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INTRODUCTION

What is collaboration?

Collaboration has become a word du jour in public policy circles in recent years—one that has become well embedded in the policy rhetoric and organisational narratives of the public and not-for-profit sectors. We are by now well accustomed to hearing policymakers and policy practitioners of all stripes talking about ‘wicked problems’ and invoking the need to marshal the capabilities of diverse individuals, organisations and sectors. And, indeed, sometimes this happens, and sometimes it leads to amazing results. Often, however, it does not happen or it happens but cannot be sustained.

‘Collaboration’ refers to any joint activity by two or more parties for the purpose of linking or sharing information, resources, activities and capabilities to achieve aims that no single party could have achieved separately (Bryson et al. 2006: 44; Bardach 1998: 8). Collaboration can occur in any domain and at any scale. For the purposes of this book, we are specifically concerned with collaborations for public purposes—in other words, collaborations designed to achieve public policy ends, particularly in relation to social problems.

It is our contention that collaboration—appropriately conceived, designed, implemented and governed—offers a means to break down organisational, policy and sectoral ‘silos’ that impede the effective treatment of problems. However, there are multiple impediments to collaborative action in public policy spaces dominated by large, hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations with distinct institutional and administrative histories.

In the following chapters, we introduce readers to a range of activities that underpin collaborative action and the personal skills and attributes exhibited by effective collaborators. Although these are important—and even vital—factors for effective collaboration, it is equally, if not more, important to consider the *collaborative capacity* of the organisations, entities or systems party to collaborative action. This is what Eugene Bardach refers to as ‘interagency collaborative capacity’ or ICC.

According to Bardach (1998: 20–21), ICC has *objective* and *subjective* components. The *objective* components of interagency action include formal agreements, personnel, budgetary and other resources, whereas the *subjective* components are mainly factors such as belief in the legitimacy and the desirability of collaborative action, the readiness to act on this belief and trust in those whose cooperation is essential for success (Bardach 1998: 22–23). For Bardach (1998: 22), the subjective components of collaboration are even more important than the objective components in that they serve to reinforce a collaborative *ethos* without which collaborative capacity is significantly compromised.

Although it is easy to *talk* about collaboration—and public sector managers in Australia and elsewhere *have* been talking about it for at least two decades—it is hard to *do*. There is a tendency in some settings for policymakers and decision-makers to enjoin frontline workers to ‘go forth and collaborate’ while paying scant attention to the collaborative capacity inherent in their organisations and operational systems. It is our aim to shed light on the objective *and* subjective components of collaboration by closely studying a number of initiatives in Australia and New Zealand that claim to place collaborative capacity at their heart. It is our hope that lessons drawn from the real-world experiences and personal observations of people serving on the collaboration front line will provide guidance and inspiration for those who are contemplating collaborative action.

Why collaborate?

As observed by John Bryson and his colleagues at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, ‘collaboration is not an easy answer to hard problems but a hard answer to hard problems’ (Bryson et al. 2009: 14). Even so, enthusiasm for collaboration has not dimmed in contemporary policy discourses despite its inherent difficulty. The ideal—or, as Australian policy scholar Janine O’Flynn (2008) has

suggested, the ‘aspirational ideal’—of collaboration retains an almost talismanic quality, evoking notions of reciprocity, social capital, network governance, shared value and collective impact.

It is widely accepted that collaboration across portfolio, organisational, programmatic and sectoral boundaries allows the capacities and capabilities of multiple stakeholders to be brought to bear on complex social problems (McInerney 2015: 295). Policymakers, policy thinkers, commentators and policy practitioners of all kinds extol the virtues of collaboration and avow its transformative potential. This is particularly true in social policy domains where it is widely accepted that many socioeconomic problems facing policymakers cannot be addressed by any one sector or organisation (Austin and Seitanidi 2012: 727).

However, the application of complex multiparty solutions to social problems also means placing greater priority on understanding and improving interorganisational and cross-sectoral relationships and taking more cooperative or participatory approaches (Suárez 2011: 308). For many organisations, this represents a departure from past practice. Acting collaboratively does not come easily or naturally, especially in the public sector, where longstanding incentives reinforce siloed behaviours (O’Leary 2014: 19).

The collaboration challenge

Collaboration depends less on bureaucratic mechanisms based on control, hierarchy and chains of command and more on relational mechanisms such as trust, shared values, implicit standards and consultation (Favoreu et al. 2016: 440). Unfortunately, cultural barriers and longstanding organisational routines often present significant obstacles to making the kinds of adaptive changes necessary to forge more collaborative ways of working (Favoreu et al. 2016: 449; Keast and Brown 2006: 51–52).

A 2012 report by the Australian Public Service Commission characterised collaboration as ‘a win–win view of’ problem-solving and ‘collaborative strategies’ as ‘the best approach to tackling wicked problems which require behavioural change as part of their solution’ (APSC 2012: 10). At its best, the report said, collaboration can lead to ‘higher stakeholder commitment, more comprehensive and effective solutions, and fewer resources having to be used by any one stakeholder’. In the worst cases, however, ‘collaboration can end poorly—dialogue can turn into conflict, hardened positions and stalemate’ (APSC 2012: 10).

While advocating that public sector organisations foster a culture that encourages collaboration and engagement, the Commission's report offered the following cautionary note:

It is clear that existing public sector institutions and structures were, by and large, not designed with a primary goal of supporting collaborative inter-organisational work. It can be challenging enough to implement governance arrangements and foster cultures that facilitate collaboration across internal organisational boundaries within hierarchical, vertically structured organisations. (APSC 2012: 17)

This observation rests on an implicit recognition that the Australian policy landscape is one in which governmental, organisational, programmatic and sectoral silos have proved to be remarkably persistent. This is a legacy that presents formidable barriers to sustainable collaboration.

'Are we there yet?'

Over a decade ago, Janine O'Flynn (2008) pondered whether we were witnessing a 'collaborative turn' in public policy or merely 'the latest fad to penetrate the Public Service'? Interrogating the 'rhetoric and reality' of collaboration discourses in Australian public policy, O'Flynn (2008: 184) proposed:

Collaboration has become so central to our conversations about public policy that few see the need to either define it or unpack what it means: collaboration has truly become part of the *Zeitgeist*.

She went on to conclude that, at best, 'we could be at the beginning of some evolutionary process that will propel us, in time, towards more genuinely collaborative approaches' (O'Flynn 2008: 191).

Seven years later, Australian policy scholar Helen Dickinson (2016) concluded that, while there *is* evidence of a shift away from *transactional* governance towards *relational* governance, we have yet to fully understand the implications for the kinds of skills and abilities that public servants will need to operate within more *hybridised* forms of public sector governance.

Organisational, programmatic and jurisdictional silos represent major barriers to the dissemination of knowledge and good practices. In the public sector, the reactive nature of public policy often stands in the way

of investigating better practices, properly documenting the development and implementation of programs and services or sharing learnings among organisations or between jurisdictions.

At the same time, competitive pressures inherent in transaction-based service delivery impede the diffusion of learnings in the not-for-profit and private sectors because such information is regarded as commercially sensitive. In addition, traditional control strategies used to govern intra-organisational information systems often fall short of the requirements of cross-boundary efforts (Pardo et al. 2006) owing to barriers to information-sharing such as legislative restrictions, the absence of a specific legal framework or protocols and/or the lack of technical interoperability (Lips et al. 2011).

The language of collaboration

It is commonplace for policy practitioners in both the public and the not-for-profit sectors to use the word ‘collaboration’ in a generic sense to denote a range of practices such as cooperation, coordination, partnership, networking, co-design, coproduction and information exchange. And, while one might reasonably expect each of these practices to be present to some degree in any collaboration, they do not necessarily amount to collaboration in and of themselves.

When it comes to collaboration, clarity of language is important because different understandings and expectations can lead to confusion and frustration, and potentially to dysfunctional or suboptimal outcomes (Keast 2016a: 39–40). It is useful, therefore, to clearly distinguish between three categories of interorganisational relationships:

1. *Cooperative relationships* that involve only a sharing of information and/or expertise, and in which each participant remains independent and interacts only when necessary to harmonise their efforts.
2. *Coordinative relationships* in which parties interact and plan with each other to better align what they are already doing while remaining independent and continuing to operate in their usual manner.
3. *Collaborative relationships* based on a recognition of interdependence and accompanied by a mutual commitment to working in new ways with the other members of the network to effect systems changes (Mandell et al. 2017: 329; Keast 2016a: 31).

Fewer silos, more listening and better skills

When asked to speculate about what the public sector might look like in 10 years, the head of the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Chris Eccles, said he expects to see a public sector that is focused on outcomes, less siloed and portfolio-driven and more reliant on collaboration, cooperation and co-design (Eccles 2016). A key reason it has proved so difficult to break down public sector agency and programmatic silos after a decade or more of talking about ‘joined-up’ government has to do with the way programs and services are funded through government budget processes (Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate 2015).

Governments increasingly accept that complex social problems require a spectrum of responses. Collaboration can provide spaces in which top-down and bottom-up approaches can meet, new adaptive solutions can be tested and risks can be equitably shared.

Meaningful engagement with communities of interest needs to be normalised as an integral element of the authorising environment and, where possible, steeped in principles of coproduction and co-design. This will require a process of transformative change in public sector culture, accompanied by the embedding of concrete, tangible disciplines within a reconceived authorising environment that supports, incentivises and rewards engagement, collaboration, innovation and experimentation.

Contemporary public policy implicitly and explicitly acknowledges the interests of multiple stakeholders. It is incumbent on public managers to listen to service users and community groups, to mobilise collective resources and knowledge in the public interest and to nurture coproductive behaviours (Sicilia et al. 2016). Unfortunately, the collaborative design and delivery of public services face fundamental challenges, such as an insistence on approaches that mimic ‘the architectures and practices of private sector organisations framed by business cases, target-based measurement and return on investment tools’ (Wilson et al. 2016: 3).

Praxis leads policy?

There is abundant circumstantial evidence that collaborative practice is often the child of necessity—informed more by the pragmatic decisions of people exercising their initiative at the coalface and colluding across organisational boundaries by creatively exploiting the blind spots in their authorising environments than by adherence to policy edicts. As Wilson et al. (2016: 2) observe: ‘In the messy reality of public management, the practices of collaboration have often run ahead of the policies of collaboration, leading to challenging relational issues between erstwhile partners.’

Such a view is reinforced by Keast (2016b), who examines the various markers of successful (and unsuccessful) collaboration between government agencies and not-for-profit organisations. She points out that, while ‘authentic’ collaboration is unfamiliar territory to many, far from being a ‘black box’, there is ample knowledge on which we might draw to deliver successful collaborations. According to Keast (2016b: 172), ‘successful collaboration relies heavily on good processes and their implementation’. She identifies a number of key processes that are essential to build on existing relationships and nurture new ones, establish trust, agree on what to work on together and *how* to work together, build new leadership capacities and manage conflicts (Keast 2016b: 172).

Keast (2016b: 169) notes that collaborative work is an inherently complex and dynamic endeavour that defies ‘prescriptive recipes for implementation’ and embodies diverse macro-level processes in the form of administrative structures and procedures, as well as what she refers to as ‘micro-relational processes’ in the form of ‘small, but powerful actions’ that help to ‘generate the space for reciprocity and mutual gain to emerge’ (p. 170). Importantly, Keast (2016b: 172) says that the implementation of the processes ‘has to be authentic and follow the intent of the collaboration itself’.

It is crucial to bring appropriate forms of leadership to collaborative endeavours in multi-stakeholder settings. As Crosby and Bryson (2005: 184) observe:

A central challenge for leaders is to bring diverse stakeholders together in shared-power arrangements in which they can pool information, other resources and activities around a common purpose. The focus should be on key stakeholders—those most affected by a social need or public problem or who have important resources for meeting the need.

A flawed service delivery architecture

In many respects, the current level of interest in collaboration is not just a response to problem complexity, but also a reaction to increasing *system* complexity. In 2016, reports to the Commonwealth Government by the Productivity Commission and the consultancy firm KPMG drew attention to systemic barriers to collaboration that are, to some extent, hardwired into Australia's service delivery architectures.

The Productivity Commission made some sobering observations about the shortcomings of Australia's service delivery systems. These are neatly encapsulated in the following quote:

Governments seldom take advantage of providers' experience and expertise in program delivery when designing systems of service provision. Instead, programs are designed by government agencies that are often remote from the realities of 'what works'. Often what looks good on paper does not translate to the real world, and contracts specify approaches to service delivery that are inconsistent with achieving high quality services, equity or efficiency. (Productivity Commission 2016: 31–32)

Separately, a report provided by KPMG to the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department suggested that—despite the potential to use competition to influence cost, quality and productivity and get better value for money—a purely market-based model might lead to fragmented services, reduced accountability, impaired coordination and disincentives for collaboration (KPMG 2016).

Repeated efforts to reform the bureaucratic, administrative state throughout the twentieth century have largely focused on making government bureaucracy more effective and efficient in its operations (Forrer et al. 2014: 214–15). In the 1980s, new public management (NPM) promoted greater creativity, flexibility and innovation in approaches to the delivery of public goods and services. NPM sought to 'reinvent' government by reducing or redefining the role of the state, encouraging privatisation and competition, using private sector expertise, becoming more customer-focused, decentralising authority, becoming more outcome-oriented and creating more transparency and accountability for results (Forrer et al. 2014: 217). What NPM did *not* do was challenge the basic presumptions of the bureaucratic model (Forrer et al. 2014: 216).

It is important to acknowledge that the bureaucratic model of public sector leadership and management has served well in providing standardised public services to large numbers of people (Forrer et al. 2014). However, the bureaucratic model may be unable to deal with complex problems in public policy that present the following characteristics:

- They are multijurisdictional, crossing local, state and even international borders.
- They are multi-programmatic, often involving several types of government programs and agencies.
- They do not lend themselves to command-and-control types of solutions.
- Citizens primarily interact with private or not-for-profit organisations and only indirectly with government.
- Leadership is diffused and must be coordinated to achieve best results.
- Roles are determined by knowledge and ability, not by positional authority in a hierarchy (Forrer et al. 2014: 209–10).

Collaboration is hard work

An important reason collaborative practice is not ‘settled’ is that it is very hard to do. Collaboration is a complex and resource-intensive exercise and many attempts at collaboration never get off the ground. A number of key success factors can be distilled from a survey of the collaboration literature. In general, collaborations succeed where the following characteristics are present:

1. There are prior structural relationships between partners.
2. There are clear objectives and partners agree about the problem they are trying to solve.
3. There is a supportive authorising environment and formal authority is conferred by powerful sponsors.
4. The collaboration has skilled, committed leaders who use formal and informal authority to resolve imbalances of power and influence and establish mutual understanding, respect and trust.
5. There are effective governance structures with final authority for decision-making.
6. The collaboration follows a detailed implementation plan and adheres to agreed rules of operation.

7. Accountability and evaluation processes are built in and adapted to the specific needs of the collaboration.
8. The collaboration has a public profile and celebrates its accomplishments.

Significantly, collaboration requires an authorising environment that encourages ICC (Bardach 1998). Conversely, if particular models of collaboration are mandated and prescribed from the top down, there is a risk that the collaboration will become just another requirement that needs to be acquitted and reported (Pell 2016).

Which model of collaboration?

Collaboration entails choices about the model of collaboration to be employed and the kinds of instruments and governance frameworks that best serve the needs of the collaboration and the partner agencies. Although many collaborations involve some type of formal agreement—for example, a contract or memorandum of understanding (MOU)—the achievement of shared purposes requires levels of cooperation and trust that cannot be enforced through a legal document alone (Forrer et al. 2014: 276). Trust exists where there are clear expectations and confidence that what has been committed to will be done. However, organisational, interpersonal and political complexities present potential obstacles to building trust across sectoral, jurisdictional, organisational and domain boundaries and, although trust can take a long time to build up, it can be quickly lost (Edwards et al. 2012).

As a starting point, it is important to understand that in cross-sector collaborations, public managers have considerably less control over their partners than in purely transactional contracting (Forrer et al. 2014: 276). While cross-sector collaborations require flexibility on the part of public managers, flexibility does not mean that standards are not set, expectations are not established or outcomes are not monitored (Forrer et al. 2014: 259).

Forrer et al. (2014) describe four types of *cross-sector* collaboration:

1. *Collaborative contracting*: Collaborative contracts are a complex form of contracting that generally exhibits one or more of the following characteristics: incomplete specifications of expectations; they are relational and involve aspects of governance that extend beyond the formal or written terms of agreements; and they are generally long term in nature, with repeated interactions (Forrer et al. 2014: 59).

2. *Partnerships*: In which public officials engage a private sector or not-for-profit organisation in the joint production of public goods or services and certain aspects of production and service delivery are shared, such as planning, design specifications, risk and financing.
3. *Networks*: In which public managers use formal and informal structures to allow governmental and non-governmental actors to work interdependently.
4. *Independent public services providers (IPSPs)*: An emergent type of collaboration involving the creation of self-directed entities comprising businesses, non-profit organisations and governmental units that collaborate in the production or delivery of public goods or services but operate outside the sphere of government control and oversight (Forrer et al. 2014: 18–19).

It should be noted that typologies such as the one presented above are not uncontested. McGregor-Lowndes and Turnour (2003), for example, have critiqued governments' use of 'partnership rhetoric', noting that 'partnership' has specific meanings in commercial law—especially in terms of the fiduciary relationship between partners—that are not necessarily reflected in instruments such as service provision agreements between governments and not-for-profit service providers.

Origins of this book

The research on which this book is based grew out of a one-day workshop held at The Australian National University in 2015. Entitled 'Cross-Sector Working for Complex Problems: Beyond the Rhetoric', the workshop's aim was to promote understanding of cross-sector approaches to complex policy problems at a practice level. The workshop brought together policy practitioners in the public and not-for-profit sectors and academic researchers to elucidate the promise and challenges of collaboration across sectoral boundaries and resulted in the book *The Three Sector Solution: Delivering public policy in collaboration with not-for-profits and business*, published by ANU Press and the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG).

A clear message from the workshop was that collaboration is 'easier said than done'—a conclusion emphatically supported by the research literature. Following the publication of *The Three Sector Solution*, it was

decided to develop a grounded research project to identify the core elements of good collaborative practice. Our research adds empirical weight to an emerging Australian literature on collaboration for public purposes (Keast 2016b; Alford and O’Flynn 2012; Alford 2009) and provides an evidential base for the adaptations required of public officials, executives of not-for-profits and their boards of management.

The cases

The research employed a collective case study approach. Data collection occurred principally through semi-structured interviews with key actors involved in the inception, design and implementation of the collaborative initiatives under study.

The five cases selected for study exhibit considerable diversity. They operate in different jurisdictions, involve different levels of government and operate at different geographical scales; they each have distinct institutional histories and span a number of policy domains; and they are governed with differing degrees of formality. Their aims and purposes include:

1. the development of a comprehensive national practice framework for the prevention of violence against women and their children
2. facilitating community-led emergency management planning and resilience
3. supporting the reintegration of offenders into the community on release from a custodial sentence
4. community-led strategies to reduce and prevent childhood obesity
5. coordinating pre-emptive multidisciplinary intervention for children at risk of formal notification.

Each of the individuals selected for interview played a significant part in the initiation, design and/or implementation of the collaborative initiative. They included senior executives, officials, frontline implementers, thought leaders and the members of backbone/governance groups.

Organisation of the book

Chapter 2: A new business as usual

In Chapter 2, we consider collaboration as a potential precursor to a new ‘business as usual’ (BAU). In essence, collaborative strategies are often pursued once it has been recognised that traditional programmatic approaches have demonstrably failed. The logic of collaboration hinges on a recognition that no single organisation or sector acting on its own has the capacity or capability to solve complex policy problems. Complex, or wicked, problems occur at the interstices of policy domains and formal accountabilities. This is particularly true for each of the cases investigated for this book. While collaboration makes intuitive sense, it is often ‘countercultural’ insofar as its success rests on a set of skills, behaviours and processes that represent a departure from accepted ‘legacy’ practices (Hanleybrown et al. 2014: 2).

Collaboration often entails an agenda for change—change in the nature of relationships, networks, governance, accountability and ways of working. Leading and sustaining change processes are difficult, even when the logic of change is broadly accepted. There is a tendency for government and social-purpose organisations to employ the language, or rhetoric, of collaboration without demonstrating a commitment to the cultural and operational adjustments required to collaborate.

Collaborative approaches can sometimes meet internal resistance in partner agencies, especially when the practices and behaviours required for collaboration are perceived to transgress operational rules and protocols or are seen as a threat to organisational or personal authority and influence. In part, internal resistance to collaboration derives from scepticism or apprehension about the impact of collaboration: ‘What if it fails?’

Chapter 3: Designing impactful collaboration

A core purpose of collaboration is to bring diverse capabilities to bear on complex problems that are beyond the ability of any single organisation to solve on its own. Clarity about the expected impact of collaboration is critical. However, collaborative approaches sometimes represent a major departure from traditional, siloed, programmatic service delivery architectures. For this reason, and because collaboration operates outside the usual incentive structures that apply in primary operating

spaces, collaborative strategies are sometimes subject to enhanced scrutiny. Collaborations, therefore, might operate with a heightened sense of urgency concerning tangible demonstrations of impact. Clear pathways to impact are essential to initiating collaboration and a strong evidential base is important for sustaining the confidence and ongoing support of partners and other stakeholders.

In Chapter 3, we profile the experience of one of our cases, the Whole of Systems Trial of Prevention Strategies for Childhood Obesity (WHO STOPS), which has explicitly modelled its approach on the collective impact model. Demonstrations of impact, however, are often beset by problems of definition and measurement, as well as practical problems, such as overcoming the lack of interoperability of business systems or the reluctance of data custodians to share information. In addition, the executives of partner organisations can sometimes be impatient for results; however, collaborations typically take two to three years to mature. Sometimes, too, impact is narrowly defined to exclude important indicators of important, and necessary, organisational and behavioural adaptations.

Chapter 4: Collaborative intelligence and organisational intelligence

In Chapter 4, we describe the nature and importance of collaborative intelligence (CQ), which refers to the mindset necessary for collaboration to flourish and embodies a set of values, behaviours and processes that are fundamentally ‘relational’ in nature, rather than ‘transactional’. CQ implicitly accepts the centrality of relationships as providing the foundation for collaborative action. Moreover, CQ is based on an implicit recognition that *people* collaborate and, therefore, interpersonal relationships are important building blocks of collaborative action. Therefore, it is essential that those tasked with making collaboration happen bring appropriate aptitudes and skills to the table. These include a preparedness to listen and consider diverse views, a willingness to compromise and engage in shared decision-making and an understanding of systems and the environment in which collaboration occurs.

Although individuals might bring CQ to collaboration, whether or not CQ is rewarded or reinforced is dependent on *organisational intelligence*, which determines the nature of the authorising environment (Yolles 2005). Thus, it is not sufficient to reflect solely on the qualities individual actors

bring to collaboration; it is essential to also consider the characteristics of authorising environments in which they work so we might assess what *authority* they have to collaborate.

Chapter 5: Designing the collaboration and its operational framework

It is important to ensure that the collaboration model is fit for purpose. That said, collaboration is not always the answer and can sometimes look very much like a solution in search of a problem.

In Chapter 5, we discuss the key elements of collaboration design. In many respects, all collaborations are unique. They are highly context dependent; collaboration partners bring different institutional and administrative histories to the table; the presenting problems they seek to address are multifactorial in nature; and stakeholders have diverse perspectives and interests. Collaborative strategies need to be built on a comprehensive understanding of the presenting problem(s) and the social, political and policy ecologies in which they arise.

It is important to identify the things on which collaboration partners agree *and* the things on which they disagree. Where there is disagreement, it might be possible to establish protocols to guide discussion and so avoid conflict and fallout. Independent collaboration ‘brokers’ can play a positive role by helping to bridge gaps in nomenclature and understanding.

Collaborations work best when there is clarity about aims, strategy, process, communication and conduct. However, respectful, cordial communication can sometimes be difficult, especially when strong personalities are involved and/or parties bring divergent views to the table (Kahane 2017). It is essential, therefore, that collaborations forge a shared understanding—based on a common language—of the collaboration’s purpose, objectives, rationale, strategic direction and proposed actions.

Chapter 6: Authorisation, governance and assurance

The provision of assurance to authorisers is important for sustaining confidence in, and the internal legitimacy of, collaborative strategies, and depends on a robust governance framework. In Chapter 6, we address the importance of unambiguous executive management support for

collaboration. It is essential to establish strong management pathways to enable formal authority to cascade down to the collaboration and assurance to flow up to executive management. Formal pathways for authority and assurance can also be enhanced by the appointment of senior collaboration champions. Direction and oversight of collaborative initiatives can be provided by a governance group or ‘backbone organisation’ whose members—collaboration leads and partners—provide an essential conduit for the flow of assurance to authorisers and other stakeholders.

Collaboration frequently occurs in what Kotter (2012) refers to as ‘secondary operating spaces’. These secondary spaces are informal or semiformal operating environments that are less tightly bound by the normal requirements of the dominant primary operating spaces. Secondary operating spaces allow partners to establish operational norms and ways of working that meet the needs of collaboration *and* provide assurance to authorisers. These collaborative spaces might be formalised via instruments such as MOUs, relational contracts or other mechanisms.

Chapter 7: Leading collaboration

In Chapter 7, we discuss the attributes of effective collaboration leaders. Collaborative leadership is a critical factor in the success of any collaborative initiative. Collaborations often experience difficulties in sustaining their founding purpose and maintaining the necessary levels of personal and organisational commitment over the longer term. In addition, collaborative initiatives sometimes meet with institutional and stakeholder resistance.

Effective collaboration leaders exhibit high levels of CQ, including exemplary interpersonal and communications skills, the ability to instil trust and act with authenticity, and strong facilitative and catalytic capacities. They need to be able to utilise formal and informal processes to engage their fellow collaborators, share responsibility and ensure that all partners feel they are an important part of the process. In the complex environments characteristic of collaboration, contradictions and tensions sometimes arise between the collaboration leadership and the prevailing values and norms in partner organisations. Collaboration leaders need to be able to protect the collaborative process politically and adapt to an ever-changing environment while keeping collaborative objectives in sight.

Chapter 8: Engagement

In Chapter 8, we examine how each of the cases has confronted the need for constructive engagement with both internal and external stakeholders to reduce institutional and stakeholder resistance, ensure adequate resourcing and maintain the support of authorisers.

Collaboration typically involves multiple organisations and sectors, each with their own administrative history, mission, organisational culture and operating systems. Success depends, in part, on the resources, people, management systems and authorising structures provided by partner organisations. It also depends on earning the confidence and support of external stakeholders, including the people and/or communities affected by a new BAU.

Collaboration sometimes meets with internal resistance from middle managers because the incentive structures under which they operate tend to reward fidelity to operational protocols rather than risk-taking. To the extent that engagement around collaboration tends to be focused externally, internal stakeholders can be overlooked. Collaboration ‘champions’ (within partner organisations) and ‘influencers’ (within affected communities) can play an important role in leveraging internal and external support for collaboration.

Chapter 9: Enabling place-based solutions

Importantly, collaboration is about ‘doing with’ not ‘doing for’ or ‘doing to’. One of the strengths of collaboration is the potential for developing bespoke solutions that reflect local circumstances and preferences. Whereas bureaucracies traditionally favour standardised systems for service delivery in which treatments of social problems are constrained by organisational, portfolio and/or programmatic silos, collaboration can create opportunities to involve a set of diverse actors in processes of defining problems and agreeing on strategies. It needs to be borne in mind that collaboration is sometimes offered as a solution when ‘traditional’ approaches have demonstrably failed or as a remedy for resource scarcity.

Understandably, past failures predispose some stakeholders to scepticism and collaborative approaches can reveal tensions within and between partner organisations and within communities. In Chapter 9, we examine the case of the Community-Based Emergency Management (CBEM) initiative in Victoria, which has embraced a community-led approach to

disaster readiness and community resilience. We also reflect on the inherent difficulties of mandating a standardised format for collaboration. In this regard, we consider the experience of New Zealand’s Children’s Action Plan, where attempts to impose a standardised operating framework met resistance from community stakeholders.

Chapter 10: Earning trust, credibility and legitimacy

Successful collaboration requires stakeholders to give up power and control, to take risks and to operate outside accepted frameworks. In Chapter 10, we explore how collaboration leaders can earn and retain the trust of stakeholders—both internal and external—to maintain legitimacy and credibility. We consider the example of Change the Story, a collaborative initiative whose aim was the development of a comprehensive national framework for the prevention of violence against women and their children. From the outset, Change the Story confronted the challenge of forging broad agreement in a diverse and sometimes fractious policy space. Observations from other cases are also drawn on.

We also consider the utility of social licence to operate (SLO) as a means for framing demonstrations of stakeholders’ trust in collaborative processes (Butcher 2018). Originally pioneered as a mechanism for enterprises to gain the permission of affected communities for mining operations—particularly indigenous communities—SLO has now spread to other resource industry sectors, such as forestry and renewable energy, and is also being applied in the international aid and development space. A key feature of SLO is that it most often applies when enterprises are ‘operating out of place’, often in postcolonial settings, and is centrally concerned with obtaining the ‘permission’ or ‘licence’ from communities for activities that affect them. The relevance of SLO to collaboration will be discussed in the context of the establishment of Children’s Teams in New Zealand communities in which Māori form a significant share of the local population.

Chapter 11: Conclusion: Are we collaborating yet?

In Chapter 11, we review the major learnings drawn from our case studies. We distil the major elements of successful collaboration with a view to providing practical guidance to policymakers and frontline practitioners. We identify the new skill sets needed, the key elements of a collaboration-friendly authorising environment and develop a value proposition that

supports the authentic pursuit of collaborative processes in the solution of significant problems. We discuss the need to embrace experimentation when pursuing collaborative responses to wicked social problems, arguing that collaboration can only thrive in a ‘safe to fail’ authorising environment that accepts measured risk-taking.

Appendix

In the 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*.

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