

# APPENDIX 1: PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS

In this appendix, we collate the ‘practice considerations’ presented at the end of Chapters 2 to 10. Our purpose is to present in one place our suggestions about how practitioners might go about systematically untying the Gordian knot called *collaboration*.

## Chapter 2: A new business as usual

1. Is there a collaborative mindset in your organisation? Does collaboration figure as an organising theme of your organisation’s way of working, and does collaboration occur in practice?
2. Are people within your organisation free to engage collaboratively across programmatic, organisational or sectoral boundaries?
3. What opportunities exist in your organisation for employees to add to their collaboration skill set?
4. Does your organisation have any collaboration ‘protocols’ to guide and regulate collaborative processes?
5. What aspects of your organisation’s/sector’s BAU potentially acts to constrain or inhibit collaboration?
6. What would have to happen to allow for change to occur?
7. Is it presently possible in your organisation for people to ‘lead from below’—to exercise creativity and initiative in ways that are conducive to the revision of current practices or the adoption of new ones?
8. Are there people who occupy positions of influence within your organisation who might be prepared to champion or lead a process involving the review of, and reflection on, those aspects of BAU that are not conducive to collaboration?

9. Can you identify people in your organisation, or in your partner organisations, who might be enlisted as ‘collaboration champions’?

## Chapter 3: Designing impactful collaboration

1. Establish a baseline against which the impact of collaboration will be assessed. Ask questions such as: a) What is the nature of the problem(s); b) What factors contribute to the persistence of the problem(s); c) What is the nature of the desired change(s); d) How will collaboration contribute to the change agenda; and e) What will a positive impact look like?
2. Identify relevant sources of baseline data as well as any gaps in information. Where there are gaps, investigate whether other indicators or surrogate measures might be used. Identify institutions or people with relevant knowledge and expertise to peer review existing data and advise on cost-effective means for the ongoing collection, interpretation and reporting of data.
3. Engage with relevant data custodians in each of the partner organisations to identify any issues or problems—and solutions. These might include privacy considerations, the de-identification of data, statutory restrictions, the interoperability of data platforms and so on.
4. Is it possible to enlist the assistance or participation of independent researchers or research organisations with demonstrated expertise in the problems being addressed? What sources of external validation are available to affirm the collaborative approach and strategic aims?
5. Identify and evaluate the applicability of all available and relevant tools for the measurement of impact. Investigate resources such as the Social Impact Toolbox developed by the University of Technology Sydney in partnership with Community Sector Banking<sup>1</sup> or Platform C—a platform created to offer support, learning and connections for people looking to achieve large-scale impact through collaboration.<sup>2</sup>

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1 See [www.socialimpacttoolbox.com](http://www.socialimpacttoolbox.com).

2 See [platformc.org](http://platformc.org).

6. Devise an impact framework for sign-off by authorisers. Have direct and indirect measures of collaboration impact been peer reviewed by people with relevant expertise? Have all relevant internal and external stakeholders been consulted? Have the feasibility and sustainability of data collection been assessed?
7. As part of the impact framework, consider how the impact of collaboration will be reported. Ensure that any reporting of collaboration impact is subject to governance processes agreed by authorisers.
8. Spell out the 'path to impact' for authorisers and stakeholders. Keep in mind that collaborations take time to mature and it might be difficult to directly attribute impact to collaboration.
9. What interim indicators might be used to validate the collaboration? How might collaboration be a driver of cultural change, changed behaviour or practice or changes in operational and/or public policy?

## **Chapter 4: Collaborative intelligence and organisational intelligence**

1. Does your organisation have honest and full discussions regarding the nature of and challenges associated with successful collaboration, including in relation to whether or not it would genuinely support a collaborative process?
2. Does it recognise and discuss the idea of CQ, including to identify where the traditional governance structures may restrict the opportunity for effective collaboration?
3. Does your organisation have a written resource describing collaborative processes and the challenges and potential mitigations needed to communicate effectively?
4. Does your organisation value, encourage and reward attitudes, behaviours and practices that are consistent with CQ, including in relation to its performance management processes and activities?
5. Can you identify those aspects of your organisation's culture or business practices that either: a) inhibit the expression of CQ, or b) recognise and foster CQ?

6. Does your organisation value and offer incentives for measured risk-taking and forging relationships with internal and external stakeholders?
7. Are there potential CQ exemplars in your organisation who might be enlisted to act as CQ ‘champions’?
8. Do the recruitment practices and reward frameworks of your organisation support and reinforce personal qualities and attributes that are consistent with CQ?
9. What steps would you need to take to devise a ‘CQ strategy’ for your collaboration, and how might you capture the impact CQ has on collaboration success?

## Chapter 5: Designing the collaboration and its operational framework

1. Set out the case *for and* against collaboration, taking into account the fact that collaboration is not the answer to *every* problem. Would another form of working together be more appropriate to the task at hand? Is there a shared vision about the task to be undertaken or about the problem that needs to be addressed?
2. Reflect on how historical factors, the intersection of policy spaces, organisational culture and stakeholder relationships contribute to the problem/task; and identify what needs to change and assess the potential barriers to change.
3. Identify all relevant stakeholders and potential collaboration partners: who is *onside* and who needs to be persuaded? Appraise the trustworthiness and credibility of key agencies, institutions and actors from the perspective of major stakeholders. Consider how any trust/credibility deficits might be addressed as well as how established trust/credibility might be leveraged in support of collaboration aims.
4. Carry out a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of the key systems, behaviours, processes, institutions and actors that need to change to address the problem or carry out the task.
5. Assess the amount of executive-level backing for a collaborative approach. Assess the potential for a ‘zippered’ approach that entails peer-to-peer interactions with partner organisations (taking care to

- spell out the risks of a ‘button’ approach). Identify potential champions and influencers inside and outside all partner organisations and devise a strategy to mobilise their support for collaboration.
6. Assess whether partner organisations are ‘collaboration ready’. What aspects of their organisational culture present barriers to collaboration? What aspects of their culture enhance the prospects of collaboration? Is there an organisational commitment to ‘moving the dial’ where impediments exist? Do partner organisations have a track record of innovation?
  7. Assess authorisers’ appetite for risk: Do partner organisations understand the risks associated with collaboration? Do they embrace uncertainty? And are they prepared to accept and learn from failure?
  8. Assess the level of decision-making authority brought to the table by collaboration partners. Do participants have the knowledge, skill and authority to participate in decision-making? What resources are available to build the collaborative capacity of collaboration leaders and other participants? Consider engaging expert brokerage/facilitation in the formative stages.
  9. Construct a governance framework that will provide: a) clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of collaboration partners, and b) the assurance necessary for authorisers in partner organisations to embrace the kind of risk associated with collaboration.
  10. Think about how impact might be demonstrated over the course of the collaboration, including indirect indicators (for example, evidence of more effective multiparty working) and direct indicators (evidence of improved outcomes). Enlist the assistance of people and institutions with relevant expertise in the formulation of appropriate indicators.
  11. Formulate realistic timelines/targets for each stage of the collaboration—wherever possible, taking account of learnings from other collaborations—and, using the governance framework, ensure that authorisers and stakeholders know what to expect over the short, medium and longer terms.
  12. Develop a communication/consultation strategy and associated protocols to guide engagement with internal stakeholders (that is, within partner organisations) and external stakeholders (that is, individuals, groups and communities likely to be affected by the collaboration) around the rationale, purpose and proposed strategies for collaboration. Ensure consistent, transparent messaging. Actively manage stakeholder expectations.

## Chapter 6: Authorisation, governance and assurance

1. Distributed leadership, decentred authority and collective accountability are the three pillars of effective collaboration. Assess the degree to which these principles are consistent with the mission, values and operating culture of each partner organisation. Identify potential impediments (for example, inconsistent understandings about what these principles mean in practice) or constraints (for example, the statutory framework within which partner organisations are obliged to operate) and possible solutions.
2. Undertake a comprehensive risk assessment that addresses:
  - the risks (reputational, industrial, operational, legal or political) that might arise as a consequence of entering into a collaborative arrangement
  - the risks that might arise as a result of not collaborating (for example, continuation or worsening of existing problems)
  - the levels of trust prevailing between partner organisations and within organisations (for example, between business units or program areas affected by the proposed collaboration)
  - the legacy of past relationships between partners, especially where there is a history of mistrust or conflict
  - any policy gaps or misalignment of priorities and approaches that have contributed to the problems the collaboration is intended to address
  - the respective risk appetite of partner organisations and any differences in their respective risk management frameworks that might affect collaborative action.

It is essential that all collaboration partners contribute to the exercise in an open and forthright manner, even if the conclusions drawn from the assessment make for uncomfortable reading.

3. Prepare an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of competing governance models, including (but not limited to) participant governance, lead organisation governance or the establishment of a networked administration organisation (or some combination of the three).

4. To the extent that the proposed collaboration will exist in a secondary operating space, consider the implications for each of the partners with a special emphasis on the delegation of authority for decision-making and the provision of assurance.
5. Identify any skills, knowledge or information gaps that might in some way affect the capacity of partner organisations to engage in the collaborative endeavour and propose strategies to address these. Specify how preferred strategies will be resourced and implemented. Identify any existing internal capability within partner organisations that can be deployed to address the problem and/or indicate whether external expertise will be required and how it might be sourced.
6. Specify how and where decision-making will occur with respect to the collaboration and the level of authority and delegation capable of being exercised by the representatives of partner organisations. Set out clear protocols stipulating the manner in which the governance/backbone group advises authorisers about decisions taken and/or requests approval from authorisers for recommended actions. These protocols need to be able to identify points of disagreement between partner organisations, timely communication of approval and/or pathways for the timely resolution of disagreements.
7. Set out the expectations that will apply to each partner organisation and to delegates participating in any governance/backbone group. These might include expectations about financial contributions, the provision of operational support (for example, operating premises, payroll, financial management, human resource management, information technology, and so on) and 'behavioural' expectations (for example, ethical conduct, conflict resolution, internal and external communications and sharing of information and knowledge).
8. Consider the need to codify the governance framework for the proposed collaboration in the form of a written instrument, such as a contract, head agreement or MOU. Also consider whether to set out the same expectations and processes in a 'mission statement' for the purposes of providing assurance to a wider range of stakeholders.

## Chapter 7: Leading collaboration

1. Consider who might be best to exercise leadership roles within the collaboration. Ensure that you are selecting potential collaboration leaders based on collaboration competencies rather than on rank, position or formal responsibilities.
2. Give careful consideration to the leadership model you think is most appropriate to this collaboration. Give careful consideration to potential power imbalances between collaboration partners and key stakeholders. Carefully assess any sensitivities that might arise and how these might be ameliorated by sharing or distributing leadership roles within the collaboration partnership.
3. Benchmark your proposed collaboration leadership against other, comparable initiatives. Speak to the leaders of other collaborations to find out what works and what does not. Use available, relevant self-assessment tools such as the Collaboration Health Assessment Tool developed by the Centre for Social Impact.<sup>3</sup>
4. Take stock of the skills mix within the collaboration, including any gaps in key collaboration leadership competencies. Identify strategies to address those gaps and to leverage the strengths of partners. Identify sources of support or training within partner organisations or externally, including specialist consultants or facilitators. Identify potential mentors within partner and stakeholder organisations who might work individually or collectively with the collaboration team.
5. Formulate a leadership plan that takes into account any developmental needs of key partners such as the:
  - a. competencies required to support boundary-spanning activities
  - b. competencies required for each phase of collaboration.
6. Formulate a strategy for the purpose of socialising the collaboration among authorisers, partners and stakeholders, and for addressing and resolving any differences that might arise.
7. Ensure that authorisers understand the dynamics of collaboration leadership and the nature and desirability of shared accountability within a leadership group. Keep authorisers apprised of any issues that arise and the manner in which any disagreement about the aims, goals, strategies or means will be resolved.

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3 To access the Collaboration Health Assessment Tool, go to: [www.csi.edu.au/chat/about/](http://www.csi.edu.au/chat/about/).

8. Develop a business continuity and succession plan in anticipation of possible changes in key personnel to ensure that the collaboration stays on track.

## Chapter 8: Engagement

1. Identify all organisational, community and individual relationships that are to any degree important to the collaboration. Try to characterise the nature of those relationships—for example, are they constructive or adversarial? Comprehensively map the ‘ecosystem’ in which the collaboration needs to operate.
2. Who are the internal and external stakeholders who need to be ‘brought into the tent’? Remember, stakeholders can be organisations, individuals or communities of interest. Within organisations, what functional or business lines need to be on side?
3. Think hard about the core messages of the collaboration; test assumptions and consider all sources of evidence that support or challenge the collaboration’s central value proposition.
4. Work hard to have respectful conversations. Think carefully about what respectful conversations sound like. Identify sources of available knowledge and/or expertise that might be used to inform or guide an effective and consistent communication strategy.
5. Identify potential sources of middle-management resistance. Which core business functions within partner organisations are key to the operational success of the collaboration? For example, key players in communications, marketing, branding, legal, finance or human relations might need to be brought on board with the aims of the consultation. What strategies are available to gain the cooperation and/or support of these key gatekeepers?
6. Who are the potential collaboration champions in partner organisations? What avenues are available to enlist their support? Are they sufficiently well placed and well regarded, both in their organisations and externally? What opportunities exist to bring them into conversations with internal and external stakeholders?
7. Are there external influencers who might be enlisted to help promote the aims of the collaboration and build support among a wide range of stakeholders? These might include community leaders, leaders in civil society or business and others with a positive public profile and the capacity to reach multiple stakeholder audiences.

8. Consider the potential benefits of using an expert third-party facilitator to assist with the tasks of communication and building trust. This might be a private consultant or someone from an academic institution who has a professional interest in the objects of the collaboration, or it might be someone drawn from a community sector/civil society organisation who has standing within the relevant communities of interest.
9. It is important that any person acting in a facilitation role is seen to be impartial. Moreover, the facilitator must be capable of earning the respect of participants and stakeholders as well as being able to respond constructively to any disagreements or conflicts that might arise.
10. If engaging a consultant to perform this role, it will be necessary to confirm the availability of funds for the purpose (and, in this regard, it might be necessary to equitably share the costs between collaboration partners to ensure equal ownership of the process). It is also advisable for collaboration partners to come to a consensus view about the brief provided to the facilitator and to ensure the brief is authorised by the executive of each partner organisation.

## **Chapter 9: Enabling place-based solutions**

1. Carefully consider all of the potential characteristics of place that might have some bearing on: a) the prevalence and severity of the social problems the collaboration seeks to address; and b) the engagement of diverse local stakeholders in articulating the aims and objectives of the collaboration.
2. Factors that might have some bearing include: a) geographic factors such as distance and community infrastructure; and b) socioeconomic factors such as levels of economic participation, educational attainment, social cohesion and social exclusion.
3. Identify potential sources of relevant knowledge and expertise both within and external to the community that might be brought to bear on: a) appropriately framing the problem/s to be addressed; b) facilitating the establishment of the collaboration; c) identifying and communicating the range of feasible options; and d) articulating potential indicators of impact.

4. Identify and wherever possible coopt influencers from within the community whose involvement or endorsement has the potential to confer informal authority and legitimacy on social-purpose collaboration and facilitate access to sections of the community that might otherwise be hard to reach.
5. Develop a communication strategy that will speak to the range of audiences that have an interest in the purposes of the collaboration, taking into account issues such as access to digital media, levels of literacy and the proportion of the population from non-English-speaking backgrounds.
6. Prior to the commencement of the collaboration, seek clarity from authorisers/partners about the authority of frontline collaboration partners to exercise decision-making and shape the collaboration in such a way as to meet the needs of place and earn the trust and cooperation of community stakeholders.

## **Chapter 10: Earning trust, credibility and legitimacy**

1. In what ways might it be expected that collaboration will yield results unobtainable by sticking with the status quo?
2. Do the partner organisations' executive or leadership understand the rationale and expected benefits of a collaborative approach?
3. Has a stakeholder scan been carried out that identifies the people, groups, communities and organisations/institutions with a stake in the aims and objects of the collaboration (including internal stakeholders)?
4. Has an assessment been made of the nature and history of each stakeholder's interest in the collaboration, and the nature of any strategic/reputational risks (or benefits) that might be attached to that interest?
5. Has a full and frank assessment been made of the partner organisations' own history of action—or inaction—with respect to the problems to be addressed by the collaboration?
6. Has a full and frank assessment been made of the partner organisations' reputation with the public generally, and with relevant stakeholders in particular?

7. Do the partner organisations' executive or leadership understand the importance of trust, credibility and legitimacy in the context of collaboration?
8. Are there people within partner organisations with the reputation, skills, knowledge, judgement and temperament to lead/participate in a collaborative initiative?
9. What aspects of the partner organisations' operational culture might act to inhibit the expression of the range of qualities required to earn trust, establish credibility and demonstrate legitimacy?
10. Is the organisation prepared to back those working at the collaboration front line by: a) giving unambiguous formal authority to act collaboratively, and b) giving collaboration leads the authority to obtain the consent of affected interests to do things differently (social licence)? The latter is especially relevant in circumstances in which the collaboration seeks to address complex problems that affect historically disempowered communities, including indigenous communities.

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