australia', *Governments and Communities in Partnership: From Theory to Practice*, Conference hosted by Centre for Public Policy, University Of Melbourne Australia. September 2006.

Pope, J & Jolly, P 2008, *Working in Partnership: Practical advice for running effective partnerships*, Department of Planning and Community Development. Melbourne, Australia.

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The following acronyms are used in this Guide

CSO	Community Services Organisation
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TOU	Terms of Reference
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Links

Partnership Forums and HSPIC

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/operations/regional-operations-performance/partnership-unit/partnership-forums-and-hspic>

VCOSS

<http://www.vcooss.org.au/>

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership

Guide 1 Preparing to Partner

Content

- Definition
- Principles
- Types
- Benefits
- Challenges
- Exploratory meeting

Tools

- Assessing the Need for Partnerships
- Continuum of Joint Effort

Guide 2 Commencing the Partnership

Content

- Questionnaire
- Mapping
- Communication
- Reporting
- Managing conflict

Tools

- Partnership Working Group
- Progress Report
- Terms of Reference

Guide 3 Sustaining the Partnership

Content

- Partnership lifecycles
- Support Strategies
- Evaluation

Tools

- Brief P/ship Questionnaire
- VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool
- New York P/ship Self-Assessment Tool

Introduction

Welcome to the second Partnership Practice Guide of a series of three guides on partnering¹ designed to provide information, tools and resources to staff in the health, housing and community services sector and government departments.

The three guides are complementary to other guides and manuals available in the sector and can be read in conjunction with a) the Memorandum of Understanding 2009–12 between the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Health, Housing and Community Sector, and b) the Collaboration and Consultation Protocol.

Who are the Practice Guides for?

The guide has been designed for any staff person or member of the partnership who has an interest in partnerships or partnering activity and is wanting an easy guide to commencing or sustaining a partnering arrangement.

The Next Guide

Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership provides suggestions and tools in the early stages of the partnership, including setting up systems and workflow processes.

Preparing to Partner

In Guide 1 – Preparing to Partner, an exploratory meeting is suggested between potential partners and the funding body representative to confirm joint activity, membership and structure of the partnership.

This involves setting shared direction and the potential tasks, roles, responsibilities, actions required, and to develop inter-organisational links.

Workplans are developed and desired results and indicators specified.

Decision making procedures can be developed and reviewed to allow for meaningful flexibility and refinement. In essence, how it will work together. Below is a partnership Questionnaire that will guide this discussion.

¹ The project was an initiative of the Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee (HSPIC) which has representatives from both sector organisations, including the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) and DHS.

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership

Partnership Questionnaire

The purpose of the Partnership Questionnaire² is to guide questions for the newly formed partnership in which to specify and plan key activities over the next 12 months. It is also designed to ensure that a process for monitoring and reviewing progress against timelines and tasks is considered.

Below is a checklist of questions to guide the discussions.

- Q 1 – Are all members signed up?
- Q 2 – Are Governance and shared management arrangements clear?
- Q 3 – Are the Executive and practitioner (operational level) managers linked in?
- Q 4 – Is there common values and common language?
- Q 5 – How clear are the policies and roles and accountabilities?
- Q 6 – Do the members have 'authority' to make decisions?
- Q 7 – How are decisions made?
- Q 8 – Are there processes for members to report back in their organisation?
- Q 9 – How good are communications between the partner agencies?
- Q 10 – Does the partnership access training?

² Adapted from Morrison, T 'Towards Integration Checklist' from workshop reading material titled 'Understanding & Leading Inter-agency Partnerships' 290109 The Centre Ivanhoe Victoria

Effective leadership or governance is a key success factor in developing a shared vision or purpose for collective action, establishing direction and promoting collaboration and consensus building principles.

Mapping the Partnerships

One of the challenges often presented to newly formed partnerships is the breadth and span of its influence and the extent of its representation. Mapping will assist in clarifying the organisations involved, their authority, key alliances and other interested organisations or individuals.

Mapping will help:

- Identify organisations and other key stakeholders and any strategic alliances that need to be involved
- Identify current service system or pathways through this partnership using the end user (client) perspective
- Analyse the key relationships and how they currently operate
- Assess current and potential value of each opportunity and relationship

How to map the partnership

It is helpful to draw a partnership map showing the key organisations/ services involved strategic alliances to other service providers and funding bodies, and other stakeholders.

Map out the current service system or pathway through the program of which the partnership is representing.

Analyse the key relationships and how they work currently.

Commencing the Workflow

The physical location, access to equipment and resources will influence the effectiveness of the partnership. Similarly who and how the work will be undertaken. To a degree this will have been discussed prior to the commencement of the partnership but the actual schedule of meetings, who is present, work tasks and allocation requires further discussion and confirmation.

Defining roles

One of the key components of a partnering arrangement is a clear identification, discussion and clarification of:

- Roles
- Responsibilities
- Working arrangements or protocols – defining consistent approaches to who does what and how

Below is a template example for recording this.

Roles	Responsibilities	Working Arrangements (Who does what and how?)

Development of a strategic plan and workplan

The partnership may already have key goals identified (specified through the funding arrangement, for example data collection for service usage across a cohort or catchment) over a one, two or three year period. The development of an annual workplan can then specify the detail and contextualize the goals for local delivery.

The doing and the setting of tasks

Having established a workable governance structure, it should be clear how the work will be generated and who will undertake it, and finally how it will be reported.

The relationship between the governing body and any operational group(s) should be documented and known to the members of the partnership.

Structures that work best generally have a strategic arm, an operational arm (and in some situations, working groups). The latter are usually temporary, formed specifically to manage and be responsible for a particular task or activity or program.

In determining if the partnership would benefit from a working group, a number of questions can be asked.

Partnership Working Group

A Checklist to determine the need for and role of a Working Group is listed below:

Task	4
Purpose and intended outcomes of group	
Powers of group (advisory or decision making)	
Membership	
Responsibilities and commitments of members	
Role of chair	
Process for recording views and making recommendations (for advisory groups)	
Process for making and endorsing decisions (for decision making groups)	
Frequency and duration of meetings	
Responsibility for executive support	
Confidentiality of meetings and documents	
Process for review of terms of reference and dispute resolution	

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership

General questions to consider for working groups:

1. How many members are required and what type of skills do they need to have?
2. Will the member be expected to represent their organisation or community?
3. Which population groups should be represented?
4. What will be their time commitment? (How many hours per month for how long?)
5. How will member travel arrangements and expenses be handled?
6. Where, when, and how often will they meet?
7. Will the meetings be open or closed?
8. What rules of order will be followed?
9. What will the role of members be?
10. How will the group sustain itself?
11. How will the effectiveness of the groups be evaluated?

Terms of Reference

Those directly responsible for delivering the outputs/outcomes on behalf of the partnership will rely on the governing body for guidance and support to achieve these.

It may be appropriate to develop Terms of Reference to describe the purpose and structure of the working group.

Name of (Working Group)

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose:

The (name of Partnership Steering Group/Committee) will work towards (overarching statement about intent)

The (name of Partnership Steering Group/Committee) sets out to achieve (what outcomes)

2. Objectives:

List 2 or 3 objectives – The (name of Steering Group/Committee) will provide (advice, guidance...)

3. Membership:

The (name of Steering Group/Committee) comprises (name who) nominated by the (name who).

Name who will take minutes and/or coordinate meetings

The role of Chair is (name person and title).

All recommendations passed by (name of Steering Group/Committee) are to be signed off by (name body).

Location of each meeting will be determined (how and where?)

4. (Name of Steering Group/Committee) Procedures:

Process

Members will commit themselves to functioning in an environment that creates and extends opportunities for:

(Identify 2 or 3 adjectives to describe how you want the committee to operate)

This culture will evolve to the extent those members:

- contributions are given and received in trust
- speak openly on behalf of constituents, without fear or favour
- act as information conduits between (who and who)

The (name of Steering Group/Committee) will seek to:

- Support, engage, canvass and represent (which constituents)
- Disseminate information to (who) in an efficient and timely manner
- Ensure two way consultation and communication between (who and who).

Minutes and Agendas

Minutes will be taken and distributed by (name individual or group). Agendas will be compiled in consultation with (who and who) in consultation with the Chair.

Agendas and minutes will be distributed within one week prior to the meeting. Minutes will be distributed within one week of the meeting.

Absences

If a member is absent for three consecutive meetings without notice or justifiable reason, the committee will review their membership.

Sub committees

The (name of Steering Group/Committee) may establish ad hoc sub committees as required. Its membership may be extended (under what conditions?).

The (name of Steering Group/Committee) when establishing sub committees will:

- determine membership
- establish aims
- clearly define a process for decision making

Meetings

The (name of Steering Group/Committee) will meet (how often – monthly; bi monthly) for (two hours or more, specify) at a regular time. Subgroup meetings will occur outside of these times. The scheduled meeting times are (list dates, times and venue).

Resources

List other resources

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership

Case Study

A partnership involving 6 agencies has been operating for 3 months. It has a governance structure in which all 6 agencies have one representative at the executive level which sets the strategic direction, and then a member each at the operational group. This latter group is responsible for the implementation of key activities.

A member from the operational group attends the executive group and discusses progress and issues at the implementation stage to the executive and back to the operations group.

The executive meetings are scheduled monthly and each executive member has one vote and decisions are made through consensus. These processes are documented in the Communication Plan.

The executive group endorse courses of action, recommends action or seeks more information from the operations group member attending.

The Communication Plan identifies how the partnerships will communicate progress and receive input from the sector.

The governance structure works well for all partnership members and through this structure are able to deliver key outcomes. A good relationship is enjoyed by all.

Communication

Communication is vital to the success of a partnership. Communication efforts should be initiated at the commencement of the partnership. Identifying the target audiences, crafting clear messages, and effectively communicating these messages to the target audiences will increase the likelihood of initiatives and their outcomes being accepted and used.

A good communication flow keeps people informed about what is going on. It promotes trust and a more friendly and satisfying working relationship; creates a more productive environment; helps to avoid conflict and helps partners achieve their objectives.

Hints

- Establish a communication plan and process (good communication among partners does not happen unless there is a plan in place and a process has been identified to support the communication)
- Identify who is responsible for communication between the partners
- Identify what information needs to be shared and with whom

- Select the best methods for sharing information. For example, when is written communication to be used and in what format, or electronic methods or face-to-face communication.
- Document results of meetings – what has been agreed to, what decisions are required and who will action them?

Reporting Options

Regular reports of progress help to maintain support and enthusiasm for the partnership and its activities. Brief, structured reports work better than extensive narrative. Reporting works best when it is linked to the annual work plan.

Reports are also a means of communicating with participating organisations and those whose support is required. They can be used to promote successes and to build and maintain support. The work plans should be the basis for official progress reports. Focus particularly on reporting against indicators and timeframes and milestones.

A standard format Progress Report is represented below.

Key Result Area			
Outcome	Indicator / Timeframe	Expected achievement this month	Actual achievement this month
Comments/Highlights			

Anticipating and Managing Conflict

Successful partnerships recognise that conflict is a natural part of partnering with diverse groups, and are able to anticipate and use conflict constructively.

Early discussion and the documentation of a process for resolving differences and conflictual situations is essential at this stage.

Hints

- Create a sense of interdependency among partnership members
- Create a sense among partners of being well informed by regularly providing updated information to them
- Work continuously to maintain a high degree of trust among partners
- Create a process of decision-making that is perceived by all as fair and open

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership

Guide 3: Sustaining the Partnership

This guide identifies the essential criteria for maintaining a successful partnership including understanding partnership lifecycle stages and strategies, monitoring and review techniques, and finally evaluation options to check the health of the partnership.

Further Resources

Boydell, L 2001, 'Partnership Framework: a model for partnerships for health'. *Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Dublin*

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Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 3: Sustaining the Partnership

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¹ The project was an initiative of the Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee (HSPIC) which has representatives from both sector organisations, including the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) and DHS.

This Guide

Guide 3: Sustaining the Partnership provides hints on how to keep the partnership alive, troubleshooting strategies and finally evaluation techniques to measure success.

Sustaining the Partnership

The success of any partnership depends on sustaining the process, particularly as leadership, administrations, and policy makers change.

Initial commitment and energy of partners commences the partnership, however the following components are the key to sustaining partnerships over a long period or until they conclude naturally through meeting their goal (time limited):

- creating a sense of interdependence
- recognising and rewarding members
- combining planning with action, and
- creating a learning partnership

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 3: Sustaining the Partnership

Case Study

A partnership comprising 10 organisations ranging from small to large in size was established six months ago. One of the larger organisations is the auspice for the funding and is responsible for reporting the overall partnership outcomes on a regular basis to the funding body.

The governance structure has 3 levels – strategic, operational and working groups.

A senior member of the auspice organisation chairs the Strategic Group for 12 months and has committed resources for administrative support (for which they have received funding).

The partnership has experienced some initial problems resulting in:

- its failure to achieve deliverables and accountability requirements on time
- disengagement of partnership members with low meeting attendance and
- difficulty in managing and expending the budget.

The Chair struggled with the time commitment required to sustain the momentum due to her own organisation increased workload and agended an item to review progress. Members were contacted directly and asked to attend this meeting to contribute to a review and to identify strategies to invigorate the partnership.

In the above case study, a time issue has been identified within 6 months of its commencement. Partnerships go through stages, often referred to as lifecycles and the partnership needs to have an understanding of this process and a means to deal with such issues.

Understanding Partnership Lifecycles

Partnerships go through different stages of development and growth at different times depending on where the partnership is in its life cycle. The stages are adapted from Tuckmans model². Understanding the challenges at key points will help the members identify appropriate strategies to implement in order to sustain the partnership.

Five Stages of Partnerships

The five common life-cycle stages of organisational behaviour, in this instance the partnership are as follows:

1. Forming

The partnership is a group of individuals coming together. This newly formed partnership is characterised by members who are extremely polite or silent with minimum initiative or commitment shown.

2. Storming

Part of the process of being able to work together may involve working through conflicts and differences, either by raising and resolving them or by agreeing to move on and around them. Some issues may be fundamental to the partnership, for example, resourcing, that must be dealt

² Tuckman, B & Jensen, M 1977, *Group & Organization Management*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 419-427 1977

with. This stage is characterised by strong opinions, vying for position or authority, adjusting to meeting process and resource issues.

3. Norming

The partnership will usually develop a set of common understandings and operating procedures that will enable productive activity to commence.

4. Performing

This is a mature partnership and the optimum point in life cycle... goals are achieved, there is balance of control and flexibility, and it has refined its core business. The partnership still has room to grow, change is embraced.

A mature partnership would have strong networks in the community and across government and is well resourced. It may be well connected and seek out opportunities to input into strengthening its partnership, forging new partnerships and impacting on broader policy. This stage requires robust processes and innovation to keep the partnership alive.

5. Adjourning

The partnership members move on once the work of the partnership has been completed. For ongoing partnerships this stage resembles 'decline' where members lose interest and leave, policies and practices may need revamping and the partnership withers.

These stages are not distinct and often merge into each other. The duration of each stage is less precise, and partnerships can regenerate (expand) or go through several rebirths (member changes; new growth funds etc).

Strategies to Support and Sustain the Partnership

a) Servicing the partnership

A competent, well-supported partnership is essential to its success. It is important that the roles, responsibilities and expectations of members are clearly identified and agreed. In addition, the level of administrative support and who will provide the funds will need to be agreed.

Where there are specific skills or information the partnership lacks, appropriate training or briefings may be required or specialist expertise located. This might include any special resources the partnership requires and how these will be provided.

b) Ongoing monitoring

Ongoing monitoring and shared reflection of how the partnership is working is critical to strengthening and sustaining relationships and achieving effective outcomes.

c) Regular reporting of progress

Regular progress reporting will help maintain support and enthusiasm for the partnership and its activities.

Brief, structured reports linked to the Strategic Plan and annual Action Plan enable members to monitor progress and to take prompt action where required.

Adopting a project methodology to plan for and report against indicators, timeframes and milestones, will enable tracking of any deviations and implementing corrective action.

Reports are also a means of communicating with participating organisations and those whose support is required. They can be used to promote successes and to build and maintain support.

Partnership fails because:

1. Rationale behind the establishment of the partnership was not clearly articulated, understood or accepted by stakeholders
2. Underestimating the time to establish a partnership – developing a trusting relationship of reciprocity (mutual benefit) takes time and effort
3. Partners do not recognise their interdependence and the value of partnering
4. Lack of clarity of purpose or failing to recognise potential participation constraints

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 3: Sustaining the Partnership

5. Lack of authority – partnership does not have authority to make decisions nor key responsibilities
6. Failure to lead – partnership suffers from lack of shared vision or purpose or direction
7. Inadequate resourcing of partnership activities

Strategies for a Failing Partnership

Every partnership will go through lifecycles. Some partnerships may not survive strategies to revamp it; some partnerships choose to struggle on; finally some partnerships acknowledge their difficulties and seek outside support. Options may include:

1. Terminate or discontinue the partnership
2. Reorganize the group from a partnership to an 'arrangement'

Both options require careful navigation to acknowledge the achievements of the partnership and plan for alternate arrangements. In some instances, closing the formal partnership can be a positive measure of success. It also may have achieved its purpose and have no further need to continue.

Action required to terminate the partnership:

- Identify the partnerships major accomplishments and acknowledge those people and organisations who have contributed
- Determine how to inform people – both inside and outside the partnership of the decision to dissolve
- Document the partnerships history and the lessons which can be drawn from its operations
- Recommend an appropriate alternative to the current partnership
- Select a time, place and event to celebrate what has been accomplished

Evaluating the Partnership

Evaluations may be conducted for a variety of reasons including assessing whether the methodology is working; assessing the benefits of individuals and organisations; justifying expenditure of resources and confirming and promoting success.

Informal Tools

There are a number of tools available to evaluate a partnership.

Brief questionnaire

In its simplest form, a partnership evaluation could address the following questions:

1. Why did we decide to work as partners? Are the reasons still valid?
2. Did we achieve what we set out to do?
3. What else has happened as a result of our working together?
4. What have been the impacts on our organisations and our clients/ community?
5. Were the achievements worth the expenditure of time, effort and other resources?
6. Do we need to still work together to achieve these outcomes?
7. What have we learnt?
8. What revisions need to be made to the partnership and how will we use the evaluation findings?³

The discussion method provides the opportunity for members to reflect on the partnership they have established and on ways to strengthen it.

³ Social Compass, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Partnership Tools: Tool 6: Evaluating the Partnership and its Program, <http://www.socialcompass.com/index.cfm/Partneringtoolkit/>

Evaluation Criteria and Evidence Base

Evaluating the Collaborative Process⁴

Evaluation criteria	Evidence
<p>Participant assessment of the collaborative process</p> <p>Changes in <i>attitudes and knowledge</i> that support development of a partnership and sustain it over time including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indications of trust; • a familiarity with the partner's identity, aims and capacity; and • the perception that the relationship is worth continued investment. <p>Can such attitudes be detected? Are they gaining or losing strength over time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anecdotal evidence (of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, increased trust, etc) • Formal assessment of participant satisfaction via surveys, focus group discussions, etc. • Attendance rate at meetings.
<p>Changes in how partners act</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tangible <i>actions</i> that reflect progress on commitments that partners make to each or to the larger community • resources invested to carry out the partners' joint work.
<p>Partnership accomplishments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>outputs</i> that indicate what partners' joint activities are actually producing that might have tangible value, such as jointly delivered health care.
<p>Improvements in service which could not have been achieved without collaboration</p> <p>Improvements in efficiency which could not have been achieved without collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership outcomes (distinguish improvements attributable to collaboration – eg. improved health of families as a result of partnership outputs) • Comparison with outcomes without collaboration • Identify difficulties minimised or removed through collaboration. • Project outcomes (distinguish improvements attributable to collaboration) • Comparison with costs and efficiency without collaboration • Cost savings attributable to collaboration • Changes to organisational systems (distinguish changes attributable to collaboration) and demonstrable benefits of these

4 P 45 Building Rural Health Partnerships: Toolkit for Success, Department of Human Services Victoria Draft 2008

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 3: Sustaining the Partnership

Evaluating the Collaborative Process⁴ (continued)

Evaluation criteria	Evidence
Collaboration model chosen was the simplest, cheapest and least disruptive needed to achieve the outcomes	Indicative comparison with other possible models.
All relevant parties were involved	Identification of any relevant organisations and stakeholders included late or found to have been overlooked.
Cost-benefit of collaboration	Additional costs attributable to collaboration, compared to benefits and savings achieved.
Spin off benefits attributable to collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other initiatives resulting from relationships made through this partnership Improved community perceptions of organisations Skills gained by organisations Improved morale and job satisfaction for participating staff

Formal Tools

Two other more common tools are listed in Templates 1 and 2:

Template 1: VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool (and example)

This tool is designed to reflect on the partnerships and ways to strengthen it through engaging in discussion, and

Template 2: New York Partnership Self-Assessment Tool

This tool was designed to help partnerships understand how collaboration works and what it means to create a successful collaborative process; assess how well their collaborative process is working, and identify specific areas they can focus on to make their collaborative process work better.

Further Resources

Boydell, L 2001, 'Partnership Framework: a model for partnerships for health'. *Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Dublin*

Boydell, L 2007, 'Partnerships: A Literature Review, *Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Dublin Ireland* ISBN 978-0-9555912-3-5

Carson, E. & Kerr, L 2006, 'Evaluating government/third sector partnerships in Australia', *Governments and Communities in Partnership: From Theory to Practice, Conference hosted by Centre for Public Policy, University Of Melbourne Australia. September 2006.*

Tuckman, B & Jensen, M 1977, *Group & Organization Management*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 419-427 1977

Pope, J & Jolly, P 2008, *Working in Partnership: Practical advice for running effective partnerships, Department of Planning and Community Development. Melbourne, Australia.*

Acronyms

The following acronyms are used in this Guide

CSO	Community Services Organisation
DHS	Department of Human Services
HSPIC	Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
TOU	Terms of Reference
VCOSS	Victorian Council of Social Service

Links

Partnership Forums and HSPIC

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/operations/regional-operations-performance/partnership-unit/partnership-forums-and-hspic>

VCOSS

<http://www.vcooss.org.au/>

Social Compass

<http://www.socialcompass.com/index.cfm/Partneringtoolkit/>

VICHEALTH

<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/en/Resource-Centre/Publications-and-Resources/Mental-health-and-wellbeing/Mental-health-promotion/Partnerships-Analysis-Tool.aspx>

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 4: Partnership Governance, Models and Leadership

Guide 1 Preparing to Partner

Content	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Definition• Principles• Types• Benefits• Challenges• Exploratory meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessing the Need for Partnerships• Continuum of Joint Effort

Guide 2 Commencing the Partnership

Content	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questionnaire• Mapping• Communication• Reporting• Managing conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnership Working Guide• Progress Report• Terms of Reference

Guide 3 Sustaining the Partnership

Content	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnership lifecycles• Support Strategies• Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brief Partnership Questionnaire• VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool• New York Partnership Self-Assessment Tool

Guide 4 Partnership Governance, Models and Leadership

Content	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnership governance• Leadership roles and responsibilities• Sustainability• Exit strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-engagement survey• Communication strategy template

Introduction

Welcome to the fourth Partnership Practice Guide which is designed to complement the three existing guides on Partnering¹ released in 2009. This Guide builds on the content from the previous three guides and focuses on partnership governance options and models to suit different partnering arrangements in the health, housing and community services sector.

The integration and collaboration between community sector organisations over the past decade in Victoria has been based on an underlying expectation and premise that collaboration will deliver better outcomes for people accessing services within a cost effective framework. Many qualitative and quantitative evaluations undertaken to date hold true this premise.

This Guide appraises some of the partnership models and structures in existence across health, housing, education and community services and offers an analysis of, and insight into, these models; their key to success and the evolution of the governance arrangements and the environmental and political factors impacting on how the partnerships are structured.²

Who is the Practice Guide for?

This Guide has been designed for members of new partnerships that may be considering structure options, or existing partnerships that may be looking to change their structure or reconfigure the leadership to strengthen the partnership. In addition this Guide may appeal to a broader audience who are contemplating partnering models to support service delivery.

Many of the issues of our community can be termed 'wicked problems'. A wicked problem "... comprises multiple, overlapping, interconnected subsets of problems that cut across multiple policy domains and levels of government." Partnerships attempt to provide a solution to these problems.

Weber & Khademan, 2008, p. 336

¹ The project was an Department of Human Services and Department of Health initiative of the Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee (HSPIC) which has representatives from peak bodies, including the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS).

² Contributors are listed in reference section.



Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 4: Partnership Governance, Models and Leadership

Inside this Guide

Content

- Partnership Governance – Current Options and Models:
 - Showcasing sustainable partnerships in Victoria
 - Unincorporated voluntary alliance
 - Subcontracted partnership
 - Informal strategic partnership
 - Incorporated partnership
 - Why Partnerships continue to succeed in Victoria
 - Factors impacting on structure type
- Leadership Roles and Responsibilities
 - Leadership skills
 - Chair in leadership role
 - Partnership resourcing
- Sustainability – Partnerships down the track
 - Tools to reinvigorate partnership
- Exit Strategy – Breaking up is hard to do
- Further Resources

Acronyms

The following acronyms are used in this Guide:

CSO	Community Sector Organisation
DHS	Department of Human Services
HSPIC	Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
PCP	Primary Care Partnership
SCOP	Stronger Community Organisations Project
SSA	State Services Authority
TOU	Terms of Reference
VCOSS	Victorian Council of Social Service

How are the Practice Guides linked?

The following guides comprise the series:

Guide 1: Preparing to Partner provides a description of the critical factors to consider in the preparation for partnering.

Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership provides suggestions and tools in the early stages of the partnership, including setting up systems and workflow processes.

Guide 3: Sustaining the Partnership provides hints on how to keep the partnership alive, troubleshooting strategies, and finally, evaluation techniques to measure success.

Guide 4: Partnership Governance, Models and Leadership showcases different partnering arrangements, rationale for choosing one model over another, successes and challenges a decade on, and the role of leadership in partnership.

Victorian Context

Today, Victoria enjoys a strong partnership culture between community sector organisations (CSOs) and the Victorian Government. The Department of Human Services (DHS) (then incorporating Health) signed the first Partnership Agreement in 2002 with the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) on behalf of the sector, and was signed again in 2005 and 2009. Similarly the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) on behalf of all local government areas also signed their first agreement in 2002 with DHS. More recently the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and VCOSS signed a Partnership Agreement in 2010.

These agreements signify a shared commitment to reform – that is jointly agreed, documented and actioned, and acknowledges and respects respective roles, boundaries and constraints.

These formal partnership agreements are a whole of sector, whole of organisation and whole of Department commitment to the partnership – from the DHS Secretary taking an active interest and engaging in ongoing and meaningful dialogue with the sector, to the Co-Chairing of the partnership governance body – in DHS/VCOSS example the Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee, and jointly determining the agenda and workplan priorities.

Why Partnerships continue to succeed in Victoria

Five partnership models will be showcased in this Guide. While the structures of the five models differ, there are a number of common factors underlying them which have led to their success.

In interviewing and surveying representatives from the five profiled partnership models in Victoria, key factors emerge that have led to their success and sustainability over time. Included in this section is an outline of these factors and those factors impacting on why a partnership has changed or evolved over time.

The five partnership models profiled contained the following common factors which have led to their success:

Research by the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development across ten of its major partnership initiatives identified key factors for effective partnership:¹

- a good broker/facilitator to build relationships;
- the right decision-makers at the table with a commitment to contribute;
- a clear vision and objectives;
- good processes; and
- ongoing motivation through evaluation and champions.

¹ J Pope and J M Lewis, 2008, "Improving Partnership Governance: Using a Network Approach to Evaluate Partnerships in Victoria", *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 67, 4, p. 443-456. This article is available online at Blackwell Synergy.

Working relationship is stronger than structure

The capacity to effectively work together and develop robust working relationships to achieve outcomes overrides the structure type or level of funding, including lack of funding, as the key criteria for longevity of a partnership across the partnership models. The development of processes and guides strengthens a partnership more than how a structure is conceived or how formal or voluntary it is for members. The key to developing strong working relationships is also dependent on the following criteria.

The Chair as Leader

All partnership models identified the importance of the Chair's skills, personality and ability to offer strong leadership and utilise inclusive processes and practice to continually engage all members. This is discussed in more detail in the leadership section. The opportunity for members to develop strong relationships over time beyond the interests of their own CSO and agenda and to contribute to a shared agenda was seen as being strongly influenced by the Chair.

Level of representation and participation

Ensuring all members of a partnership had the authorisation and autonomy to facilitate the function of the partnership was identified as critically important and influenced the making or breaking of the partnership. Membership and commitment to partnership fluctuated in direct relationship to the level of seniority of those attending and the regularity of which they attended and participated. High member turnover

also impacted negatively on the partnerships' capacity to achieve its goals.

Capacity to influence

The degree to which partnerships believe they can contribute and influence sector and government planning and policy development has a positive impact on the energy and morale of the group. The capacity of the partnership to link with government and resourcing promotes stronger partnership activity.

Recognition that partnerships take time

The forming of new partnerships and the inclusion of new members to an existing partnership takes time for members to 'jostle', adjust and establish a culture. This stage of group dynamics takes a number of meetings to process and is often reflected in the earlier agendas and discussions. Successful and ongoing partnerships recognised and accommodated this process in the lifecycle.

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 4: Partnership Governance, Models and Leadership

Partnership Governance, Models and Leadership

There are many examples of experienced and sophisticated formal and informal partnerships, networks and alliances (hereon referred to as 'partnerships') operating in Victoria across all sectors. These partnerships are characterised by a high degree of integration and collaboration with regard to the planning, management and provision of services, and as a vehicle for driving initiatives.

A partnership is defined as a joint working arrangement where the partners:

- Are independent bodies;
- Agree to cooperate to achieve common goals;
- Create a new organisational structure or process to achieve outcomes;
- Accept shared responsibility for decision making and the delivery of actions and outcomes;
- Plan and implement a jointly agreed plan with joint resources; and
- Share relevant information, pool risks and rewards.³

Partnership Governance – Current Options and Models

What is not considered a partnership?

The word partnership is used with increasing frequency by government and sector organisations alike to describe an array of arrangements. The arrangements below would not be described as a partnership for the purpose of this Guide:

- The contracting of a third party by a local or state government or CSO to deliver one or more services on its behalf - this would be best described as a contract for services;
- A peak organisational body or representational body;

- The coming together of CSO members for a single forum, event or as a group to discuss forthcoming issues, policy or strategy; and
- A knowledge sharing network.

In a move to address more complex, cross organisational and sectoral issues - what has been described as 'wicked problems' within the service system, both government and sector organisations continue to develop partnering models to achieve collaborative and integrated service system so as to support improved outcomes for people accessing services.

The structures of these partnering models may differ in the types and number of governance committees, in the kinds of CSOs represented, the sector to which the auspice CSO belongs, the organisation to which the chair is affiliated, the membership of the executive or board and the level of representation from CSOs. Some partnerships have a model of tiered membership, with CSOs choosing to be signatories to an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or not as best fits the partnership. It is not possible to describe a single "best" governance arrangement and structure.⁴

This section will examine more common types of partnerships and provide an example of different structures.

Partnership Structure

Many current partnerships lean towards a more formal collaborative arrangement with a high degree of integration as opposed to an informal arrangement of working together with other CSOs on common goals. This is due to the complexity and type of issues and problems emerging within and across sectors and governments that requires a well organised approach to and clarity around the working arrangements.

The formality, frequency, purpose and the level of involvement, commitment and contribution from members of the partnership is often captured in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)⁵ or a Partnering Agreement. This is the more formal arrangement and a less informal partnership may only have

terms of reference or 'rules' of how members of the partnership will work together.

The following are a description of the more common partnership structures operating in Victoria.

³ Northamptonshire County Council Partnership Protocol (available online)

⁴ 'Adapted from An Evaluation of the Primary Care Partnership Strategy Report', p.7 October 2005 Australian Institute for Primary Care (AIPC) based at La Trobe University.

⁵ For information on developing an MOU, refer to Partnership Practice Guide 1: Preparing to Partner

Unincorporated Voluntary Alliance

This model requires each CSO or 'member' to be a legal entity. Members maintain a separate legal, cultural and organisational identity and, for the purpose of partnering, come together voluntarily to participate in setting and implementing key goals, policy direction or service delivery – it is a non-legal partnership.

A formal governance structure is established for internal management and accountability, as well as mechanisms to enable coherent business planning and effective project management. For the purpose of funding the partnership, a contact or lead CSO is nominated to administer the funding from government on behalf of the partnership in the form of a service agreement signed with the CSO. In addition, the contact or lead CSO may be the direct employer of any secretariat support and/or partnership staff. An administrative fee may be charged by this CSO to operate and manage the resources and funds. All member CSOs have separate service agreements with their funding body for service delivery outside of partnership deliverables.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Terms of Reference (ToR)⁶ guide member CSOs' strategic and operational working arrangements. Targets and performance accountability identified in the service agreement between the lead CSO and the government is seen as a shared responsibility between member CSOs.

⁶ For information on developing a ToR, refer to Partnership Practice Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership

Governance Structure – How it works

The governance structure comprises an overarching strategic group of member CSO representatives and departmental representative(s) that sets the direction for the partnership via a process of consultation and negotiation with partnership members. An Executive or Project Officer is often funded to, amongst other tasks, provide support to the group and to the implementation of the strategic plan. In some alliances, there is no funding allocated for this role, in which case members agree to contribute a small fee to fund the partnership position.

Chair

The role of the Chair, nominated by the member CSOs, is appointed to create a unified and cohesive 'board' or committee to help fulfil its obligations, and ensure the Board's or strategic group's effective operation - its structure, goals, decision making, and professional internal and external relationships.

Operational Arm or Working Groups

In addition to the Board or strategic group, an unincorporated voluntary alliance may establish designated management groups or one or more sub-groups which are project or functions based. These groups exist as the operational arm responsible for the implementation of joint work, identifying practice issues, policy gaps, and trends and to monitoring progress or finances. These groups may be referred to as the operations group; sub-working groups, and/or practitioner groups.

Other Partners

Whilst the core group of member CSOs are signatory to an agreement, other partners may be affiliated with the group and invited to participate in joint projects or activities, but are not members, or held accountable for deliverables.

Why Choose This Model?

- Suits sector organisations and government wanting to create a cross sectoral service system across local government areas which is influential in developing policy directions; and
- Fulfills a need to foster local relationships and strategies between organisations where improved linkages across and joining-up of services is required.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

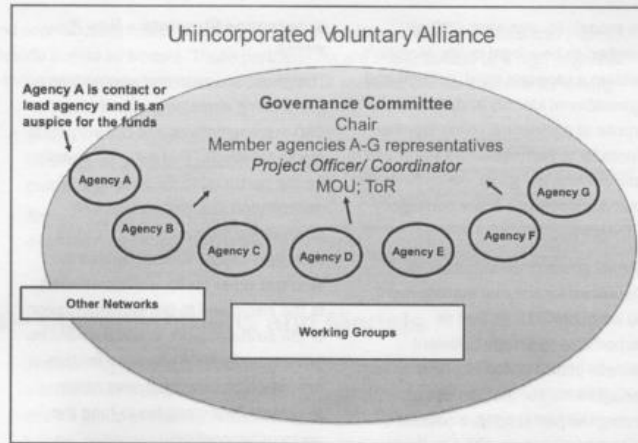
- Each CSO remains autonomous and retains responsibility for the management, organisation, delivery and funding of its own services;
- Partnership provides the capacity to participate in planning across broader regional local government area-based catchments;
- Consistent approach for service delivery;
- Opportunities to implement practice, protocols and systems for facilitating access to services;
- Mutual accountability for high quality service delivery; and
- Fosters improved linkages across services in an area.

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 4: Partnership Governance, Models and Leadership

Disadvantages

- Varying levels of membership – from single level to complex membership requiring high maintenance;
- Potential that smaller organisations will be overlooked by larger or statewide organisations;
- Role of contact CSO as fund holder may carry more power; and
- Requires clear reporting lines for Project Executive Officer.



Showcase 1: North East Primary Care Partnership - An example of an unincorporated voluntary alliance or non-incorporated consortia

The Primary Care Partnerships (PCP) Strategy commenced in April 2000 by the Department of Human Services with the goal of improving the planning and delivery of primary care services, strengthening relationships, improving service coordination, integrating health promotion activities and reducing the preventable use of hospital services, to achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes for the community.

The North East Primary Care Partnership (NEPCP) is a voluntary alliance of service providers in north east metropolitan Melbourne operating within the local government areas of Banyule, Darebin and Nillumbik. Members include – Austin Health, Banksia Palliative Care, Banyule City Council, Banyule Community Health Service, Darebin City Council, Darebin Community Health Service, Neami, Nillumbik Community Health Service, Nillumbik Shire Council, North East Valley Division of General Practice, North Western Mental Health, Northern Division of General Practice, Northern Health, Royal District Nursing Service, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, and Women's Health in the North. Other CSOs become Affiliate Members and participate in NEPCP activities as they are relevant to their services.

Key Changes

- Adoption of a robust formal, legally binding Partnering Agreement for 2010 – 2012.
- A more sophisticated structure with multiple levels of membership.
- Change in the guiding planning methodology - moved from a Community Health Plan that outlined the work in four portfolio areas of partnership, service coordination, integrated health promotion and integrated chronic disease management to a strategic plan that is based on the population health needs of the catchment and is a higher level plan supported by an operational plan with more detail of strategies and actions.

Partnership Practice Guide

Communication Strategy

The communication between members of the partnership, and between members and other sector organisations outside of the partnership, plays an important role in the success of the partnership. Whilst not all communications need documentation and formality, it is helpful to determine information flow on particular topics and identify responsibility for communication. Some partnerships have developed a communication strategy to clarify this. Below is an example of a Partnership Communication Strategy describing what, how and to who information is disseminated.

Example of a Partnership Communication Strategy

Meeting	Whose responsibility	When	Method	Governance Group	Affiliate Members
Governance Group	EO/Project Officer/Coordinator	Bi-monthly	Email		
Agenda	Chair/EO/PC	Bi-monthly	Mail for those without email	✓	
Minutes	EO/Project Coordinator	Bi-monthly	Mail for those without email	✓	
Partnership Budget	EO/Project Coordinator	Bi-monthly	Mail for those without email	✓	
EO Report to Governance Group/Other Governance Group Papers	EO/Project Coordinator	Bi-monthly	Mail for those without email	✓	✓
Partnership agreement	EO/Project Coordinator	6 monthly or annual review & every 2-3 years	Email hardcopy	✓	
Working Group	Chair Working Group	Fortnightly		Tabled at Governance Group bi-monthly meeting	
Agenda	Chair Working Group	Fortnightly	Mail for those without email	✓	
Minutes	Member, working group	Fortnightly	Mail for those without email	✓	

Source: North East Primary Care Partnership Agreement 2010-2012, 2011.

Showcase: North East Primary Care Partnership (continued)

Key Changes (continued)

- Moved from regular Working Groups that had existed for many years to topic specific, time limited Task Groups, for example Health Promotion Planning Task Group formed to consider directions for integrating the health promotion work for the partnership. Care Planning Task Group is working together to implement inter-agency care planning.
- Development in understanding of what integrated health promotion can be, from funding small CSO projects, to identifying work in CSOs against shared health promotion priorities, to trying to plan together to integrate some work together.

Strategic Plan Framework

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING	PHYSICAL HEALTH	Well Population	At Risk	Established Conditions	Chronic Conditions	CHRONIC DISEASE	MENTAL ILLNESS
		Promotion & Prevention		Prevent progression	Service System Response		
		Priority 1		Priority 2			
		Support health promotion and preventative initiatives that lead to improvement in mental and physical health		Ensure better coordination and integration of the service system			
		Priority 3					
Enhance the partnership through strategic positioning for Commonwealth Reforms							

NEPCP Strategic Plan Framework 2010 - 2012

Success Factors

- Development of trust between core member organisations, now having worked together for over 10 years.
- Members seeing successful outcomes from the partnership work undertaken that could not have been achieved on their own, for example centralised service access in many CSOs that has improved the individual's experience in identifying needs and obtaining the support required to address these needs.
- Transparent processes outlined in Partnership Agreement and in their application.
- Ensuring communication between and throughout member organisations about activities.

Continuing Challenges

The following are potential challenges for the NEPCP:

- Keeping a wide range of member organisations committed to partnership vision and goals.
- Alignment of current goals to new innovations and policy directions from state and federal government, for example Medicare Locals.
- Provision of appropriate resources to ensure the NEPCP remains sustainable.

Partnership Practice Guide

Guide 4: Partnership Governance, Models and Leadership

Subcontracted Partnership

Similar to the Unincorporated Voluntary Alliance, the Subcontracted Partnership model is a group of independent and legally incorporated CSOs that come together to create a new organisational structure to achieve specific outcomes. Again this arrangement can often be specified by State Government through linking funding to the model. A lead auspice CSO is nominated to administer the funding from government on behalf of the partnership, in the form of a service agreement signed with the CSO. This is similar to the contact CSO role in an Unincorporated Voluntary Alliance, but differs in its relationship to member CSOs by way of a sub-contracted arrangement.

The partnership is made up of member CSOs and representatives from the State Government.

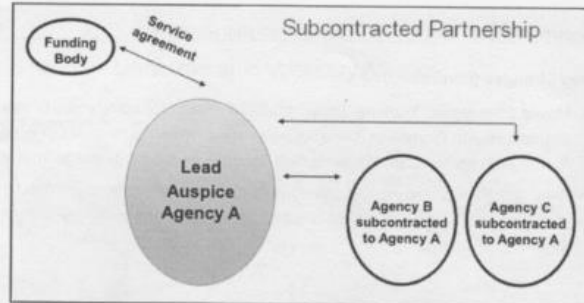
Governance Structure – How it works

The governance structure is similar to the model above with a strategic group responsible for overseeing the integrated service model, including achieving allocated targets and complying with service standards. A Project Officer⁷ is often funded to provide support to the group and to the implementation of the strategic plan.⁸ In addition, working groups are established.

The critical difference in this model is the sub-contracted component - one CSO takes lead responsibility and liability for the delivery of outputs and targets through the service agreement with the funding body. The lead auspice

⁷ Financed by contributions from member CSOs and government.

⁸ For information on strategic planning refer to Partnership Practice Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership.



CSO sub-contracts CSOs to co-deliver on outputs and targets. Up to eight CSOs may be sub-contracted to the lead CSO.

A MOU and ToR guide the strategic and operational working arrangements between all CSOs for achieving targets. The lead auspice CSO then is held accountable for the successful implementation of the service model.

Chair

The role of the Chair is nominated by the member CSOs.

Operational Arm or Working Groups

In addition to the Board or strategic group, the sub-contracted partnership may establish designated management groups or one or more sub-groups which are project or function based. These groups exist as the operational arm responsible for implementing joint work, identifying practice issues, policy gaps, and trends, and, monitoring progress or finances. These groups may be referred to as the operations group, sub-working groups, and/or practitioner groups.

Other Partners/Networks

Other partners may be affiliated with the group and invited to participate in joint projects or activities, but are not members.

Why Choose This Model?

- To deliver a coordinated and streamlined service response;
- For establishing an integrated service model; and
- The structure assists government to enact legislation, i.e. mandatory partnerships to achieve goals.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- Each CSO remains autonomous and retains responsibility for the management, organisation, delivery and funding of its services; and
- Capacity for smaller CSOs to gain access to resourcing.

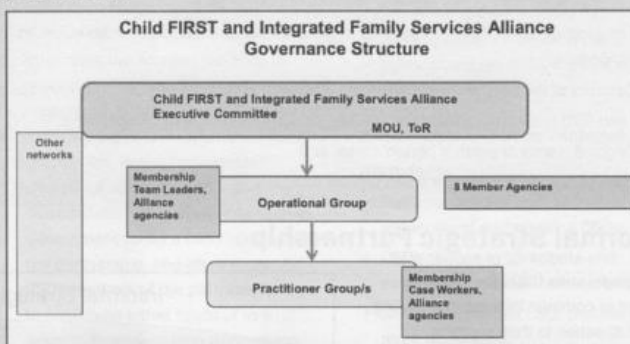
Disadvantages

- Potential for smaller CSOs to be swallowed up by larger or statewide organisations;
- Lead CSO has burden of reporting to funding body and responsibility for delivery of all targets; and
- Power challenges with the lead CSO model.

Showcase 2: Child FIRST (Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams) - An example of a sub-contracted partnership

Background to Partnership

Child FIRST was an outcome of the *Child, Youth & Families Act 2005 (CYFA)* which established a community based referral point and pathway into family services. It requires CSOs providing family services in a defined catchment area to work together to actively engage with families with complex needs, connecting them to specialist and universal services as required.



Rationale for Partnership Structure

Each Child FIRST Alliance is a partnership made up of member CSOs and representatives from the Department of Human Services (DHS). Initially DHS required each alliance to nominate a lead CSO, accountable to the DHS through a service agreement, to sub-contract with other CSOs to deliver the service targets identified within the service agreement. This has since been reviewed, see Changes/Developments below.

The governance structure consists of an executive team comprising senior members of each CSO, an operational group also comprising members (Team Leaders) of CSOs, and a Practitioner Group or Intake Group comprising DHS Child Protection workers and CSO workers who allocate cases. The group is governed by an MOU and ToR which guide member CSOs in strategic and operational working arrangements.

Changes/Developments

A number of Child FIRST alliances have moved away from the lead/sub-contracting arrangement. Lead CSOs cite difficulties with this role of being held responsible for the delivery of sub-contracted CSOs' targets through the service agreement. The onus of monitoring the subcontracting arrangements has proved difficult for some lead CSOs. The DHS, as funding body, has responded positively to this situation and has renegotiated individual service agreements and funding with each CSO in the alliance. Whilst this 'back of house' change may impact on the delicate relationship between CSOs, it has not altered the streamlined service offered to those seeking family services. An MOU and ToR guide the work of the CSOs within the Alliance.

Success Factors

Child FIRST Alliances consider the following criteria for success:

- Recognition of each CSOs' individual service expertise;
- The need to extend the alliance scope to include the expertise of other service providers within the local area; and
- Executive Management (governance group) operating with a degree of formality and authority.

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Continuing Challenges

The following are challenges faced by Child FIRST alliances:

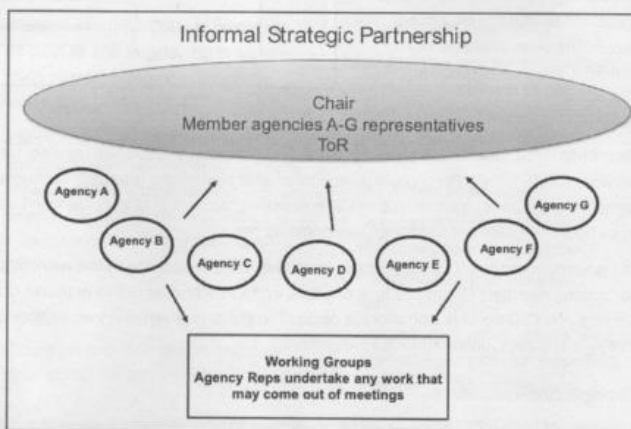
- Ensuring specialist CSO involvement in the alliance, for example education, youth, early childhood and Aboriginal specific services;
- Capacity of the partnership to maintain links with other networks and partnerships due to time and resource constraints;
- Lead CSO role responsibility and funding obligations can be over-burdening;
- Ongoing issues of partner performance; and
- Lack of specific funding for a coordinator role.

Informal Strategic Partnership

This model suits CSOs that have a shared or common interest in providing broad direction to their sector's strategic planning and development processes and may also act as a conduit for local area representatives to raise and discuss like issues to further inform policy and practice.

At its most joined effort, it may have a strong link with representatives from local and state government and regional department offices who attend the meetings to provide information on key policies and direction, seek views on policy planning and development, and input to draft documentation. Often these informal partnerships are program orientated, for example a disability partnership or catchment area group.

The strength of the group is in its commitment to share information and resources, influence policy direction and act as a representative 'voice' for a cohort, place-based projects or other key sectors. Its challenges stem from the absence of any sufficient and sustainable resources. There is an assumption that participation is cost neutral. Feedback from the Partnership



Evaluation surveys suggests resourcing of partnerships is a significant factor to success.⁹

Governance Structure – How it works

The governance structure is more informal and CSOs choose to contribute and engage with the partnership because of its purpose and agenda and its collective capacity to influence

changes. Funding bodies (local and state governments) are invited to meetings but do not drive the meeting. An MOU and ToR may define the groups' actions, or meeting minutes and planning sessions may do this.

Chair

A member representative is nominated to chair meetings and provide secretariat activities such as coordinating minutes and agendas amongst the group.

⁹ Under the auspice of HSPIC, three state-wide surveys were undertaken in 2002, 2005 and 2008 to gauge levels of satisfaction with the partnership between DHS and the Health, Housing and Community Sectors. HSPIC, Partnering in Progress Evaluation, 2009 [Available online - http://www.vcoos.org.au/documents/VCOOS%20docs/HSPIC/Partnering%20in%20Progress_Final_091029.pdf]

Operational Arm or Working Groups

Work generated by the group is undertaken by either the members or delegated within member CSOs to manage and report back to the group. One or more sub-groups may be established.

Other Partners

The informal partnership may also establish connections or networks with local groups in the community as required to progress key issues.

Resourcing the Partnership

The DHS and CSOs agree that adequate resourcing of the partnership is essential to provide the timely administrative support required to sustain the partnership. Resourcing is recognised as a multilayered approach involving the coordination of meetings and forums, active engagement with small and large CSOs, and the dissemination of relevant information. Government funds a contribution to the partnership, and often requests CSO members of the partnership to contribute either funds or in-kind support to resource the partnership. In some cases, smaller CSOs host a worker through the provision of office space, or secretariat support per forum.

Why Choose This Model?

- Response to government initiatives to meet challenges identified; and
- Seek to influence a government agenda through CSOs within a sector joining-up.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- Does not require any changes to the autonomy of participating CSOs;
- CSOs choose to contribute and engage with the partnership; and
- No lead or contact CSO, therefore more equal roles.

Disadvantages

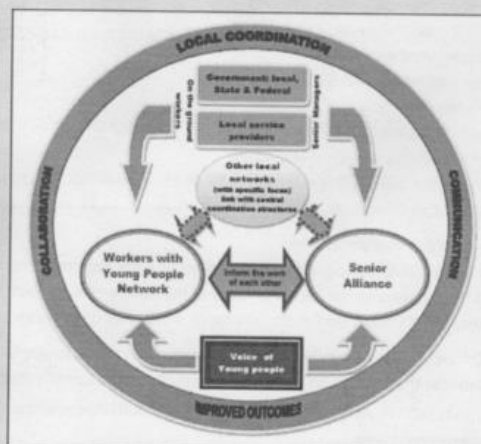
- Absence of any sufficient and sustainable resources.

Showcase 3: Wyndham Youth Services Senior Alliance - An example of an informal strategic partnership

Background to Partnership

The Wyndham Youth Services Senior Alliance (WYSSA) was established in September 2009 as an informal voluntary partnership to oversee the Wyndham Better Youth Services Pilot (BYSP) Project: Phase 2. The BYSP Project was a Victorian Government initiative recommended through the *Vulnerable Youth Framework Discussion Paper*. The intention of the BYSP was to improve coordination, collaboration and planning at a local level across stakeholders from government, schools and community sector organisations providing services to young people.

The WYSSA comprises senior managers and/or CEOs from a range of organisations in the Wyndham municipality. Service areas represented included health, mental health, generalist youth services, family services, education/employment/training, housing, justice/law, and culturally specific services. It is supported by a Project Convenor.



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Showcase: Wyndham Youth Services Senior Alliance (continued)

Rationale for Partnership Structure

Following the completion and submission of the Final Report for the Wyndham Better Youth Services Pilot: Phase 2 to the Office for Youth, then in the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Alliance work was complete and it could have dissolved. However, members expressed an interest in continuing the Alliance in some configuration to build on the partnership work that had been initiated through the BYSP project.

Changes/Developments

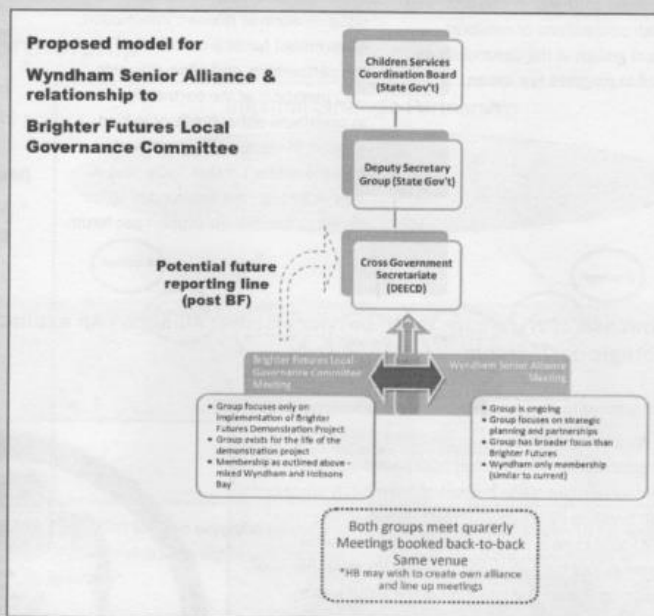
It was announced at the conclusion of the second phase of the BYSP that the pilot would not be extended again, but instead the Brighter Futures initiative (now called Youth Partnerships) – led by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), would build on the pilot findings. While the projects are strongly linked, there are key differences between the two¹⁰ and a new governance structure is proposed for the demonstration project. As a result the WYSSA needed to consider whether there was value in having the WYSSA as a separate entity to the governance structure for the demonstration project – given likely similar membership and similar focus of work/goals.

Key planning was undertaken

by the WYSSA to compare the roles of then Brighter Futures project and WYSSA governance structures. The WYSSA found that the differences between the focus of the each was significant enough for the two structures to remain distinct yet overlapping in membership and key focus areas. Key differences in the two partnerships include:

- Different roles - the WYSSA is an ongoing group with a longer term strategic planning and partnership focus that is broader than the Youth Partnerships initiative, with specific goals and defined timeframes; and
- The WYSSA is Wyndham specific, while the Youth Partnerships demonstration site also includes the Hobson's Bay local government area.

¹⁰ Key differences were understood to be: DEECD is the lead department for Youth Partnerships, the site incorporates Hobson's Bay as well as Wyndham, age range for Youth Partnerships is 10-18 years while the BYSP was 10-25 years, there is a distinct governance structure including the formation of a Secretariat within DEECD to oversee all of the Youth Partnership projects.



Showcase: Wyndham Youth Services Senior Alliance (continued)

The reconfigured structure proposed by the WYSSA retains the two governance models as distinct groups with strong cross-communication between the groups, different level of representatives or even same representatives on both groups. The WYSSA proposed holding back to back meetings and ensuring clear communication between the governance structure for the Youth Partnerships demonstration project and the WYSSA.

The proposed model is based on information that was available at the time of planning, prior to the commencement of the Youth Partnerships initiative. As a result, the model is still to evolve.

Success Factors

The reconfigured Alliance is in its infancy, yet the commitment to the structure has been positive and involved key representatives from the WYSSA, DEECD, and the Office for Youth, now located in the Department of Human Services. The strength to date of the WYSSA has been:

- No duplication of other alliances, and its role is of interest to the membership – it is the only cross-sectoral youth sector group in Wyndham with a strategic focus;
- Direct association with a State Government project that sought recommendations about how to improve service coordination and planning at a local level;
- 'Closed' membership, with one relatively senior representative from each member organisation;
- Strong and committed senior staff member as Chair, and
- Focus on action around sector improvement specifically in Wyndham, with all actions informed by the membership and other local organisations.

Continuing Challenges

The following are potential challenges for the reconfigured Alliance:

- Broad membership and consistent attendance – it is essential that the key organisations in each of the relevant sectors have a presence or connection with the Alliance – a valuable step would be for the partnership work to be written into position descriptions;
- Relevance of meetings for members;
- Ongoing support for the Alliance and recognition and/or endorsement of the group by State Government as a key strategic alliance for Wyndham; and
- The nature of 'voluntary' vulnerability – there is an absence of accountability and no signatory document.

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Incorporated Partnership

An Incorporated Partnership has a more formalised structure that involves the establishment of a separate legal entity, incorporated association or a limited liability company that member CSOs are signatories to. This model increases the accountability of members to each other and legally – either through the *Incorporations Act 1981* or the *Corporations Act 2001*. In addition, the corporate structure may place the partnership in a strong position for future initiatives and reform agendas driven by government. The major types are:

(1) Incorporated Association

This requires the establishment of a committee of six members that includes the following roles – President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. The partnership is required to conduct annual general meetings, lodge annual statements with the Registrar, and ensure the conduct and reporting of financial affairs. In addition, this legal entity can sign contracts in its own right, hold property and employ staff.

(2) Limited Liability Company

The duties differ for directors of an incorporated company established under Commonwealth law. The *Corporations Act 2001* specifies the duties of directors:

- A duty to act in good faith;
- A duty to act with due care and diligence; and
- A duty not to trade while insolvent.

Directors can sign contracts, hold property and employ staff. However there is increased reporting and administrative duties for 'Board' members, including a responsibility

for ensuring that their Board is legally compliant with legislative requirements such as *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985*; employment law; environmental law; *Trade Practices Act 1974*; discrimination law; taxation law; fundraising law; contracts law; privacy law and negligence.

Governance Structure – How it works

The governance structure comprises an overarching 'Board', which may include member CSO representatives as Directors and individuals with a commitment to the sector who have the skills and expertise to contribute to the governance of the Board and, in some instances, can represent the views of the community.

Strategic service planning is conducted in partnership with state and local (and sometimes federal) departments and is constructed within the context of key policy directions. In addition, research and consultation may be tasks undertaken by the Board with key alliances.

Chair

The Chair is nominated by the Board through a democratic process.

Executive Management

An executive management team is established comprising either paid staff or staff provided in-kind from member CSOs, who oversee program responsibilities. Their role is to implement the strategic plan developed by the Board.

Why Choose This Model?

- The partnership would be placed in a stronger position as a corporate structure for future initiatives and reform agendas driven by government (for example Medicare Locals); and
- All partners have equal accountability and responsibility.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- Removes one CSO (lead CSO) as fund holder;
- Stronger reporting lines for funded positions, i.e. CEO and partnership staff, to a Board;
- Strong financial accountability; and
- In-kind support and real costs of partnership are exposed.

Disadvantages

- Increased reporting and administrative duties for 'Board' members;
- Loss of 'charity' status; and
- Enters a competitive space as corporate body.

Partnerships function most effectively by:

- Ensuring broad membership and consistent attendance;
- Having regular meetings;
- Developing a central plan for the partnership; and
- Being recognised as a formal coordination structure with links to existing structures.

Factors impacting on structure type

The choice of partnership, alliance or network structure to suit purpose and needs is not always a clear decision. Initial configurations were conceptualised in the absence of tried and true examples. The early partnership structures in Victoria were based on international research that existed at the time, some local innovative thinking, and a 'learn by doing' approach with a review built in.

The following factors have determined the type of structure adopted for the varying partnerships in Victoria:

Funding body stipulation

For some partnerships, the funding government department needs to deal with a legal entity. This will either be an individual (a 'natural person') or a 'body corporate' formed under state or Commonwealth legislation, such as a company, government, CSO, or incorporated association. In these instances, partnerships are constructed to identify one CSO with which to develop a funding and service agreement and to hold accountable for outputs, service standards and financial and performance related accountability requirements.

The Statewide Primary Care Partnership (PCP) Chairs and Executive Officers Network have identified leadership of PCPs as a key factor in their success. To this end they have developed the key competencies required for both roles, broadly indicating that the PCP Chair has a role in leading the development of the vision of the PCP and the Executive Office in overseeing the operational implementation.

The focus on partnerships recognises the important role undertaken by CSOs. The Victorian Auditor-General's May 2010 report identified:

'The significant role played by CSOs in delivering services to the community on behalf of the state highlights the importance of a strong partnership between the departments and CSOs. The government has emphasised the importance of this partnership relationship and wants to make its interactions with CSOs streamlined, easy to navigate, and designed to optimise value to the community. A partnership memorandum of understanding is in place between DHS and the sector.'¹¹

Cross sectoral needs

The opportunity to coordinate initiatives and activities across particular sectors or services to provide a seamless integrated service system for the service user is facilitated through the partnership models. Through the development and sharing of practices, processes, protocols, and systems, such models can offer consistent pathways, joined-up services across diverse programs and more streamlined service responses for members of the community – in essence, simplifying the experience for a person accessing services.

Centrally driven

The challenge for the Government is to coordinate its policy efforts and relationship with CSOs. A large number of government departments have funding and other relationships with CSOs, and many CSOs receive funding and have relationships with multiple departments. The need for structures and processes that provide a more coordinated approach across government was recommended by both the Strengthening Community Organisations Project (SCOP) and the State Services Authority's Review of Not-for-Profit Regulation.¹²

Pitching the Partnership

Determining the level of planning in which a partnership would operate is a key factor in the type of structure established. For example, is the partnership to operate at a regional or narrower local government area-based catchment level? The question here is what can be locally driven and what is mandated at a state or central level?

Level of Partnership resourcing

The level of financial assistance to support any partnership impacts on its ongoing viability and sustainability. The capacity of local, state and federal governments, and CSOs themselves, to contribute resourcing to continue to build and maintain a partnership and the relationships between CSOs influences the partnerships' nominated projects and key activities.

¹¹ Victorian Auditor-General's Office, Audit summary of Partnering with the Community Sector in Human Services and Health, tabled in Parliament 26 May 2010.

¹² The SCOP and the SSA Review contributed to the development of the Victorian Government's Action Plan: Strengthening Community Organisations – for further information see: www.dpcd.vic.gov.au.

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Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership Skills

The degree of partnership synergy is largely influenced by the effectiveness of its leadership. Leading a successful partnership requires specific skills similar to the leadership attributes required in a successful organisation.

These skills include:

- 'taking responsibility for the partnership;
- inspiring and motivating partners;
- empowering partners;
- working to develop a common language within the partnership;
- fostering respect, trust, inclusiveness and openness in the partnership;
- creating an environment where differences of opinion can be voiced;
- resolving conflict among partners;
- combining the perspectives, resources and skills of partners; and
- helping the partnership look at things differently and be creative'.¹³

Leadership skills also encompass analytical skills and problem solving focussed on the service context, community and political environment, and task focussed skills concerned with meeting processes, such as facilitating meetings.

Chair in Leadership Role

The Chair of a partnership needs to be a highly skilled leader to ensure that the partnership is strong and most likely to endure.

The role of the leader or Chair requires a high level of credibility, influence, integrity, reliability, and trust. The leadership qualities must be recognised both internally and externally by other CSOs.

The role of the chair of a partnership is challenging and has different challenges to that of being a chair of a CSO's board, as while the partnership governance operates as a 'virtual board' and conducts their meetings under the same principles, the members are aligning their organisations' interests to that of the partnership to achieve the shared vision through collective action.

This role plays a pivotal role in developing and influencing a 'working together' culture devoid of 'turf' issues and funding 'bun fights' (but not a sole role). More often than not, the Chair has a high level of seniority in their own organisation which is recognised by all members internally and externally. The Chair at times needs to bring together diverse views and encourage the group to think beyond their organisation's perspective or outcome to the 'good' of the partnership. This involves fostering loyalty to the partnership while upholding the autonomy of each member CSO present.

As a skilled leader, the Chair facilitates the constructive, continued and consistent representation of key members. Without this leadership, members may disengage from accountability requirements and exhibit low meeting attendance, and issues can develop between other partner organisations with the auspice organisation (contact or lead CSO).

Nominating the Chair

Many of the partnerships profiled have appointed a Chair from one of the sector organisations rather than the funding department making the appointment. This decision is generally about locating ownership for the partnership within the sector, and is often vital to the partnership success.

In many of the partnerships, a natural leader has been identified and nominated by members for the Chair role.

Partnership Resourcing – Executive Officer / Project Officer / Coordinator Role

Partnerships may receive varying levels of funding from local, state or federal government to undertake key projects. This funding may be a one-off or ongoing contribution at the minimalist end that resources administrative functions associated with the partnership (secretariat), through to the high-end that enables the recruitment of a Project Officer, Executive Officer or Coordinator – depending upon the establishment terms of the partnership – to support the activities of the partnership.

¹³ E S Weiss, R Miller Anderson & R D Lasker, Making the Most of Collaboration: Exploring the Relationship Between Partnership Synergy and Partnership Functioning, *Health Education and Behaviour*, 29 (6), p688, Dec 2002.

This latter role ranges in responsibility from a Project Officer who may operationalise and implement the strategic goals, support members in between meetings, seek individual feedback, gauge views, canvass ideas and day to day liaison. The Executive Officer role is generally a more senior appointment that focuses on building relationships across members of the partnership and the broader sector, conducting analysis of data, information and trends impacting on the sector and across sectors, have strong project management skills, and ensure strong communication processes across stakeholder groups. The importance and value of adequate resourcing, including in-kind support from organisation members, is seen as pivotal to the success of partnerships.

Working Groups

Working Groups are typically created to support the overall work of the partnership to address a specific problem or to produce one or more specific deliverables, such as a guideline, standards specification, etc. Members of a working group are chosen with diversity aimed at forming an effective team that has a range of complementary skills and resources to ensure the deliverables produced are well informed and reflective of the specific population or cohort under examination.

The lifespan of the working group can last anywhere between a few months and several years, depending on a range of factors such as nature and complexity of task and the goals of the task.

Chair – Executive Officer/Coordinator/Project Officer Relationship

A healthy Chair –Executive Officer/Coordinator/Project Officer relationship is critical for the success of the partnership. Each relies on the other to undertake their role and responsibilities for the cohesion of the group.

At best, the relationship is respectful and complimentary, roles are clear and distinct, and there is an honest working relationship where any issues and broader partnership problems can be discussed without fear or favour and addressed jointly. At worst, a poor relationship breeds a lack of respect from one or both sides, in-fighting and an undermining of each other, which ultimately undermines the effective functioning of the partnership.

Members' Role

The capacity to achieve shared goals lies in the composition of appropriate members and their constructive contribution. The first step is to identify the key organisations that need to be at the table, with the second step being to engage the appropriate levels of representation and participation.

The success of the partnership hinges on the consistent engagement and contribution of cross-sectoral members over a long period of time. Retaining members' commitment over this time requires inspirational leadership and an agenda that changes in response to the context in which the partnership is operating. The capacity to which members attend and contribute to meetings and activities defines the strength of the partnership.

Partnerships work best where members make critical links across the external environment and back into the partnership environment. Members who operate in this way have been referred to as 'boundary spanners'¹⁴ – members who seek to bring information from the outside environment into the partnership environment in addition to taking information out to the external environment or sector.

¹⁴ This term was coined by Paul Williams in an article titled 'The Competent Boundary Spanner' first published online in Dec 2002, *Public Administration* 80, 1, p.103–124.

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Sustainability - Partnerships down the track

Ensuring partnership sustainability requires members to continually assess both its purpose and capacity to deliver outcomes.

A range of issues have emerged over a period of time for long-term partnerships that impact on the sustainability of the partnership. These include:

Partnership staying focused on its purpose and remaining relevant

Partnerships have a lifespan and need to regularly review their purpose and membership to ensure the partnership remains focused on its purpose and remains relevant. It is quite possible that different members are needed for different stages of projects and activities.

Membership - What to do with partnership members who don't do anything

There are a number of effective strategies to manage a situation where a member of the partnership is not dependable or fails to consistently follow through an action which impacts on the achievement of the partnership goals. This situation is not unrealistic as each member has their own responsibilities to their organisation and work pressures in addition to contributing to the partnership.

Every member shares in the responsibility to involve other members in the partnership. Non-participating members or consistent non-attendees can have a demoralising impact on members. In some situations the member may need a little reminder of their role as part of the partnership.

In the short term, possible strategies may include:

- Addressing absences with the member – is it temporary or mod operandi?
- Ascertaining the reasons for non-attendance.
- Revisiting expectations of members.
- Requesting an 'at level' proxy to attend.
- Reaffirming roles and importance of cross-sectoral representation.

Over a longer term, the Chair might consider:

- Suggesting a 'leave of absence' from the partnership if health, work, or other reasons are preventing full participation.
- Conducting a board discussion or a survey (see Tools to reinvigorate partnerships) on what makes it difficult for people to participate fully.
- Revising members' expectations of responsibilities - are tasks unrealistic; could there be more working groups?
- Changing the membership status to 'affiliated member'.

Tools to reinvigorate partnerships

Following are two key tools to utilise at the point where the partnership is stagnant.

Survey to re-engage members

It may be time for the partnership to cease or to change direction. Survey questions distributed to members that review the partnership process and membership commitment will provide feedback.

Questions may include:

- What has changed in the current environment or partnership space since the inception of the partnership?
- What are the new drivers?
- What do you think are the key challenges for the partnership over the next one to two years?
- What do you think the strategic vision of the partnership should include over the next one to two years?
- How do you think the partnership should operate in the future?
- What lessons from the partnership to date could we apply in the future?
- How well will the current membership mix (skill and broad coverage) meet the future challenges?
- Are there things that could be changed about the frequency, day, time, or length of meetings that would make it easier for you to attend?
- Are there things about the way that meetings are conducted that would make it easier for you to attend and participate or that would give you more reason to want to attend?
- Who do you think are the key organisations or sector bodies necessary for this next period?
- What do you see as your contribution over this next period?

Communication Strategy

The communication between members of the partnership, and between members and other sector organisations outside of the partnership, plays an important role in the success of the partnership. Whilst not all communications need documentation and formality, it is helpful to determine information flow on particular topics and identify responsibility for communication. Some partnerships have developed a communication strategy to clarify this. Below is an example of a Partnership Communication Strategy describing what, how and to who information is disseminated.

Example of a Partnership Communication Strategy

Meeting	Whose responsibility	When	Method	Governance Group	Affiliate Members
Governance Group	EO/Project Officer/Coordinator	Bi-monthly	Email		
Agenda	Chair/EO/PC	Bi-monthly	Mail for those without email	✓	
Minutes	EO/Project Coordinator	Bi-monthly	Mail for those without email	✓	
Partnership Budget	EO/Project Coordinator	Bi-monthly	Mail for those without email	✓	
EO Report to Governance Group/Other Governance Group Papers	EO/Project Coordinator	Bi-monthly	Mail for those without email	✓	✓
Partnership agreement	EO/Project Coordinator	6 monthly or annual review & every 2-3 years	Email hardcopy	✓	
Working Group	Chair Working Group	Fortnightly		Tabled at Governance Group bi-monthly meeting	
Agenda	Chair Working Group	Fortnightly	Mail for those without email	✓	
Minutes	Member, working group	Fortnightly	Mail for those without email	✓	

Source: North East Primary Care Partnership Agreement 2010-2012, 2011.

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Exit Strategy – Breaking up is hard to do

Some partnerships will naturally conclude – their purpose has been achieved, the purpose is no longer relevant or the partnership has morphed into another arrangement. For those partnerships that cease, there are a number of tasks or obligations to close the partnership. These tasks include:

Completion of the partnership obligations

This task relates to the achievement and completion of the partnership's legal and financial obligations, including final reporting requirements to the funding body, returning any unspent funds, collating files and archiving, and determining a location for the storage of files.

Recognition and thanks to Partnership members

Activities may include formal recognition and thanks to members for their participation, celebrating the completion of key work undertaken and successes along the way.

Post Partnership Review or Evaluation

The post review or evaluation is usually developed once the partnership has ceased and all the project deliverables have been finalised.

The final review or evaluation is both a history of the partnership and a final evaluation of its performance. The objectives are to determine if the partnership achieved what it was designed to do. The review should

assess how successful the project was in terms of functionality, performance, and cost versus benefits, as well as assess the effectiveness of the life-cycle development activities. This may involve seeking input from members via a brief written report, the completion of simple questionnaire or holding a meeting with key members to seek their input and opinions about the partnership and what they would do differently next time.

A post review is generally conducted up to 3 months after the partnership has ceased to enable objectivity and reflection time. The report is provided to members, the funding body or government which may jointly use the findings to initiate new actions or to inform future partnerships.

Further Resources

1. Australian Institute for Primary Care (APIC), *An Evaluation of the Primary Care Partnership Strategy Report*, 2005, p. 7.
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4. T Morrison, 'Understanding & Leading Inter-agency Partnerships: Support Materials' presented in partnership with Berry Street at Partnership Conference 29 January 2009, Ivanhoe Victoria.
5. Northamptonshire County Council Partnership Protocol: <http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Community/sic/Pages/PartnershipProtocols.aspx>.

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7. E P Weber, & A. M. Khademan, Wicked problems, knowledge challenges, and collaborative capacity builders in network settings. *Public Administration Review*, Mar/Apr 68(2), 2008, 334–349.
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Special Thanks

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- Erin Clark, Coordinator Family Services – Youth, Youth Services, City of Wyndham
- Julie Watson, Executive Officer, North East Primary Care Partnership
- Lee Kennedy, outgoing Executive Officer, HealthWest Primary Care Partnership

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	
5. Implementing collaborative action						
Processes that are common across agencies have been standardised (e.g. referral protocols, service standards, data collection and reporting mechanisms).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There is an investment in the partnership of time, personnel, materials or facilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Collaborative action by staff and reciprocity between agencies is rewarded by management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
The action is adding value (rather than duplicating services) for the community, clients or agencies involved in the partnership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There are regular opportunities for informal and voluntary contact between staff from the different agencies and other members of the partnership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
SUBTOTAL						0

6. Minimising the barriers to partnerships						
Differences in organisational priorities, goals and tasks have been addressed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There is a core group of skilled and committed (in terms of the partnership) staff that has continued over the life of the partnership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There are formal structures for sharing information and resolving demarcation disputes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There are informal ways of achieving this.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There are strategies to ensure alternative views are expressed within the partnership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
SUBTOTAL						0

7. Reflecting on and continuing the partnership						
There are processes for recognising and celebrating collective achievements and/or individual contributions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
The partnership can demonstrate or document the outcomes of its collective work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There is a clear need for and commitment to continuing the collaboration in the medium term.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There are resources available from either internal or external sources to continue the partnership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There is a way of reviewing the range of partners and bringing in new members or removing some.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
SUBTOTAL						0

Aggregate score	TOTAL
Determining the need for the partnership	0
Choosing partners	0
Making sure partnerships work	0
Planning collaborative action	0
Implementing collaborative action	0
Minimising the barriers to partnerships	0
Reflecting on and continuing the partnership	0
TOTAL	0

Checklist score

35-84 The whole idea of a partnership should be rigorously questioned.

85-126 The partnership is moving in the right direction but it will need more attention if it is going to be really successful.

127-175 A partnership based on genuine collaboration has been established. The challenge is to maintain its impetus and build on the current success.

The checklist

Rate your level of agreement with each of the statements below, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. The scores will be totalled automatically. To save your checklist, select 'File'/Save As'/PDF'. You can then name your checklist and email it to your partner organisations as an attachment.

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	
1. Determining the need for the partnership						
There is a perceived need for the partnership in terms of areas of common interest and complementary capacity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There is a clear goal for the partnership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There is a shared understanding of, and commitment to, this goal among all potential partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
The partners are willing to share some of their ideas, resources, influence and power to fulfil the goal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
The perceived benefits of the partnership outweigh the perceived costs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	SUBTOTAL
SUBTOTAL						0
2. Choosing partners						
The partners share common ideologies, interests and approaches.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
The partners see their core business as partially interdependent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There is a history of good relations between the partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
The partnership brings added prestige to the partners individually as well as collectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There is enough variety among members to have a comprehensive understanding of the issues being addressed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	SUBTOTAL
SUBTOTAL						0
3. Making sure partnerships work						
The managers in each organisation (or division) support the partnership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Partners have the necessary skills for collaborative action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There are strategies to enhance the skills of the partnership through increasing the membership or workforce development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
The roles, responsibilities and expectations of partners are clearly defined and understood by all other partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
The administrative, communication and decision-making structure of the partnership is as simple as possible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	SUBTOTAL
SUBTOTAL						0
4. Planning collaborative action						
All partners are involved in planning and setting priorities for collaborative action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Partners have the task of communicating and promoting the partnership in their own organisations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Some staff have roles that cross the traditional boundaries that exist between agencies or divisions in the partnership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
The lines of communication, roles and expectations of partners are clear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
There is a participatory decision-making system that is accountable, responsive and inclusive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	SUBTOTAL
SUBTOTAL						0

