

The Inter-agency Services Collaboration Project

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Inter-Agency Service Collaboration in the NPO Sector

By Joan Roberts and Pauline O'Connor

Introduction

Collaboration has become a major focus of attention and action in business and government over the last several years. The number of collaboration initiatives within the private and public sectors, as well as between those sectors, has increased significantly over the last decade. Government's, and to a smaller extent, the corporate sector's, interest in collaboration within and with the NPO sector, has also increased. In Canada, this interest has been reflected at the federal level most recently with policy statements such as the 2001 *Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* and the 2002 *Code of Good Practice on Funding*, which outline respective roles and responsibilities and shared values to guide collaboration between Ottawa and the NPO sector.¹

The discussions around collaboration within and among the public, private and NPO sectors sometimes suggest collaboration as a “magic bullet” for solving increasingly complex social and economic problems and societal structural challenges. Within the NPO sector, collaboration is hardly a new strategy or idea. The current interest in collaboration as a society-wide strategy, however, brings the issue of NPO collaboration into the orbit of these broader policy discussions, and raises new questions and expectations for the sector.

But what does collaboration mean for the NPO service sector? Is it a useful strategy in the sector? What does it achieve? Who supports it and why? How, when, and with whom should NPO organizations collaborate? Should their collaborations be driven by the same goals and strategies as drive government and business collaboration? One of the ways in which the Wellesley Institute advances urban health is through building NPO sector capacity to provide sustainable, effective services that improve outcomes for disadvantaged populations and communities. The current attention and action on collaboration suggests that collaboration is a potentially powerful strategy to build the capacity of NPO services in ways that improve outcomes. The Wellesley Institute initiated this project in collaboration with other Toronto NPO capacity builders as the first in a series of projects to investigate collaboration's potential to enhance NPO capacity and effectiveness in Toronto.

SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

What is “collaboration”? Broadly speaking, collaboration refers to individuals or organizations working together to achieve a common purpose. (See Appendix A for a glossary of terms used in discussing NPO collaboration.) Collaborations can involve varying degrees of sharing of authority, resources and information. But they fall short of full amalgamation or union of the participants into a new entity.

¹These policy statements emerged from the work of the Voluntary Sector Initiative, which in turn resulted from the 1999 Voluntary Sector Roundtable or “Broadbent Panel's” report, *Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada's Voluntary Sector* (VSR).

The NPO sector encompasses many different types of organizations providing many different types of services. Moreover, NPO organizations collaborate – with each other and with other sectors – in widely different ways. They may collaborate to advocate and inform policy-making and system change; to coordinate and plan services across geographical regions and service areas; or to plan and deliver direct services to clients. NPOs across a whole sector, such as mental health providers, may collaborate together. Or the collaboration may involve a few individual agencies whose staff know each other and come together to exploit specific opportunities to improve services or influence policy. Often, individual organizations are collaborating in many ways, with many different groups of organizations, at the same time.

This first project set out to examine one slice of NPO collaborative activity -- *collaborations among NPO agencies that directly or indirectly enhance service delivery*. This includes collaborations to enhance organizational operations – administration and human resources, for example – and collaborations to enhance service planning and delivery. Examples of such collaborations include shared administration, budgets, or administrative staff; shared infrastructure such as co-location; joint service planning, or joint program delivery such as single intake; inter-agency service protocols or case management for clients; and information-sharing. Figure 1 describes the continuum of types of inter-agency collaboration. The project focused on service collaborations because they relate directly to NPO capacity to promote health equality through effective services, and because community-based health and social service providers feel under increasing pressure to rationalize and integrate their services through collaborative strategies that may lead all the way to organizational amalgamation.

FIGURE 1: CONTINUUM OF TYPES OF INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION, BY INTENSITY

INDEPENDENCE	← LESS INTENSE ————— MORE INTENSE →			
	COMMUNICATION	COOPERATION	COLLABORATION	INTEGRATION
	INTER-AGENCY INFORMATION SHARING	SHARED POLICIES OR PROTOCOLS FOR DEALING WITH CLIENTS	SHARING RESOURCES STAFF, DECISION-MAKING	INTEGRATED PROGRAMS, PLANNING, FUNDING

Adapted from Vanderwoerd, J. (1996). *Service Provider Involvement in the Onward-Willow-BBBF Project: 1990-1993*. Better Beginnings, Better Futures Research Coordination Unit: Queens University

The initial focus was also restricted to non-institutional or community-based health and social service providers. The realities of the research eventually broadened this focus to include lessons learned from NPO service delivery collaborations involving institutional and other partners. Initially, this project restricted its attention to NPO inter-agency collaborations that involved formal working agreements. However, as the summary of findings in Graham (2007) shows, this restriction would exclude much of the valuable actual collaboration that is taking place among Toronto service agencies.

The project explored several questions:

- What assumptions or forces appear to be pushing local NPO service agencies to collaborate more in service delivery?
- Does collaboration work? That is, does it result in better services, better client outcomes, than agencies working alone?
- What is the state of collaboration among Toronto health and social service agencies? What are the forces shaping the amount and kind of collaboration we are currently seeing in NPO health and social service delivery in Toronto?
- On the assumption that collaboration can work, at least sometimes, what policies and policy supports promote collaboration that improves services and client outcomes?
- On the assumption that collaboration can work, at least sometimes, what do NPO service agencies need to know about when and how to build collaborations that will work, that is, improve services and client outcomes?

METHODS

The project explored these questions using a multi-method approach. Scans of the research literature were conducted in all topic areas. The literature searches included both academic and gray literature. Information from the literature reviews was enriched through interviews conducted with key informants who have intimate knowledge of the goings-on within the sector. These included Toronto capacity builders, NPO collaborators, and other sector experts. Case studies were employed in order to gain insight into the process of collaboration. The East Scarborough Storefront Project provides a successful example of a collaboration that has survived the funding rollercoaster, while the case of the Korean Interagency Network provides insight into the process of forming a collaborative arrangement. Finally, a roundtable was held with local capacity builders, experts, officials from all three levels of government, and service providers. At the roundtable, participants expressed their reactions to the reports and discussed issues they felt are important for NPO collaboration. A synthesis of the learnings from the roundtable has been included in the report.

OVERALL FINDINGS

The current enthusiasm for collaboration in the NPO sector suggests many stakeholders already endorse collaboration as a strategy to increase NPO sector capacity and effectiveness – perhaps even as a “magic bullet” to achieve these ends. For these stakeholders, the key question to ask about services-related collaboration in the sector is not *whether* collaboration is an important strategy to improve outcomes, but *how* services-related collaborations should be encouraged and sustained. Academic and community researchers appear to share this perspective, focusing their work largely on the process questions of how to create and sustain good working collaborations (Boutilier et al. 2007).

Taking this widely held view as a working hypothesis, the project’s initial investigations aimed to clarify and substantiate the objectives and impacts – on clients, communities and services – of NPO service-related collaborations, and to identify process and policy strategies to promote collaborations that would improve outcomes for clients, communities and services in Toronto.

The first overall finding of the project, however, was that a clear case has yet to be made for collaboration as a strategy to build the capacity of NPO services to improve client and community outcomes. Specifically, the project found:

- a. A lack of research evidence on the impact on clients, communities, and services of different types of service collaborations (Figure 1), due to a lack of outcome evaluations of individual service collaborations in both the academic research and grey literature (BOUILIER ET AL. 2007).
- b. A lack of shared, clear understanding among Canadian stakeholders of what NPO services-related collaboration is intended to achieve (HOWARTH 2007; GRAHAM 2007). NPO service providers depend primarily on governments for funding, and to some extent on foundations and NPO funders such as the United Way. (In Ontario, the Province funds about 80% of NPO health and social services.²) Government funders’ ambitions for collaborative service delivery in the sector are not clearly articulated, and perhaps not well defined (HOWARTH 2007). But there is some evidence, and a widespread perception within the NPO sector, that funders’ and providers’ goals are often at cross-purposes: many funders are perceived to promote collaboration to rationalize and reduce duplication in existing services, while community-based providers say they most often collaborate to leverage resources in order to respond innovatively to complex community needs (HOWARTH 2007; GRAHAM 2007).

The second overall finding of the project, however, was the outline of a “bottom-up” approach to NPO collaboration that has potential to increase collaboration and improve outcomes for clients and communities. This approach

²Katherine Scott, Spyridoula Tsoukalis, Paul Roberts, and David Lasby, *The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in Ontario: Regional Highlights of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. (Toronto: Imagine Canada and Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006) p.20.

emerged from local capacity builders, community-based providers, funders and other stakeholders in key informant interviews and roundtable discussions, and from additional research on collaboration in business and government.

These investigations found:

- a. Sustainable service delivery collaboration that is perceived to have positive impacts on clients and communities is typically “bottom-up” – that is, it originates among service providers, strongly motivated, who come together to respond to a need. Funder-mandated or -incented collaborations, or collaborations in which agencies are not highly motivated to participate, or which lack a clear “value proposition” (some clear result each participant is seeking from the collaboration) are hard to create or sustain, and unlikely to improve outcomes for clients and communities (Graham 2007; Roberts 2007; Roche and Roberts 2007; Roundtable Proceedings).
- b. Bottom-up collaborations most often form to respond to complex community needs rather than to increase efficiencies or rationalize services for their own sake (GRAHAM 2007; ROCHE AND ROBERTS 2007; ROUNDTABLE PROCEEDINGS). This impetus for collaboration may explain in part why most collaboration among Toronto health and social services agencies continues to consist in informal information-sharing, followed by shared protocols and processes to link clients to services, and why there is relatively little of the back-office consolidation (e.g. shared IT systems), the rationale for which is typically efficiency-based.
- c. The NPO sector’s bottom-up impetus to collaborate shares interesting parallels with private sector collaboration. Business collaborations are aimed often as not at increasing firms’ long-term profitability in complex, intensely competitive globalized markets – a strategic goal – rather than at increasing short-term profits through increased efficiencies (ZIZYS 2007). That is, like NPO collaborations, business collaborations also often aim to leverage resources to respond innovatively to their complex environments. Moreover, the response of both business and NPO collaborations is often to bring together different core competencies within the different organizations to respond innovatively to the complex environment (GRAHAM 2007; ZIZYS 2007). One important difference between business and NPO collaborations, of course, is business’s focus on narrow, limited ends in collaboration.

Business is the only sector for which there is considerable evidence that collaboration improves outcomes – both strategic (at least for simple collaborations) and short-term financial outcomes (ZIZYS, 2007). Arguably, the private sector’s success with collaboration motivates and guides governments’ current efforts to increase collaboration within the public and NPO sectors. The success of strategic private sector collaborations in improving outcomes therefore provides some indirect rationale, for NPO services-related collaborations improve outcomes for clients and communities. However, the differences between NPO and business collaboration also suggest caution in generalizing the business experience to the NPO sector.

- d. There would be more collaboration if agencies had more financial and other resources to build and maintain labour-intensive collaborations, and if government’s and other funders’ policies toward the NPO sector were

more collaboration-friendly (GRAHAM 2007; EAKIN 2007; ROUNDTABLE PROCEEDINGS; ROCHE AND ROBERTS 2007).

Community-based providers are keen to collaborate where it will meet community needs, even though they are also skeptical of policy-makers' and funders' goals for NPO collaboration, and want solid evidence that their collaborations improve outcomes (GRAHAM 2007).

Funders' intense concern with funding accountability reduces agencies' ability to collaborate by consuming enormous agency resources in applying for, and reporting on, funding (EAKIN 2007). This intense concern with funding accountability reinforces NPO perceptions that government sees collaboration as a strategy to contain costs by increasing efficiencies. Un-standardized funder policies and procedures, and lack of direct funding for collaboration even when mandated, also reduce the resources for collaboration (GRAHAM 2007; EAKIN 2007; BANASIAK 2007). Skills training to providers on how to create and sustain collaborations would also increase sustainable collaborations (ROBERTS 2007; GRAHAM 2007).

- e. Intensive collaborations that involve shared resources, activities, and /or authority (see Figure 1) very often coalesce out of informal information-sharing among agencies, or the ongoing activities of sector networks, alliances and other project partnerships (GRAHAM 2007). These other collaborative activities also need to be nourished for services-related collaborations to increase.

There is a pressing need for more evidence that collaboration enhances NPO sector capacity to improve outcomes for clients and communities. More substantial evidence is also needed on which types of collaborations (Figure 1) improve outcomes, and in what contexts. In the interim, though, some indirect evidence from the private sector, and anecdotal evidence and ongoing commitment to strategic collaboration from providers, as well as other stakeholders, present some rationale for moving forward in promoting collaboration as appropriate.

The most promising approach to increase levels of collaboration in NPO services, and to increase the kinds of collaborations most likely to improve outcomes, is for all stakeholders to work together to create a policy and practice environment that best nurtures bottom-up collaborations that evolve to respond to complex community needs in innovative ways. This involves re-orienting efforts away from collaboration imposed as a top-down strategy to rationalize existing services for its own sake. What evidence we have suggests that such collaborations are more likely to wither and die, and therefore less likely than organic collaborations to improve outcomes for clients and communities.

Positively, it involves NPO-friendly policies, more research evidence on what works, and entrepreneurial action within the sector that will facilitate more organic collaboration and remove barriers to its bottom-up development. Key informants and roundtable participants had some specific suggestions for action. These are highlighted in the final section.

DETAILED FINDINGS

This section describes the findings from the research in more detail. The findings are organized under headings that largely respond to the research questions that guided the investigations. (Individual reports can be read in their entirety after this chapter.)

1. THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR NPO SERVICES-RELATED COLLABORATION

There is a widespread perception in the NPO sector that funders – primarily governments – want more collaboration, and more intense collaboration (Figure 1) among NPO health and social services. For example, the newly formed Local Health Integration Networks [LHINs] have a mandate to integrate services within Ontario’s 14 regional health care authorities, including those community-based health services they coordinate and fund. These policy trends raise the spectre of organizational amalgamation for sector providers. For funders, the more limited integration of specific planning, program delivery, or administration functions among several agencies might be viewed either as an alternative to full amalgamation, or a way-station to that result. A scan of federal, provincial and City of Toronto policy statements on collaboration among NPO community service organizations, and between government and the sector (HOWARTH 2007), however, found:

- a. Government’s rationales for collaboration with the NPO sector identify multiple goals, from improved service access to increased civic engagement. However, there are no similar stated rationales for collaboration within the NPO sector (although the difference between “with” and “within” is not always noted).
- b. Program-level policies for the NPO sector consistently call for more partnerships and collaboration among agencies. The focus here is solely on service delivery. The goals and objectives for collaboration seem to be: improved service delivery effectiveness and impact through, for example, reduced service duplication: increased service coordination for clients: and streamlined access [HOWARTH 2007].
- c. Government makes no clear statement, at either the policy or program level, about which types or intensity of collaboration (Figure 1) it thinks is needed. However, even initiatives directed to increasing service integration, such as the LHINs, do not call for agency amalgamations [HOWARTH 2007].

In key informant interviews, capacity builders, providers and researchers indicated that community-based agencies have traditionally collaborated, mostly in informal information-sharing. They felt that community-based agencies want to collaborate more often and more intensively (Figure 1) wherever doing so will leverage more resources to respond to the complex needs that agencies face (GRAHAM 2007).

2. EVIDENCE FOR POSITIVE IMPACTS OF NPO SERVICES COLLABORATION ON SERVICES, CLIENTS AND COMMUNITIES

There is a dearth of quantitative studies examining effective service delivery collaboration strategies. This is due to the limited amount of quantitative work undertaken in the NPO sector, as well as to the limitations of the evaluation capacity of the field (there are few measurable indicators of successful outcomes of collaboration). Some studies do show benefits for the agencies involved (such as pooled resources, enhanced efficiency, and reduced administrative costs), yet benefits for clients are harder to evaluate. The evidence that does exist points to the benefits of the range of services available, as opposed to the conventional single-interventions available, when agencies partner together for service delivery. It is not the partnerships themselves that make an impact on the service delivery outcomes, but the increased number of services to which clients have access as a consequence of the collaboration. The literature review produced the following findings:

- a. A mix of services (health promotion, child development and employment services) was more effective than receiving just one of these interventions (health promotion only or child development only) in helping single mothers to leave social assistance (BROWN, 2000). BELAND (2004) provides further support with his study of services for weak senior citizens. An integrated case management program involving a multidisciplinary team (case managers, physicians, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, nutritionists, etc.) improved outcomes for frail elderly citizens using services in Quebec while also reducing the burden on institutionalized hospital services for supporting these patients (BELAND, 2004).
- b. The Conference Board of Canada (2001) found inferential evidence of the benefits of collaboration (typical of the literature). Their study describes the co-location of a number of employment-related services that both share office infrastructure and employ a computerized client data management tool. The inferential evidence includes: avoiding duplication; alleviating the need for clients to navigate fragmented services; reducing administrative costs through integrated data-tracking of clients; pooling resources to accomplish more than if the agencies tried to carry out the same functions separately; and making referrals more likely to be acted upon, for counselors literally walk the client from one service to another.
- c. The Partnership for Employer-Employee Responsive Systems (PEERS) found that workforce development intermediaries (an organization that coordinates or facilitates the matching of employers needing workers with workers searching for work) engaging employers in a collaborative manner (as opposed to placement services only) are more likely to benefit both employers and workers (2003). Using such workforce intermediaries led to higher productivity and higher wages, benefiting both employers and workers.

The need for more concrete evidence is found in cases of collaboration that show limited beneficial impact. Early evaluations of the Sure Start Program (Sure Start, 2005) found that multi-function building centers allow clients to enter without fearing the stigma attached to some service buildings (since they could be entering for any number of reasons). While this is promising, the National Audit Office (2006) found that the more disadvantaged children in

deprived communities (e.g., teen mother, lone parent, workless households) were adversely affected by living in a Sure Start community. Their speaking, behavioural, and social skills suffered. Studies such as this one point to the need for more rigorous, verifiable methods in evaluating the outcomes of inter-agency collaboration. Further research of a more scientific nature is needed before one can confidently proclaim that integrated service delivery methods do indeed lead to better outcomes for clients.

3. THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS AS MODELS FOR NPO COLLABORATION

Other sectors' experiences with collaboration can shed light on, or provide indirect evidence for, collaboration's potential for the NPO sector in the absence of direct evidence from the sector itself. The private sector's successful embrace of collaboration is widely thought to drive government efforts to increase collaboration within government and within the NPO sector (ZIZYS 2007). A brief scan of the goals and impacts of private sector collaboration found (ZIZYS 2007):

- a. Collaboration among firms has expanded rapidly since the 1980s, mainly in response to increased market competition and complexity, and to changes in technology and modes of production that allow greater production flexibility and innovation. Individual firms work to access more markets and opportunities, spread risk, and leverage more capital than they could do alone, by building inter-corporate alliances and flexible supply-partnerships (ZIZYS 2007).
- b. As indicated earlier, only some of these collaborations aim to increase short-term profits through increased efficiencies. Many, if not most, pursue strategic longer-term goals such as increasing market share (ZIZYS 2007).
- c. Although most business alliances fail – as much as 70% of all alliances, some estimate – the survivors report significant success as measured by higher share prices, improved products, expanded sales, and reduced cost structure for the participating firms (ZIZYS 2007).
- d. Business collaborations are generally well-resourced and tightly focused on clear, self-interested objectives embodied in “value propositions” (ZIZYS 2007). Businesses engage in collaboration strictly as a means to focused self-interested ends. Given the complexity of their environments and multiple mandates, NPO collaboration objectives may often be more diverse and diffuse.

Private sector collaboration shares an interesting parallel with NPO services collaboration in often pursuing strategic, rather than strictly operational, goals and objectives. It also differs significantly in being generally well-resourced and narrowly focused on limited ends. If these latter features are critical to the success of business collaborations – and the evidence is unclear – then they may also be critical to NPO collaboration success. This would call for more cautious use of collaboration to the NPO sector, since such features are not always present in NPO collaborations.

The public sector's success with intra-government collaboration is less clear, due mainly to lack of information and government's broader, more diffuse goals and objectives. U.S. researchers have reported a lack of information even on the number and nature of services-related collaborations within and between government departments, for example (ZIZYS 2007). A brief scan of the goals and impacts of collaboration in the public sector (ZIZYS 2007) found:

- a. Government's goals in collaborating include both increasing efficiencies and improving "customer service," and the broader, more diffuse goals of breaking down the silos within government and responding more effectively to complex, often called "wicked," problems (ZIZYS 2007). The diversity and diffuseness of some government goals share parallels with NPO sector collaboration. Government's collaboration initiatives include back office /administrative integration, cross-sectoral planning, standardizing protocols and procedures, budget pooling, and asset and personnel sharing (ZIZYS 2007).
- b. Measures to assess government collaborative processes or outcomes are less developed than they are for business collaborations, reflecting government's more diverse and diffuse goals. Government's complex objectives and operating context also make it difficult for evaluations to attribute outcomes to initiatives (ZIZYS 2007). Interestingly, measures to assess highly complex business collaborations – typically strategic alliances involving many, many different partners – have also been hard to find (ZIZYS 2007).
- c. There is a lack of research evidence on the impact on government of collaboration initiatives within government (ZIZYS 2007).

NPO sector goals and objectives are often more diffuse, like those of government. This reinforces the need for caution in applying business learnings to the sector.

4. STATUS REPORT ON NPO SERVICES COLLABORATION IN TORONTO

4.a Nature and Extent of Collaboration

Key informants agreed there is "a lot" of collaboration in Toronto (GRAHAM 2007), most of it informal resource- and information-sharing rather than the more intensive (Figure 1) integration of programming, planning or back-office functions. There is also some amount of shared protocols and processes (e.g. post discharge from hospital). Informants said the informal resource- and information-sharing in the sector was not new. The 19 key informants worked in, or were familiar with, housing and homeless services, immigration and settlement services, health and mental health services, and multi-sectoral partnerships involving arts and environment and services for underserved and marginalized communities. Collaboration also varies by neighbourhood and sector in Toronto; for example, it is less common in some inner suburbs than in others or in downtown Toronto, and less common in immigrant services than in, say, the health sector.

Historically, similar agencies and sectors tend to collaborate, reflecting funding silos; but inter-sectoral collaboration is increasing. Larger, more established agencies /organizations are more likely to initiate collaborations, and often become transfer agencies for funder-driven collaborations.

Key informants felt that funders do not usually underwrite the costs of forming and sustaining collaborations, so that most are resourced through in-kind resources or time-limited pilot programs.

4.b Trends in Collaboration

Organizational capacity to build and sustain collaboration has decreased in Toronto's NPO sector, as a result of "systemic core infrastructure challenges" (GRAHAM 2007) (see below). Funders are requiring or imposing collaboration on agencies more often, and through funding requirements are shifting the focus of collaboration from infrastructure capacity to direct service provision. Mainstream agencies are being encouraged to collaborate with smaller agencies to share resources and expertise.

4.c Sustainability

Sustaining complex service partnerships is difficult, requiring considerable skill, resources and time (GRAHAM 2007; ROUNDTABLE PROCEEDINGS). Key informants felt that "organic, grass-roots" collaborations tend to be more sustainable (as well as more effective) because they are focused on a clear need, and partners tend to be strongly committed to meeting this need (GRAHAM 2007).

Collaborations also tend to be more sustainable when partners are healthy and strong. However, individuals' leadership and partners' collaboration skills are often key or critical to building and/or sustaining collaborations. Mandated or imposed collaborations tend not to last because participants are less committed to their goals and objectives. Key informants also pointed out that collaborations do not need to last if the reason for their formation disappears.

4.d Barriers to Collaboration

Local key informants identified a range of barriers to collaboration (GRAHAM 2007; ROUNDTABLE PROCEEDINGS) which were echoed in research studies in other English-speaking jurisdictions (BANASIAK 2007). These include:

- a. Lack of financial resources. As indicated earlier, funding for collaboration processes is relatively rare in Toronto. Agencies have few internal resources to fund collaboration processes themselves, since the current project-based funding regime also limits agencies' financial resources needed to build organizational capacity for existing services (EAKIN 2007; ROCHE AND ROBERTS 2007). Smaller agencies, in particular, have little extra capacity to invest.

- b. Lack of standardized funding application and reporting procedures across funder types, and even within a single funder (e.g. one level of government) drains resources that could be used for collaboration, and makes it difficult for multiple agencies with different funders, and different bookkeeping systems, to work together on projects (GRAHAM 2007; BANASIAK 2007).
- c. Inflexible funding limits collaborative possibilities by limiting agencies' ability to free up money for collaborative activities (GRAHAM 2007).
- d. Siloed funding encourages competition among agencies rather than collaboration, and generally increases agencies' fears that they will be amalgamated (GRAHAM 2007).
- e. NPO staff may lack the higher-level skills and personal capacity needed to embark on complex partnership building, which requires individual agencies to negotiate across organizational boundaries (GRAHAM 2007; ROCHE AND ROBERTS 2007).

5. POLICY SUPPORTS FOR COLLABORATION IN OTHER ENGLISH-SPEAKING JURISDICTIONS

To stimulate local thinking on policies to support NPO services-related collaboration, the project scanned policy regimes for the sector in three other English-speaking jurisdictions: England, New Zealand, and Queensland, Australia (BANASIAK 2007). Each of these jurisdictions has a policy framework for supporting the NPO sector. While Queensland is the only jurisdiction to introduce explicit initiatives to promote NPO collaboration, all three jurisdictions have introduced measures to remove some of the barriers to collaboration identified in Toronto.

The investigation found:

- a. Each jurisdiction has created an Office or designated a ministry to move the framework forward in government, undertake specific initiatives, and consult with the NPO sector. In England, the Office of the Third Sector housed in the Cabinet Office advocates across government for the sector, researches the sector's needs, and initiates consultations with the sector. New Zealand's Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, housed in the Ministry of Social Development, also runs regular consultations with the sector, and is building sector capacity through a knowledge base of research ideas, and organizational systems to help the sector be more effective and efficient. In Queensland, the Department of Communities and Disability Services has responsibility for supporting the sector, and is leading the reforms (Banasiak 2007).
- b. Funding policies are central to all three jurisdictions' frameworks and action. England's focus has been on full cost recovery and three-year funding, to increase support for agency infrastructure and to stabilize funding, respectively. New Zealand has introduced "integrated contracts" – a single contract between multiple government funders (within the same level of government) and each provider – aimed to reduce transaction and compliance costs for the agency and integrate agencies' programs. A special team within government brokers the contracts. Working with agencies, they identify opportunities for integrated contracts for integrated services. Queensland provides earmarked funding for collaboration-building, and grants for specific service collaborations (BANASIAK 2007).

In England, an evaluation found that the government had made little progress after three years in implementing full cost recovery or implementing multi-year funding (Banasiak 2007). Government funders also reported difficulty assessing agency overhead costs and determining which costs should be funded.

- c. England and Queensland have introduced measures to standardize or streamline policies and procedures through the use of on-line applications and resources and standardized accounting services. Queensland has introduced the Community Book Keeper, a streamlined accounting system to be used by all NGOs receiving state funding. England has developed an electronic registry of funding providers and piloted a “passporting” program, in which core funding-related information on agencies is shared among government departments via a regularly updated website (BANASIAK 2007).

In England, providers continued to report lack of standardized procedures and practice in a recent evaluation. Evaluation of the passporting pilot found it decreased application time by up to one hour and helped funders by standardizing applications. However, accountability issues arose between the lead funder and other funders (BANASIAK 2007).

- d. All three jurisdictions have introduced initiatives to build sector skills and knowledge. These may indirectly support collaboration by increasing providers’ skills and knowledge on how to build and sustain collaborations. Queensland, for example, has a “one-stop-shop” Community Door website providing resources, tools, and information that can improve effectiveness, which includes links to collaboration resources. England is conducting a pioneering analysis of the sector, and has created six Hubs of Expertise for NPO providers to access. Each Hub consolidates all knowledge and information in a specific area, such as finance or governance. New Zealand is building a knowledge base of community-based research undertaken by the sector (BANASIAK 2007).
- e. England and New Zealand have initiated measures to increase knowledge of the sector, for the sector and other stakeholders to access. In New Zealand, government, NPO providers, and academics are collaborating on a project to measure and describe the role of NPOs in society, in order to increase volunteering. The government is also planning to create a centralized on-line database of NGOs, to which NGOs could regularly contribute information about their activities. The database would have the potential to document and track collaborations (BANASIAK 2007).
- f. Queensland has funded some specific service collaborations. These include a Multi-Tenant Service Centres Pilot, in which three communities established multi-tenant service centres to evaluate the benefits of co-location to share administrative and infrastructure and integrate service delivery. No evaluation is available yet (BANASIAK 2007).

It seems too early to tell whether other jurisdictions’ efforts to create an NPO-friendly policy environment are increasing NPO service effectiveness, or promoting service collaboration that improves client and community outcomes. However, other jurisdictions’ approach to the task suggests that real commitment to creating policies

that support an effective, robust NPO sector involves development of a formalized policy framework, dedicated staff, senior level responsibility for the dossier, mechanisms for ongoing engagement with the sector, and resources. England has committed 250 million pounds in loans and grants just to help NPO providers with organizational start-up and expansion (BANASIAK 2007).

6. PROCESS LEARNINGS

Research on collaboration in the NPO sector, the private sector and in government shows that good collaborative processes are necessary for improved outcomes (BOUTILIER ET AL. 2007; ZYZIS 2007), even though a successful collaborative process does not necessarily result in better outcomes (BOUTILIER ET AL. 2007).

Two local studies explored successful collaborative processes: the East Scarborough Storefront explored a successful inter-agency collaboration, and the Korean Interagency Network, a developing collaboration.

The East Scarborough Storefront exemplifies a successful bottom-up collaborative. The initiative was catalyzed by the local community when, as a response to an emergency influx of newcomers, the city housed a refugee population in temporary motels in the inner suburb of Scarborough. Due to the gentrification of the downtown core of Toronto, Scarborough was in the midst of filling up its old apartment blocks with newcomers instead of the population of singles and young married couples for which the high-rises were originally designed. Up until the 90s, social and health services for newcomers had been primarily concentrated in the downtown core and there were few services available in the suburbs for refugees or at-risk populations. Seeing refugees with little on their backs standing in the midst of suburban Scarborough motivated the local faith communities to act on the overwhelming need. Despite a freeze on the development of new social services, they were adamant about finding a way to get services to the motel-strip population, as well as at-risk populations now housed in the high-rises (ROCHE AND ROBERTS, 2007).

The motivation to collaborate is just as desperate with the Korean Interagency Network. With a large population of over 100,000 in the GTA, constantly absorbing newcomers but very geographically dispersed due to their settlement patterns, they too came of age in the era of contraction and cutbacks. Ethno-specific agencies were particularly hard hit in the era of system contraction, and 7 of the 8 ethno-specific agencies in KIN are unstable in terms of funding (ROBERTS, 2007). As is any other newcomer population, KIN members are highly motivated to provide culturally appropriate services and have been collaborating to build a whole system focus since 1998. In the workshops, anxiety emerged over the sustainability of their organizations and concern over their community's equitable access to public resources (ROBERTS, 2007).

From both these projects, motivation to collaborate emerged as a critical success factor. This is linked to the business sector's concept of a value proposition. Clear benefits need to be identified early in the process in order to keep agencies engaged. If they fail to appear, disengagement in the process is signaled. With The Storefront, the motivation to collaborate was palpable. Services were desperately needed in their community.

Other critical success factors for successful collaboration were identified in The Storefront project, including building inclusive leadership, the importance of using the adult educator's/community developer's toolbox to build participation trust and a common vision. Participative engagement and decision-making processes with community and agency partners built a foundation of trust that paid off with support and mutual solidarity when the viability of The Storefront was at risk.

Both projects identified the need for its members to have the skill-set to work on the level of collaboration. In the KIN process, overcoming service duplication was identified as one of 6 priorities in their vision; however, building individual and organizational capacity was seen by the group as more important and a precursor to taking on the politically-charged task of defining catchment and program areas.

Again, both projects identified the need to establish an appropriate governance structure, for a collaborative structure requires mechanisms for transparency, power sharing, conflict resolution, and other inclusive strategies.

Barriers to successful collaboration included lack of funding to undertake the capacity building necessary to build multi-organizational partnerships. With The Storefront, we saw how a change in funding threatened the very existence of the collaborative. As well, the capacity to invest precious time and energy in collaboration is diminishing within the sector. We saw in the KIN project how hard it is to bring people together to do the work of collaboration when they are geographically dispersed over a large region and travel time eats into their work time, while backfilling of positions with other staff to cover absences at meetings is most often non-existent.

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

The key informant interviews and roundtable discussions generated a large number of specific recommendations, in addition to the framework of a bottom-up approach to NPO service collaboration. The literature scans also generated specific recommendations.

This section identifies some of the most promising and do-able recommendations that surfaced in the course of the investigations.

10 SUGGESTIONS TO MOVE THE FIELD OF NPO COLLABORATION FORWARD!

1. NPO COLLABORATION SHOULD BRING VALUE TO THE CLIENT

Increased value has to be the principal motivation to collaborate. Collaboration can bring a great deal of value to NPO work, such as alleviating the need for clients to navigate fragmented services by creating shared referral systems; programming partnerships; and cost-containment strategies such as the purchase of expertise (e.g. HR).

2. TERMINOLOGY

Agreement about the terms used to describe collaborative arrangements must be a goal. Organizations should move towards adapting the same definitions. Our glossary might be a place to start. Until these terms have been widely agreed upon, an emerging collaboration or any NPO-focused work group needs to develop shared definitions of collaboration before beginning their conversation.

3. RESEARCH

Roundtable participants emphasized the need to find a consensus on what collaboration means: is it an outcome or a process? Formal or informal? What do we mean by collaboration? Can we define a continuum of collaboration and value the different kinds of benefits generated along the continuum? Research is needed to help clarify the complexity and the issues involved in collaboration. A generic categorization of strategies and outcomes, applied to a meta-analysis of previous research, might clarify some issues.

Because there is a lack of academic evidence of outcome-focused research, building a knowledge base is a priority. Evaluations of NPO programs delivered by collaborative mechanisms need to be initiated and funded as soon as possible.

4. INTERESTING RESEARCH TOPICS SUGGESTED THROUGHOUT THIS PROJECT INCLUDE:

- What characteristics of formal agreements are most likely to lead sustainable partnerships?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of Management Service Organization structures in diverse service sectors?

- What levels of risk and platforms of accountability are amenable to shared services and back office collaborations?
- How do shifting funding structures, “the legacy of silos,” affect agencies’ ability and willingness to collaborate on service delivery, and how do these affect the long-term sustainability of such collaborations?
- What characteristics and structures of leadership and governance are most amenable to sustaining collaborative projects?
- There is consensus that it is important to know about and consider the continuum and/or natural evolution of collaborative efforts. What do we understand to be the key components/relationships with respect to this continuum/evolution?

5. USE INNOVATIVE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION METHODS

The use of a variety of research methods, approaches, and sources is encouraged in order to explore fully this unique topic. Using case studies, ethnically diverse research methods, and exploring the “grey,” non-academic literature will help to paint a more complete picture of collaboration. Longitudinal studies of the lifecycle of collaboration could be particularly useful. Interesting topics for further study include investigating ways of building research capacity, particularly in linguistically distinct and marginalized communities. Looking to other innovative approaches for cultural/ethno models that might work in diverse settings would also be beneficial. The participation of ethno-cultural groups is necessary because it connects them to the “mainstream.”

6. BUILD KNOWLEDGE IN THE INTERIM PERIOD

In the interim period prior to the development of a substantial literature, governments and funders could undertake better documentation and transfer of knowledge to enhance and create an ongoing corporate memory in the sector. This could include more documentation of process to ensure knowledge transfer and document preferred practices and emerging themes.

7. TAKE A THOUGHTFUL APPROACH TO THE PRACTICE OF NPO COLLABORATION:

Agencies need to think about collaboration as an opportunity to enhance the functions of the organization by finding collaborative opportunities that fit with its specific strategies.

To determine the benefits of a collaboration, NPOs need to ask:

- Is the organizing issue compelling enough to have agencies put aside turf issues and work together?

- Does the agency have sufficient staff/management time to devote to the collaboration project?
- Are there sufficient resources to devote to processes to build trust and commitment (for example, monies to hire a facilitator)?
- Since each participant's motivation for collaborating is different, is there enough self-interest in the focus of the collaborative to engage the prospective partners? If the partnership is to access new resources, are the participating agencies sustainable enough to participate in the extensive capacity building needed for a new organization?
- Should the arrangements that underpin the collaborative project be formalized in an agreement?
- Will conveners have an opportunity to explore the cultural difference of potential partners early on in the relationship to determine whether or not there is a fit, or are the differences too great? This assessment may include such tangibles as compatible IT systems, funding silo difficulties, and collective agreements.
- What are the elements of leadership necessary for collaborative initiatives? In the East Scarborough Storefront, a critical mass of child and adult educators emerged to provide the process skills and leadership to facilitate community and agency participation.
- How can we be conscious of the power differentials between member agencies?
- Are there people within the group who have the capacity and the time to lead the collaborative endeavour?

8. LEADERSHIP AND SKILL BUILDING

Inter-agency collaboration requires a range of skills, and often high-level skills to undertake it. This complex skill-set includes all the skills required to run NPO programs and organizations, and the ability to deal with a high level of conflict and change leadership competencies. Programs and training need to be made widely available to enable the people who will lead successful collaboration. One suggestion was to create an on-line forum where practitioners can share agency visions, tools, and different evaluation methods.

Looking at collaboration in the for-profit sector highlighted another important lesson: poor relationship building among organizations is what leads to a failure in their collaborative efforts. There are already an abundance of informal collaborative initiatives taking place in the NPO sector. As a result, the NPO sector may be in a better position in terms of the trust and time needed to build sustainable relationships, and the solid foundation from which to move towards more formalized collaborative arrangements.

9. NPO SYSTEM PLANNING IS NEEDED BUT COLLABORATION AS A TOOL CONTRIBUTES TO AMBIGUITY NOT CLARITY

Governments and funders need to be clear on their desire for system rationalization and use more appropriate tools and sector engagement processes to build a rationale for change when system change is desired. Engaging system stakeholders in building a common vision will engage the system to move towards a desired future.

Although the NPO sector is using collaboration to address complex social problems and gaps in service systems, the need to rationalize service delivery systems has been identified as well. No agency wants its clients to deal with a fragmented service system. If government funders desire system rationalization, it would be prudent to work with agencies in the planning stage of system design. If the NPO sector needs to implement a system plan, they also need to participate throughout the design process in order to build the trust and the capacity to sustain the change.

At the system planning level, inter-agency collaboration can provide a more comprehensive system map and can foster building the trust that complex system change requires. In general, participants want governments to allow more opportunities for groups to facilitate/convene and to collaborate on a system planning level.

10. GOVERNMENT AND FUNDERS

Governments/funders need to be clear about their intended outcome for collaboration. Lots of conversation emerged about whether collaboration is seen by funders as an interim step towards a more integrated or rationalized system. There was also a great deal of discussion centering on the way the government's mixed messages further antagonize the sector.

Requests for proposals that require a number of partners need to be more explicit regarding the depth and intensity of inter-agency connections that would be needed to meet specific program objectives. In accordance, funders need to provide the resources to develop such inter-organizational mechanisms.

A small number of governments are creating funding and capacity building frameworks to facilitate easier collaboration. Governments need to explore the initiatives being taken in other jurisdictions that create standardization and build sector supports to foster innovation and collaboration.

Government/funders are encouraged to cease funding programs that require partnerships as the delivery mechanism, and instead create funding programs that fund program innovation that is percolating from the bottom up. It is preferable to deal with requests for funding by partnerships on a case-by-case basis.

Funding must also take into account the intense collaboration process. It is expensive and time-consuming, and the support available from funders should reflect this reality by covering the real costs. Also, the funding should be flexible enough to deal with the complexities of multiple partners.

Finally, funders need to fund research about collaboration in order to evaluate it. The argument that programs delivered in a collaborative manner work better than when delivered by a single agency needs to be substantiated.



Service Delivery Collaboration in Non-profit Health and Community Services: What Does Government Want?

By Rob Howarth

Introduction

There is a widespread perception on the part of Toronto non-profit organizations that the government wants them to collaborate more in service provision. This paper explores this perception, and the rationales that governments at all levels might be giving to justify their desire for increased collaboration. It canvasses a range of federal, provincial, and City of Toronto policy statements that reference collaboration with and among non-profit community service organizations. These include several higher-level policy statements, and a sample of program-specific funding guidelines and government planning documents in the areas of community-based health and social services.¹

References to collaboration in these policies include statements about a government's intentions in partnering with non-profit organizations, as well as statements about why they are promoting collaboration between non-profit organizations. These two objectives are not always clearly separated, as in the case of the literature on "horizontal" initiatives, where the same general statements about the value of collaboration are applied to partnerships among and between multiple stakeholders.

Governments' rationale for collaborating with the non-profit sector includes a range of stated goals, from improving service access, to promoting civic engagement and enhancing policy development. Beyond service delivery, however, most of these broad goals are not reinforced in program-level policies that might further them in practice.

Governments also appear to have no clear policy outlining the specific types or levels of collaboration that they are intending to promote within the sector. Collaboration is advocated generally as a mechanism to improve service delivery outcomes. But this seems to refer to everything from networking for improved service coordination, to the consolidation of services in order to create fewer "one-stop" access points.

Finally, there appears to be an absence of policy frameworks that intentionally link collaboration within the sector with strategies for realizing governments' broader goals for partnering with non-profit organizations. In some instances government objectives appear to be in conflict, as where a department's service delivery goals encourage a reduction in non-profit service providers, while the government's corporate policy champions a diversity of actors in the sector to further its civic engagement role.

Both the federal and city governments have developed corporate level policy statements articulating their intentions with regard to collaborating with non-profit organizations. The Province of Ontario has no similar statement in place regarding its partnership with and investment in the non-profit sector. This constitutes a significant policy gap, considering the fact that the province provides approximately 80% of all government funding for Ontario's non-profit health and social services sectors.²

¹See Appendix A: Government Policy Documents Reviewed.

²Scott Katherine, Spyridoula Tsoukalis, Paul Roberts, and David Lasby, *The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in Ontario: Regional Highlights of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations* (Toronto: Imagine Canada and Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006), p. 20.

Collaboration among Governments and the Non-profit Sector

The most in-depth examples of higher-level policy statements are the federal government's 2001 "Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector" and 2002 "A Code of Good Practice on Funding." These documents outline respective roles and responsibilities, and shared values guiding the collaboration between the federal government and the non-profit sector.³

The fullest statement of the varied purposes for which the federal government provides funding to the voluntary sector is presented in appendix four of the Code. This lists the objectives of: program and service delivery; strengthened sustainable capacity; strategic investment approach; alliances and partnerships; policy dialogue; advocacy; research; innovation; and capital expenditure.

Under "alliances and partnerships" the code suggests that funding may be provided for "networking; capacity-building at the multi-organization level; coalitions; associations with other organizations; and joint action."⁴ It is important to note that this is a descriptive statement identifying the range of purposes to which federal funding may be directed, and not the active promotion of increased alliances and partnerships.

Toronto's 2001 Social Development Strategy (SDS) provides the most detailed outline of the City's intentions in collaborating with the non-profit sector to advance specific policy objectives. This document also underpins and informs the positioning of the city's "community partnership and investment programs" that constitute their renamed grants to non-profit community organizations.

The SDS perspective on partnering with non-profit agencies explicitly promotes the proliferation of organizations, and a decentralized approach to service-delivery to achieve improved service access:

The city encourages the formation of community groups and networks, employing community development staff to assist citizens in organizing themselves and providing support to ensure stable community infrastructure.

Working in partnership with the City of Toronto, these organizations and agencies deliver services and programs,

³These policy statements emerged from the work of the Voluntary Sector Initiative which in turn resulted from the 1999 Voluntary Sector Roundtable or "Broadbent Panels" report, *Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada's Voluntary Sector* (VSR).

⁴Voluntary Sector Initiative, *A Code of Good Practice on Funding: Building on An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* (Ottawa: Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2002), pp. 21-22

advocate on behalf of residents, and help to build social cohesiveness within communities. Over the years a sophisticated service delivery model has developed within Toronto. It is an “alternative” model that has moved away from a constrictive reliance on centralized service delivery. It relies on partnerships among the city, community organizations, and for-profit service providers. Toronto’s human services system, because of its mixed and flexible nature, can provide accessible services effectively and economically.⁵

Horizontal Initiatives: the Role of Non-profit Organizations in Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

Governments are also responding to mounting evidence that successful approaches to addressing complex social challenges can no longer be achieved by single organizations, levels of government or sectors acting in isolation. Collaboration across all of these domains, referred to as “joined-up” services in Britain and “horizontality” in Canada, is being promoted as an essential feature of successful practice. As noted in the 2006 report by Human Resources Development Canada’s Task Force on Community Investments:

Most governments of countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are either actively exploring or developing the public service and policy architecture to undertake a more integrated approach to complex policy files.⁶

The federal government has generated a range of policy positions and analysis regarding horizontal initiatives.⁷ The Treasury Board of Canada’s 2005 report “Management in the Government of Canada: A Commitment to Continuous Improvement” defines horizontality as “a ‘whole-of-government’ approach to programs and services, both internal and external that aligns departments and agencies and promotes co-ordination with other levels of government and the private and not-for-profit sectors.”⁸

⁵City of Toronto, *Social Development Strategy*, 2001, pp 11-12.

⁶Task Force on Community Investments, *Horizontal Tools and Relationships: An International Survey of Government Practices Related to Communities*.(Ottawa: Human Resources and Social Development Canada, January 2007), p. 8.

⁷The importance of working in a horizontal fashion is articulated formally in reports by the Auditor General of Canada (specifically, the November 2005 report, chapter 4, “Managing Horizontal Initiatives”), and by the Treasury Board Secretariat (e.g. the “Review of the Policy on Transfer Payments”). Additionally, a Task Force on Community Investments stewarded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada has a government-wide mandate from the Treasury Board to make recommendations to achieve “more consistent and coherent funding practices across the Government of Canada and seamless horizontal approaches to community investments” (achieving coherence report, p.1)

⁸ Quoted in the section “Need for coherent planning and management to meet horizontal priorities” in the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Management in the Government of Canada: A Commitment to Continuous Improvement* (Ottawa, 2005). http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/spsm-rgsp/cci-acg/cci-acg03_e.asp

For the most part these policy directives focus on intra-governmental collaboration, and only marginally refer to the specific role played by non-profit organizations in horizontal initiatives. The integration of federal services into Service Canada, and the City's Neighbourhood Action Teams⁹, are two examples of government inter-departmental collaborations and linkages, promoted as innovative and essential mechanisms for improving program impact and coordination.

Although not formalized as government policy, reports from Human Resources and Social Development Canada's Task Force on Community Investments more clearly identify the specific roles played by non-profit sector organizations in horizontal collaborations. These contributions are presented in terms of the capacity of the sector to generate social capital:

As a partner to government in horizontal initiatives, the community nonprofit sector contributes both bridging and linking social capital between governments and communities. In horizontal initiatives community organizations provide both the "on the ground resources" to "bridge" individuals across community problems through various forms of social service such as employment services and transitional education. At the same time, they are intrinsically a producer of social capital through public participation in organizational activities.

These organizations also provide the linking capacity to connect government to knowledge and resources of communities and sub-sectors, as a producer of the relationships that governments need to foster horizontal initiatives. Connections between other-serving organizations, horizontally across communities produce the professional networks that enable governments to "reach into" communities.¹⁰

Examples of recent horizontal initiatives involving both non-profit and government partners include the Vancouver Agreement (a tri-partite urban development agreement among three orders of government and local community organizations), Action for Neighbourhood Change (a national three-year multi-departmental initiative in partnership with community organizations to support resident convening and planning), and the National Homelessness Initiative.

⁹ These teams have been created to foster collaboration across city departments (e.g. public health, social services, police services, recreation, libraries, housing, and local schools) to achieve program impacts and an expansion of services to 13 priority neighbourhoods. The Neighbourhood Action Tables (NATs) are also charged with initiating broader multi-stakeholder initiatives called Neighbourhood Action Partnerships that will engage NPOs, resident groups, local business, faith communities, and all orders of government in local planning and priority-setting. This initiative provides the incentive and emerging structures to facilitate increased collaboration between local NPOs, across government departments, and with other stakeholders. It is not clear at this time whether any of this expectation and potential for increased collaboration will be formally resourced by the city.

¹⁰ Task Force on Community Investments, *Horizontal Tools and Relationships: An International Survey of Government Practices Related to Communities*, p. 19.

Government Objectives for Collaboration within the Non-profit Sector

Clearly articulated strategies for promoting collaboration within the non-profit sector are hard to find in public government documents. For example, the federal government's literature on horizontality, and their seminal Accord and Code of Practice on Funding documents, do not contain specific objectives with regard to collaboration within the non-profit sector itself.

Most of the documents that articulate general goals for collaboration within the non-profit sector are department or program-level. A number of program funding guidelines include requirements that the applicants demonstrate appropriate levels of collaboration or partnerships with other service providers and relevant stakeholders.¹¹

The implicit assumption in these documents is that increased levels of partnership and collaboration will improve service delivery effectiveness and impact, for example by reducing service duplication, increasing the coordination of services, or streamlining service access (e.g. one-stop, central referral, integrated services). However, these assumptions are either not stated, or are asserted very generally without any link back to specific programmatic objectives.

For example, the federal government's Population Health Fund, administered by the Public Health Agency of Canada, identifies collaboration as a core principle and objective of the program, noting that "a key factor in the success of a population health approach is the development and support of comprehensive and co-ordinated action by governments, private, professional and voluntary sectors to address the identified needs and issues of the population(s)." The funding application requires prospective applicants to "indicate any other organizations, coalitions, groups, projects, etc. with whom this project plans to partner, and provide a description of each partner's role in your project" and further asserts that "collaboration across sectors is essential to successfully address the determinants of health. Existing partnerships should be strengthened, and new ones created, with organizations whose mandate or activities have a direct or indirect impact on health." The "scope and nature of collaboration with other sectors" is then included as a criteria for the project assessment process (PHF guidelines, p. 16). However, there is no guidance provided to prospective applicants about the specific nature or extent of collaboration that would be required to successfully address these determinants of health.

At the provincial level key ministries, including Health and Long-Term Care (via the new Local Health Integration Networks or LHINs), Children and Youth (in their "Best Start" early learning programs, and "Framework For Child

¹¹Many funding applications request information about partnerships and collaboration but do not include this function as a discrete and eligible category for funding. In this way governments give signals to applicants that collaboration is expected but not valued as a fundable activity in and of itself.

and Youth Mental Health”), and the Ministry of Community and Social Services reflect similar policy objectives about increasing the integration and coordination of services.

The 2006 strategic plan for the Ministry of Community and Social Services identifies “collaborating with partners for social change” as one of their five “priorities for transformation,” noting that the Ministry will “continue to work with community partners to deliver locally sensitive and accessible services.” In this regard the Ministry commits to adopting a “systems approach to service delivery” and to “promote greater service delivery integration, provide a unified provincial presence in the community and work towards a broad human services approach to meeting the special needs of Ontarians.”¹²

There is little detail in the MCSS strategic plan concerning expectations of collaboration or consolidation within the non-profit sector itself. But in sketching out the current service system context, their plan notes vaguely that “new models of service delivery” will be required to assure sustainability:

Ontario’s largely community-based delivery system is facing significant challenges. Substantial financial pressures threaten long-term sustainability. As the system formalizes, cost pressures arise out of increasing regulation, rising wage demands and the escalating costs of doing business. At the same time, governments and the donor community are experiencing competing demands for funding. The Ministry must be strategic in leveraging technology and employing new models of service delivery wherever possible in order to assure sustainability.¹³

Similarly, the Ministry of Children and Youth’s report, “A Shared Responsibility: Ontario’s Policy Framework for Child and Youth Mental Health,” emphasizes the overarching goal of service coordination and integration, identifying the first of its four main goals as “A child and youth mental health sector that is coordinated, collaborative and integrated at all community and government levels, creating a culture of shared responsibility.”¹⁴

This framework further defines “service integration” as a continuum moving from awareness to communication, then cooperation and collaboration, and finally the “fusion” of services where “agencies join together to offer a new, fused service which draws on the service strengths offered in the participating agencies, but does so in a form in which the contributing agencies are no longer clearly and separately identifiable.”¹⁵

Significantly, the framework does not prescribe the level of integration required to meet the Ministry’s policy objectives, but states instead that “each community is best placed to determine, based on local needs, the appropriate degree of inter-connectivity along the continuum of service integration that they should aim to achieve.”¹⁶ The Province’s recent

¹²Ministry of Community and Social Services, *Thriving Communities: a Strategic Direction for the Ministry of Community and Social Services* (Ontario, 2006), p. 18.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁴Ministry of Children and Youth Services, *A Shared Responsibility: Ontario’s Policy Framework for Child and Youth Mental Health* (Ontario, 2006). p. iii.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p.26.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p.26.

Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) initiative to increase service integration in the health services is quite explicit in its objective to promote service integration. The 2006 LHINs legislation expressly “requires” health providers in a given geographic region to develop plans for service coordination and integration. However, the LHINs Boards themselves cannot require the amalgamation of service providers or any “changes to provider boards or closure of a corporate operation”. Recommendations for such amalgamations or closures must be referred by the LHINs to the Minister.

At this time, the LHINs legislation and various regional planning documents do not make specific reference to achieving service efficiencies among non-profit community health organizations (e.g. Community Health Centres). It remains to be seen whether the Minister’s potential powers to order amalgamations will extend to the many community-based agencies and contracts that are part of the LHINs initiative.

Connecting Government Objectives for Collaboration With and Within the Non-profit Sector

There is little evidence of linkages between the higher level policy statements regarding collaboration and departmental or program level policies. Objectives for collaboration within the non-profit sector seem to be disconnected from advancing the roles envisioned for the sector in broader statements about promoting social capital, civic engagement, and democratic participation.

Many of the program-level statements imply a preference for increased integration or the possible amalgamation and consolidation of services, though such explicit goals to rationalize non-profit service infrastructure are not stated.

In contrast to this inferred inclination towards consolidation there is the suggestion implicit in many of the broader policy documents that maintaining or increasing the diversity of non-profit organizations is desirable, and is in fact one of the sector’s most important assets in terms of enhancing program access and impact. This perspective is evident in the federal government’s Accord, policies on the use of horizontal collaborations to address complex social issues, and is also explicit in the City of Toronto’s Social Development Strategy.

The City’s policy notes that along with supporting a diversity of organizations, the municipal government should maintain supports for coordination and collaboration among non-profit organizations. As part of the strategic direction

to “actively support the building of community capacity” the city commits to “help build strategic partnerships, alliances and networks among community-based organizations and institutions to provide effective services and advocacy; and provide staff resources to support community capacity building.”

The City has in fact operationalized these networking and collaboration objectives through funding and in-kind supports. City staff, particularly the Community Development Officers in the Community Resources Unit, have historically been available to provide in-kind partnership development supports to community organizations.¹⁹

Yet, with the exception of the City’s SDS, few of government’s broader policy statements link their diverse intentions for the non-profit sector with specific strategies for promoting and sustaining collaboration within the non-profit sector itself.

Conclusion

The policy statements reviewed for this paper suggest that governments have no single rationale or agenda in place with regard to promoting increased levels of collaboration within the non-profit sector. Some policy statements indicate a preference for linking and networking to ensure service coordination, others are promoting greater levels of coordination and service integration to create efficiencies, reduce duplication, and improve service impact. Still other policy statements seem to intend a rationalization and consolidation of non-profit infrastructure, but this objective is never explicitly stated.

At the program level, the objective of increased partnership and collaboration is consistently reinforced, but not often explicitly linked to specific program outcomes. Collaboration within the non-profit sector is generally encouraged as a positive or essential element of successful program-delivery, but the depth and intensity of inter-agency connections that would be needed to meet specific program objectives is not explored in any detail. It is hard to know whether these policies are promoting real collaboration, in the sense of initiatives involving shared risks, decision-making and commitment of resources, or are simply advocating information-sharing that would enable effective service planning and coordination.

Even those service-coordination initiatives that are clearly aimed at achieving increased integration, such as the province’s reorganization of the health-care system into Local Health Integration Networks, do not explicitly advocate a reduction or consolidation of non-profit organizational infrastructure. While certain government initiatives may include the intent to rationalize the non-profit sector, these objectives are not clearly identified in the policy statements reviewed for this paper.

¹⁹Over the last two years these in-kind supports have been redeployed to steward the City’s “Neighbourhood Action Teams” (NATs) in 13 priority communities, and are no longer as widely available to support non-profit collaborations and partnerships in other areas.

It may be that an analysis of government practice, for example patterns in the allocation of government funding to non-profit organizations, would provide a more concrete indicator of government intentions with regard to promoting particular levels of networking, partnership, collaboration, or service rationalization.

Appendix A: Government Policy Documents Reviewed

FEDERAL:

A) Corporate Policies:

- a. various statements of policy and procedure issued by the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada
- b. Auditor General reports on Grants and Contributions, and Managing Horizontal Initiatives, and Treasury Board responses
- c. Key documents generated by the Federal Government's Voluntary Sector Initiative ("An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector" and "Code of Good Practice on Funding")
- d. reports of the Task Force on Community Investments (a Treasury Board mandated Task Force stewarded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada)

B) Sample of Program Specific Policies

- a. Public Health Agency of Canada
 - i. Program Guidelines for the Population Health Fund (CHF)
 - ii. Program Guidelines for the Canadian Action Program for Children (CAPC)

PROVINCIAL:

A) Corporate Policies:

- a. "New Partnerships - New Capacity" Final Report of the 1997 Advisory Board on the Voluntary Sector

b. 1998 Report of the Ontario Voluntary Forum

B) Sample of Program Specific Policies:

a. Ministry of Children and Youth Services

- i. Childcare and Early Learning: “Best Start: Ontario’s Plan for Early Learning and Childcare” (2005)
- ii. Developmental Services: “A Shared Responsibility: Ontario’s Policy Framework for Child and Youth Mental Health”

b. Ministry of Community and Social Services – “Thriving Communities” (2006 strategic planning document for the Ministry as a whole)

c. Ministry of Health and Long Term Care – Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) legislation (2006), “New Directions” Bulletins, and related Ministerial memoranda

MUNICIPAL:

A) Corporate Policies:

a. Social Development Strategy for the City of Toronto (2001)

b. City Council Priorities (2006)

c. Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP) Program Guidelines (Part A)

B) Sample of Program Specific Policies

a. Social Services - Community Services Partnerships (CSP) Program Guidelines

b. Public Health Department – AIDS Prevention and Drug Prevention Program Funding Guidelines

c. Housing – SCPI - “The Community Plan for the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative in Toronto 2003–2006”

Does Collaborative Service Delivery Improve Client and Organization Outcomes?

A Review of the Evidence on NPO Collaboration in Health and Social Services

By Marie Boutillier, Pauline O'Connor, Tom Zizys, Joan Roberts, Krista Banasiak



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- Costs, Risks, and Other Challenges in Service Delivery Collaboration

Conclusion

Appendix A: Research Methodology

Appendix B: Models of Collaboration

Introduction

Collaboration and partnership strategies have become commonplace in health and social service delivery in recent years. Yet the question of whether or not collaborative strategies improve outcomes for clients and communities is seldom considered. This review examines the research evidence on multi-agency collaborations in the delivery of health and social services. It aims to answer these questions: Does multi-agency service delivery collaboration (or partnerships) in health and social services improve outcomes? If so, in what contexts and under what conditions?

Research findings from the review will contribute to the current policy and program debates on collaboration in the NPO sector, and help guide Toronto's independent NPO agencies in thinking and planning service delivery collaborations.

Section 1 of this report describes the definitions and key issues explored in the report and the methods used to find the evidence. Section 2 provides the research findings on outcomes related to collaboration. Section 3 offers factors to consider when contemplating collaborations.

DEFINITIONS AND KEY ISSUES

COLLABORATION – WORKING DEFINITION

Collaboration is what happens when a group of independent individuals or organizations work together to achieve a common purpose, involving varying degrees of cooperation or sharing of functions. Collaboration falls short of organizational amalgamation, although it may involve the integration or consolidation of specific functions or resources, sometimes through the creation of an intermediary entity.

FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

Collaborations can operate on a formal or informal basis. However, for the purposes of this literature review, collaboration will refer to independent organizations working together under the auspices of a formal agreement. While one of the most common forms of inter-agency collaboration in the NPO sector is informal information-sharing (GRAHAM, 2007), these informal arrangements are rarely assessed and therefore do not offer useful evidence for this paper.

This review's original focus was on collaborations among NPO organizations, more specifically, service delivery collaborations among independent, non-institutional, NPO agencies. Collaborations among NPO institutions only – such as hospitals or universities – were placed outside the purview of the paper, as were service collaborations involving NPO agencies that were led by government. Institution-to-institution collaborations, or government led collaborations, share some similarities with those primarily involving smaller agencies, but differences in scale, resources, funding levels and functions (including major research roles) make comparisons less valid or helpful.

However, the paucity of evidence on outcomes of collaborations involving largely non-institutional NPO agencies (see below), has led to inclusion of a sample of institutional service delivery collaborations which may shed light on non-institutional, multi-agency NPO service delivery collaboration.

NPO agencies collaborate for a range of purposes, including advocacy and other policy-related actions, sector-wide service planning and coordination, and neighbourhood or community-wide service planning and coordination (comprehensive community initiatives), as well as on-the-ground collaboration in operating services. This review focuses only on on-the-ground service collaboration – that is, on multi-agency collaborations that involve working together by sharing information, protocols, resources, operations, or infrastructure related to the delivery of health and social services. This review therefore focuses largely on a fairly narrow slice of NPO collaborative activity.

OUTCOMES

There is a need to distinguish between process performance and substantive outcomes. Abundant research exists on effective collaborative processes, citing those critical factors that enable partners to create and sustain their collaboration. These typically include trust, shared vision, leadership, and strong motivation for collaboration (REED ET AL., 2005; TFD, 2006; SELDEN, 2005; KOONTZ AND THOMAS, 2006; GANNON-LEARY ET AL., 2006; WEISS, ET AL., 2002). Good collaborative process is also often considered a necessary condition for collaborations to produce positive substantive outcomes (GLISSON AND HEMMELGARN, 1998).

Indeed, good working collaborations may also produce benefits to communities and individuals that are collateral to the process and to the collaboration's objectives. For example, the presence of productive collaborations can increase the social capital or collective efficacy of neighbourhoods or populations, even without improving client outcomes. Such collaborations might also provide a platform for higher-level collaborations to influence policy-makers or mobilize the community to action, as well as spawn other service delivery collaborations among participants. Many capacity builders and NPO providers believe these collateral outcomes are as important and as frequent as direct client and organizational outcomes.

This paper will review factors that support process performance, given that these do contribute to substantive outcomes. Collateral outcomes are beyond the scope of this paper. The paper's primary goal is to describe forms of collaboration and attempt to offer evidence relating to substantive outcomes. These outcomes can include outcomes for the organizations, such as increased cost-effectiveness, better quality services, better outreach, and outcomes for the people the organizations serve, such as finding housing, or getting access to a doctor.

In practice, evaluations of NPO service delivery collaborations often measure very divergent outcomes, making it difficult to generalize about the positive impacts of these collaborations. Table 1 provides a typology of NPO collaboration outcomes relied on in this report (DOWLING ET AL., 2004). It includes both service-level changes – changes in the quality or economy of the services being delivered, or of the organization’s capacity to deliver effective services – and client-level outcomes – direct benefits to the client. Some of the outcomes in the typology in Table 1 also include results often called “outputs.” These are changes in the ways the organization operates, or how clients engage and use services, that influence the organization- and client-level outcomes.

TYOLOGY OF COLLABORATION OUTCOMES

(DOWLING ET AL., 2004).

Type 1) “Accessibility of services to users, [for example] ... whether clients experience earlier interventions through a quicker response from service providers, and the convenience of the service location...

Type 2) “Making the distribution of services more equitable, [for example] ... examining the distribution of services in relation to need...

Type 3) “Efficiency, effectiveness or quality of services delivered through partnerships[for example] ... the impact and standards of services, taking into account their costs, and including measures such as reductions in duplication and overlap between services....

Type 4) “[Changes] in the experiences of staff and informal carers [for example] ... identifying changes in the working conditions and job satisfaction of staff providing services, and improvements in the quality of life of carers....

Type 5) “[Changes] in the health status, quality of life or well-being experienced by people using services, [for example] ... examining the impact of changes in services and service delivery on the health of service users and their capacity to live independently” (pp. 313-314).

TYPES OF COLLABORATIVE ACTION

Virtually any aspect of NPO health and social service delivery can be the object of collaboration. Collaborative service delivery activities or mechanisms can be categorized in a variety of ways, three of which are described below:

DEGREE OF INTENSITY

One categorization is according to relationship intensity – that is, degree of engagement among the partners.

(SELDEN ET AL., 2006) (VANDERWOERD, 1996) (CAMERON ET AL., 1995) (CORBETT, 2006)

TABLE 1: DEGREES OF INTENSITY

←—————→			
LESS INTENSE		MORE INTENSE	
<i>COMMUNICATION</i>	<i>COOPERATION</i>	<i>COLLABORATION</i>	<i>INTEGRATION</i>
INTER-AGENCY INFORMATION SHARING	SHARED POLICIES OR PROTOCOLS FOR DEALING WITH CLIENTS	SHARING RESOURCES STAFF, DECISION-MAKING	LINKING TOGETHER PROGRAMS

FUNCTIONAL FOCUS

Service delivery collaborations can also be categorized according to their functional focus, that is, whether the collaboration is occurring in administration, operations, or in planning and policy.

ORIENTATION FOCUS

Finally, service delivery collaborations can be categorized or distinguished according to whether the collaboration is based around the client – as in service coordination, multi-agency case management, single intakes, referral protocols – or around the organization – as in shared IT function, or joint service planning (SELDEN ET AL., 2006).

LIMITATIONS OF THE EVIDENCE

The original intent of this study was to highlight rigorous evidence, presumably acquired from peer-reviewed publications, and supplemented from the “grey” literature of non-peer reviewed documents (for a summary of the research methodology, please see Appendix A).

However, a review of the literature resulted in the following findings:

- A tendency for evaluators to conflate process performance with substantive outcomes (while process does influence outcomes, effective process is not evidence of positive outcomes).
- Diverse measures of outcomes, reflecting in part the diversity of collaborative activities, make it hard to draw generalizations from the evidence.
- There is a relative lack of evidence on outcomes; most of the literature is descriptive or anecdotal, identifying best practices based on qualitative analysis rather than quantitative evaluation.

Much of the grey literature is marked by what could be called “positive”, or even “sanguine,” descriptions of local collaborations, with very little rigorous evaluation. The grey evaluations are usually on process, but some case

studies describe promising trends in partnerships and hint at which outcomes change, and in what ways. It is difficult to assess whether these kinds of “grey” reports suggest a “sea-change” in ways of working, or if they primarily provide local projects with some policy-friendly, politically astute, profile. While many positive outcomes are no doubt realized, some rigorous examinations might suggest contradiction (CAMERON ET AL., 1995).

This review, therefore, does not catalogue these descriptions or take their conclusions at face value, but may draw on examples of them.

Ideally, the current review would draw lessons from previous studies on best practices in collaboration, using evaluations of various models such as co-location, joint planning, single intake, and so on. Attempts to do so have found difficulties comparing differences across service goals, political and social contexts, populations, and “definitional chaos” (HULTBERG ET AL., 2005; KHARICHA ET AL., 2004). Others point out, and it is the case more generally across the literature, that there is little agreement on what are the questions to be studied, what are suitable or understandable outcomes, or how to measure them.

To summarize: this is a fledgling body of literature, flourishing with guidance on process, yet offering little evidence of the efficacy of voluntary collaborations based on primary data analysis or evaluation (CAMERON ET AL., 1995; POWELL AND DOWLING, 2006; DOWLING ET AL., 2004; GLENDINNING ET AL., 2005). Most evaluations focus on success of the quality of the collaborations, its process lessons and sustainability, rather than on evidence of the outcomes of these collaborations. For example, in an effort to contribute to the evidence base of the UK policy agenda, Dowling et al. (2004; 2007) reviewed the UK literature on partnerships in social welfare since 1997 (the year that partnerships became a central tenet of the Labour government’s social welfare policy). They point out that while policy is intended to be evidence-based, it actually draws more on theoretical models of partnerships than on sound research demonstrations of efficacy. In their recent review of UK academic and grey literature on partnerships, they found almost 5,000 publications and point to a review of 491 papers on partnerships and collaboration, with only 38 (13%) offering primary data and evaluation. The minimal research falling within the parameters of this review, therefore, has led to some “slip” in the scope of this review.

What accounts for this significant dearth of quantitative studies looking at effective collaboration strategies?

First, there is a limited amount of quantitative evaluation work that is undertaken in the non-profit sector of any sort. Second, there are limitations to the evaluation capacity in this field: partnerships and collaborations are likely to arise when agencies seek to combine multiple efforts in achieving some result, particularly in terms of target individuals or communities. While the non-profit sector has begun adopting accountability measurements that track inputs and outputs, the expertise and resources for devising and applying indicators that track outcomes and impacts remains underdeveloped, particularly in relation to more complex circumstances that involve multiple factors (for example, how to measure the impact of a community development initiative).

Findings On Outcomes

Given the limited and uneven nature of the literature, this section includes both qualitative studies evaluating the impact of collaborations as well as other studies whose value is largely descriptive and where the impact of the collaboration is inferred. The purpose here is to offer an overview of the range of collaborative service-related practices and a sampling of the evaluation quality. As indicated earlier, the evidence provided below includes evidence on the multi-agency, non-institutional NPO collaborations that were the primary focus of investigation, as well as evidence on other types of collaborations which may shed light on outcomes of multi-agency, non-institutional NPO collaborations.

SHARING ADMINISTRATION FUNCTIONS

“Back office” collaborations are theoretically believed to consolidate resources and streamline administration, leading to improved outcomes at all levels (BROWNE ET AL., 2004A; MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES, 1997; FARQUHAR ET AL., 2006). Back office or shared services is the term commonly used to describe administrative functions. The term shared services is often applied to collaborations in the private sector and among government services and departments on back office functions such as payroll and IT. Shared services are less developed in the non-profit sector, but management of non-profit collaborations is becoming increasingly formalized and professionalized¹.

Formalized partnerships are sometimes managed within a Management Services Organization (MSO) model (CONNOR ET AL., 1999; WALSH ET AL., 2006). The management service organization, or management support organization, model is increasingly common in the for-profit sector (where they are characterized as “shared service providers”), while “co-location” often refers to IT functions, with an emphasis on data backup and storage. Applying the framework to the non-profit sector, Walsh et al. (2006) outline two broad types of MSOs: first, the “integrated” MSO controlled by, and often housed within, one large NPO, which then provides services to others; and second, the “jointly held” MSO, created as a freestanding entity, providing services to its parent NPOs (and possibly others), who sit on its Board of Directors.

The following provides an illustration of its different forms:

- **The classical business model** is one where an organization establishes a separate shared services provider that brings together the business functions previously performed by separate business units within the organization.

¹For example, Google searches of non-profit back office collaborations, non-profit shared services, and co-location, reveal websites of a number of organizations specializing in providing back office integration services for non-profit organizations (e.g., http://www.greenlights.org/back_office/, http://www.tradeforum.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/101/Back_Office_Operations.html; and <http://www.cloudless.co.uk/clientswho.htm>).

- **A dedicated shared services centre** set up by a separate organization, sub-contracted to perform specific business functions, for example, sub-contracting for bookkeeping or Internet services.
- **A peak body support model**, in which a peak body within a particular sector provides a range of services for its members in return for a membership fee or a subscription fee or a combination of both. Walsh et al. (2006) cite Jobs Australia, which represents a peak body for 260 non-profit employment-related organizations, providing a consolidated front that represents its members' views to government and other decision-makers.
- **A co-location model**, whereby a number of organizations share common premises and common resources and facilities such as secretarial services, photocopying, joint insurance, and so on. Co-location may or may not include administrative services. For example, health and social service professionals have described co-location of services as decreasing duplication and facilitating interprofessional understanding and collaboration in professional practice (HULTBERG ET AL., 2005).

OUTCOMES OF SHARED ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS IN NPO SERVICE COLLABORATIONS

No explicit examinations of the impact of shared services on non-profit organizations' outcomes have been uncovered. The benefits of co-location are typically inferred, relying more on "common sense" rather than quantitative evaluation. One study typical of this approach (CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA, 2001) describes the co-location of a number of employment-related services. The services shared office infrastructure and employed a computerized client data management tool, allowing for easy exchange of information and updates about clients. The inferential evidence includes: avoiding duplication; alleviating clients' need to navigate fragmented services; reducing administrative costs through integrated data-tracking of clients; pooling resources to accomplish more than if the agencies tried to carry out the same functions separately; and the increased likelihood that referrals will be acted upon, for counselors literally walk the client from one service to another.

BUDGET POOLING

In both Sweden and the UK, health and social service agencies have been encouraged to "pool" their discrete budget allocations in order to "increase effectiveness and reduce costs" (HULTBERG ET AL., 2005). In both countries, the push to address fragmented service delivery has led to efforts to increase collaboration and flexibility, with health services collaborating with the welfare system on specific groups of clients or on short-term projects. Evidence on the effectiveness of budget pooling tends to focus on government-led, or intra-governmental, budget pooling.

Previously in the UK, specific budgets were allocated to the National Health Service (NHS), while local authorities paid for welfare services from a mixture of national and local taxation. The mechanism of pooled budgets takes central government money allocated solely to the NHS and “allows NHS and local authority budgets for specific services to be [voluntarily] ‘pooled’”. The money in the pool loses its distinctive health or social services identity and health and social services staff can decide how the pooled resources are spent across the spectrum of health or social care services” (p.534). In Sweden, by comparison, reforms in the early 1990s saw municipalities take on more responsibility for social services, nursing, and other non-medical health care provision. The intent was to foster interdisciplinary collaboration among professionals from different authorities, although somewhat unsuccessfully (p.534). Three different voluntary initiatives were established, including a framework for financial coordination and joint political and financial management. Outcomes and outputs were compared along three dimensions: legal, management, and staffing.

In the UK, pooled budgets led to process findings and outputs: legal outputs – formal service-level agreements for budget monitoring, information sharing and user fees – appear to have been successful, although with some process tensions along the way, as found in a qualitative review on interdisciplinary collaboration. Management of pooled budgets led to struggles around partners’ expectations of one another and around the sharing of resources. However, as found in other studies, staffing issues arose as merging frontline staff across organizations was challenged by culture, training and attitudes, and by employment terms and conditions. Local frontline staff collaborations were also impeded by different record keeping requirements and IT systems.

Conclusions from the UK were that pooling budgets can increase effectiveness because it tends to highlight areas of staff duplication and make spending patterns transparent. Management structures could be streamlined, staff could be seconded to collaborating organizations or transferred to an integrated provider. It allows for flexibility of spending, new opportunities for external funding, and construction of complex packages of local services for people with specialized needs and “saves money on expensive ‘out of area’ placements” (p.536).

Similarly, in Sweden, local government is responsible for finances and organization of the health care system (Hultberg et al., 2005) with trial initiatives in joint financing across agencies. These have led to lower staff sick leaves and more effective rehabilitation and early interventions. One of the initiatives targeted long term sickness by allowing sickness insurance, social services and health services to pool their budgets and jointly manage local rehabilitation services. The three dimensions came together successfully around pooled budgets in that the legal framework and a political board allowed local flexibility. Joint financial management facilitated mutual understandings across organizations, leading to recognition of mutual interest, and as in the UK, “joint activities and comprehensive, ‘whole system’ perspectives” (p.537). Staffing re-organization into interdisciplinary teams eventually led to information exchange and improved collaborative process.

Overall, however, the conclusion based on experience in both countries is that the local results are variable, and there is “a lack of clear evidence that interdisciplinary collaboration actually results in improved quality of care for the patient” (p.539).

INTEGRATING PROGRAM FUNCTIONS

In several studies, the real message appears to be that integrating a range of services results in greater impacts than when there is a single service intervention. In several instances, the only way this range of services can be delivered is through a partnership of several agencies, and so one can credit the collaborative structure of service delivery for the beneficial outcomes (although the real benefit flows less from the fact of a partnership but rather is a consequence of the range of services that come to bear).

Thus, in a study designed to evaluate the effectiveness of different mixes of interventions aimed at facilitating single mothers to leave social assistance, Browne (2000) found that a mix of services (health promotion, child development and employment services) was more effective. The project involved collaboration among Regional Municipal services (Hamilton-Wentworth), local Public Health, and over 20 youth-serving agencies, led by the local YM/WCA. To evaluate its efficacy, social assistance mothers with children were divided into one of three groups: those who received no extra treatment; those who received extensive case management, with health promotion, recreation/skills development for children, employment retraining and childcare services; and those receiving only one of these interventions (health promotion only, childcare/recreation for children only, or employment training only). After two years, of those with no extra treatment, 10% had left social assistance; those with full supports, 25% had left; those with just recreation for their children saw 20% leave. In terms of net cost, the recreation- only intervention paid for itself within one year, and resulted in considerable savings after four years, including the use of other services. The study established that the wider range of interventions (which requires a wider range of partners) had a greater impact in terms of supporting individuals in leaving social assistance.

Beland (2004) showed that the integrated case management of community services reduced the burden on institutionalized hospital services for supporting the frail elderly. This pilot project sought to demonstrate a model of integrated services for weak senior citizens. Individuals 75 years of age and older frequently suffer complex health problems, consisting of chronic disease, episodes of acute disease, physiological deficits, functional disabilities, and cognitive problems, yet their care is often fragmented. This project relied on a case management approach involving a multidisciplinary team. These multidisciplinary teams consisted of case managers, physicians, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, nutritionists, visiting homemakers, and community organizers. Employing an experimental approach, respondents were placed into one of two groups: those receiving integrated services and those receiving the regular services available in Quebec. The findings showed that integrated systems of services for frail elderly people reduced the use and cost of hospital and housing services with no overall increase in the cost of social services and healthcare. The quality of care was maintained, and the burden on elderly people and their families did not increase.

In a similar vein, the Partnership for Employer-Employee Responsive Systems (PEERS) concluded that workforce development intermediaries that engage employers in a collaborative manner (as opposed to simply providing placement services to employers) are more likely to generate benefits for employers and for workers (2003). A workforce intermediary typically is an organization that coordinates or facilitates the matching of employers looking for workers with individuals who are looking for work. This is done by convening and supporting employers; brokering and providing services; improving education, training and supportive services; conducting research and development; helping to create skills standards and career paths and influence wages and benefits; enhancing the workforce development system; and assuming some of the risk and costs associated with training and recruitment. In the PEERS (2003) study, data was collected by way of a survey sent to 565 small and medium-sized (20-499 employees) U.S. manufacturing firms, with 220 respondents. Their results demonstrated that using a workforce intermediary only to obtain new workers leads to lower wages, to the detriment of workers and to the possible detriment of employers. However, using a workforce intermediary to redesign jobs leads to higher productivity and higher wages, benefiting both employers and workers. Moreover, using a workforce intermediary to plan and/or provide training reduces labour turnover, which then leads to higher productivity and higher wages, benefiting again both employers and workers.

Selden et al. (2006) examine the impact of inter-organizational relationships on clients and organizations. Their work illustrates how service-level outcomes work together to facilitate client-level outcomes, but not always without some cost. Their approach was to examine variations in interagency collaborations among 20 human service organizations focused on early child care and education (childcare and community centres, and schools), in New York State and in Virginia. The collaborations focused on curriculum development, teacher training, and family involvement in programs. Outcomes at each level were:

- Management and service level. Teachers were more satisfied with benefits as the intensity of the collaborative relationships increased, possibly because salaries were better in the larger organizations. However, there was a double edge to this finding: for teachers the collaboration expanded their professional networks and led to opportunities for advancement. Interagency collaboration increased voluntary turnover, especially in smaller collaborations. Thus, more intense collaborations may bring in resources that make the non-profit organization more attractive, but also open career opportunities for staff. "Therefore, although collaborations benefit nonprofit organizations by increasing teacher satisfaction, they must be particularly intense in order to reduce voluntary turnover."
- In larger three-way relationships, significantly positive outcomes were found in program services and quality as a result of the additional resources, especially from Head Start, which brought in a wider range of services; classroom quality; more structured curriculums and more formalized schedules of activities.

- Collaboration helped to involve teachers in their larger professional community, allowing them to attend in-service trainings where they could meet teachers from other programs and benefit from professional development.
- At the user-level, the collaborative relationship had a statistically significant impact on students' school readiness and parents' perceptions of teacher quality.

Staff turnover was lowest in the most “intense” collaborations, leading Selden et al. to conclude that, because collaborations marshal resources, they are thus “a sound management strategy for bringing in more resources to better support and promote greater satisfaction among staff” (p.421). In particular, involvement with Head Start, a large well-funded national program, brought resources to the collaboration and showed better results. In other words, the common motivation for managers to collaborate (resource acquisition, conservation, and management) also indirectly facilitated positive service-level outcomes and positive client-level outcomes.

COMPREHENSIVE COLLABORATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Two prominent areas attracting comprehensive collaborative approaches in service delivery have been in relation to early childhood development and neighbourhood improvement. In many cases, the drive to collaborate has been mandated or encouraged by governments; however the actual form of that collaboration has been determined by the community agencies charged with implementing the programs or contracted to deliver the services.

Early evaluations of the Sure Start Programme (Department for Education and Skills, 2005), the initiative in the United Kingdom that promotes the integration of many services focused on early childhood development, struggle to demonstrate the value of the push to coordinate and integrate these services. The National Audit Office (2006) found little evidence that Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) achieved their goals of increasing service use and/or usefulness or of enhancing families' impressions of their communities. Furthermore, results suggest that among children from (mostly) deprived families living in deprived communities, those from relatively less (but still) disadvantaged households (i.e. non-teen mothers) residing in SSLP areas benefit somewhat from living in these areas, perhaps due to the beneficial effects of SSLPs on the parenting of non-teen mothers. In contrast, within these same deprived communities, children from relatively more disadvantaged families (i.e. teen mother, lone parent, workless household) appear to be adversely affected by living in a SSLP community. Their speaking, behavioural, and social skills suffered. Researchers feel that those who are able to make the most of the new services are “sucking away” support from those in the greatest need, who may feel overwhelmed by the program (WARD, 2005).

While the program has had trouble demonstrating positive outcomes, some evidence points to the advantages of using a co-location service delivery system. Multi-function building centres, such as those used for the Sure Start Program, allow service users to escape the stigma that can attach itself to some social service buildings. When seeking help for sensitive issues, parents note they are more comfortable going into a community space where,

once inside, they can seek help they would otherwise have had to access through more stigmatized means. The building provides a “cover,” as clients could be entering for any number of reasons (SURE START, 2005).

The Better Beginnings Better Futures (BBBF) projects in Ontario were conceived as community-based, universal projects designed to prevent emotional and behavioral problems and promote general development in young children, while also attempting to improve family and neighborhood characteristics, to link effectively with existing services, and to involve local residents in project development and implementation (PETERS ET AL., 2003).

BBBF project and programming varied by the age cohort of the children. The younger cohort sites included home or family visitor programs, playgroups, resource centres, and toy-lending libraries. The older child cohort sites had parallel programs, including home visits, but they also emphasized school-based programming. All programs shared staff and participants, and staff connected participants to other programs.

Where programming was very specific and focused on one cohort, outcomes improved. On the other hand, where there was a community development approach, client outcomes (such as children’s emotional and behavioural problems) worsened. Overall, it was found that more intensive and continuous school-based programming led to better outcomes for children, families, and neighbourhoods.

In addition to the focus on children’s outcomes, BBBF also examined service-providers’ experience (CAMERON ET AL., 1995). Significant increases in organized collaboration were found as a result of BBBF but were BBBF-specific and involved minimal resources. Lessons about what worked well for service providers focused on process and relationships, especially on having frontline staff and community residents engaged.

Thus there is some evidence, in children’s services (integration of which has been a major policy focus in North America over the last 15 years) that comprehensive, intensive collaboration in service delivery improves some education-related child outcomes, but it is not conclusive. This begs the question of which service delivery components achieve most of these results: user-level seamless service to clients (service coordination, referral protocols, single intakes), or provider-level mechanisms (joint planning, co-location, pooled budgets, staff sharing, professional networking, and so on).

Positive Contributory Factors, Costs and Challenges in Achieving Positive Outcomes

The line between process and outcome is imprecise in many evaluations of collaborations, partly because process findings point to elements of collaboration or partnership models. In general, good collaborative process appears to be necessary, but not sufficient, to effective service delivery. This section explores some of the process issues cited as contributing to good, sustainable, working service collaborations, and the evidence for their importance to positive outcomes. It also presents evidence on the costs involved in collaboration, and other challenges in achieving service collaborations that improve outcomes.

PROCESS FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO COLLABORATION SUCCESS

Research has identified a range of process factors that contribute both to the effectiveness and sustainability of the collaboration process, and its positive outcomes

Process Characteristics of Collaboration Found Critical to Sustained Collaboration

In a mid-stream process evaluation of 25 community health public-private partnerships, known as Community Care Networks (CCN), Shortell et al. (2002) investigated the factors affecting partnership effectiveness. CCNs collaborators included hospitals, managed care organizations, clinics, public health departments, physician organizations, nursing homes, schools, local and state governments, citizen groups, chambers of commerce, social service agencies, political leaders, and local businesses. The CCN program requires that the partnerships study the community health needs, set priorities, assess barriers and facilitate seamless continuum of care. Each CCN's goals and their own measures of success represented a wide range of health issues, for example, reducing teen pregnancies, increasing rural access to medical transportation, extending health services to the uninsured, or improving accessibility to expensive medications.

Successful partnerships were marked by process characteristics:

- The ability to manage size and diversity,
- The ability to attract and rely on multiple components of leadership,
- The ability to maintain focus,
- The ability to manage and channel conflict,

- The ability to recognize life cycles (CITING D'AUNNO AND ZUCKERMAN, 1987) and “hand off the baton,” and
- The ability to “patch” (CITING EISENHARDT AND BROWN, 1999). The “ability to patch” refers to a partnership’s ability “to reposition its assets, competencies, and resources to address changing needs and priorities,” such as blending and carving off resources for multiple projects.

Shortell et al. identify six factors in achieving effective, sustainable collaborations. The first three factors (“managing size and diversity, managing and channeling conflict, and ‘handing off the baton’”) deal primarily with political issues associated with maintaining a strong partnership coalition. The remaining three (leadership, focus, and patching) “deal primarily with efficiency and effectiveness issues involved with getting the work done... Both political ‘maintenance’ and instrumental achievement appear necessary for community partnership success; and ... sharply differentiated the most successful from the least successful.” Thus, the successful partnerships had incorporated a political element into their models, and the successful partnerships could leverage support for more funding

Hepburn et al. (2004) report on 38 inter-municipal shared service agreements in the Alberta Capital Region (Calgary) among recreation facilities, including libraries. The shared services included both those used by the public (such as ice time in arenas) and back office functions (for example, payroll). They found that a key element in success in these shared services arrangements (as measured by achievement of stated goals, value for money, and fair and equitable treatment) was the need for each partner to have control over the life of the partnership agreement, rather than only during initial negotiations. This was also related to the need for some flexibility in the partnership, and political sensitivity. In general there was satisfaction with the arrangements, a widespread sense of control, and flexibility, although in some cases user fees or restrictions to residents posed some challenges.

Overall, Hepburn et al. point to the importance of a few key factors in agencies’ satisfaction with shared services collaborations (which also depended on utilization rates and user satisfaction with the quality of the recreation service):

- Formal agreements appear to be more successful than informal agreements, possibly because they “systematically address matters such as voice, equity shares, and dispute resolution provisions that contribute to partnership success” (p.48).
- Dispute resolution mechanisms were found to be particularly important where partnerships deliver services directly to the public (in this case, recreation services) and require resources (costs) to do so. This is for obvious reasons, again reflecting the dynamic nature of collaborations: if client populations or needs change, satisfaction with the service itself requires adjustment and partner flexibility, especially in expensive services.
- The “human element”: throughout the agreement, each partner needs a mechanism to have a “voice.”
- Flexibility in agreements. The community (demographics, needs), the organizations (in the form of professional personnel, Boards of Directors, funding sources, and policy directives), and the broader context (elected officials, public servants, social and political climate) may all change over the course of the collaboration.

Leadership

Leadership, management and coordination are often mentioned as important in multi-agency collaborations (SELDEN ET AL., 2005; REED ET AL., 2005; TORONTO FIRST DUTY, 2006; KOONTZ & THOMAS, 2006; HUDSON AND HARDY, 2002; FULLAN, 2006; GANNON-LEARY ET AL., 2006; DOWLING ET AL., 2004; WALSH ET AL., 2006). Leadership is a process issue, reflecting the ability to bring people together, work with partners and respond to problems and conflicts, and as such relates to process. However, leadership can also be a factor in service-level outcomes (SHORTELL ET AL., 2002). They identify three components of leadership in the successful sites: a committed core leadership, a consistent organizational driver, and the practice of subsidiary leadership. This usually meant having dedicated staff (such as executive directors), supported by a stable organization (a hospital foundation, a health department). Subsidiary leadership refers to the practice of delegating to people and groups closest to a given problem the authority and resources to deal with the problem. In the case of the community health partnerships, this took the form of recognizing the need for different partners to take a leadership position on different issues.

Staff acceptance

Studies have found that staff acceptance is essential to positive outcomes. In their study of budget pooling, for example, Hultberg et al. (2005) found that staff tensions impeded positive outcomes initially. They found, first, service managers and politicians learned to work together, with the strengthened horizontal (agency) relationships fostering vertical relationships and responsibilities. Second, “both experiments encountered initial resistance through different cultures and ways of working,” particularly important as frontline staff have the primary effect the clients experience (p.539). In a separate study Hultberg et al. (2003) evaluated one of the local Swedish collaborative trial projects in rehabilitation and compared it to conventional working arrangements. Key outcomes for staff included ease of communication when also co-located, resulting in improved patient care because communication efficiency also increased.

Toronto First Duty (TFD) was an effort to integrate children’s services with early childhood education. Begun in 2002, with \$5 million in funding from a foundation, municipal government, and a labour union, the project was implemented in five sites. The project encouraged coordination and collaboration at each site, with local variations. Staff perceptions of the collaboration evolved over the course of the integration. The project overcame issues in the early stages (described as marked by “considerable angst over turf and status”), to eventually redefining roles and responsibilities brought about by “strong leadership, professional development and program supports.” In addition, new resources were created for professionals that are expected to contribute to the sustainability of the collaboration once funding ends.

GOOD PROCESS AND POSITIVE OUTCOMES

While good collaborative administrative processes can be important conditions for effective collaborative service delivery, they do not always correlate positively with client outcomes, especially if the service delivery reforms are not communicated to or accepted within a system context. In a study of children's services, Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1998) observe that process and outputs may set the context for the possibility of successful outcomes "because the effectiveness of these services depends heavily on the relationships formed between service providers and the people who receive the services" (p.404). They found that although collaboration to coordinate children's services was successful, the improved process (i.e., "quality of service") did not improve outcomes for children, and in some cases worsened children's outcomes. In this case, several factors contributed, including poor system-wide communication and acceptance of re-defined roles, coinciding with decreasing individual caseworker responsibility for each child. The objective of service coordination and centralizing service decisions served to diffuse frontline caseworker responsibility and flexibility for services. They found that the factor which had the most beneficial impact on children's outcomes was organizational climate rather than the coordination of service delivery. Where organizational climate was good, caseworkers maintained responsibility for, and good relationships with, clients.

The study concluded that, by comparison, the system coordination did not serve children as well as the previous individual case management results-oriented approach. This suggests that improvements in service delivery do not conclusively lead to improved outcomes for clients. There is the possibility of worsening client outcomes where efficiency of services is implemented without a system-wide communications strategy and understanding of the impact on client-level change.

COSTS, RISK AND OTHER CHALLENGES

Some studies suggest that non-profit organizations collaborate for reasons of resources (money) (GAZLEY AND BRUDNEY, 2007). However, research indicates that the material benefits of collaboration can take years to emerge, and that collaboration may carry its own risks.

COSTS

In a review of the medical and social service integration in the UK and the USA, Leutz (1999) declared the "integration costs before it pays" (p.89). Costs include up-front costs such as communications, operations, evaluations, and staff training, and these are difficult to estimate beforehand. Leutz also declares that the funder of the integration will maintain some power throughout and this may cause professional tensions if there is a perceived loss of control. Similarly, Powell and Dowling (2006) found that in partnerships that included a "transformational" model (that is, the blending of agency cultures), power struggles over finances and values impede success. Costs of collaboration can

also include “mission drift, the possible loss of institutional autonomy or public accountability, cooptation of actors, greater financial instability, greater difficulty in evaluating results, and the expenditure of considerable institutional time and resources in supporting collaborative activities” (GAZLEY AND BRUDNEY, 2007). Similar concerns were cited in the Australian trial of shared services in Meals on Wheels (WALSH ET AL., 2006). In the UK, Clarke and Glendinning (2002) note that start-up costs of management collaborations can also collide with accountability if there is uncertainty about which services will be delivered, and in what ways.

Costs can be dear for small agencies, as found by Selden et al. (2006), where teachers who networked within the collaboration left the original partner agency and moved on in their careers – a benefit few would deny the staff involved, but still a cost to be borne by the agency, and another reminder that collaborations are dynamic.

The time required to plan collaboration and integrated service delivery (which translates to resource use) is mentioned as a barrier to initiating collaborations. As demonstrated in the Swedish and English budget pooling experiments (HULTBERG ET AL., 2005), the early stages of collaboration involve inordinate amounts of (expensive) senior management time. The time involved in collaboration and the need for ongoing communication (including reviews of formal agreements as staff turns over) are cited as tradeoffs in some of the literature on collaborative process, sometimes affecting outcomes negatively (POLIVKA ET AL., 2001). Strategies to overcome the problem are use of coordinators, “boundary spanners” (RUGAKSA ET AL., 2007), “brokers,” and Management Service Organizations.

Client-level costs sometimes emerge, such as the children and families who are less well served than under previous models, as cited by Selden et al. Worries about a loss of privacy are also mentioned when agencies agree to information-sharing protocols (GANNON-LEARY ET AL., 2006; BROWNE ET AL., 2004B).

Finally, shared services are suitable to “back office” functions, but also to legal, public relations and communications functions. Such specialized work also raises the question of whether it is more cost-effective to advocate for funded “centres of excellence,” or for independent organizations who provide these services as third parties, rather than partnerships among agencies. This is similar to the suggestion of Connor et al. (1999) that collaborations be managed by independent organizations, and reflects the proliferation of resource support organizations (cited above).

RISK

Shared services might also be considered inappropriate depending on the risk for the organizations involved (London Centre of Excellence, 2006). A typology of collaborative mechanisms and services compared by level of risk may provide points of departure for health and social service agencies' thinking around collaboration. Key elements of risk cited here include the amount of interaction with the public required and political sensitivity. Back office collaborations may be the lowest risk levels, but even in that domain, the issue of risk to individual privacy has been raised (GANNON-LEARY ET AL., 2006; BROWNE ET AL., 2004B).

OTHER CHALLENGES

In Toronto First Duty, stumbling blocks to integration included “differences between the funding, training, labour affiliations, compensation, and work environments of kindergarten teachers and other early childhood staff” (TFD, 2006, p.8). These factors speak to the effect of silos on service delivery as “separate funding, governance, and legislative structures for education, child care, and other family and children’s services make it difficult to integrate people and programs at the local level. Differences in staffing requirements, regulations, and funding structures become obstacles to making seamless environments. Long-term change and sustainability requires an overhaul of legislative requirements, professional education, funding mechanisms and local governance structures” (p.26).

Conclusions

Several themes recur in the literature.

There are a number of models of collaborative service delivery but the literature to date is sparse and ambiguous. A generic typology of levels of change and outcomes will allow comparison of findings across diverse research studies.

According to the typology used in this review, findings are generally ambiguous. Outcomes most often emerge as Type 3 (efficiency, effectiveness or quality of services), and Type 4 (experiences of staff) on the typology of outcomes described in Table 1. This is found in the examinations of budget pooling (HULTBERG ET AL., 2005); intensity of collaborations (SELDEN ET AL., 2006); comprehensive service delivery (BBBF and Toronto First Duty); and shared services (HEPBURN ET AL., 2004; WALSH ET AL., 2006). To some extent Type 5 outcomes (user/client level change in health status, quality of life or well-being) were identified in the research on collaboration intensity, comprehensive service delivery, and organizational climate in the context of collaborative reforms (GLISSON AND HEMMELGARN, 1998).

In general, the administrative reforms and back office and shared services research showed possible impact on clients (Type 5) in light of system-wide broader acceptance and understanding of organizational change (GLISSON AND HEMMELGARN, 1998), in concerns about client privacy, but were indirectly linked to organizational climate, culture and staff morale. This suggests the importance of process issues, even in what are often considered non-contentious back office collaborations.

Collaborations depend on process, but successful process in achieving outputs – such as agreements to collaborate or integrate – does not in itself lead to success. Process factors that appear to be important include co-ordination, leadership, and inter-professional collaboration.

In addition, the fact that collaborations are not static – staff move on, funding structures shift, populations change, technology changes, vision evolves – highlights the need for a stabilizing influence on the partnership, even in short-term or back office partnerships. This can take the form of effective leadership or a coordination protocol, but also requires that people feel they are part of a larger project, pointing to the importance of communication and staff buy-in, and allowing time for changes to be integrated.

Accordingly, individual staff level outcomes (Type 4) cannot be overlooked in planning. Salaries, professional development opportunities, and the broader community's acceptance of realigned roles and responsibilities affect the collaboration and the service delivery (SELDEN ET AL., 2006; GLISSON AND HEMMELGARN, 2005; KHARICHA ET AL., 2004). While motivations to collaborate may include resource enlargement (GAZLEY AND BRUDNEY, 2007; POWELL AND DOWLING, 2006), these are also integral to job satisfaction experiences.

Also of importance are legal and infrastructure issues, such as incompatible IT systems, funding silo difficulties, and collective agreements (GANNON-LEARY ET AL., 2006; HEPBURN, 2004; HULTBERG ET AL., 2005). For the most part these appear to be transitory, but in some cases they can block or delay collaborations. Again, process issues such as communication, shared vision, trust, and negotiation emerge.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Overall, there is no overwhelming evidence that service delivery collaborations improve user-level outcomes. The caveat to this, however, is that it tells us more about the literature than about the impact of service delivery collaborations. The paucity of research on the question is a barrier to understanding the how and why of successful collaborative service delivery. Similar to the well-known criticism of evidence-based research on parachute use (i.e., without the evidence generated by randomized control trials we cannot conclude that parachutes save lives [SMITH AND PELL, 2003]), we cannot conclude that collaborations will improve service delivery outcomes. Expertise at the local level (and common sense) may suggest otherwise.

In general, rigorous examination of the relationships is needed, but there are unavoidable difficulties encountered in definitions, differences in health and social issues and populations. A generic categorization of strategies and outcomes, applied to a meta-analysis of previous research, might clarify some issues. The typology used here (DOWLING ET AL., 2005) is an example.

Appendix A: Research Methodology

The scholarly literature was searched through electronic databases for books and peer-reviewed journals. Key words searched jointly and/or separately were: nonprofit/non-profit; collaboration; partnership; outcomes; impacts; service delivery; service coordination; co-location; single intake; service integration; co-delivery; shared assessment; multi-agency; shared services; back office integration. The grey literature was explored with Google and Google Scholar searches of keywords and authors who were identified on databases, online discussion forums (ARNOVA); discussions with Wellesley Institute staff.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the types of collaboration under study – categorized according to partners involved, sector(s) involved, function and purpose of the collaboration -- are outlined in the Definitions and Key Issues Section (1).

There is an extensive literature on outcomes measurement; measurement issues are only discussed here as applied to the question of non-profit service delivery collaboration.

In the grey literature in particular, several streams that touch upon non-profit service delivery are excluded because their foci are tangential and/or undeveloped. These include, for example, philanthropic foundations who provide guidance and evaluation engagement with and participation of communities; these evaluations tend often to examine intervention strategies and process evaluations. Government-based health websites also provide guidance on “best practices” in interventions and occasionally mention integrated care and collaborative approaches. Of these, evaluations may be mentioned but few are available and “lessons learned” are for the most part on process, or on client-focused accessibility strategies (such as offering culturally appropriate care). Government sources also focus on collaborations among government internal departments and services; these are excluded. In addition, community based, action research and participatory research evaluations that engage universities and research institutions with communities are excluded because they do not focus on service delivery.

Appendix B:

Models Of Collaboration

A number of diverse continua and models have been developed to characterize collaborative service arrangements, for example:

- Selden et al. (2006) conceptualize a continuum of collaborative service arrangements from cooperation (informal and personal relationships) to service integration (the development of new services for mutual clients) on four levels:
 - policy (e.g., intergovernmental advisory councils);
 - organization-centered (e.g., creation of a unified “umbrella” of agencies at federal to local levels);
 - program-centered (e.g., linked IT, joint program planning); and
 - client-centered (e.g., single intake).
- Cameron et al. (1995) see collaboration as the middle point on a service integration continuum: cooperation > collaboration > integration.

On another dimension, integration can be:

- voluntary (with no independent structure),
- mediated (linked primarily through one organization), or
- directed (one organization has legal and funding authority and can impose decisions).

In addition, the models of service integration can be: entrepreneurial, coalitions, federations, or “integration” (“formation of a new supra-organization”).

- The London Centre of Excellence (2006) offers a basic typology of shared services.
 - Centralisation: One organization with multiple departments centralizes their own corporate support capabilities into one shared service.
 - Collaboration: Two or more public sector organizations collaborate to develop a shared solution, sometimes with external funding.
 - Commercialisation: A public or private sector organization (perhaps both) develops a shared service centre and then takes it to market. (p.15)

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Collaboration Practices in Government and in Business:

A Literature Review

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Why has collaboration emerged as such a prevalent theme in government and business practices?

A PARADIGM SHIFT

Collaboration in government and in business is a longstanding practice. In recent decades, however, it has taken on greater prominence. To cite just a few examples from the business world:

- One 2003 study noted that more than 20,000 corporate alliances had been formed world-wide over the previous two years, and that the number of such alliances in the United States had grown by 25% per cent each year since 1987 (ZINELDIN, 2003);
- Over half of America's fastest-growing companies have worked collaboratively with others, and almost two-thirds of Canada's emerging growth companies say building strategies alliances is one of the reasons why they've climbed so high, so fast (THE CONTROLLERS UPDATE, 2002; SHIFFMAN, 2004);
- Most large companies participate in at least 30 alliances, and many have over 100 (BAMFORD, 2002).

This emphasis on collaboration is not simply some new technique or fad that has emerged as a best practice in the last few years. It reflects substantial changes that have taken place in terms of the way organizations operate, both in the business and government realms. In essence, it represents the consequence of the weakening of hierarchical approaches to directing organizations, the erosion of a command-and-control form of top-down management (FUKUYAMA, 1999, PP. 195, 194).

The reasons for this transformation are varied and all self-reinforcing, and reflect technological, economic and political changes (CONSIDINE, 2005; GIGUERE, 2006; STUART, 1993). The changes driving increased collaboration in business include:

- The overtaking of mass manufacturing by consumer-oriented approaches, including greater customization and shorter product cycles, and the emerging predominance of the service sector. These require innovation, flexibility and adaptability, so top-down management has been giving way to decentralized production and service processes such as outsourcing.
- Cheaper communications and transportation, as well as globalization, are pressing business to compete on cost

and on speed, while staying ahead of the competition through quality improvements and constant innovation. Traditional contracting-out is a highly structured process. Business is turning to more creative forms of continuous adaptability that rely on on-going relationships (partnerships) between buyers and suppliers to collaborate on mechanisms that lower cost, increase speed, improve quality and foster innovation.

- Information technology has made possible increasingly sophisticated and fine-tuned systems for managing product logistics, aimed at reducing costs related to supply, production, transportation and inventory. (FULCONIS, 2005). These systems, known as supply chain management, require information sharing and incentives sharing (reduced costs, higher profits).
- Supply chain management is often conflated with strategic partnership or strategic alliance, but these are actually much broader categories of collaborations (ELLRAM, 1995; VYAS, 1995). In focusing more on their core competencies in the intensely competitive marketplace, companies are relying more on inter-corporate alliances to expand their markets, to innovate and to apply new technologies, to spread risk, to access capital and to take advantage of converging opportunities (WEISS, 2001).

The changes driving collaboration in government are somewhat different. They include:

- Increasing pressure since the early 1970s to reduce costs and improve efficiencies, in reaction to rising deficits and growing voter resistance to tax increases. Borrowing from the private sector, governments are increasingly focused on core competencies, exploring privatization, out-sourcing and downloading, and reassessing their essential functions (eventually moving from government as doer to governance as facilitator).
- Increasing pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of government services. However, governments have been hard-pressed to demonstrate not only value for money but even evidence of actual results. The growing realization of the complexity of many social problems, coupled with an increasing tendency of citizens to question hierarchical authority, has diminished governments' perceived legitimacy as the ultimate arbiters of public concerns.
- However, in following business' lead in devolving functions and decisions, governments have also faced increasing segmentation or the "silo effect," where individual branches and departments act in isolation, or counterproductively. Governments are now working to integrate or join up government functions.
- As the complexity of social problems becomes more evident, governments have begun to try to become more inclusive, and to draw in a wider range of perspectives to produce higher quality decisions in response to these issues (such as neighbourhood revitalization or regional economic development). They have also tried to regain legitimacy by incorporating a more diverse variety of interests through multi-stakeholder policy development and strategy implementation processes (CONSIDINE, 2005).

WHAT OBJECTIVES UNDERLIE THE DRIVE FOR COLLABORATION?

The move to partnerships and collaborations to address the above trends represents a sea change in business and government practice. What specific objectives does collaboration propose to achieve?

IN BUSINESS

In the business sector, most of the reasons given for collaboration appear more instrumental in nature, that is, as a means to an end, to support above all else the bottom-line business goals of the corporation. In the context of a highly competitive, globalized environment, with relentless pressure on companies to deliver their products and services cheaper and faster, and where innovation is in constant demand, businesses must rely on their essential strengths, and seek partners to supply those capabilities which they lack. Thus, strategic alliances have been promoted on the basis of:

- Accessing the capabilities of other companies, namely their products, customer relationships or their technologies;
- Spreading the risk of a new initiative;
- Attracting more capital for a new venture;
- Gaining scale to compete with larger competitors;
- Adding scope to support integrated solutions;
- Gaining familiarity for entering new geographic markets;
- Securing industry buy-in for technological standards (ERNST, 2000, ERNST, 2004).

IN GOVERNMENT

For the public sector, the rationale for collaboration includes an instrumental component (like business, government seeks cost-savings and service improvements), but there is also a qualitative difference in its adoption of collaboration, namely, to transform the way in which programs and policies are developed (to become more inclusive), and to fashion integrated solutions of complex social problems. Thus, joined-up government is justified on the basis of:

Better customer service:

- *Convenience, consumers can access services more easily and at less cost;*
- *Comprehensiveness, consumers have access to a greater variety of services;*
- *Simultaneity, consumers can access multiple services at the same time;*
- *Individualization of services, services can be responsive to differentiated needs;*
- *Differential engagement, consumers can engage services at different levels of intensity;*
- *Mainstreaming, blended services reduce stigma for some population sub-groups;*
- *Broader coverage, better outreach;*

Efficiency:

- *Process efficiency, less duplication of effort, and some activities and processes can be streamlined;*
- *Cost efficiency, through reduction of transaction costs associated with fragmented services, elimination of duplication, harnessing collective purchasing power, and realization of economies of scale;*
- *Flexibility, diverse funding streams can be blended in creative and more effective ways;*

Transformed government approaches:

- *Taking a wider view, moving from a silo approach to a wider perspective of program impacts;*
- *Addressing the complexity of issues, by cobbling together interconnected and mutually supportive interventions;*
- *Promoting innovation, by bringing together a wider set of perspectives and experiences;*
- *Focusing on outcomes, rather than on process rules, inputs and/or outputs;*
- *Enhancing legitimacy, through inclusive, participative processes.*

(CONSIDINE, 2005; CORBETT, 2006; NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE, 2001)

What different types of collaborative activities are there?

Virtually all facets of organizational activity can be the object of a collaborative approach. Collaborations in business and in government can be categorized in various ways. One type of categorization concerns the kinds of partners involved. However, this report discusses a limited sub-set of multi-partner collaborations: business-to-business collaborations, and intra-government collaborations involving different branches or departments. Collaborations among these homogeneous partners are typically categorized either in terms of:

- **relationship intensity:** How intense or integrated is the collaboration?
- **functional focus:** At what operational level does the collaboration take place?

COLLABORATION BY DEGREE OF RELATIONSHIP INTENSITY

Collaboration that involves, say, informal information sharing among different companies is much less “intense” than a formal joint venture involving major staff and financial sharing. Conceptual models of relationship intensity abound. Table 1 shows one model, developed primarily for the public sector (Corbett, 2006). Conceptual models of relationship intensity in business-to-business and intra-government collaborations are similar to those used in discussing NPO services.

TABLE 1: RELATIONSHIP INTENSITY SCALE (CORBETT, 2006)

Level 1	<p>Communication: <i>Clear, consistent and non-judgmental discussions; giving and exchanging information in order to maintain meaningful relationships. Individual programs are totally separate.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures for information sharing • Regular interagency meetings • Informal service “brokering” arrangements <p>Cooperation: <i>Assisting each other with respective activities, giving general support, information and/or endorsement for each other’s programs, services or objectives.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task forces, advisory groups, committees to review/approve plans • Consensus concerning best practices • Cross system dialogue and/or training • Cooperative monitoring or case reviews
Level 2	<p>Coordination: <i>Joint activities and communications are more intensive and far-reaching. Agencies or individuals engage in joint planning and synchronization of schedules, activities, goals, objectives and events.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal inter-agency agreements to “coordinate” • Joint mission statements/principles • Joint training • Contractual procedures for resolving inter-agency disputes • Temporary personnel reassignments • Coordinated eligibility standards <p>Collaboration: <i>Agencies, individuals or groups willingly relinquish some of their autonomy in the interest of mutual gains or outcomes. True collaboration involves actual changes in the agency, group or individual behaviour to support collective goals.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated personnel/qualification standards • Single application form/process • Common case management protocols

- Centralized functional administration
- Coordinated IT programming authority

Level 3 **Convergence:** *Relationships evolve from collaboration to actual restructuring of services, programs, memberships, budgets, missions, objectives and staff.*

- Contractual provisions for fund transfers/reallocations
- Contractual “lead agency” agreements
- Pooled resources/budget contributions

Consolidation: *Agency, group or individual behaviour, operations, policies, budgets, staff and power are united and harmonized. Individual autonomy or gains have been fully relinquished, common outcomes and identity adopted.*

- Multi-agency/multi-task/multi-discipline service plans and budgets
- Seamless inter-agency service delivery teams
- Fully blended inter-agency planning/division of labour/responsibility
- Shared human capital/physical capital assets

COLLABORATION BY FUNCTIONAL FOCUS

Collaborations can also be categorized with reference to function. Business and government collaborations tend to be categorized with reference to three types of functions. The categories are broadly similar to those used in classifying NPO service collaborations. However, the specific collaborative service mechanisms among NPO agencies – such as co-location, and client-based referral mechanisms and case coordination – are often quite distinctive to that sector.

Administrative support.

This typically involves behind-the-scenes integration (such as back-office shared services). In government, this often takes the form of shared services, involving the consolidation of administrative or support functions (such as human resources, finance, information technology or procurement) from several departments into a single, stand-alone entity (ACCENTURE, 2005). Sometimes shared services cover more, such as consolidation of professional and technical support (for example, architects or property management) or sub-regional services (waste) (WHITFIELD, 2007). The purported benefits of shared services include:

- Learning and sharing best practice through collaboration and lead authority roles;
- Pooling and sharing of resources and investment in new systems which may not otherwise be affordable by an individual business unit or government department;
- Achieving economies of scale and efficiencies, thus reducing the cost of services (fewer locations, systems and equipment) and redirecting savings to other services (e.g. customer service, front-line services);

- Applying new technology to simplify and standardize processes;
- Improving the quality of services by redesigning and reorganizing delivery methods;
- Sharing training and development costs; Increasing capability and flexibility to absorb peaks and troughs.

(WHITFIELD, 2007)

Operational support

These collaborations involve actual linkage of operations, such as occurs in information portals, service collaboration or supply chain management. Supply chain management, for example, involves coordination among the various actors involved in the flow of products and information, from raw materials to the final customer, based on the sharing of information and of decision-making, as opposed to relying on limited buyer-seller contracts. The coordination process seeks to cut costs, speed the process, and enhance innovation, with the benefits being shared among the partners. Activities that form part of supply chain management incorporate supply chain design (including procurement, transportation and distribution), collaborative manufacturing (including inventory management, product design and product development, and manufacturing planning), and integrated fulfillment (including order processing, sales, customer service and demand management). Anticipated benefits of supply chain management include improved efficiencies, increased sales, reduced assets and working capital, reduced inventory, and the potential for reducing a company's infrastructure (SAMUEL, 2006).

Table 2 describes the key ways in which supply chain management differs from conventional supplier-bid contracting practice in business.

TABLE 2: SUPPLIER BID AS OPPOSED TO SUPPLIER PARTNERING APPROACH (STUART, 1993)

<i>TRADITIONAL CONTRACT APPROACH</i>	<i>BUYER-SUPPLIER PARTNERSHIP</i>
PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON PRICE	MULTIPLE CRITERIA, INCLUDING MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY
SHORT-TERM CONTRACTS	LONGER TERM CONTRACTS
EVALUATION BY BID	INTENSIVE AND EXTENSIVE EVALUATION
MANY SUPPLIERS	FEWER SELECTED SUPPLIERS

<i>TRADITIONAL CONTRACT APPROACH</i>	<i>BUYER-SUPPLIER PARTNERSHIP</i>
IMPROVEMENT BENEFITS SHARED BASED ON RELATIVE POWER	IMPROVEMENT BENEFITS ARE SHARED EQUITABLY
IMPROVEMENTS AT DISCRETE TIME INTERVALS	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IS SOUGHT
PROBLEMS ARE SUPPLIER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO CORRECT	PROBLEMS ARE JOINTLY SOLVED
INFORMATION IS PROPRIETARY	INFORMATION IS SHARED
CLEAR DELINEATION OF BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITY	QUASI-VERTICAL INTEGRATION

Strategic-level development and implementation

These collaborations involve higher-order coordination. Examples in business practice include industry convergence initiatives. In government, higher-order coordination often involves service systems integration. The latter attempts to integrate government services across vertical departmental or branch funding, regulatory, or policy-making “silos.” So, for example, an individual requiring income support may be obligated to seek employment, but their job prospects may be limited by one or more of: inadequate informal networks for finding employment, lack of formal work skills, limited English language proficiency, lack of access to affordable childcare, behavioural challenges, unstable housing, substance abuse issues, and so on. Services for addressing each of these challenges may be the responsibility of a separate government department (even a separate level of government), and/or delivered through a separate government office. Each of these services may have different eligibility requirements, different intake forms and procedures, different time frames, and impose different (and possibly conflicting) obligations on the client.

Services system integration attempts to overcome these barriers and conflicts by streamlining and simplifying client access to a wide range of benefits and services that cross traditional program domains. The ultimate purpose is to improve client outcomes, based on the premise that each program is more likely to achieve its goal when it operates in a coherent and coordinated fashion with related programs serving the same client (RAGAN, 2003). Services system integration appears to be most advanced in the United States, notably with respect to workforce development systems and integration of income-support programs with related programs (employment and training, childcare and child welfare).

Strategic-level collaborations in the NPO sector include multi-stakeholder, place-based comprehensive community initiatives, sector-wide service alliances (e.g. hospice services, or mental health services), or advocacy/sector planning coalitions and networks. These types of collaborations are beyond the scope of the project of which this paper is part.

What measurements of effectiveness apply to collaboration

The business sector has a much more articulated framework for measuring the effectiveness of collaborations than does the public sector. Business has one fundamental metric – the bottom-line, which ultimately involves quantifying impact in terms of dollars and cents. The assessment of government actions often entails far more nebulous judgments relating to far more intangible outcomes. In practice, the business sector has evolved some very sophisticated tools for measuring performance. The government sector shows considerable lag in this regard, in part because it lacks the equivalent incentive that drives the business sector (personal financial reward for success, bankruptcy for failure), but also because its qualitative impacts are often less susceptible to isolation and quantification.

MEASUREMENTS OF COLLABORATION EFFECTIVENESS IN THE BUSINESS SETTING

Collaboration in business is often undertaken for strategic, and not just tactical, reasons. That is, the goal may be one that has a longer time horizon, and so its immediate benefit may not express itself in increased sales or profits. For that reason, the business literature counsels that an assessment of the benefits of a collaboration should proceed along several dimensions, to capture immediate impacts as well as to measure performance that has a longer term or more intangible consequence. The outcomes-related dimensions are:

- **Financial:** The prime business yardstick, expressed in numerous ways, could involve such items as sales revenue, operating margins, profitability ratios, cash flow and return on investment. There might also be metrics relevant to the specifics of the partnership, such as reducing overlapping costs, achieving purchasing discounts, transfer pricing revenues and sales of related products by the parent companies. As well, there are surrogates for some of these assessments, such as tracking the share prices of the respective partners before and after the formation of the alliance, and comparing their changed value to that of industry averages.
- **Strategic:** These metrics involve the position of the alliance/partnership in the marketplace, items that in the long run should contribute to the initiative's business strength. These may include such measurements as market share, new product launches, customer loyalty, access to new customers, access to new technology, knowledge transfer and gains of employee expertise.
- **Operational:** These measurements focus on immediate outputs tied to effectiveness that should have a bearing on financial performance. These could include number of customers contacted, number of staff recruited, product quality, manufacturing throughput and the time it takes to make key decisions. (BAMFORD, 2002; SAMMER, 2004)

MEASUREMENTS OF COLLABORATION EFFECTIVENESS IN THE GOVERNMENT REALM

Measures of intra-governmental collaboration effectiveness are less developed than in business. This has as much to do with settling on what is to be measured, as on the well-known practical difficulties about how to measure public sector outcomes. This challenge has its roots in the initial discussion about the objectives for which collaboration is used. In the public sector, collaboration focuses on process goals as well as outcomes goals. For example, a consultative process regarding some policy initiative could conceivably come up with a proposed solution that from a technical standpoint is exceedingly sound; but because the process used was so disappointing, it results in no stakeholder support for the proposal.

Two types of measures are considered important in measuring the effectiveness of intra-governmental collaboration:

(CANADIAN HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH FOUNDATION, 2006; GEDDES, 2006; RAGAN, 2003; VOETS, 2006):

- **Outcome assessments:** Did the collaboration produce results and of what sort, having regard to outputs (changes in immediate behaviour) and outcomes (longer-term desirable changes);
- **Performance assessments:** Was the effort worth the cost (efficiency), how did it compare to alternative options (effectiveness).

Identifying appropriate outcomes measures is often difficult. In a number of the case studies reviewed, the evaluators and policy-makers simply zero-in on concrete indicators by which to measure success. That is, instead of getting bogged down in a discussion of what to measure and how, some initiatives seem to take the view that, “if what gets measured gets done,” then the best approach is to set a target to drive the activities of the collaboration. Table 3 shows the outcomes indicators adopted in Great Britain to assess the effectiveness of seven inter-departmental initiatives.

**TABLE THREE: INDICATORS FOR SELECTED JOINT WORKING INITIATIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN
(NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE, 2001)**

<i>INITIATIVE AND GOAL</i>	<i>INDICATOR</i>
ROUGH SLEEPERS UNIT TO REDUCE THE NUMBERS SLEEPING ROUGH	TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH IN ENGLAND BY TWO-THIRDS
EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDCARE PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE THE COORDINATION AND DELIVERY OF CHILDCARE AND EARLY EDUCATION SERVICES	SPECIFIC NUMERICAL TARGETS FOR CHILDCARE SPACES AND NURSERY PLACES

<i>INITIATIVE AND GOAL</i>	<i>INDICATOR</i>
<p>SURE START TO ENSURE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES</p>	<p>SPECIFIC TARGETS MATCHED TO PROGRAM OBJECTIVES (FOR EXAMPLE, REDUCE THE NUMBER OF MOTHERS WHO SMOKE DURING PREGNANCY BY 10%)</p>
<p>BUSINESS LINK PARTNERSHIPS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO SMALL BUSINESSES</p>	<p>MEASUREMENTS RELATING TO MARKET PENETRATION, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND PRODUCTIVITY AND PROFITABILITY</p>
<p>BRITISH TRADE INTERNATIONAL TO HELP ALL BUSINESSES TO DEVELOP BUSINESSES OVERSEAS AND TO IMPROVE EXISTING SERVICES</p>	<p>QUANTIFIABLE IMPROVEMENTS IN BUSINESS PERFORMANCE FOR EXISTING EXPORTERS AND NEW EXPORTERS</p>

PROCESS OUTCOMES

The literature on business-to-business and intra-government collaboration also emphasizes the importance of “good process” to effective outcomes. That is, a well-working collaboration process is necessary for successful outcomes. The health and fit of the partnership need to be tracked, to ensure that the process entered into can support the business objectives. This requires measuring such factors as trust between the partners, speed and clarity of their decision-making, and the effectiveness of their decisions and their implementation (BAMFORD, 2002; SAMMER, 2004).

What evidence is there for the effectiveness of collaborative activities?

This study relied on a fairly rapid survey of the business and government literature, which covered a very wide variety of documents (ranging from specific case studies to surveys of key informants to broad academic reviews of the field, often combining theoretical analyses with practical examples) and a wide variety of collaborative practices (from administrative shared services to regional economic development). Two observations derived from this cursory skimming of the literature may provide a context for interpreting the overall state of the quantitative evidence about collaborative activities.

Evidence and Its Interpretation

First, there is a common view in the business literature regarding the high failure rate of alliances, variously described as “30-60% are under-performing,” “a long-term success rate of about 50%,” “a majority (roughly 70%) fail outright or achieve only initial goals,” and “a failure rate as high as 70%” (BAMFORD, 2002; ENRST, 2000; WEISS, 2001; ZINELDIN, 2003).

Yet it is very clear from the literature that this failure rate is viewed as a product of poor implementation (primarily poor or damaged working relationship between partners, or a lack of relationship management capability) and is not a consequence of the collaborative approach itself. Indeed, survey data of CEOs demonstrates that the value of a collaborative approach is widely accepted. One explanation for this is that it is in the nature of a paradigm that its validity relies on faith because it accords with current values and accepted wisdom.

The other view would be (and this would require further research) that the evident success with more mechanistic forms of collaboration in the business sector (supply chain management, consolidation of back-office services) has been successful to such a degree¹ in terms of the easy measurements (reduced costs, improved efficiencies) that the concept of collaboration has easily migrated to more challenging forms (strategic alliances for the purpose of innovation, convergence or market penetration), where the supporting anecdotal evidence is strong but where the quantitative data is still catching up to practices. This might especially be the case because these more strategic forms of alliances do require a greater attention to process and less to financial metrics, for which the business sector is still slow to adapt.

Lack of Evidence on Intra-Government Collaboration

The other observation is that there is a significant dearth of quantitative information about the practice of collaboration in the public sector. One U.S. report concluded that very little information exists in the US to answer such questions as: How many collaborative efforts among government, business, and civil-society entities are actually underway? How many people are involved in these collaborations? What proportion of government spending is channeled through such ventures? What share of rules and regulations are framed, influenced, or implemented collaboratively? How do these indicators vary across sectors and between countries? And how, if at all, are they changing over time? (DONAHUE, 2004)

It is well known that the public sector has a much less developed practice of evaluation than that found in the private sector, and a large part of the reason for this relates to the difficulty of isolating cause and effect in complex social circumstances. In the case of collaborative work, this difficulty is compounded by the challenge of sorting out the influences of multiple players (never mind making assessments about the quality of the collaboration and how that affects the impact).

It is noteworthy that when the business sector engages in collaborative practices that more closely approximate the activities of governments (that is, the use of strategic alliances, which can be of a complexity comparable to multi-stakeholder processes like regional economic development), their record in terms of measurement falls off substantially. Only a fraction of strategic alliances have adequate performance metrics in place: one account (of over 500 companies) says less than a quarter; another (of 200 companies and 1572 alliances) says 11%, and that half (51%) have essentially no performance metrics (BAMFORD, 2002; DYER, 2001).

¹ Wal-Mart is the poster child for supply chain management, both because it pioneered its use in retailing and because it emerged as an industry giant as a result. A Google search of the combined terms “Wal-Mart” and “supply chain” produces 2,200,000 hits.

Thus it appears likely that the dichotomy in terms of measurement results may have less to do with what sector is being examined (that is, business as opposed to government) and more to do with the complexity of the collaboration activity being examined. Companies says less than a quarter; another (of 200 companies and 1572 alliances) says 11%, and that half (51%) have essentially no performance metrics (BAMFORD, 2002; DYER, 2001).

Thus it appears likely that the dichotomy in terms of measurement results may have less to do with what sector is being examined (that is, business as opposed to government) and more to do with the complexity of the collaboration activity being examined.

EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION EFFECTIVENESS IN THE BUSINESS SETTING

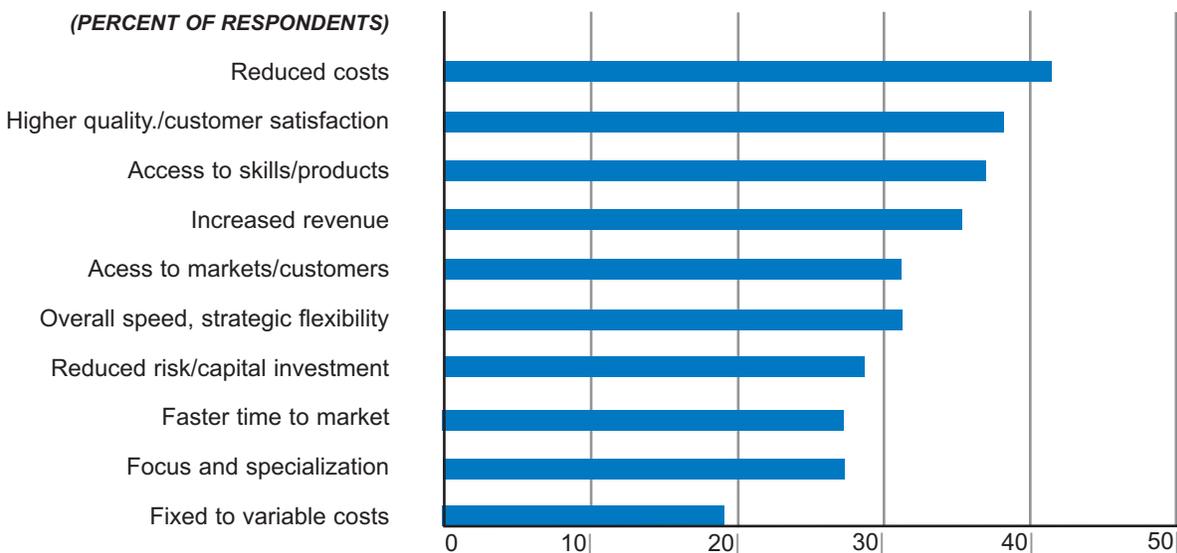
The evidence that has been assembled has focused on amassing large-scale results, not individual evaluations. As such, these typically rely on surveys of CEOs, but where financial data is also assembled. Usually CEOs are asked about collaboration practices (the extent to which they engage in specific collaboration practices and/or employ specific strategic alliance capabilities). The business performance of these corporations is then examined, in particular comparing those that score high in terms of collaborative approaches with those that score low. One major survey involving 765 in-depth interviews with CEOs around the world found the following:

- Companies innovating through strategic partnerships enjoyed the highest operating margin growth;
- Over 75% of CEOs indicated that collaboration and partnering is very important to innovation (even though only half of the CEOs believed their organizations were collaborating beyond a moderate level);
- Companies in which the CEO orchestrates a more team-oriented culture were decidedly more profitable than organizations with segregated pockets of innovators.

(IBM GLOBAL BUSINESS SERVICES, 2006)

This same survey asked CEOs to identify the benefits of collaboration. Table 4 shows the findings. While this is not direct quantifiable evidence of the benefits, the opinions of CEOs who presumably know their business should count as relevant secondary evidence.

TABLE 4: COLLABORATION AND PARTNERING BENEFITS CITED BY CEOS
(IBM GLOBAL BUSINESS SERVICES, 2006)



In addition:

- A three-year cross-industry study of over 150 alliance managers showed that companies with a very high relationship management competence (self-reported) tended to have a higher profitability ratio than that of their industry, while companies with a very low relationship management competence reported net profit margins and return on assets well below that of their respective industry (Weiss, 2001).
- A survey of 240 purchasing executives found important linkages between business benefit and the extent of partnership between the buyer and supplier as follows:
 - A correlation coefficient of .74 between short-term benefits (such as reduced downtime and rework, speedier throughput time, inventory reductions, and so on) and the degree of supplier partnership (measured in terms of committed resources and views on partnership);
 - A correlation coefficient of .79 between longer-term benefits (such as reduced cost structure, product sales gains and improved product quality) and the degree of supplier partnership (as defined above). (STUART, 1993)
- The stock market also passes judgments on the value of collaboration. Presumably stock market analysts base their judgments on an analysis of how these collaborative vehicles have affected, or can affect, return on investment. Tracking the share prices of 2,102 companies that had announced alliances (comparing prices for the five days before the announcement and the five days after the announcement, and excluding data that was deemed corrupted), one study found:

- That alliances are better received than mergers and acquisitions in fast-moving, highly uncertain industries such as electronics, mass media and software;
 - Alliances are also better received for companies trying to build new businesses, enter new geographic markets or access new distribution channels;
 - Multiple partner alliances and consortia are well received;
 - 52% of large alliances caused the share price of the parent company to move more than one standard deviation of its normal movement, and in 70% of these cases the movement was positive. (ERNST, 2000)
- A similar study of the movement of stock prices focused on financial institutions in Japan and the value difference that strategic alliances added, finding that:
 - A strategic alliance on average increases the value of partner firms;
 - The gains from the alliance are spread more widely among the partners than would be suggested by a random alternative;
 - Smaller partners tend to experience larger percentage gains;
 - The market values inter-group alliance announcements more than intra-group alliance announcements.

EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION EFFECTIVENESS IN THE GOVERNMENT REALM

On the government side of the ledger, a completely different set of problems present themselves. With respect to collaboration that approximates private-sector approaches and philosophy (notably, shared services and private-public partnerships), the topic generates ideological smoke, which clouds the view. That is to say, the prospect of using techniques developed by the private sector or to propose a private sector role in government are propositions fraught with value judgments, and studies pro and con tend to produce findings that coincidentally accord with the author's predisposition on that issue.

Collaboration that involves linking, joining up or integrating services appears to have some positive evidence, although it is clear that in many cases implementation and evaluation involve many challenges.

Thus, in the case of shared services, a major private sector management consulting firm surveyed 143 senior government executives across 13 countries. 66% were already using shared services or were in the process of implementing it, with its greatest application being with respect to IT (73% of those 66% respondents currently have these functions shared), finance (58%), human resources (56%), supply chain/purchasing (55%) and property/facilities management (53%). Almost two-thirds (63%) of these respondents rated shared services as extremely or very important in meeting their current business challenges (of which the top three were meeting efficiency targets, service improvements and controlling costs) (ACCENTURE, 2005).

A different perspective casts doubt about the benefits of shared services, citing for example that:

- The 20%-25% savings figure claimed by the British government in the 1990s and authoritatively repeated elsewhere was subsequently shown to be a myth and averaged about 5%;
- The savings estimates do not include transaction costs;
- The studies do not assess impacts on local employment and the local economy, in the case of consolidations applied across geographical areas, or whether larger consolidations might not facilitate off-shoring services, further harming local economies. (WHITFIELD, 2007)

In the case of the joining up of government services, the evidence is more positive where the initiative set tangible targets in advance. Thus, in the case of the joint working initiatives cited earlier, several produced demonstrable achievement: Table 5 shows outcomes achieved for five intra-governmental UK initiatives.

TABLE FIVE: OUTCOMES FOR SELECTED JOINT WORKING INITIATIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN

<i>INITIATIVE AND GOAL</i>	<i>OUTCOMES</i>
<p>ROUGH SLEEPERS UNIT To reduce the numbers sleeping rough</p>	<p>Rough Sleepers Unit To reduce the numbers sleeping rough The numbers of those sleeping rough was reduced from 1850 to 700 (the target had been 616). The number of entrenched rough sleepers in London (those who have multiple health and social needs requiring sustained help) reduced from 427 to 110).</p>
<p>EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDCARE PARTNERSHIPS To improve the coordination and delivery of childcare and early education services</p>	<p>The target to provide a free part-time nursery place for all 4 year olds had been achieved as planned; free part-time places were available for over 50% of 3 year olds; and 240,000 new childcare spaces had been created, exceeding the target by 70%.</p>
<p>SURE START To ensure the health and well-being of pre-school children and their families</p>	<p>At the time of this report it was too early to report.</p>
<p>BUSINESS LINK Partnerships to provide support to small businesses</p>	<p>At present no results because the methodology for the satisfaction surveys has changed.</p>
<p>BRITISH TRADE INTERNATIONAL To help all businesses to develop businesses overseas and to improve existing services</p>	<p>At the time of this report it was too early to report.</p>

NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE, 2001

In the case of more complex initiatives, such as services system integration or local area improvements, the evidence becomes more difficult to produce, because of the nature of what is being attempted, the challenge in measuring outcomes and the limited practice of rigorous evaluation in such instances. Nevertheless there are some examples.

Thus, in the case of services system integration, one study suggests that such initiatives do make a positive impact, although their influence on community-wide measures of well-being has still not been determined. An extensive review of practices in 12 American states offered the following as the answer to the question, What difference does the effort to integrate services make:

- **Impacts on clients:** There was extensive anecdotal evidence from staff about the positive effects of integration of services;
- **Impacts on service staff and managers:** Similarly, the review cites widespread enthusiasm and pride in what is seen as a better way of delivering services;
- **Satisfaction surveys of clients:** the limited number of satisfaction surveys reported very high positive feedback (over 90% saying they would recommend the service to a friend, or that staff were courteous and concerned);
- **Program performance measures:** Program statistics showed better results in achieving objectives compared to areas where there was not service integration (objectives such as reducing caseloads, level of client participation in work-related activities);
- **Community-wide metrics:** In the case of broader measurements, such as poverty rates, home ownership rates, highschool graduation rates, illegitimacy or teen pregnancy rates, only a few programs are attempting such assessments, and at the time of this report, no results were yet available. (RAGAN, 2003).

What are the critical factors in achieving effectiveness in collaboration?

There is considerable consensus across the literature about what contributes to effective collaboration. Four studies were relied upon, representing a cross-section of perspectives:

- An analysis of 12 case studies, involving either shared services or service delivery collaboration, in a number of jurisdictions throughout North America and Europe, representing different partnership configurations (public-private, public-public, public-non-profit) (CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT, 2004);
- A review of five case studies of joined-up services in Great Britain (NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE, 2001);

- A study of services system integration in 12 U.S. states (RAGAN, 2003);
- A survey of over 150 senior government and NGO officials from across Canada (CROSSING BOUNDARIES NATIONAL COUNCIL, 2006).

The following are the key factors that were identified:

- **Clearly defined, shared goals:** It's hard to fly a plane if two co-pilots are steering in different directions. Excitement about partnering may mask different perceptions about what is the purpose of the common initiative. It is necessary to make the goals explicit and without any ambiguity (best through a formal document).
- **Leadership:** There not only needs to be buy-in and support from the top, but also a willingness to champion the partnership, to mobilize a collaborative approach across the partnering organizations, ensuring the goals of the partnership are understood and actively supported.
- **Measuring performance:** Goals need to be made concrete in the form of outcome indicators, to ensure they are understood, to measure progress, to provide feedback on whether things are working or not, and where necessary to prod change.
- **Strong communication, effective coordination and positive working relationships:** Good partnerships rely not only on each partner's ability to carry out their own function well, but also on the ability of each partner to work well with each other. Partnership work is not a series of discrete, disconnected tasks, but the interplay and conjunction of tasks.
- **Resources:** The synergy caused by collaboration (that is, the capacity to do more and/or to do it more effectively), does not by itself generate the resources to make it so, although parties entering partnerships sometimes seem to feel that will be the case. Partnerships require the dedication of staff, resources and time to realize their goals.
- **Trust:** Trust makes partnerships possible, because of the need to rely on the other partner. Trust needs to be assumed at the outset, but it also needs to be earned.

In addition to these primary factors, there are several other supporting elements that make these factors more likely to be present, namely: good management skills; staff who are trained in alliance relationship management capability; a governance structure for the partnership that enables problem-solving and decision-making, and that is sufficiently flexible; and stability.

It is noteworthy that the business literature regularly highlights the way in which the corporate sector tends to focus far more attention on the legal, financial and technical elements of partnerships (including reliance on information technology to cement an alliance), and often neglects the human dimensions of what is needed to ensure that a partnership survives (KANTER, 1994; LEGAULT, 2004; SVEJENOVA, 2006).

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The State of Service Delivery Collaboration in the Toronto NPO Sector:

A Key Informant Study

By Heather Graham



WELLESLEY INSTITUTE
advancing urban health

Introduction

1. BACKGROUND & PURPOSE:

In April 2007 the Wellesley Institute initiated a research project on inter-agency collaboration as one promising mechanism to help non-profit organizations increase their effectiveness, especially non-profit agencies that address the social determinants of health that create health inequalities. The project will be informed by a literature review, case studies, a round table event, document reviews, and up to 25 key informant interviews with identified stakeholders.

The purpose of the key informant interviews was:

- To provide information on the scope and nature of service delivery collaboration among Toronto's NPO health and social service providers,
- To identify relevant factors and issues with respect to effective and sustainable service delivery collaboration, and
- To identify issues, opportunities, and/or recommendations for discussion at a roundtable event (scheduled in October 2007) aimed at developing a vision and action plan for improving effective NPO collaboration in Toronto.

2. PROJECT SCOPE & DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of the research, collaboration was focused around service delivery - situations where partners are involved in shared program planning and/or delivery and jointly invest in resources, information, and expenses to support collaboration. Collaboration was defined as:

a structure that includes: A common agenda, vision, program or function; two or more autonomous organizations that maintain their separate organizational governance systems while creating a new trans-organizational system (to manage and oversee the collaboration); shared investment of time, energy and resources and risk, and all of the above may be specified in a formal agreement.

While the definition of collaboration provided suggests an emphasis on more formalized collaborations, stakeholders were encouraged to speak about their experience more broadly with both formal and informal service delivery collaborations. In addition, informants were able to reflect on the relationship between service delivery and other types/kinds of collaboration (e.g. information/resource sharing; joint planning/advocacy; etc.).

3. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Nineteen (19) stakeholders representing four (4) stakeholder groups (health sector, social service sector, funders, and others – conveners, mediators & researchers) were interviewed regarding their observations and perspectives related to collaboration in the NPO sector. They were able to speak about a range of service areas including Housing & Homeless Services; Immigration & Settlement Services; Health & Mental Health Services; and multi-sectoral partnerships – involving arts & environment; and services for underserved and marginalized communities. Beyond their current affiliations, stakeholders were able to speak from a range of perspectives – often wearing multiple hats (e.g. funders and mediators previously worked in the social service sector; health providers often work between health and social services; etc.).

The table below provides an overview of the stakeholders who participated in this process.

<i>STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES</i>	<i>AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS</i>	<i>INTERVIEWS</i>
HEALTH SECTOR	ST. JOSEPH'S HEALTH CENTRE TORONTO PUBLIC HEALTH TORONTO CCAC AIDS BUREAU	4
SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR	TORONTO NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES ACCESS ALLIANCE MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE (CROSSING HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES) COMMUNITY RESOURCE CONSULTANTS TORONTO	3
OTHER (CONVENERS, FACILITATORS AND RESEARCHERS)	COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF TORONTO CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION RENT ONTARIO PREVENTION CLEARINGHOUSE (BEST START PROJECT) RESEARCHER, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO (HOSPITAL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION STUDY) INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT (HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR)	6

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES	AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS	INTERVIEWS
FUNDERS	TORONTO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION CITY OF TORONTO UWGT GEORGE CEDRIC METCALF CHARITABLE FOUNDATION LAIDLAW FOUNDATION WELLESLEY INSTITUTE	6

Refer to Appendix A for a complete listing of stakeholders consulted.

Refer to Appendix B for Interview Questions.

4. EMERGING QUESTIONS & ISSUES

In the process of conducting the key informant interviews, a number of questions and issues related to collaboration emerged as important to discuss further amongst stakeholders. These were considered as possible points of focus/discussion at the Round Table event held in October 2007.

- There is consensus that it is important to know about and consider the continuum and/or natural evolution of collaborative efforts. What do we understand to be the key components/relationships with respect to this continuum/evolution?
- The continuing push for and investment in collaboration assumes that collaboration is good. Is this true? If so, when should collaboration happen? What strategies and tools would enhance collaborative practice?
- There is very little research/evaluation data from which to assess how effective collaboration has been. How do we measure the effectiveness and impact of collaborative work? What are the conditions, variables and indicators that suggest the most effective collaborations?

5. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

5.1 IMPORTANT REFLECTIONS & INSIGHTS

Stakeholders offered some useful reflections and insights about collaboration that can inform our thinking about strategies/approaches to enhance the effectiveness of collaborative practice.

- The goal/intent of collaboration is not – primarily -- to improve quality and/or efficiency of services. The majority of collaborations are about supporting innovation and leveraging services and resources to improve client outcomes – particularly for clients/communities that are currently underserved, not well served, or are falling through the cracks.
- The majority of collaborations are informal in nature – without a formal agreement between partners, and/or a separate structure to govern/guide the partnership. It was suggested that we shouldn't assume that formal collaborations are any more effective or sustainable than informal collaborations. It would be helpful instead to understand where more technical/formal collaborations make sense. It was also suggested that it is important to make sure that informal collaborations are "on the radar," given that they are largely invisible currently.
- Policy-makers and funders are urged to find ways to enable more grass roots/organic collaborations that identify – through their ongoing work together -- opportunities to improve community/client outcomes. The suggestion is to avoid the tendency to impose priorities, accountability structures/mechanisms, and/or rigid models or protocols that may serve to cultivate collaboration that is neither successful nor sustainable in the longer term.

"Every agency has some kind of joint programming in place. Some of these have developed formalized agreements."

(Provider)

5.2 NATURE & EXTENT OF COLLABORATION

How much are we seeing?

- There is a lot of collaboration happening out there, and the majority is informal/organic and relates to the sharing of information/resources.
- The minority involve integration and/or rationalization of services between partners.
- Lots of collaboration is focused on advocacy/system change on behalf of clients/communities and access to services/resources. A lot of this work is specific to service delivery even though the mandate was broader (e.g. planning around continuum/quality of care).

“Informally we do lots of work for/with other agencies....from these more organic relationships we build trust with other organizations and future service delivery collaboration builds from this trust.”
(Provider)

“Planning and relationship building to do collaborative work should be part of the continuum of service delivery collaboration.”
(Funder)

- Not much in the way of multi-sectoral collaboration (e.g. involving the arts and environment).
- There is more or less collaboration happening in some geographic areas and sectors (less in some of the inner suburbs; recent increase in collaboration concerning community mental health, housing and homelessness, immigrants and refugees; more funder-mandated partnerships in health than in social services; some community based sub-sectors are not yet working well amongst themselves – e.g. settlement sector).

How are they collaborating?

- LOTS of informal, organic collaborations that aren't on the radar (sharing information, resources and expertise with one another).
- Majority of collaborations start with a catchment population or issue-specific focus.
- There are some joint service planning and service alignment collaborations and these are important to include on the service delivery continuum since they frequently produce solid and sustainable service delivery collaboration (e.g. EYCs; AIDS Service Organizations; Community Health Networks).
- There are more joint advocacy, community-based research, and engagement projects – and a perception that these have a direct link to service delivery collaboration (build trust; help to identify service delivery projects).
- We don't see much sharing of back room functions, but it tends to be more like coordination than integration (e.g. shared purchasing programs; HR support services). We are seeing more co-location of services.
- We see a fair bit of shared protocols/processes (e.g. post discharge from hospital; TO drop-in network; RENT – housing and supports).
- Coordinating shared functions, such as intake or case management, is harder – each agency has a different scope, scale, and priorities. We see more in the health sector.

Refer to Appendix C for examples of service delivery collaborations cited by key informants.

“We see a range of partners...it depends on the issue and target community.”

(Mediator)

Who is collaborating?

- There is a real range – lots of diversity – and no clear trends.
- Partners vary depending on the issue, population, neighbourhood, or shared function.
- Informal collaborations often come together around a population focus (e.g. increasing access to services; working together to influence policy).
- Some collaborations involve a combination of smaller and larger organizations and often can include institutions as partners. There is more of a push now for mainstream agencies to collaborate with small agencies to share resources and expertise.
- In ethno-specific agencies, connecting is often vertical -- with larger mainstream agencies and other ethno-specific agencies in order to meet the needs of emergent communities .
- Historically similar agencies and sectors work together. Lots of silos occur in the social service sector and often like agencies tend to work together.
- More recently (last 3-4 years) there has been a shift to more inter-sectoral collaboration as funders begin to support collaboration around a broader context (e.g. priority neighbourhoods work).
- Partners from different sectors tend to come together around broad community initiatives (revitalization; economic development), whereas partners from similar sectors come together around joint advocacy and service delivery.
- Legal services are not yet well integrated/connected.

Why are they collaborating?

- The reasons vary for different collaborations – and no one is dominant.
- Community-based agencies genuinely want to deliver good services – collaboration is a way to get support for an identified issue/opportunity they care about.

“No one agency can do it all...(we) need a coordinated response.”

(Provider)

*“(The) majority are driven by agencies related to issues they care about. They learn about what’s happening in the catchment and identify challenges in providing services.”
(Funder)*

*“Is anyone funding for collaboration? The process work is not a discreet funding item, and agencies are not good at identifying the true costs of collaboration.”
(Mediator)*

*“It’s harder now for agencies to participate in collaboration because they don’t have the resources to pull from.”
(Provider)*

- Increasing needs and demands in the community.
- Resource constraints (imposed by previous policy decisions/assumptions concerning the need for rationalization in the NPO sector).
- Opportunity to increase organizational capacity to respond -- leveraging resources to increase impact – particularly for underserved/marginalized populations.
- Funder priorities and expectations (to a lesser degree) – suggestion that if this is the incentive, it tends to draw agencies that would not otherwise collaborate. Perception that these don’t work well in the long term.

How are they funded?

- Mostly in-kind with agencies coming together and pooling resources – often for time-limited pilots that help to build trust and make the case for continued funding. These tend not to be as sustainable – securing ongoing resources often becomes a challenge.
- Larger organizations sometimes free-up resources temporarily because they believe in the issue/opportunity -- often contributing convening and administrative resources/skills (e.g. Parks & Recreation; Social Planning Councils; Public Health; Hospitals).
- Smaller agencies without core/stable funding often don’t have the opportunity to contribute in-kind resources.
- A minority – typically higher profile collaborations – are externally funded.
- Perception that no one (i.e. funders) is really funding collaboration. Funders want products/results, but are not recognizing/prioritizing the time and resources required for collaboration (process development support). These costs are buried in general operating costs and contribute to core infrastructure drain.

“There aren’t enough resources. The city has changed significantly -- increasing numbers of newcomers....[and] less capacity out there.”

(Funder)

“Requirements from funders to collaborate have increased.”

(Provider)

“Client outcomes are improved... We have better conceived services because of the diversity of voices and perspectives at the table.”

(Provider)

What are the trends?

- Larger, more established, agencies/organizations tend to move towards collaboration much more quickly (stable resources; less threatened). Often they become transfer agencies for funder-driven collaborative projects.
- Organizational capacity to build collaboration has decreased in the NPO sector (particularly in social services).
- More push from funders to require/impose service collaboration, and there have been changes to the way collaboration is funded (e.g. focus on direct service provision as opposed to infrastructure to improve services; significant administrative and accountability requirements).
- Increase in the use of third party conveners or mediators (e.g. funders; Public Health; Social Planning Councils; consultants; 3rd party agencies – Centre for Social Innovation).
- Agencies are increasingly involved in shared planning for a population where service delivery issues/opportunities are identified and then discussed with potential funders.
- We are starting to see public investment in things that create social and political infrastructure (e.g. 13 priority neighbourhoods; capacity building supports; community-based research supports; etc.)

5.3 IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY

How effective has collaboration been (e.g. quality, efficiency, and improving client outcomes)?

- There is a lack of research/evaluation information on which to base an assessment. Assumptions about duplication (efficiencies) need to be weighed with the intensity of service demands – important to consider the need for responsiveness and accessibility.
- Evaluation needs to include both process and outcome indicators – building process to support future impact/outcomes is important.

“Efficiency is hard to examine. Partnerships are messy and involve lots of time spent to create/support healthy partners.”
(Funder)

“Without continued funding and nurturing, collaboration will not continue.”
(Mediator)

- A majority of collaborations have achieved important outcomes for clients through service coordination work (improving access to and responsiveness of services). They are able to address the needs of folks who would previously have fallen through the cracks.
- Changes aren't always HUGE because these collaborations are often working with incredibly marginalized people with complex problems (facing systemic barriers).
- Collaborations are building the core competencies of partners involved – they jointly plan, share issues, solve problems, and have a stronger impact than if working alone. Lots of time is spent creating/supporting healthy partners and nurturing the collaborative itself.
- Not sure about quality and efficiency – not the objective of collaboration. The majority of collaborations are about leveraging services to improve client outcomes – they support creativity and insight.
- Informal/organic collaborations are generally viewed as more effective – partners with shared values choose to come together around an emerging issue/opportunity. More fluid and flexible. These are often under resourced.

How sustainable have these collaborations been?

- Need to assess this 20 years out, not 3 years out. Also be clear that sustainability is not just about money/resources – it's about impact and residual effects.
- Do all collaborations need to be sustainable? Partners need to discuss sustainability when creating collaborations -- be clear at the start when it will end. Some have needed to end, but NPO agencies often have trouble letting go (particularly social services).
- The majority over time are not viewed as sustainable.
- Organic/grass roots collaborations are viewed as more sustainable because they are built on an understanding of and commitment to addressing needs (as opposed to being opportunistic). They are based on relationships and trust.

“There has been money at times, but in-kind support and commitment from agencies has kept services going.” (Mediator)

“We want to sustain our capacity to be involved in these initiatives.” (Provider)

“Personalities, relationships and capacity are important.” (Funder)

“Designate a trustee or lead role versus equal responsibility where folks don’t have the capacity to steward or partner.” (Provider)

- Mandated collaborations are also generally viewed as not sustainable – but not because of resources so much as the lack of commitment to the issue – seen more as opportunistic as opposed to having a genuine interest.
- Informal collaborations are generally led by individuals (without organizational commitment) and when key people leave they are hard to sustain. These collaborations also struggle financially to a greater degree – even when doing well. It can be exhausting to secure resources over time.
- Collaborations are generally less sustainable when they involve small, less established agencies that have significant organizational/operational challenges (related to lack of core funding).
- When partner agencies are healthy and strong, collaborations are more sustainable. Agencies want to sustain their capacity to be involved in collaboration (organizational resilience).
- Sustainability also depends on the skills and personalities of individuals involved (energy; passion; dynamic)
- Where there is joint planning/priority setting, you tend to see more sustainable collaboration.

What are the characteristics of collaborations/partnerships associated with success and/or sustainability?

- Collaborations share a catchment population or issue-specific focus (common bond).
- Partners share a vision and intent with respect to long term impact or change.
- Start with non-threatening projects/initiatives first to build trust, experience, and momentum.
- Strong, healthy, and confident partner agencies (acquire adequate funding; build on core competencies; be clear about why they are at the table; be open to sharing knowledge and to working differently).

“The LHINs should reward and recognize collaborative projects as an incentive for more practice.”
(Provider)

“Funders often make the mistake of stipulating mechanisms rather than focusing on goals.”
(Mediator)

- Strong relationships – address cultural differences between partners/agencies and build capacity for collaborative practice.
- Individuals involved are important – skill set is critical and not well recognized or understood. Need to invest in people and provide training and support.
- Leadership & organizational commitment – identified by organizations as something they support and are committed to; viewed as a part of how they function/do business.
- Dedicated staff and resources.
- Collaborations that involve trusteeship are generally more stable – where trustee is stable and sustainable.

What are the characteristics of the external environment associated with success and/or sustainability?

- Reaction to the external environment is important because threats are always there – important to take leadership where feasible as opposed to sitting back.
- LHINs are bringing people together (larger agencies/institutions in the health sector mostly) – too early to tell if this has a positive or negative influence. There is healthy skepticism about the potential impact on the sector, and it's not yet clear what this will mean for the social service sector.
- Funders who are flexible enough to support and empower partners/collaborations that emerge organically and are based on client/community need. It is important not to impose mechanisms and accountability requirements – focus instead on shared goals/impacts.

What are the most significant challenges/obstacles typically faced?

Systemic:

- Lack of investment in infrastructure, development (building connection and trust), and monitoring/evaluating of collaboration (no sharing of best

“Through collaboration, partners identify the need to change, but change can be threatening to some agencies, so most don’t do this.”

(Provider)

“People are generally trapped in sectors because of funding and accountability instruments.”

(Funder)

practices). Organizational resources have been cut to the point where most agencies don’t have room to spend on collaboration.

- Lack of system planning and support for collaboration makes it difficult for agencies to adapt to changes/shifts in the external environment.
- Funding in silos, as opposed to leveraging capacity across the system, encourages competitiveness instead of collaboration, and raises fear that collaboration is about mergers and rationalization. Difficult to go beyond your sector/circle of networks to see examples of innovative and successful collaborations (arts and environment).
- Funding concerns -- tenuousness of funding and lack of stable funding in the social sector (immigration and settlement in particular). Demand for services exceeds capacity – systemic underfunding of services.
- Lack of flexibility on the part of funders – imposing targets and requirements; not amenable to grass roots initiatives; forcing/mandating relationships within a competitive environment.
- Organizational imperatives/mandates are out of sync with collaborative goals (too narrow/constrained to leave room for collaboration). Agencies are internally focused on organizational accountability.
- Different organizational cultures and accountability structures exist (for example, hospitals & community-based agencies tend to focus on broad determinants of health as opposed to disease).
- Power imbalances – bigger organizations drive the agenda, and smaller ones don’t have the resources to participate (creates resentment).

On-the-ground:

- Lack of understanding concerning the amount of capacity that is required for collaboration work (infrastructure challenges; boards don’t have delineated accountability expectations; staff don’t always have the skills/capacity).

“Everyone understands the importance of collaboration... finding a way to do it is challenging.”
(Provider)

“Agencies are working in joint projects here and there without a strategic vision to break down silos.”
(Funder)

“Start by focusing on increasing knowledge, awareness and understanding of what’s going on and how it relates to community outcomes.”
(Mediator)

- Personalities of partner agency staff involved – not necessarily pre-disposed to work collaboratively.
- Lack of evidence-based information about collaboration (tools; best/promising practices; evaluation indicators).
- Informal collaborations are not on the radar currently – they have to demonstrate that they exist (without any terms of reference, they are not taken seriously).
- Sustaining involvement: partners come together around moments of innovation, but it’s more difficult to keep partners engaged in ongoing nurturing and maintenance of partnership.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS

What recommendations would you suggest to increase effective collaboration?

System-Oriented (Funders):

- Develop strategies to address systemic challenges concerning collaboration. Requires a mind shift – moving from scarcity to abundance by looking across sectors. Use what we’ve got differently – external environment should be flexible and adoptable.
- Build the overall health of the NPO sector – ensuring agencies are healthy enough to operate non-competitively. Go back to providing adequate support for CORE in general rather than directing collaboration (particularly in immigration and settlement sector).
- Recognize that collaboration itself is a fundable activity and dedicate support/resources for collaborative efforts.
- Free up agencies to develop collaborations and learn from them – enable agencies and communities to identify for themselves the collaborations they will undertake (based on needs and opportunities); foster leadership and reward and invest in talented staff.

*“There is no one template
– collaboration is complex
and varied.”
(Provider)*

*“Build the capacity
of organizations to
do collaboration.”
(Mediator)*

- Develop a better sense of sector priorities and where we are going long-term. How does it intersect with various levels of government? Are there opportunities for cross-sectoral participation?
- Create a forum for funders (from all levels) to discuss how to move forward.

Practice-Oriented (Agencies):

- Intent is important -- focus on the impact on individuals, agencies, families and communities as opposed to the kind of collaboration (e.g. Don't set up collaboration itself as an objective; Collaboration for what?; Don't rush to formalize collaboration).
- Start with a shared sense of needs/opportunities, and collectively set priorities for service delivery collaboration/improvement.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, tools, and templates concerning collaboration (e.g. process development; service agreements; value of 3rd party convener/facilitator; etc.). Don't identify a prescribed protocol/model – hard to generalize – lots of variables – context is important. Balance formalizing the process with the need to support flexibility and creativity.
- Support the evaluation of collaborations (identify indicators and unintended outcomes; examine informal and organic collaborations; explore what else the NPO sector could be collaborating on – emerging needs/opportunities).
- Support an ongoing forum for partners who are already collaborating to solve problems (could also be a forum for different sectors to share their experiences/successes – arts; environment; international development work).

Concluding comments

There is a lot of collaboration taking place in the non-profit health and social service sectors in Toronto, and a belief that there is genuine interest among agencies to collaborate in order to improve outcomes for clients through leveraging resources. Even without a base of evidence/research on which to measure objectively the impact of collaborative efforts, there is a strong collective sense that on the whole collaborative practice is producing meaningful outcomes for clients that are currently underserved, not well served, or are falling through the cracks.

Despite this, there is healthy skepticism about the intent of collaborative requirements (from policy makers and funders), and the capacity to overcome significant systemic barriers that currently limit the potential of collaborative practice. Recommendations about ways to increase effective collaboration suggest that there is a willingness among funders, providers, and other key stakeholders to work collectively towards developing strategies and approaches that will begin to address identified barriers and support opportunities for enhanced collaboration.

APPENDIX A: KEY INFORMANTS

Mini Alakkatusery, Senior Program Officer, Toronto Community Foundation

Chris Brillinger, Director Social Development Division, City of Toronto, Community Resource Unit

Rob Horwath, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres

Amanuel Melles, Director of Organizational Capacity Building, United Way of Greater Toronto

Collette Murphy, Community Program Director

George Cedric, Metcalf Charitable Foundation

Tonya Surman, Executive Director, Centre for Social Innovation

Winston Tinglin, Director of Community Engagement, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto

Joan Roberts, Director of Capacity Building and Knowledge Exchange, The Wellesley Institute

Ted Richmond, Program Coordinator, Laidlaw Foundation

Lynn Eakin, Lynn Eakin and Associates

Liz Jantzen, Director, South Region Family Health & Healthy Lifestyle, Toronto Public Health

Rick Edwards, Director of Community Integration and Urban Health, St. Joseph's Health Centre

Axelle Janczur, Executive Director, Access Alliance Multicultural CHC

Rosalee Bender Coordinator, Resources Exist for Networking and Training (RENT)

Camille Orridge, Executive Director, CCAC Toronto

Subha Sankaran, Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, Resource Centre Manager

Sheryl Lindsay, Acting Executive Director, CRCT (Community Resource Consultants of Toronto)

Blake Poland, Dept. of Public Health Science, University of Toronto (& Principal Investigator, Hospital Involvement in Community Action Research Project)

Frank McGee, AIDS Bureau, MHLTC

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The broader research questions were translated into specific questions relating to the following three topic areas:

i) NATURE & EXTENT OF COLLABORATION:

- How much service delivery collaboration is happening?
- Who is collaborating?
- How are they collaborating?
- Why are they collaborating (incentives)?
- How are they funded?
- What are the trends?

ii) IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY:

- How effective has service delivery collaboration been (quality/efficiency & improving client outcomes)?
- How sustainable have these collaborations been?
- What are the characteristics of the collaboration/partners that are associated with success and/or sustainability?
- What are the characteristics of the external environment that are associated with success and/or sustainability?
- What are the most significant challenges/obstacles typically faced?

iii) RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS:

- What recommendations would you make regarding how to increase effective collaboration?

APPENDIX C:

LISTING OF SERVICE DELIVERY COLLABORATIONS CITED BY STAKEHOLDERS

- Colin Dart (Dufferin Mall) re: Turning Point Project: 5-6 collaborating agencies have determined that the collaboration works better when agencies make the collaboration a part of their core business
- J.D. Griffin, North York, developed a formal agreement between organizations that serve the developmentally handicapped with a focus on system design issues (Bill Gapin is the contact)
- Toronto Drop-In Network focused on building more effective organizations and is developing a manual for Drop-Ins re: shared standards, protocols, processes, working with volunteers, etc.
- St. Clair multi-phased housing organization is involved in a collaboration with FSA and 3-4 partner organizations related to shared referral and intake
- Mental Health examples: Mental Health and Justice Collaboration; Early Intervention Initiative; Dundas Osler Initiative; and Hostel Outreach Project (all supported by MHLTC)
- Young Parents No Fixed Address: Collaboration involving Public Health & Community-based agencies (Alice Gorman at Toronto Public Health is the contact)
- Black Creek Project (community-based coalition delivering shared services for defined populations/issues); Malvern Community Coalition (population-based collaboration)
- Rexdale Community Partners: youth employment opportunities
- Woodgreen involved in a partnership involving home support and seniors services that was cited by 2 different stakeholders (Jane Picalsto at Woodgreen is the contact)
- Soft Landing (pilot project): agreement between 3 community service organizations & St. Joseph's Health Centre that follows up with people discharged from the hospital (24-48 hours) before the CCAC is involved
- Agreement between St. Joseph's and local CHCs concerning uninsured peri-natal patients
- AIDS Bureau (MHLTC) is developing a collaborative strategic plan for the HIV/AIDS sector and this is translating to innovative service delivery collaboration (Frank McGee is the Contact)
- RIDE (formerly City of North York) negotiated with local seniors service centre about partnering on delivery of services for seniors; identified areas where agencies are having difficulty responding and where other agencies could pick up the slack

- Meals on Wheels developed a shared service that was negotiated between 7 different organizations (Kaarina Luoma at Mid-Toronto Community Services Inc. – Multi-Services Downtown East is the contact)
- Food Share is the lead agency in The Food Animation Project that is funded by the Toronto Community Foundation and the City of Toronto. It involves different sectors including 4 agencies in Toronto that were identified as experts in food security issues, and staff were seconded to share their expertise with 4-5 agencies in underserved neighbourhoods across Toronto.

Policy Supports to the NPO Sector:

A Quick Scan of Other Jurisdictions

By Krista Banasiak

Introduction

This research sought to investigate current policy supports for collaborative service delivery mechanisms for NPOs in jurisdictions outside Canada. Government policies dealing with the voluntary sector in England, New Zealand, and Queensland, Australia show few examples of programs or policy initiatives that provide support for inter-agency collaboration, while some remove barriers to it. All three jurisdictions have a policy framework in place that articulates the government's relationship with the sector, as well as infrastructure to move the policy forward. The focus is often on funding. While the policies implemented in England and New Zealand do remove some barriers to collaboration, the Queensland government has explicitly made supporting collaboration a key part of their policy agenda.

Method

This review focused on government policies supporting the voluntary sector. The jurisdictions were selected in consultation with the Principle Investigator. For each jurisdiction, the government website was accessed and searched for policies pertaining to the NPO sector. Search terms, used separately and/or jointly, included: voluntary sector; non-profit organizations; non-government organizations; third sector; collaboration; partnership; service delivery; inter-agency; multi-agency; and evaluation. Included were policy frameworks regarding the NPO sector, government programs and initiatives to support and/or strengthen the sector, and program evaluations. Excluded were collaboration process-related material, inter-governmental collaborations, and government-voluntary sector partnerships.

England

INTRODUCTION

The British Government has developed a number of initiatives to support the voluntary and community sector after a formal commitment between the third sector and the government was made to strengthen their relationship. The initiatives revolve around issues of funding, including streamlining access, lengthening the duration of funding contracts, and investing in building the capacity of the sector and infrastructure development. No one department is charged with carrying-out the initiatives. Instead, different offices and departments are responsible for the different programs. Few of England's initiatives address service delivery collaboration.

DEFINED RELATIONSHIP AND FRAMEWORK

The framework for the relationship between the British government and the voluntary sector is expressed in the 1998 Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary Sector in England (the Compact). Produced after extensive consultation with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and various government departments, the Compact is “an expression of the commitment of government and voluntary and community sector to work in partnership for the betterment of society and to nurture and support voluntary and community activity.”^{vi} Included within the Compact are codes of good practice that address how the government will approach issues pertaining to the sector (e.g. funding, volunteering). The Compact is not a legally binding document. Its authority is derived from its endorsement by the government and the sector through its consultation process.

There are no specific programs or initiatives outlined within the Compact. Therefore, the actions being taken to move its principles forward have been initiated by various departments and offices within the government. Established within the cabinet office in May of 2006, the Office of the Third Sector advocates for the third sector across government. Its main role is to ensure good terms of engagement between the government and the third sector, done by pioneering analysis of the third sector to inform the work of the government and funding programs that support the sector's development.ⁱⁱ The HM Treasury, England's economic and finance ministry, has made recommendations on ways in which the sector could be better funded by the government. These centre on streamlined and stabilized funding schemes. The Home Office, the government department charged with leading the effort to shield England from terrorism, crime and anti-social behaviour, is also involved with enhancing the third sector. It has raised and provided funds for programs to develop infrastructure and build the capacity of the voluntary and community sector.

In a more recent attempt to establish a strong relationship between the VCS and the government, a review of the condition of the third sector was carried out by the Office of the Third Sector and the HM Treasury's Charity and

Third Sector Finance Unit. It included the largest ever consultation with third-sector organizations in England and revealed a number of concerns on the part of the sector revolving around funding, the vulnerability of smaller organizations, the inconsistent nature of relationships between the sector and different levels of government, and an absence of mutual understanding between different parts of the sector and government.ⁱⁱⁱ In response, the Office of the Third Sector will be investing in research of the value of the VCS and lengthening the duration of funding.

COLLABORATION

The initiatives England has in place to move the Compact forward are geared towards providing funding for either service delivery or capacity building. While all are intended to strengthen the VCS, few deal explicitly with either supporting collaboration or removing barriers to it.

As part of the 2002 Spending Review, the HM Treasury conducted a Cross-Cutting Review entitled *The Role of the Voluntary Sector in Delivering Services*. The review made three recommendations regarding funding:

- 1. Full Cost Recovery.** Funders are to ensure that the price of contracts and grants reflect the full costs of service delivery for all government-funded contracts to the sector. These should include a legitimate portion of overhead costs. If fully implemented, full cost recovery would be helpful since one of the main barriers to collaboration is not having the money for it.
- 2. Stabilizing the Funding Relationship.** Re-applying for funding yearly leads to diversion of efforts from service delivery into bidding for new contracts. Therefore, the Treasury recommends changing funding contracts from one to three years. This would remove a barrier for collaborating organizations since the initial outlay of money when implementing collaborative service delivery is quite large. It takes time to recover from such a financial output and three-year funding would provide the organizations with sustained and secure income to carry-through with their collaborative efforts.
- 3. Streamlining Access.** Third sector organizations often depend on a variety of funding sources, requiring them to make numerous applications. An excessive amount of management time is spent on applying for funding. The Treasury recommends government funders work together to streamline the application process. This is to be accomplished by developing an electronic registry of funding providers or by implementing 'passporting': sharing information on third sector organizations between funders in order to cut-down application time for organizations.

The government had allocated 93 million pounds to implement these and their other recommendations outlined in the Cross Cutting Review.^{iv}

In 2005, the National Audit Office published their evaluation of the implementation of the Treasuries recommendations

and found that more needs to be done to ensure that commitments translate into results. The perception in the sector was that no improvement in funding had been made since 2002. Not much progress was made on reimbursing the full costs of service delivery. Third sector organizations insisted that government funders were inconsistent in their treatment of suppliers, relying more heavily on a “grant culture.” Government departments felt there were many barriers to implementing full cost recovery, such as the inability of third sector organizations to assess accurately their overhead costs¹, and lack of agreement on which costs should be funded. Also, in 2005 annual funding still remained the norm². The National Audit Office offers lack of trust and suspicion on the part of the government, along with a tendency to underrate the ability of the third sector to delivery public services, as possible explanations.^v

At the time of their evaluation, the National Audit Office found no evidence of a standardized or comprehensive approach to applying for funding. However, some departments had developed some innovative ways to approach funding, which included two-stage application processing (an initial application is made by an organization and used by the government to produce a short-list of organizations eligible for funding, who are then asked to submit full proposals); help lines (telephone lines offering advice to applicants on how to complete application forms and whether or not certain grants or funding schemes are appropriate for their specific project); and on-line or email application forms. A Government Funding website was also created as a common point of access to various funding schemes.^{vi}

When consulted, third sector organizations did not feel that information about, and procedures for, applications had changed much since 2002. The general consensus was that approaches to funding information and application procedures are inconsistent within and among different government departments. However, they felt that the Government Funding website was “a step forward” in addressing this. Furthermore, the organizations complained that application forms used complex language and on-line application forms sometimes deterred applicants. They felt that applications were too lengthy and not proportionate to the amount of funding being applied for.^{vii}

In 2004, joining up with two funders to share information on two national and two regional third sector organizations, the Department of Work and Pensions to the role of “lead funder” in a trial of “passporting.” The trial was based on a website holding an assortment of information on these voluntary agencies that organizations are routinely required to submit (i.e. basic details of the organization, annual reports, legal and insurance certification). Passporting reduced bureaucracy for the third sector organizations involved in the pilot. On average, application time was decreased by half an hour to an hour. Passporting also helped funders, for it standardized funding applications from

¹Note: the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organizations (ACEVO) has produced guiding literature for the sector on how to identify their costs and assign them to projects. It has since been simplified and updated.

²Note: at the time of the evaluation, the majority of departments were given firm three-year budgets. Therefore, there was no fiscal year preventing funding bodies from agreeing to longer-term funding arrangements. However, three-year budgets did not apply to most of the departments associated with funding third sector organizations, preventing them from being able to benefit from three-year funding schemes.

different offices. One problem with this system was that the lead funder was unable to validate the third sector organizations' documentation on behalf of the other funders. The other funders were concerned that they would be held accountable for decisions made based on information they did not validate.^{viii}

The Home Office has also taken actions to support the third sector. It has funded two initiatives to increase the third sector's capacity to deliver public services. ChangeUp is a Home Office strategy that will provide 150 million pounds over four financial years (2004-2005 to 2007-2008) to improve the infrastructure of third sector organizations. Since 2006, the fund has been managed by Capacity Builders, an agency led by a board of voluntary sector experts situated at arms' length to government.^{ix}

As part of the strategy, "Hubs of Expertise" were established nationally in six areas: finance, governance, information and communication technology, performance, volunteering, and workforce. Each hub is a partnership of organizations with a partnership board that includes funders and public sector members, and is housed within existing organizations. By localizing information on their area, they aim to improve efficiency, coherence and strategic development within the sector. For example, the Finance Hub website will soon be a one-stop-shop combining all available resources of financial information relevant to the sector. Through its website it has made available toolkits on fundraising, trading, procurement, contracts and loans. The ICT Hub is working on research and reports about the way the voluntary sector uses ICT and the best way to support its use.^x While each hub has its own focus, they share some common functions, including:

- providing a single gateway to support in their area through their on-line website or their office;
- working with funders, regulators, purchasers, and other agencies to influence them in the sector's best interest;
- gathering and developing expertise aimed at strengthening support in their area; and developing tools to facilitate good practice.

The hubs are a product of collaboration between the sector organizations. Their focus, however, is not on service delivery but on providing information, resources and tools to fellow organizations.

The other Home Office initiative is a 250 million pounds fund entitled Futurebuilders. The fund is used for loans and some grants for third sector organizations involved in public service delivery and is aimed at bringing about long-term significant improvements in public services by investing in the third sector. Investments are made in development to help improve business plans, for start-up finances, and to expand services for which there is a high demand. In 2003, Futurebuilders England, Ltd., a consortium comprising the Charity Bank, the National Council for Voluntary Organizations, the Northern Rock Foundation and Unity Trust Bank, was created to manage the fund. Futurebuilders Ltd. is a non-profit organization that is independent, but has a three-year contract with the Office of the Third Sector that sets out the parameters within which it is required to operate.^{xii} Again, this initiative supports the third sector, but has little to do with collaboration.

In July 2007, the Future Role of the Third Sector in Social and Economic Regeneration: Final Report was published.

The report outlines plans to promote the partnership between government and the third sector. Many of the measures will be led by the Office of the Third Sector, which will be investing 515 million pounds in third sector programs to voluntary and community organizations across England. As the beginning of a ten-year vision, from 2008 through 2011 the government will focus on five areas of improvement. The two relevant to this project are:

1. **Transforming Public Services.** The perception in the sector is that the government is narrowly focused on financial efficiency and value for money, which is causing unintended consequences in terms of the sector's ability to transform services. The sector feels that government needs to consider the wider role in both shaping and delivering services. In response, the government will work on building an evidence base of the value of the third sector's deliverance of effective public services. The base will hold information about the sector and its organizations and work to promote recognition of the value of its work and to justify the government's reliance on and support for the sector. The Office of the Third Sector has committed to investing in setting up and running a new centre for this research project.
2. **Supporting Conditions for a Healthier Third Sector.** The Minister of the Third Sector will now report to the Chief Secretary of the Exchequer on an annual basis to ensure that all departures from three-year funding are justified. The government will also improve the Government Funding website, ensuring that it is comprehensive of all central government departments (it currently holds only eight departments and nine offices).^{xiii}

These new commitments remove barriers to collaboration. One of the tools needed for collaboration is evidence of what works. This evidence base could supply that, if used in such a manner. As was previously mentioned, sustaining funding for three years supplies organizations with sufficient funds to spend on the initial costs of collaborating. Finally, the comprehensive government website will help streamline access to funds, therefore removing the barrier of time.

CONCLUSION

In England there is no direct focus on collaboration among NPOs. The Compact offers a platform from which initiatives can be designed and implemented, though it does not outline any specific programs. The initiatives that have been implemented focus heavily on funding, and there is very little emphasis on either supporting or removing barriers to collaboration.

New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

The New Zealand government has launched several initiatives to support the non-profit sector, as part of an articulated commitment to build “strong and respectful relationships” between government and the community, voluntary sector, and iwi/Maori organizations. Key elements of the government’s policy action to support the sector include streamlining and restructuring its NPO-funding procedures, supports to build NPO organizational capacity, and new consultation processes between government and the community and NPO sector. These initiatives are led through a new Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector located in the NZ Ministry of Social Development. While none of the initiatives are explicitly designed to promote collaboration, several remove existing barriers to inter-agency collaboration.

DEFINED RELATIONSHIP AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The New Zealand government’s policy framework for its approach to the NPO sector is spelled out in its December 2001 Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government Relationship. The statement calls for “strong and respectful relationships between government and community, voluntary and iwi/Maori organizations³,” and promises government action to strengthen the community sector, to address concerns about funding arrangements, effectiveness and compliance costs, and to improve consultation processes between government and the sector in regards to policy making and delivery of effective services.^{xiv}

Responsibility for moving the policy agenda forward is vested in a new Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector [OCVS] in the Ministry of Social Development⁴. The Office has largely advisory authority within the Ministry and government, but it does work on building sector capacity by providing and developing organizational systems to help community and voluntary sector organizations become more efficient and effective, thereby allowing them to concentrate on service delivery. The OCVS is also working to build a knowledge base by researching activities undertaken by community and voluntary organizations. The results are used to influence government planning, decision making, and resource allocation. Finally, the OCVS works across government to identify policies that inhibit community and voluntary organizations to do their work.^{xv}

The NZ Ministry of Health also has its own initiative with the health and disability non-government organizations with which it deals. The Ministry framework for this relationship was articulated in the 2002 Framework for Relations

³Note: Iwi refers to groups that are kin-based and can trace their genealogy back to an ancestor. Maori refers more generally to those who identify as Maori. It is possible to have multi-tribal Maori organizations.

⁴One of the largest departments in government, the Ministry of Social Development has an advisory role with regard to strategic social policy, sectoral policy and social research, and evaluation in a number of areas including income support, child, youth and family and community.

between the Ministry of Health and Health and Disability Non-Government Organizations (the “written handshake”). MoH’s stated goals in the document are similar to those in the 2003 government-wide document: improved communication and consultation with the sector, and training and other measures to build sector capacity and skills.^{xvi} The Ministry now hosts semi-annual Forums with the health and disability sector, which provide an opportunity to air and share key issues for the NGO sector with the Ministry and other stakeholders.^{xvii} Also, in 2003 an NGO desk was established within the Ministry of Health. It helps disseminate information to the health and disability sector and to push forward the issues confronting the sector that are identified at the NGO-MoH Forums.^{xviii} One recommendation that has not yet been implemented is that of creating a database of NGOs that links information about and from NGOs on a single website where the NGOs could contribute information about what they do.^{xix}

COLLABORATION

Policies and programs supporting collaboration are lacking in NZ. The barrier of time is removed with the introduction of organizational systems, while a new method of funding introduced by the OCVS offers the only support to service delivery integration. The research underway in the OCVS and the MoH along with a few project specific to the MoH have the potential to support the sector, but they have not yet been applied in such a manner.

Two of the capacity building tools put in place by the OCVS remove the time and information barrier. Managing Well is a catalogue listing over 120 written resources, websites, newsletters, manuals and information sheets on topics of interest to organizations. The Community Resource Kit is an on-line how-to site that was designed to help small and emerging community and voluntary groups start up and develop good practice in the voluntary sector environment.^{xx} The publication of information in one place enables organizations to turn quickly and easily to the sources they need to find information pertaining to their intended undertakings.

The most active supports for collaboration are seen in the OCVS work on addressing policy barriers. In NZ, organizations must pay transaction and compliance costs when they receive money from a government agency. Since many organizations receive funding from more than one agency, they must pay multiple fees. This type of contracting is problematic for governments as well, for it forces the agencies to work separately. As a solution, the Funding for Outcomes project was introduced to transform the current single-contract system into an integrated one. Integrated contracts simplify contracting while identifying opportunities for better coordination between agencies, therefore reducing the costs for groups receiving funding.^{xxi}

A group of contract brokers, the Funding for Outcomes Team, has been implemented with the responsibility of working with agencies across government and service providers to develop contracts suiting the needs of all parties involved. The results clients experience from the services delivered motivates and drives a contract to be structured in a particular way. Therefore, when a group of clients would be best served by integrated services, collaboration is pursued, and this is made explicit within their contract. Integrated contracts actively support NPO collaboration in cases where the Funding for Outcomes Team feels it will provide the best results for the clients.

An evaluation of the Funding for Outcomes project was conducted in 2005-2006. Overall the findings are encouraging.

Providers found that integrated contracts left them with more time to spend on service delivery improvements, and an increased capacity to provide holistic services that meet clients' needs. They also found that they operate more effectively and efficiently, and that outcomes-focused contracts provided them with opportunities to be creative and deliver services which best meet client needs.^{xxii} The evaluation does not address the issue of collaboration among community and voluntary sector organizations. This may be due to the fact that the program was not developed specifically to promote collaboration; it simply supports it as a function of its design.⁵

Similar research projects currently underway in the OCVS and the MoH offer potential supports for collaboration. Both projects involve creating on-line databases that would hold information on all NPOs. The OCVS "satellite account" is being developed as part of the Study of the New Zealand Non-Profit Sector, a collaborative project among government, the voluntary sector and academic representatives to measure and describe the role of non-profit organizations in society in order to improve the importance of volunteering to the economy.^{xxiii} Akin to the satellite account, the MoH has proposed creating a centralized on-line database of NGOs to provide a comprehensive list of organizations to government agencies planning to contract out services. These tools would support collaboration. Organizations involved in collaborative arrangements could access information on all of their partners without having to search through separate sites and papers to find them. Taking this one step farther, the databases could expand the information available to include information on ties between organizations and how they are collaborating among themselves.

If applied, the NGO-MoH Forums and the NGO desk could support collaboration. The NGO-MoH Forums are a platform through which new and innovative ideas could be discussed. Attendees include individuals working within the sector, government, and stakeholders. Therefore, all persons involved are gathered in one place, which would remove a communication barrier and allow for more effectual discussions of planned collaborative efforts. The NGO desk established within the ministry gives the sector a physical presence within government. This could be an active support for collaboration if used to advocate policies facilitating collaboration, yet at the moment its energies are not focused on such endeavors.

CONCLUSION

Happenings within New Zealand offer few concrete examples of how collaboration could be best supported by the government. While the government has a framework in place to support the sector, the framework does not address service delivery integration. Integrated contracts provide the sole example of supports for NGO collaboration. Yet, ideas such as the satellite accounts and the discussion forums provide potential supports that, if implemented, could greatly promote and aid collaboration in the non-profit sector.

⁵The information regarding evaluations of the Funding for Outcomes project was found on an Update Newsletter published by Ann Pomeroy, the contract manager for the project. The official evaluation is not available on-line and attempts to contact Ms. Pomeroy for additional information were unsuccessful.

Queensland, Australia

INTRODUCTION

As set out by the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, the Queensland government has developed a number of initiatives to strengthen the voluntary sector, as part of a strategy to build the capacity of funded NGOs. These initiatives are aimed at improving the internal processes and practices within the Department of Communities and Disability Services, streamlining NGOs accounting systems, providing effectual resources and tools to NGOs, and creating opportunities for NGOs to form partnerships and share resources. These initiatives have been implemented by the Department of Communities and Disability Services, which is seated in the Queensland jurisdictional government. Queensland's initiatives are progressive in terms of supporting collaboration among the sector.

DEFINED RELATIONSHIP AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The framework for The Department of Communities' support for the voluntary sector is spelled out in the 2005 Strengthening Non-Government Organizations Strategy. The strategy seeks to enable NPOs to continue providing high-quality community and disability services to Queenslanders by helping build the capacity of the sector. The strategy was designed to provide clear government expectations of NGOs, improve the system for administering funding to organizations, guarantee NGOs have the organizational tools and resources they need to operate effectively, and to actively encourage sharing and collaboration between NGOs and stakeholders in the community and disability sectors.^{xxv}

In charge of implementing this strategy is The Department of Communities and Disability Services. The department is a human service agency that performs government, regulatory and support functions to strengthen communities within Queensland. Its main roles are to provide services to the community (either themselves or by contracting out to the NPOs), develop policy on a variety of topics (such as volunteering, community engagement, and homelessness), and promote and support the interests of disadvantaged groups within the community.^{xxvi} The Department is responsible for the nine key initiatives that have been implemented statewide. These initiatives cover a wide variety of issues that are faced by NGOs and are designed to aid them in their daily functioning.

COLLABORATION

Although the strategy is aimed at strengthening the sector as a whole, collaboration specifically is one of the chief aims. Of the nine key initiatives put into place, four have implications for collaboration among NGOs, two that remove barriers and two that support it.

Effective Business Systems. This initiative is aimed at improving the internal processes and practices within the Department of Communities and Disability Services Queensland in order to provide more helpful support to funded NGOs and those who are using their services. One way in which the government hopes to accomplish this is through the development of a Grants Management System. This is a new information and technology (IT) system to be established for managing grants and contracts within the department. The hope for this system is to reduce both paper work and processing, as well as to provide e-business facilities to NGOs to enable them to apply for grants and submit reports on-line.^{xxvii} More consistent systems used within government would lessen the complexities of applying for grants, which are difficult enough for NGOs delivering services separately, let alone on an integrated basis. This initiative may prove to be more helpful for the government than for the NGOs themselves for, as was noted in England, NGOs did not find on-line application forms helpful and in fact deterred some from applying for funds all together.^{xxviii}

In May 2006, the Department of Community and Disability Services published an update of the progress made on each of the key initiatives. At that time, the departmental processes for awarding and acquitting grants to funded NGOs had been reviewed by a “project team” (no description of the team is provided), as had the processes for managing service level agreements and reporting. The team had also identified functions and features that should be provided in the new IT systems, and had proposed some IT solutions.^{xxix} None of these were described.

Community Bookkeeper. Implemented in August 2006, this initiative involves the introduction of a more streamlined accounting system for NGOs entitled the Standard Chart of Accounts. Designed for use by NGOs to help with financial management and reporting and to both simplify and standardize their bookkeeping methods, the intended outcome is reduced administrative duplication and standardized accounting information with use of standard codes and terms that are used across NGOs.^{xxx} This initiative simplifies the introduction of collaborative arrangements because all organizations involved are working under a standardized system and are therefore “speaking the same language.”

From May through August 2006 staff and associates of funded organizations attended free training sessions to prepare for the introduction of this new system. They were provided with instruction manuals and follow-up support through a helpline. Organizations annually receiving more than \$10,000 from Disability Services Queensland or more than \$20,000 from the Department of Communities also received small subsidies to offset the cost of introducing the new system.^{xxxi}

Community Door Website. This is a “one-stop-shop” website designed specifically for NGOs. It provides resources, tools and information to help organizations manage their everyday tasks. The topics covered include policies and procedures, governance, planning, management and administration, financial management, legal and insurance matters, marketing and service delivery. Furthermore, the site includes a link to resources on collaborative practice. Here one finds case studies and other information on how organizations can implement collaborative practices most effectively. The website has been fully implemented and is frequently updated.^{xxxii}

Shared and Collaborative Arrangements. This initiative provides the clearest support for collaboration. It aims specifically at creating opportunities for NGOs to form partnerships and share resources so that through working together, they can further build their capacity to provide services. Examples of sharing office space, staff, vehicles, payroll and purchasing services are given, along with the idea of developing a common client assessment process. The initiative has two components: The Multi-Tenant Service Centres Pilot, and the Building Links Program.

Multi-Tenant Service Centres Pilot—Three communities have established multi-tenant service centres to evaluate the benefits of organizations co-locating to share administrative and infrastructure and integrate their service delivery. To date, NGOs in each of the communities have prepared joint-business plans outlining co-location options, transitional plans and joint-management options for the co-locations.^{xxxiii}

Evaluations for the Multi-tenant service pilot began in 2006. They are presently still underway. However, the three organizations that are involved in the Mackay pilot officially established a single new organization in July 2006, the Mackay Women’s Centre. In this particular situation, the groups amalgamated completely.^{xxxiv} No mention is made of what is taking place in the other two pilot centres and it is therefore difficult to clarify whether or not the goal in each multi-tenant service centre is for collaboration or for amalgamation. It appears as though the amalgamation is specific to this case, for a goal of amalgamating the groups is mentioned nowhere else in the pilot.

Building Links Program—This program provides grants for NGOs to establish partnerships that help them either to improve their services, or to operate more efficiently. Grants are available for developing business case proposals or for “specific collaborative activities.” No further information was provided on the sorts of activities which qualify here. The program has great potential for facilitating shared services, but no evaluations are available.

CONCLUSION

Queensland provides some interesting examples of what could be done to remove barriers to, and support collaboration among, voluntary organizations. The Strengthening Non-Government NGOs Strategy put into place by the Department of Community and Disability Services embodies initiatives that support the sector as a whole, while also specifically encouraging service delivery integration. While the Queensland model provides more active support for NGO collaboration, there is no literature outlining whether or not it has actually worked. Questions as to how much collaboration these initiatives helped to facilitate still remain. Nonetheless, the initiatives provide progressive ideas on how to develop collaboration among organizations within the sector.

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The East Scarborough Storefront Project:

A successful inter-organizational service collaboration

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The East Scarborough Storefront (The Storefront) was chosen to explore and determine the critical factors and dynamics of partnership and collaboration that lead to a successful, formalized, inter-organizational service collaboration. The Storefront stands out as a unique example of non-profit work, emerging out of a coalition of community members, local faith-based organizations, and community-based service providers who identified an area marked by an increasingly vulnerable population of newcomers with high needs who were under-served by agencies.

The Wellesley Institute in collaboration with The Storefront conducted a brief qualitative study of The Storefront. Our research objectives were as follows:

- Explore how research and capacity building can mutually learn from and benefit one another
- Document the learning from the process of coming together and collaborating for community agencies as part of The Storefront
- Identify the factors in the external environment that initiated the project
- Identify the specific factors that have made The Storefront a successful collaboration and model of community capacity building
- Capture the learnings from this process and share them in the Wellesley Institute's report on Interagency service collaboration in the NPO sector
- Make recommendations to funders on how to create policy and programs that lead to effective collaboration among service providers.

We conducted a series of individual Interviews with key stakeholders connected to The Storefront. These participants reflect a range of perspectives from critical personnel involved in the day-to-day coordination and ongoing management of The Storefront, representatives of agencies who are active partners in The Storefront, members of the local community, and members of the core working group.

In addition to these qualitative interviews, a document review was conducted of all relevant written materials relating to the development and daily operation of The Storefront, including policies and procedures manuals, committee meeting minutes, staff reports and publications produced by The Storefront.

Finally, an "historical scan" was conducted with former and current members of the agency group. An historical scan is an experiential exercise where participants (collectively) trace the central events in the history of a project. Through the exploration of critical events and contextual features (social, historical and cultural), organizing values are identified, helping to give shape to the chronological history from the perspective of shared experiences.

Methodology

Sixteen Interviews were conducted in total. Transcription was done for all tapes available¹. Reviewing the transcripts helped to formulate a preliminary sense of the overarching themes. These themes helped to give shape to initial codes which were then applied to the transcripts in preparation for analysis. All of the Interviews were coded using an initial set of “open codes.” Particular attention was directed towards those terms and discussions intent on capturing dimensions of partnership, collaboration and cooperation within the storefront and the challenges that have accompanied these processes.

The analytic strategy draws greatly on Grounded Theory to elaborate upon the ideas that emerged during coding and the reviewing of transcripts (Corbin 1986). Grounded Theory involves the practice of constant checking and confirming findings. This process begins in the context of data collection, where impressions and observations are explored and emerging “theory” is assessed with participants over the course of the interviews.

This process continues through the analysis of text materials (interview transcripts, meeting minutes and project documents, and the graphic representation of the historical scan). Interview transcripts are reviewed with an eye towards tracing themes and patterns in the evolution of The Storefront. Particular emphasis was placed upon charting the dynamics that have contributed to the formation of working partnerships, the development (and promotion) of a sense (or spirit) of cooperation as opposed to competition, the “value added” that participation in The Storefront yielded, and the sustainability of established partnerships over time.

For the document review, written materials were initially read to capture a sense of the history of decision-making, governance, and the processes of operation. Critically these materials were reviewed again with an eye towards identifying patterns and themes related specifically to the concepts of collaboration and partnership, and how these are realized in practice for The Storefront.

An historical scan is a more interactive means of gathering insights on the evolution and sustainability of The Storefront. Through an exploration of critical events with members of the agency group (past and present), we examined the points of significance in the history of The Storefront, moments that stand out as particularly rewarding as well as situations and points of challenge. Participants were asked to articulate the history of The Storefront, reflecting upon the critical events identified in the course of the exercise, towards highlighting points of learning that have particular relevance around collaboration and its sustainability over time. The data product that emerges from this exercise is a map, of sorts, which marks in a graphic way the critical junctures in the history of The Storefront, foregrounding the pivotal moments that have given shape, structure, and meaning to the project.

¹One tape (containing two interviews) was damaged, and was unable to be transcribed.

Core Themes

Social service agencies (and their representatives) form networks and working alliances with some regularity. Such initiatives may be limited in scope and duration depending upon the resources available. While there is a lack of comprehensive research evidence available regarding the formation of such networks, we may speculate that such coalitions and forms of collaboration are not uncommon. What may be unique in the case of The Storefront working group is their commitment to share ownership of such efforts with the community through the establishment of formal arrangements. These arrangements ensured that an equal voice was given to agency representatives and community members in the governance structure of The Storefront, where the composition reflected equal participation by community members and agency representatives.

Collaboration is not uncommon, I mean, social service agencies work in networks and coalitions all the time. Some better than others. But those are usually very limited types of coalition[s]. This was a bigger deal because people were making a commitment to provide services, to provide staffing, to provide insurance for their people and their clientele in a much longer term partnership... It was basically about community taking ownership, because the steering committee was made up of seven people from the agencies, seven people from the community. (Interview 10)

This concept of shared ownership emerged early in the development of The Storefront, underpinning the core framework of the project. The notion of equal input from community and service providers was made explicit in the initial funding proposal and later in the model of decision-making processes used at The Storefront. Ultimately this framing of roles and responsibilities has helped members of The Storefront work together in a way that promotes norms of cooperation. These concepts have been realized in both the driving principles of the project's mandate and in the practical actions of service delivery.

In seeking to uncover the dynamics that have facilitated meaningful collaboration, we identified several core themes across the data sources: the identification of need and the emergence of the project; defining “community” (and its role in the project); processes for decision-making and governance; the establishment and support of a vision over time; the role of leadership; the “complementarities” of service delivery; relationship capital; and critical challenges over time. These themes intersect and overlap considerably, with one area helping to define another.

“OVERWHELMING NEED”

Initial ideas for developing The Storefront began with the recognition that the community of East Scarborough in the late 1990's was one of considerable, unmet need. In a stretch of hotels in the Kingston-Galloway area, newly-arrived refugees and recently homeless individuals and families came to epitomize the state of disconnect between the level of need and the ability to provide services within the local community.

There were 13 motels under contract, with the government under the hostel services. For so many refugee families came to Canada, this was their first point of housing. So there were families of 5 living in one hotel room. It was horrendous. And a lot of the motels were on Kingston Road, right around this area. They ranged from probably Brimley Road [to] east of the Pickering border. You could see some of these refugee families walking along Kingston Road almost bewildered. Like, 'Where have you put us?' and 'Where do we shop?' and 'Where do we go to the doctor?' and 'How do we get our ID?' and 'How do we get an apartment?' (Interview 3)

This concentration of individuals and families brought a new visibility to the problems emerging in the community of East Scarborough, reflecting a growing population who were not only under-served by agencies, but also un-engaged.

We started to help the folks in the hotels and we got to know them. We door knocked and by doing that we found out how isolated they were and how under serviced they were. Even finding healthy food, and stuff like that. So we started doing outreach in the motels and that's how the seed of The Storefront came to be. (Interview 3)

Converging with this need were significant challenges in the provision of services, with few resources poised to adequately serve a population increasing in size and diversity across a broad area. Services were limited in their ability to meet the needs of this population, swamped by the numbers who were seeking services and constrained by insufficient resources. Beyond the limitations of individual agencies, these service challenges also reflected a wider socio-political context of a non-profit sector facing significant budget cuts, and downsizing by the provincial government.

It was actually fascinating. What happened was there was a unanimity and cohesiveness amongst us because we knew there were these serious, serious problems they were facing, the community, and it wasn't as though the broader community was unaware. They were very, very much aware. But still nothing was done. The politicians knew about it but there was this lethargy, this inactivity because no one was ready to take hold and begin leading and our group realized that we had to do that and approach it from the bottom up. (Interview 15)

In 1999, an informal collection of agencies, comprised of the Caring Alliance (a network of individuals representing different faith communities), agency staff from Toronto Public Health, Toronto Social Services and Shelters, Housing and Support, local social services agencies, community planners and local residents came together to begin planning the development of a "community-driven, multi-service, information and referral service."

The working group planned to build upon previous service frameworks that had shown promise in the East Scarborough community (Women's Place, formerly of the Morningside Mall), as well as in other communities in Toronto (e.g. Dufferin Mall Youth Services Centre and the York Gate Information Centre at Jane-Finch). The vision for the storefront was to create a model of a "one-stop" community services centre.

So we came up with the idea that why don't we find a space, a storefront or an old supermarket or something, like a mall or something like a plaza with space that everyone could share. This fixture could become a community hub, a community space and the community would have to have some control over how that space was shaped, how the services were provided, the quality of relevance of the services and things like that. And so the idea of a storefront project came about. (Interview 10)

For health and social care agencies, service provision often operates under the constraints of stretched resources, where providers struggle to balance the needs of their client group, the boundaries of their mandate and the financial limitations that defy their ability to bridge the gap.

In Toronto this has been acutely felt within the inner suburb communities, where the population may be dispersed over a broad geographic region. Services are, as a result, also dispersed broadly. The transportation system across Scarborough is famously under-resourced, often proving difficult to navigate in a timely way. For residents this can translate into logistical challenges that may limit the use of health and social services. For individuals who are marginalized or disadvantaged, such barriers may prove difficult to get around, particularly when exacerbated by the lack of money for transportation, or available child care options. For newcomers – a growing sub-group of the population – a lack of English language proficiency may further limit accessibility to both transportation services and the service agencies. These challenges, coupled with the diversity of the population, fostered a situation where agencies could offer limited services in limited settings, if at all.

Early discussions of “need” recognized the obstacles and limitations that existed for services in the East Scarborough community: *People had been unable to provide services, wanted to provide services, had clientele in the area but had no space to set up shop, had no resources at that point in time (Interview 10).*

The willingness to think broadly about need, defining this as much as a community issue as a service-sector one, has played a central role in shaping and confirming the mission of The Storefront.

The notion of a community hub was particularly attractive in its ability to bring together and begin to address these two constructs of need: the health and social concerns facing residents and the needs that exist around services and service provision. For residents, a community hub offered one-stop services. Service providers were quick to note the advantages of this feature.

For people in the area, a lot of young people, certainly, who are not working do not have money for TTC if they can get into some kind of a program for service here that's great, you know? They can walk here. And you know besides the employment services for youth there are the other services like mental health services, women's abuse and that kind of thing. That's also wonderful, you know? Because for people especially with mental health issues it's really difficult to get them to go somewhere but if they've already been here they know where this place is, they will feel welcome here by the staff definitely and they won't be so afraid to come back and see someone from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (Interview 9)

For providers, there are considerable advantages to having other community services also housed within the same setting. The potential for complementary programming heightened the appeal of The Storefront model, suggesting the ability to provide coordinated, comprehensive services, particularly for populations where there may be multiple needs or heightened vulnerabilities or disadvantages. The often criticized “siloing” pattern of health and social services can become effectively re-configured within a shared physical space to create a setting where each agency serves as a resource for the other.

In its simplest form, this means providers can access information and referral sources for their clients more easily, thereby facilitating greater continuity of care. For the community member or client, an array of services under one roof simplifies the process of navigating the services system, which is likely to improve service use and follow-up.

Such settings can play an important part in establishing a more coherent service sector. Expanding the working knowledge of services and resources can help to give shape to more complex relationships between agencies, ultimately opening the door to greater potential for partnering and collaborating. Agency representatives may have limited networking opportunities when operating out of their head office. The benefit of the “umbrella” function of the The Storefront is its ability to bring together providers from a range of complementary agencies – but also, as mentioned by one participant above, the ability to provide a space for the partnership to be housed should not be underestimated.

I think what makes [it] really unique or what would be the pieces that really keep the agencies alive is that it gives them an opportunity to know what everybody else is doing. It's huge because before these kinds of partnerships, and there's a number of them around now, but none of them have their own unique space.
(Interview 12)

For the service provider, the exposure to new agencies and the chance to collaborate (formally or informally) enhances the ongoing professional development of professionals. This can translate into the gradual evolution of networks, where providers gather first-hand knowledge of complementary services. Moreover, the providers' understanding of the community can change and develop, as participation in a hub like The Storefront enables them to step back and consider the bigger picture of service provision, acknowledging community strengths and needs.

Unique to The Storefront has been the dimension of inclusion. As a core principle, this has functioned as a central driver to the work of The Storefront. In practice, the construct of inclusion has guided the working definition of the community, and the constituents whom The Storefront serves. This in turn inspires the governance structure and practices of the project.

DEFINING THE STOREFRONT COMMUNITY

You're all here to serve the community. Community, community, community, community -- what they want, what they need. Then meet them at their level. (Interview 13)

From the outset, the ethos driving The Storefront was decidedly community-inspired and committed to the community assuming a central role. A considerable amount of background work went into the evolution of the service model for The Storefront, reflecting a framework that was (and continues to be) committed to the involvement of community members across all facets of the project. The principle of inclusion has defined many of the organization practices within The Storefront, shaping the nature and extent of participation by community members.

Critical to this involvement was an emphasis on identifying community-driven interests, as opposed to the conventional practice in the non-profit services sector of starting from an idea that is externally defined and determined.

The Outreach Committee envisions The Storefront respecting and responding to the community's self-identified "wants" as distinct from their presumed (or even researched) "needs." This would suggest that a process whereby agencies identify what services/programming they are interested in providing would be insufficient to respond adequately to the community's self-identified wants. The Outreach Committee therefore recommends that no decisions be made regarding what services will be operated through The Storefront until the community can be mobilized and involved to self-identify what programming it needs (Discussion Notes, April 2000).

This notion of starting from the point of self-identified "wants" rather than social-agency directed "needs" marks an important departure from the traditional service model. Careful not to ignore what may emerge as needs in essence, The Storefront manages to find a balance between needs and wants. Adopting an asset based development approach², the organizing group were careful to rely first on what they could all bring to the table and the belief that the local community had resources that would make a difference.

No matter how well intentioned, often such initiatives can fail to translate well into practice. The Storefront has, from the emergence of the working group to the present time, actively challenged assumptions about and boundaries demarcating the community of East Scarborough. Establishing who is and who is not a member of the community is often a task that is driven by the particular remit of an organization. This can be limited to particular sub-groups of the population or defined regionally by "catchment" areas. Conventionally, this translates into working definitions of a proposed client or service user population -- the people whom the agency/project aims to support.

For The Storefront, there was not a drive to limit or mark out a specific "catchment" within the population. Instead there was an effort to ensure that the scope of who constituted their community was intentionally broad – even going so far as to encompass individuals or groups not typically regarded as colleagues or as members of the community.

²John Kretzmann and John McKnight, Building Communities from the Inside Out (1993).

For example, one participant noted the critical relationship that was forged among The Storefront staff, committee members, and the managers of the Morningside Mall:

I think agencies see mall management more as landlords, as opposed to a partner. And you know, we took a totally different approach to that and unfortunately we weren't able to negotiate with them to continue to have a space...But other than that, they became partners with us, to work with the community. And it only benefited them, and I think that again, and maybe it speaks to personalities that were sitting at that administration desk and the security people that were there, and what they saw was important for the community and recognized this was a good thing. (Interview 8)

What emerges from such recognition is a demonstrated investment in relationship capital. This commitment acknowledges the distinctive value that interpersonal relationships can offer to enhance the supportive work being done within and by agencies, ultimately towards more complementary organizational connections.

For The Storefront working group, and later, the steering committee, the formation of relationships has reflected a commitment to inclusiveness and a longer-term investment in alliances. In some of these relationships, there are clear and immediate benefits. These may reflect specific, short terms goals or interests where the formation of particular relationships enhances service delivery. Agency representatives were acutely aware of the ways in which being part of The Storefront could assist them in their service delivery.

We provide identification replacement for those who don't have it. For those folks who are homeless, or those needing housing assistance, for instance that need a lot of support in temporary housing situations, they can benefit from someone guiding them from The Storefront. ID replacement is something we can do for those same clients, especially since we do document replacement for birth certificates or record of landing for newcomers. We thought that this could be a really good fit. (Interview 5)

However, the benefits of many relationships may not be explicitly apparent or defined in such pragmatic ways. Instead, the practical benefits of these relationships may emerge over time, be situational in nature, or shift over time. More pointedly, the strong commitment to form such relationships – ones that have fewer apparent benefits or may be less goal-driven in nature – helps to create an environment where the groundwork for future working alliances has already been laid.

The investment in longer-term relationships by The Storefront has yielded unique benefits, particularly as they sought to introduce new agencies or specialized projects:

Because we involved security, we got to know them, they came to visit us at The Storefront. They became our friends, and before long, great, all of the sudden, vandalism in the mall started to go down, all of a sudden, you know, the security guards weren't having to escort youth out of the mall as often as what they were. We had a couple of incidents up at The Storefront, and immediately the security was there, they dealt with it very

professionally, they dealt with it the way they should have. And it was done. So they totally came on board, and totally understood that having services for the youth and providing support for the youth was a really good thing.
(Interview 8)

Investing in relationship capital represents a particular strength of The Storefront. This approach moves beyond short term strategic partnerships that may be the norm in the sector, i.e., focused on one-off funding opportunities or advocacy campaigns.

Defining the community of interest for The Storefront remains a broad, almost self-organizing priority. This is supported by key policies governing the project, including the equal representation of community representatives and agency representations, as well as an equal voice in the model of decision-making.

The Community Group meets quarterly at The Storefront Community Speaks and is made up of any community members interested in participating in the development of The Storefront and the local community. The Community Group has a strong voice in determining the future of The Storefront. They are active decision makers in the overall vision of The Storefront, which is reviewed every few years. To ensure the community voice is heard, updates from all Community Speaks are presented to other decision-making bodies within The Storefront, and seven community members sit on The Storefront Steering Committee.

From How Decisions Are Made at the East Scarborough Storefront Handbook.

“Community Speaks” are open forums that enable members of the community to voice openly their concerns, issues, or wishes.

Attending to the interests of the community did not mean that The Storefront was excluding the needs of agencies. The principles of participation and inclusion drove the interactions of agencies with (and within) The Storefront. This was a critical impetus for the work of The Storefront from the start, to ensure that agencies felt supported in their work throughout its operation. This support enabled a vision of service provision for (within) the neighbourhood that could adapt over time.

One participant acknowledged that the nature of their services had changed over time, and the agency recognized that community members responded more to their services in an alternate, off-site setting than when housed in The Storefront. For this service, continuing to offer services through The Storefront would fail to appreciate the ways in which the needs specific to their client group may have shifted. The reflexivity in such a decision is in keeping with the ethos of the working group; that is, thinking beyond the scope of individual projects. Moreover, while this agency no longer provides services through The Storefront, they remain actively engaged with The Storefront in what they define as “a collaborative way”:

I think that there's so many benefits from being involved in a collaboration like this even though we're not providing services in The Storefront at the moment. But the opportunity is going to continue to be there. Also the networking and knowledge of the community is beneficial to us. You know it's hard to get to know what the community is all about and what makes up the communities and what the issues are. (Interview 12)

This ability to be dynamic and responsive to shifting community characteristics is unusual when funding constraints lock-in service provision parameters for most agencies. In part, this specific case reflects the capacity of this particular agency to meet the needs of their clientele. However, it also highlights the unique way in which The Storefront enables agencies to operate in a flexible way. While there are conditions and parameters that exist in relation to participation in The Storefront, these are not restrictive in nature.

Nonetheless, for agencies, the relationship to The Storefront can be complex. On the one hand there is a strong sense of support for The Storefront model, recognizing the unique benefits that membership in the project can bring. At the same time, agencies can experience a diminished sense of identity, in effect overshadowed by the larger brand of The Storefront:

So today, for example I had some clients that were referred by another organization inside here. I spent the whole morning, sitting with them filling out several different forms and identifying documents. So then I couldn't finish it and they also couldn't stay longer, so I had to schedule another [day]. So I said if you want you can come next Thursday or if you want, you can come to my other office. But when they asked for the address, and I wrote it down on my business card, they said uh, which office, is it this office or that office. I had to explain the whole thing, like what this is (The Storefront) is like an umbrella thing. (Interview 4)

While not uncommon, the confusion around identity is described as typically brief in nature. This may reflect one of the ways in which agencies need to reflect upon their mandate independent of The Storefront and to reconcile their interests with those of the broader project.

More often agency representatives speak highly of the opportunities that The Storefront has offered, enhancing the nature of their professional work and individual development.

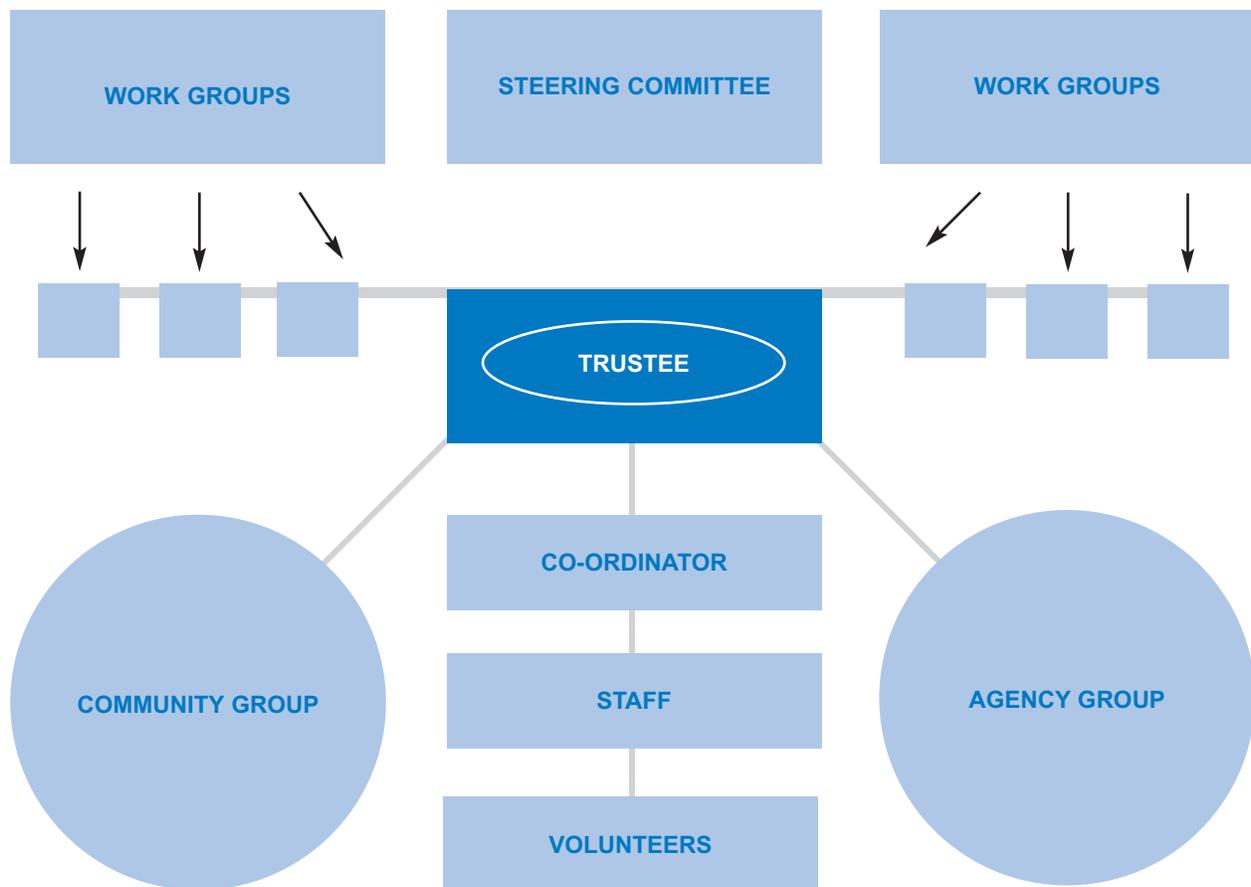
I [have] really enjoyed working here. It's a change, but at the same time I get to see many new faces, come across different people... we get more information from other organizations and they get more information about us. And they pass along information too, so it's helpful for clients. (Interview 4)

A GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE TO CULTIVATE COOPERATION

We had groups broken up into various committees. There was somebody working on structure, ideas, there was someone on governance, somebody working on outreach, someone working on looking for space, negotiating for space, different things like that. And over a two-year period we created this thing, that's now The Storefront.

We hired Anne, who was our first coordinator for it. We determined that one of our members would be the trustee and the trusteeship was supposed to rotate originally like every year or every two years. We were going to do the trustee relationship and either rotate it to another agency or see how it was going. (Interview 10)

In a collaboration as complex as The Storefront, the ability to cultivate effective working relationships among the various stakeholders relies on the establishment of key structures and systems to provide institutional governance. Structural issues frequently rose to the top of The Storefront’s agenda and its structure evolved accordingly to meet the changing needs of community partners and funders, while balancing the demands of a shifting socio-political context. The governance framework has been critical in clarifying and defining the ways in which participants (agency representatives, voluntary committee members, community partners, and community residents) in The Storefront contribute.



From How Decisions Are Made at the East Scarborough Storefront

In effect the governance framework embodies the principles underscoring the work of The Storefront, most notably the concepts of inclusion and transparency. The arrangement of organizational bodies – the essence of who contributes, in what fashion, to which processes – was constructed in part by the necessity of ensuring organizational comprehensiveness in the implementation of The Storefront. This outlines the way in which The Storefront self-monitors and operationalizes “transparency” through decisive administration. “Inclusion” has been realized through the identification and promotion of mechanisms for power-sharing and joint decision-making, such as the stipulation that the Steering Committee formally reflect equal representation of 7 agency staff and 7 community members. Equal representation ensures that on a practical level, the value of power sharing has been translated and incorporated into practice within the organizational structure and the policies that guide day-to-day operations.

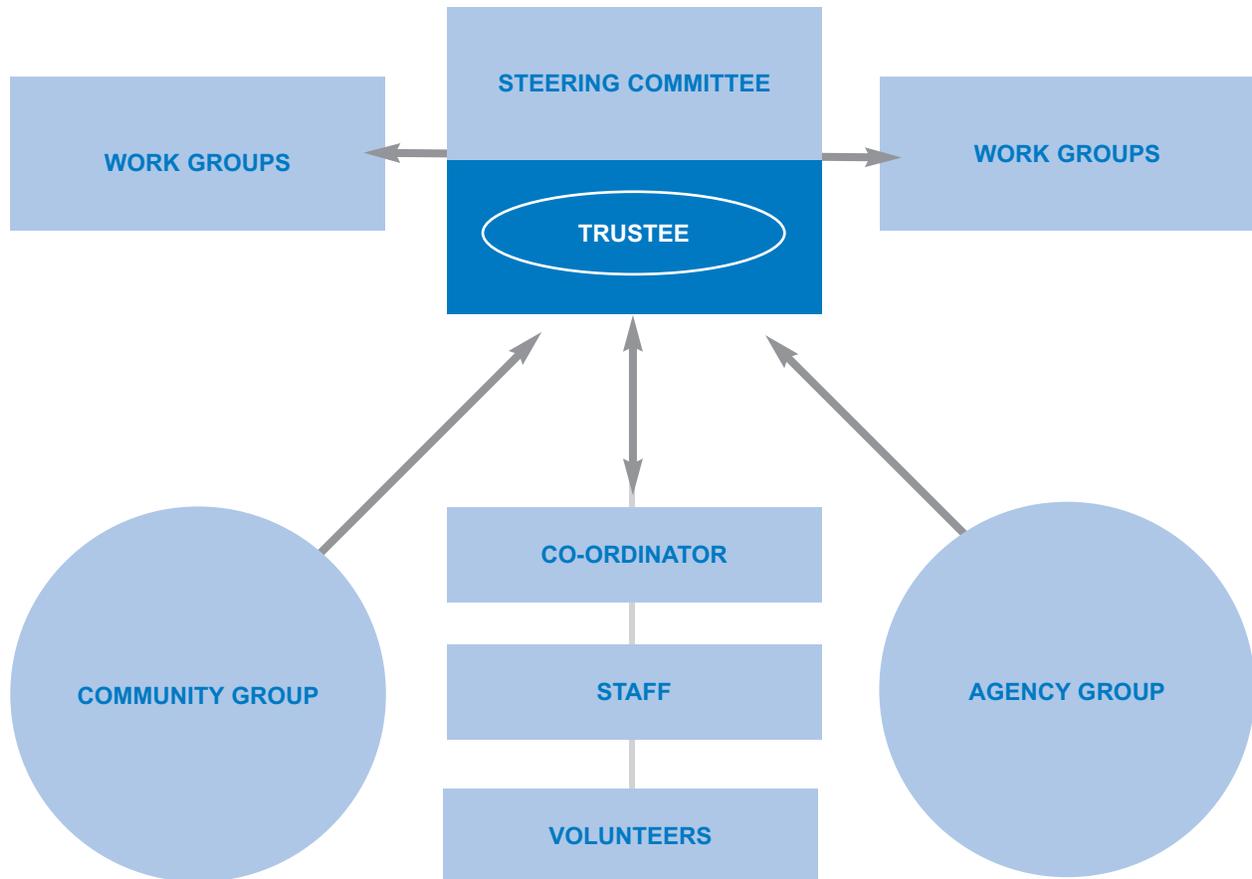
I think that the steering committee work that I've done has been very collaborative, and the thing I like about the governance of The Storefront is that the community has equal say. Equal or more say than the agencies. So that's something that community is not really used to. Community is used to programs being set up and agents saying this is what program is coming to the community. Whether you've asked for it or not, but with The Storefront there's been right from day one a real good consultation of community, both from the steering committee level and with the Community Speaks every three months, where everyone from the community is invited to come out about the direction we're taking, or other issues. (Interview 3)

The inclusion of community members in power sharing and decision-making is unique. This facet of the governance framework required active promotion over time – beginning with the Community Speaks forums – but also requiring active engagement with community members who sit on the steering committee.

Staff has been really welcoming and almost showing that people can be empowered. And helping folks to take on more of a leadership role. And then when we do our Community Speaks. At every Community Speaks people are much more vocal and much more opinionated about what's happening in The Storefront and in the community.... So I see a lot of wonderful benefits as far as community empowerment. (Interview 3)

Appointing community representatives to such formal decision-making bodies may assure rights around power sharing in principle. However it is in the everyday practices of such groups that this power distribution can be realized.

THE STOREFRONT DECISION-MAKING MODEL



From How Decisions Are Made at the East Scarborough Storefront

In policy and in the partnership agreement, explicit parameters are placed around services and their use of The Storefront, from outlining roles and responsibilities to ensuring that systems are in place to off-set critical issues around conflicts should they arise. One agency staff member explains the practical value that is added by having clear and consistent guidelines in place. An agency staff member explains:

Because when we signed an agreement, everything was explained to us on things like that. And I don't think there would be any conflict between two organizations on a competition basis because I have hardly come

across that situation at all, but we had a basic agreement signed, and we understand our rules. (Interview 4)

Partnership agreements form an important part of the internal operations.

You've three tiers that they can be involved in and it's up to them to decide their level of involvement. We don't push their involvement like other collaborations. When you come in here you're a partner. If you want to change then you can move up to the next level. So everybody is comfortable, you know. If you just want to do programs one to two days a week, no problem. After two or three years doing that the Executive Director or Manager says, no, we want to be a fully-fledged partner. (Interview 13)

With up to 40 agency members, a community-focused governance structure and a growing volunteer base, the potential for conflict was inevitable. Different approaches to conflict resolution had to be worked out within the same value structure of power sharing.

Having governance mechanisms in place, and a culture that expected and normalized conflict when conflict happened, meant that it was in fact normalized, and they easily allocated the space and time to deal with it.

We let the groups figure that out. I mean there are were like six or eight different agencies that wanted to provide services and we said look, you guys need to figure out how to make this schedule work for you. We'll help with the time scheduling but you need to figure out how you are going to share the responsibility and if you have overlapping services we don't need both of you at the same time, you know, that kind of thing. So youth people sit down together, the settlement people sit down together, the seniors, people sit down together and sort of start working together... cooperating. (Interview 10)

Nonetheless there have been occasions where for whatever reason an agency did not work out well in the structure of partnership at The Storefront.

Don't get me wrong, there were still agencies and organizations that were very territorial and weren't that good at sharing or at being partners. But I think that there was enough of us out here in Scarborough that were able to override those folks and say, okay, you want to do your own thing, then off you go, do your own thing, but this is what we're going to do, and we know that it's going to work out better for the community because as opposed to getting \$10,000 dollars worth of service, they're now going to get \$20,000 dollars worth of service, and that's only going to be a good thing for the community. So, you know, there were growing pains for sure. When you look at the agencies that have come and gone there's very few that were here and then left, and didn't return. (Interview 8)

The practical steps of operating The Storefront, from establishing committees and guidelines to implementing protocols and partnership agreements, also serve to establish a context of shared understandings. In the process,

a common conceptual language is established. It is this sense of a shared perspective that proves useful in solidifying commitment, but also in the development of collective problem-solving tools.

I think what happens is that everyone has pretty much the same notion of what community development is and what serving the community looks like, and when we all come together - we all find this incredible common ground. (Interview 11)

I think the staff, especially Anne, have really nurtured us all to look at the greater picture, and not look at just us. So that's really been nice, because really the bottom line is always the residents and how were impacting the residents. So if there's a puzzle that we have to put together, we have the services. We have Boys and Girls Clubs, we have different groups running out of The Storefront, we have West Hill Community Services. How can we put the puzzle together, each using the skills that we have - Because certainly I'm not a youth worker, but we have the experts who are, and so how can we all kind of put the puzzle together using these skill sets we have. (Interview 3)

The ability to create a sense of shared language is no small feat. Efforts to promote a particular approach have to reconcile diverging opinions at best and counter the ideological divisiveness and subsequent factions at worst. The coordinator role has been particularly influential in this realm, supporting the organizational follow-through on policies and procedures, as well as ensuring that The Storefront retained (and if necessary revisited) its vision.

Maintaining a specific focus, or ensuring that the partnership remained true to the vision and mandate, is something that – as with any organization – requires the commitment and leadership of core individuals. The project coordinator at The Storefront is credited often with the ability to play a strong self-reflective role on behalf of the project, attentive to the need for operational balance and reminding those involved in The Storefront of their directive.

I think it was hard to, to I think it [the vision] kept getting forgotten every once in a while, like people started to assume that, 'Oh, we do so much here, we should get this,' and people just assume that, 'Well, what's another couple more hours, you know. We're a major player here.' And the reality is that we just had to keep reinforcing that. You know, I think one of the things that, and I'm sure you've already heard it over and over and over again, is the belief of the coordinator in the value of the community. So constantly, she's constantly focusing the steering committee on what's right and what's wrong and asking "How are we doing?" (Interview 12)

By and large the ability to cultivate and promote cooperation as opposed to competition remains one of the defining features of The Storefront. Indeed, of the agency representatives interviewed and committee members who agreed to participate, the majority were part of the core organizing group involved in establishing The Storefront in the first place. This collective leadership represents a critical driving force behind the success of the partnership model, the collaborations in place, and the continued success of the storefront.

I've never encountered a partnership that has lasted so long. You know, it's still thriving. Now I think the other piece is that it was based on a certain theory and principle and I think quite often other partnerships

have allowed those principles to become lax. I think the biggest piece is the community ownership of it, the community involvement of it. Whenever you are talking to funders or partners or partnerships or collaborations or whatever, there is always talk about community ownership and community involvement, and the fact that the steering committee was going to be always half agency and half community. (Interview 12)

No other issue dominated the governance structure of The Storefront more than the issue of trusteeship. The relationship between The Storefront and its trustee partner (the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough) started from a position of joint working. As such the conditions have been carefully outlined – from the boundaries of financial roles and accountabilities to the respective roles around decision-making. Clarity and transparency are critical themes that have driven the relationship between The Storefront and its trustee agency.

When the funding came through and we knew that it was actually going to be a reality, they needed someone to hold the funds. They needed someone to manage those funds, knowing that this wasn't going to be an organization, this was going to be a partnership, and it was going to be people just coming and accessing space and services. So the group as a whole decided to put out a call for tender, if you will, for a trustee. (Interview 8)

The Partnership-Trustee Journey: Handbook for Community Agencies in Partnership (GLOGER 2004) spells out the dimensions of the trustee-partner relationship established by The Storefront and the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough, from financial responsibilities to the question of leadership roles and how this has shifted and adapted over time. The Handbook is a unique resource that documents the complexities and tensions that can accompany the process of establishing working relationships that are on the one hand structural (encompassing administrative and financial arrangements) and, on the other hand, represent a shared ideological perspective or ethos. This work offers insights into the very framework of partnership that The Storefront has worked to promote.

Despite differing experiences with partnerships, all the people we talked with agreed that to make a partnership-trustee relationship a success story you need:

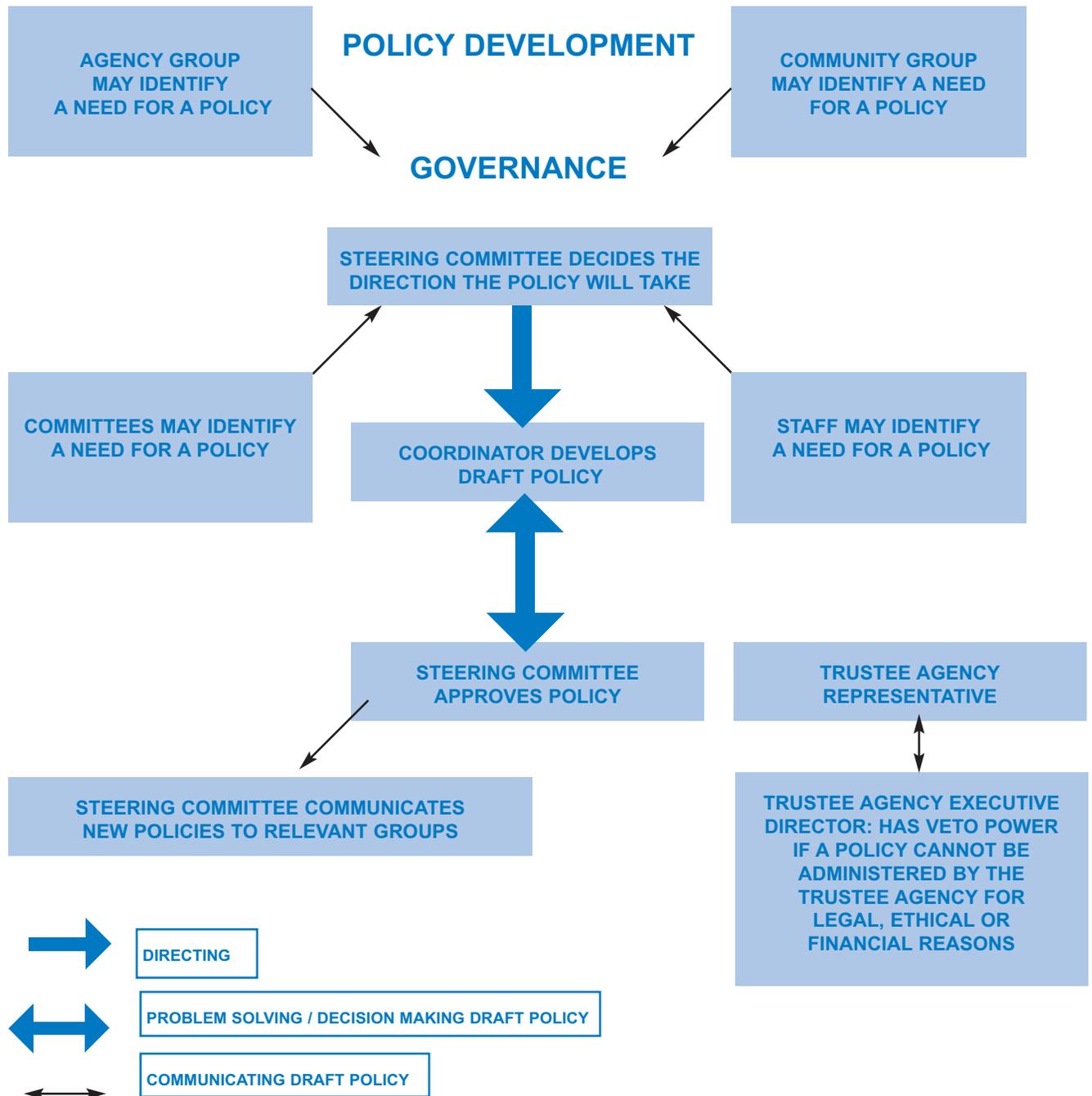
- A fundamental sense of goodwill among all stakeholders
- Strong, lasting motivation by all partners
- Clearly defined roles for everyone
- Good, straight forward and consistent protocols
- Huge amounts of communication
- An understanding of the legal implications

(GLOGER 2004:4-5)

One of the striking features of this document is its ability to accent many of the unarticulated dimensions of such relationships. The examples may be grounded in the real lived experience of the Boys and Girls Club-The Storefront partnership, but the situations and guidance have applicability in other settings. One example is an illustration of the flow of communication through The Storefront with regard to policy development (see below). With step-by-step exactness, the logistical framework of decision-making is laid out.

In addition to laying out the pragmatic, operational concerns of The Storefront, the handbook tackles many of the interpersonal issues around roles from a rights and responsibilities perspective, but also the more nuanced and perhaps context-specific nature of the "goodness of fit" among individuals in their respective roles (agency representative, Storefront staff member, committee member, or community resident).

East Scarborough Storefront Communication Flow Chart



More recently, the governance structure of the partner-trustee relationship has come under some question. The recent re-examination of the structure of the working relationship between The Storefront and the Boys and Girls Club of Scarborough was not, however, driven by a need to introduce a restructuring. If anything the partnership between the two bodies has been remarkably successful.

The decision to revisit the agreement was driven largely by the challenges in funding. New funding sources have sought to reconcile The Storefront-Boys and Girls Club model with conventional trustee partnerships found in the non-profit sector.

They [the funders] wanted to know that The Storefront is a program of the Boys and Girls Club. Because then it becomes part of the Boys and Girls Club as opposed to this thing that kind of floats out here, looks like an organization, acts like an organization, does all the things that an organization does, but isn't an organization. (Interview 16)

Many of the discussions about the partnership agreement between The Storefront and the Boys and Girls Club have centred upon the position of the project to the wider organization: is it a program or a project?

For The Storefront and the Boys and Girls Club, what lay at the heart of this discussion was whether the shift in language would not only transform the relationship between the two, but also potentially alter the nature of The Storefront itself. In effect, if The Storefront were to be reconceptualized as a program of the Boys and Girls Club, there could be a lasting impact on the critical processes in place, such as decision-making and governance.

For many organizations, in establishing funding agreements there may not have been such attention to the shifting use of terms and the nuances that new language can bring. The storefront coordinator acknowledges that in some respects the initial reaction was to simply accommodate the funder's request.

When the United Way said that they couldn't fund this as just a project and that we should be a program of Boys and Girls Club and again it was, this stuff guides us. Because at first it was, okay, how can we do this with quickly and we'll just put it on really quickly and -- Wait a minute! You know, we've got to go to the agencies. We've got to go to the community. We've got to look at this from the big picture and what's the best to do for The Storefront. And we've got to really explore this. So, you know, I called the United Way, told them and that was a big deal. (Interview 16)

But critically it is a reflective stance, which moves to the foreground of decision-making – even if this means jeopardizing an agreement for much needed funding. Achieving a balance between the needs of funders to have in place certain structures and the ability of The Storefront to maintain its autonomous relationship to the B&G Club has been achieved over time, through attentiveness to language and recognition of the long-term implications for the storefront.

However, this process has not been straightforward or easy. Instead, all parties made a considerable commitment – in time and resources -- to establishing an agreement that could retain the independence of The Storefront while operating under the auspices of the Boys and Girls Club. By carving out an agreement specific to The Storefront, they have successfully maintained the power-sharing processes central to the governance of The Storefront.

[Re Trustee issue] We're working on an agreement; first it was a memorandum of understanding, then a partnership agreement, and used that language. Now we're saying it's just an agreement. So it's still really a trusteeship (formalized in an agreement), but with things spelled out a little more than before. So we're using words like program in that agreement, but with the understanding that as much as The Storefront is a program of the Boys and Girls Club, it is only in regards to funding and the financial piece, that they [The Storefront] will still operate independently. (Interview 8)

What emerges as significant throughout the formation, establishment and perpetuation of the governance framework is the central role of reflection on the vision of The Storefront.

The Storefront staff have been attentive to conceptualizing "visioning" processes for the "agency," engaged in a critical examination of the boundaries of the program (from the beginning of the conceptual development of The Storefront), cautious of being "agency-driven" and intent upon ensuring that the interests of community members were well represented – particularly in the context of a diverse multi-ethnic neighbourhood.

A COMMON VISION AND PARTICIPATIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Throughout the data, core values and beliefs emerge that have been an intrinsic part of The Storefront's vision. These characteristics are critical in that they establish the tone and ethos that drive internal and external relationships and the principles that guide decision-making, ultimately shaping the organizational structure. These elements come together in an assortment of ways, grounding the vision and ethos of the agency – but also by directing the practical organization and structure of The Storefront.

Anne and the rest of the management and people are on board at a high level knowing how day-to-day operations would look to meet expectations. Because she [Anne] developed the operations manual, The Journey of The Storefront and the welcoming package, these influence what the agency partnership looks like, how the space looks like, you know how it's going to work. So it's a constant. Constantly our focus with our staff and our steering committee is this is alright, what next? How do we build up on this? How do we change it and still meet the community needs and but yet still follow the principles of what The Storefront started out with. (Interview 13)

The East Scarborough Storefront promotes a framework for working in the non-profit sector that is decidedly proactive. This is an important attribute, shaping the nature of community engagement – but also fundamentally

shaping how The Storefront “fits with” (or actively differs from) conventional practice in the non-profit sector.

A fundamental element of the East Scarborough Storefront project has been, and continues to be, the willingness of individuals involved in the project – in whatever capacity -- to engage in critical self-examination of the operational processes of the storefront, the ethos underscoring their work and how this reflects or coincides with the “wants” of the community.

There's a lot of reflection that goes on and a lot of going back to, so, what were some of the original ideas about this? What were the founders thinking when they set it out this way? Yeah, and is it still relevant? Or how much do we have to change it to keep it real and alive? It's a lot of work ... but at the same time it's because everybody feels that they're part of the answer, you know, and they take ownership. (Interview 10)

The ability to ground the work firmly in an ethos of “community” and in the process of reflection begins with strong leadership. Many of the key individuals involved in the framing and ongoing operating of The Storefront (as agency representatives and committee members) have important expertise in adult education and service planning and delivery. For example, a number of adult educators involved at the beginning and throughout the project were identified in the participative visioning and decision-making documents, the historical scan and through the in-depth interviews. Adult educators can offer particular expertise, such as introducing and guiding reflective process exercises into meeting agendas in order to build consensus for developing ownership of the emerging organization.

I'm sure you've heard it over and over -- the coordinators' vision of the value of community is constantly focusing the steering committee on what's right and what's wrong. It's an unspoken part of routines here. They are almost not aware that is happening, in a way. That there is this infrastructure that sort of helps to direct things a bit. (Interview 8)

Group processes play a pivotal role in the life of the agency. The members of The Storefront Working Group, and later the committees that were established, have utilized their working group meetings, committee meetings, and formal visioning sessions in a strategic fashion by using brainstorming, team building, and participative discussion techniques towards a continual refinement of the agency in the direction of continuous empowerment of The Storefront community. One participant, in outlining the nature of the formal visioning exercise conducted, acknowledged that what emerged as critical was in fact different:

It didn't look like what we thought it was going to look like, our vision statement. The key was, actually, is the very last line, 'To look at and explore possibilities.' The idea is that when people come in and say 'I have a great idea' we don't tell them all the reasons why it won't work. (Interview 16)

This notion of being open to possibility is a critical element guiding the collective thinking of The Storefront, shaping the response of the agency to challenges such as funders' calls to re-examine the governance structure.

The changes that occur in the life of The Storefront – whether changes to the housing of The Storefront or challenges to the stability of its funding – play a critical role in the life of The Storefront. Such changes have the power to challenge existing practices and, potentially, the stability of The Storefront itself. It is precisely these challenges that push The Storefront to confront itself and its ideals about collaboration and cooperation.

CRITICAL ISSUES FOSTERED THE CAPACITY TO CHANGE

If we didn't have the funding crisis we would not be successful now, because we had to change our focus, what we're thinking about and how we would go about doing it. So our difficulties really empowered us and encouraged us and gave us more insight to search it out and do it and find and call on the powerful people on board. (Interview 13)

The changes that have occurred in the life of The Storefront – whether housing related or financial in nature – play a pivotal role. This serves to challenge the existing practices of the project. It has been these challenges that have pushed The Storefront to confront and reflect upon the work that it does, the community where it functions as a part, and the ways in which collaboration and partnership have been realized in practice.

Preliminary funding for The Storefront was provided by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). This ensured that the initial infrastructure could be put into place. In 2005, however, funding from HRDC was severely cut. The Storefront community mobilized into action.

So we did marches, and letter campaigns that really brought a lot of the community together and gelled a certain segment of the community. They saw that they could carry placards and walk around -- even on the hottest day of the year. We chose to do this march, with the police helping us and the press there, and we were shouting, 'Save our Storefront!' (Interview 3)

This campaign demonstrated the strength of its supporters' commitment. People spoke of this pivotal event as – in essence – a defining moment for The Storefront, illustrative of the partnership established between the agency and the local community, the strength of key relationships in the broad community that had been established over time, and the ongoing commitment people had to ensuring the continuation of The Storefront.

This event set into motion a new search to secure funding and along with it a new model of governance. Over time additional funds were secured through grants from Trillium, the City of Toronto, the United Way, the Metcalf Foundation and HRDC. As highlighted earlier, The Storefront has successfully existed under a “trustee” partnership relationship with the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough. The success of this relationship is well documented through The Storefront policies, minutes of committee meetings, and most directly through the “Partnership-Trustee Journey” handbook produced in 2004.

With the dramatic shift in funding, however, came new conditions around the governance structure. Specifically, there was a drive from funders to re-configure the relationship that The Storefront held with the Boys and Girls Club, moving from a trustee partnership to one where The Storefront would be recast as a "program" of the Boys and Girls Club. Such changes have the potential to alter dramatically the nature of the working relationship. For a number of projects/agencies, such a restructuring effectively transforms the relationship, challenging its sustainability. There is a unique vulnerability that is associated with the decision-making of funders that can place projects in an uneasy position where they feel unable to oppose changes to the governance structure.

For The Storefront, the benefits to such an arrangement were openly acknowledged, as were concerns about what such a transformation would do to the autonomy of The Storefront and the consistency of their partnership with the Boys and Girls Club. Problematically such a transformation could place the respective mandates into sharp relief. For The Storefront, the question of how it could operate in a new relationship with their trustee became an opportunity to re-think the nature of funders' requirements for projects they support.

The funders seem to want The Storefront to fit into their existing "box". It was suggested that perhaps the Storefront should help them to build a new "box." [Steering Committee Meeting; March 22, 2006]

By taking the position that this juncture represented an opening rather than a point of concession, whereby The Storefront and the Boys and Girls Club could construct a governance framework drawing upon features of their previous relationship while forging a new model, they satisfied their respective interests.

Despite the strong commitment of The Storefront members, whether as agency representatives, members of the community, or members of the respective committees, there have been recurring challenges that have tested the stability of the project. Funding, as highlighted above, was one such obstacle. Housing was another.

We found this space that was an old library in the Morningside Mall, which had a lot of space but was not in great shape but the mall wasn't making any money on it. It made almost as much money not having anybody in there as they did having somebody paying no rent. (Interview 10)

The initial site for The Storefront was located in the Morningside Mall. The mall location was in many respects ideal. It ensured that the project had maximum exposure for residents in the community.

Many of the areas that comprise Scarborough are noted for a heavy concentration of residential buildings with limited shared public spaces. The larger roads do not operate as traditional main streets where stores, businesses, and social programs come together. Instead, the physical environment is marked by infrequent public space. Businesses are more often located in a patchwork of purpose-built strip malls, not conducive to drop-in settings.

For residents in the East Scarborough area – particularly those with limited resources or experiencing disadvantage

– the limitations of the environment could force residents to choose between their competing needs. At this most basic level this could mean: shop for groceries or visit an employment centre. Residents may not have had the resources to do both. The Morningside Mall, however, offered a unique setting that could allow residents to meet a range of needs and access The Storefront.

The mall definitely helped, and another way the mall helped was that it had a wonderful big open space. I remember taking my kids to see Santa Claus at Morningside Mall. And it had two levels, so that the upper level looked down on the open space. So we had a lot of community events there... Which was great, because people who were using the mall had no idea that The Storefront was on the third floor, or what that was. If they happened to be shopping at the time they could stop and listen and learn and find out what this group was all about... It was our town centre for sure. (Interview 3)

From its opening the longevity of the mall as a site was always in question. When the final decision was made for the mall to be torn down, people affiliated with The Storefront organized and lobbied on its behalf.

The mall was a huge issue when we found out it was going to be torn down. It was just the issue of The Storefront having to move, but the issue of the whole public space of a mall leaving our community. And that had tremendous impact, and it still does on our community. (Interview 3)

The search for, and inevitable move to, a new location, while challenging, was ultimately met as a defining moment for The Storefront. In preparing for the move to its current location, members of the steering committee actively chose to re-frame the events – less as a forced move, but rather a transition:

The committee approved the following move plan:

Host an open house “honouring the past and celebrating the future” within the first week of opening.

It was agreed that despite January weather, we would try to hold a march between the two sites.

Plan “B” would be to bus people over.

(Steering Committee meeting Nov. 15, 2006)

LEADERSHIP

An integral part of the success of The Storefront has been the strength of its leadership. This began with the core group of professionals and local residents from the Caring Alliance who formed the initial working group. The service providers involved from the beginning reflected agencies and community groups with an established history of working with the community:

The group encompasses public health, mental and physical health supporting groups, employment training and job support services, family resource and youth services, residents, faith communities, ethno-specific and multicultural organizations, immigrant and refugee settlement services, information and referral services, and more. (Funding Proposal to HRDC)

Aside from the breadth of services and programs, many of the members of this group – perhaps more importantly – had established relationships within the community, the majority having a history of working in this area of Scarborough. Many were also skilled adult educators and community organizers. The written record documents and reflects the incorporation of participative learning processes found in the toolbox of organization and community development.

Leadership in a collaborative partnership might not look at first glance like leadership in a hierarchical organization. One needs to deconstruct the activities that lead to community and staff taking ownership of their power responsibilities and tasks.

The initial processes of establishing the working group were nonetheless subject to common organizational issues: difficulties scheduling and challenges around commitment. The negotiation of participation on the working group evolved over time and was to some degree spearheaded by the assertiveness of key individuals, who openly acknowledge a willingness to “push” towards “the thoughtful engagement” of individuals on the issues at hand, and what should be the position advocated by the storefront.

I think of the [unnamed] development... I happen to know an individual who is trying to pull all the partners together and they can't move ahead. They're blocked with no movement at all because of the kinds of things that we were afraid would happen. You know, the people, the territoriality, responsibility, and I'm better than you or I'm bigger than you and I should have more say. Conflicting interests can emerge in such a large diverse group and there may not be enough of a core to sort of bring it forward, move it ahead. (Interview 15)

Core Findings

What we are:

We are a partnership of community members and services working together to create a thriving community in East Scarborough

What we do:

We act as a bridge between people, services and communities

We work together in a safe, welcoming and accessible environment

We nurture diversity and harmony

What we promise:

To listen to you

To help you find the resources you need

To look at and explore possibilities

(The East Scarborough Storefront Vision 2003)

The East Scarborough Storefront is a collaboration of community agencies and community residents working together in partnership. As a collaborative effort, this project has demonstrated sustainability and continued success despite – or perhaps in response to – significant threats in regard to funding and housing. For a community-based project in a context of limited (or stretched) financial resources, The Storefront has demonstrated a strength and resourcefulness, without diminishing its commitment to its core mission or the community it serves.

Our brief exploration of The Storefront in practice has pointed to a number of important learnings that we believe have relevance in the broader understanding of working collaborations and partnerships.

- The notion of “overwhelming need” provided an initial motivation for the initial community agencies and community activists to collaborate. Importantly, a distinctive reading of need has played a decisive role in shaping the nature of The Storefront, recognizing the dual interests of the community and the service sector and bringing these together.

- An intrinsic part of recognizing and serving the interests of the community starts from a broad definition, emphasizing the inclusion of a range of stakeholders, and investing in relationship capital on a long term basis.
- The establishment of an appropriate governance structure for a collaborative structure requires mechanisms for transparency, power sharing, conflict resolution, and other inclusive strategies.
- Critical issues can play a pivotal role in surfacing the capacity of a collaboration, and test its resilience. Participative engagement and decision-making processes with community and agency partners built a foundation of trust that paid off with support and mutual solidarity when the viability of The Storefront was at risk.
- Leadership in a collaborative partnership is different from leadership in a hierarchical organization. Rather than traditional individual leadership tools of providing direction and accountability, participative engagement and decision-making processes using the adult educator's toolbox can create a collaborative culture of shared responsibility and ownership.

Conclusion:

This paper documents the story of how the co-location service delivery model used by The East Scarborough Storefront emerged, despite an environment of NPO system contraction and government cutbacks in the late 90s, to meet the overwhelming social service needs of a newcomer population. Factors that made The Storefront a successful collaboration and model of community capacity building include: developing a broad definition of community and investing in the maintenance of community relationships over time; the convergence of grassroots leaders skilled at creating participatory visioning; and establishing decision-making processes that reflect a shared power structure of agency and community representation.

When The Storefront was challenged with dramatic funding cuts and the loss of their housing, The Storefront membership and supporters rallied to demonstrate their ownership and commitment to the continuing success of The East Scarborough Storefront. The sustainability of The Storefront speaks to the strength of this commitment, but also to the ability to manage effectively complex relationships among agencies, community partners, and funders over time.

Appendix A

WELLESLEY INSTITUTE STUDY – INTERVIEW GUIDE

We want to capture a sense of the history of the storefront, the agencies that have been a part of it – how they came to be involved and how this has progressed over time.

Can you tell me about your role in relation to the storefront – from the beginning?

How did you first learn of the storefront?

Thinking about the way in which the storefront has operated – I'd like to talk about the way it has functioned in practice.

Based on your experience:

- What are unique features of the SF? Has this model been used in other settings? Are there variations that we know of (describe)?
- Why did they decide to collaborate together? (what prompted the collaboration?)
- How did they identify the participants were they complementary to each other? Where is value added? How did they see the community would benefit from their working together?
- How has the structure facilitated collaboration versus competition?
- What is the business model for service delivery? Why did they choose the model? What works with this model? Where is the value to their agencies to themselves and the community?
- How do they build and then sustain their relationships? Do they have a process to resolve conflict? Experience of power?
- Has the mandate/vision changed over time? (Has the past been acknowledged and integrated into the future? In what ways?)
- What has been the input of the community in the assessment, planning and delivery of the program (at different time points)?
- Is there a mechanism of adaptation for “changing community needs”?
- What has the impact been on other developing collaborations?

List of Interviewees:

Jayanthi Reynold	South Asian Women's Centre	Settlement Worker
Siva Sivagurunathan	Community Resources Connections	Mental Health Worker
		Steering Committee
Lori Metcalfe	West Hill Community Services	Community Developer Community supporter Steering Committee
Ralph Gain	YOUTHLINK	Steering Committee
		Co-chair
Julia Chao	Neighbourlink	Supervisor ID Clinic Other programs Steering Committee
Janice Simmons	East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club	Trustee/Storefront liaison Steering Committee
Peter Vanderyagt	Community member representing the Caring Alliance	Steering Committee
Wayne Robinson	City of Toronto	Community Development Officer – resource support

Nigel Levy	City of Toronto Parks and Recreation	Youth Outreach Worker
Samsam Ismail	Toronto District School Board & Horn of Africa Parents Association	Liaison with the Somali Community
Dianne Edwards	West Hill Community Services	“Nurse Dianne” Mental Health Group facilitator Outreach Committee
Annie Zawadi	Arising Women	Facilitator of Women’s Groups
Philip Isaacson	East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club Gordonridge Pre-employment	Computer teacher Employment Counsellor
Wendy Baker	Youth Employment Toronto	Employment Counsellor Steering Committee
Ann Gloger	East Scarborough Storefront	
Richard de Gaetano	CSPC	
Thilaga Jeganathan	CCVT	
Wendy Baker	Youth Employment Toronto	Employment Counsellor Steering Committee

Interviewer: Brenda Roche

Appendix B

HISTORICAL SCAN PARTICIPANTS:

Julia Chao, Street Health

Leslie Chitra, Toronto Police Services Crime Prevention

Richard DeGaetano, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto,

Ralph Gain, YOUTHLINK

Cheryl Gillis, City of Toronto, Parks Forestry and Recreation

Dave Gray, Toronto Police Services,

Anne Gloger, East Scarborough Storefront

Dip Habib, East Scarborough Storefront

Carmen Harper Brown, Tropicana

Nigel Levy, City of Toronto, Parks Forestry and Recreation

Mohammed Mihri, Catholic Cross Cultural Services South Asian Women's Centre

Jaime Elliott Ngugi, East Scarborough Storefront

Jayanthy Reynolds, South Asian Women's Centre

Janice Simmons, East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club

Siva Sivagurunathun, Community Resource Connections of Toronto

Anthony Thomas, YMCA

Mohammed, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

Wellesley Institute Staff:

Facilitator: Joan Roberts, Note taker: Brenda Roche

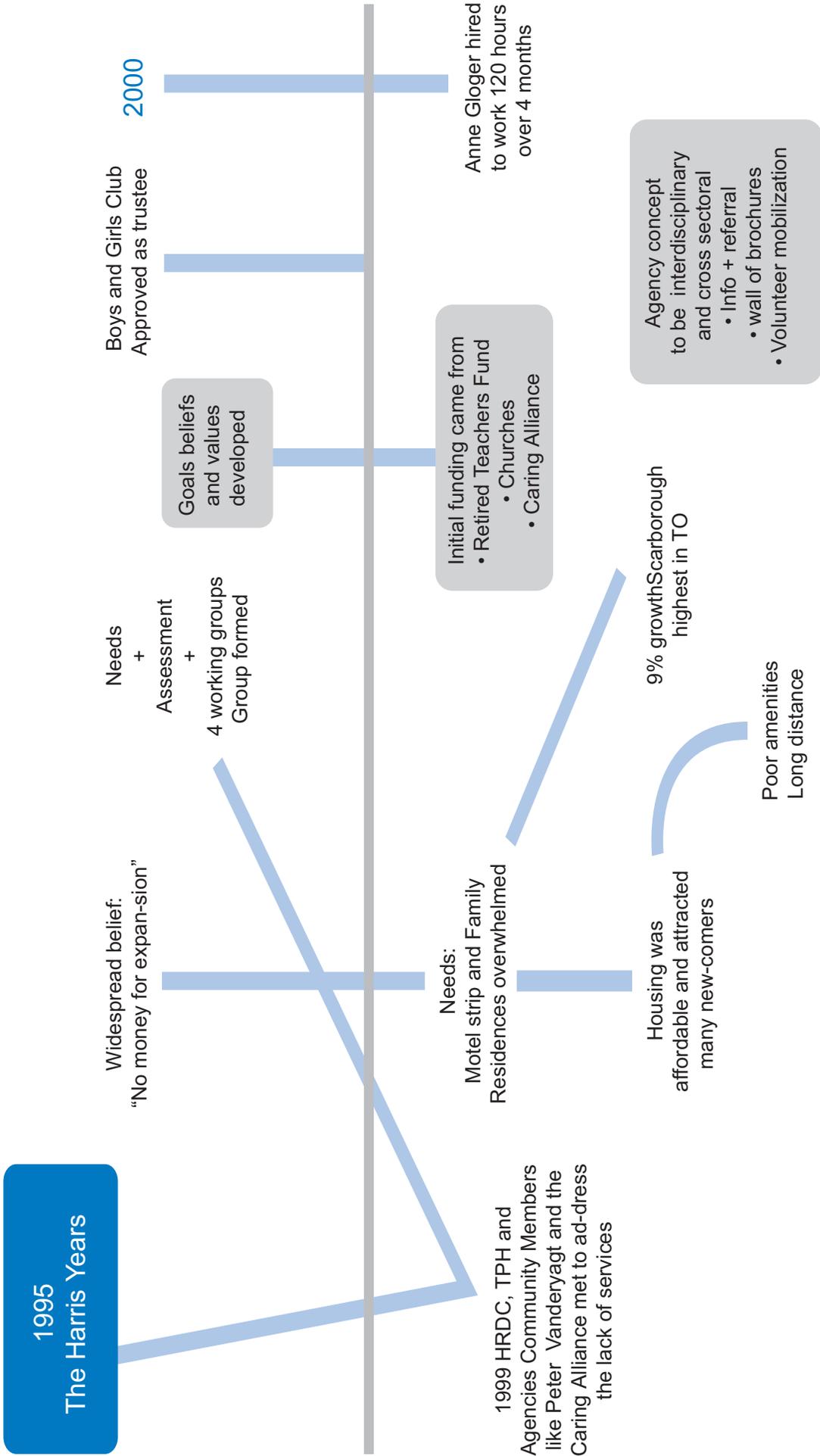
East Scarborough Storefront Historical Scan Workshop Agenda

May 1, 2007

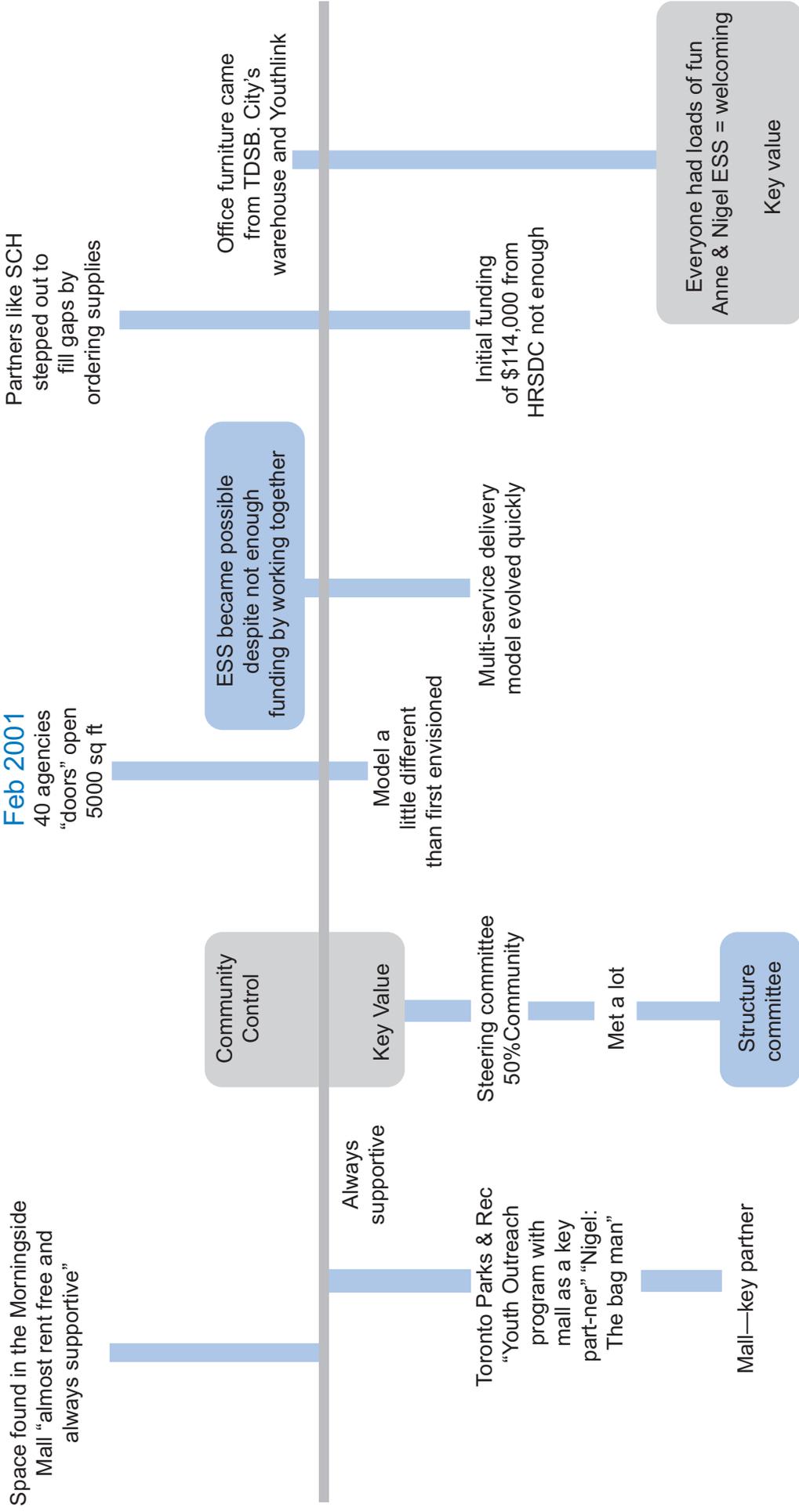
1:30 pm

TIME	ACTIVITY
1:30-1:45	Introductions and icebreaker:
1:45-1:50	Context :describe the need for looking at history and describe process and timeline
1:50-1:55	Individual brainstorm-take a few minutes to think about when you entered into the story of East Scarborough Storefront
1:55-2:35	Draw timeline Ask the person with the longest experience/oldest to start: "What are the significant events that have made this place the way it is? I'll write what you say. Lets start at the beginning"
2:35-2:50	Debrief and Review time line: What catches your attention? What were the high points in the organization's life? What were the low points in the organization's life? What were trends? What were the turning points? Are there phases in The Storefront's development? Can we name them on the timeline? Implications for the future?
2:50-3:00	Wrap-up. In one or two sentences describe what you see as the story of ESS?

Giving birth to the idea

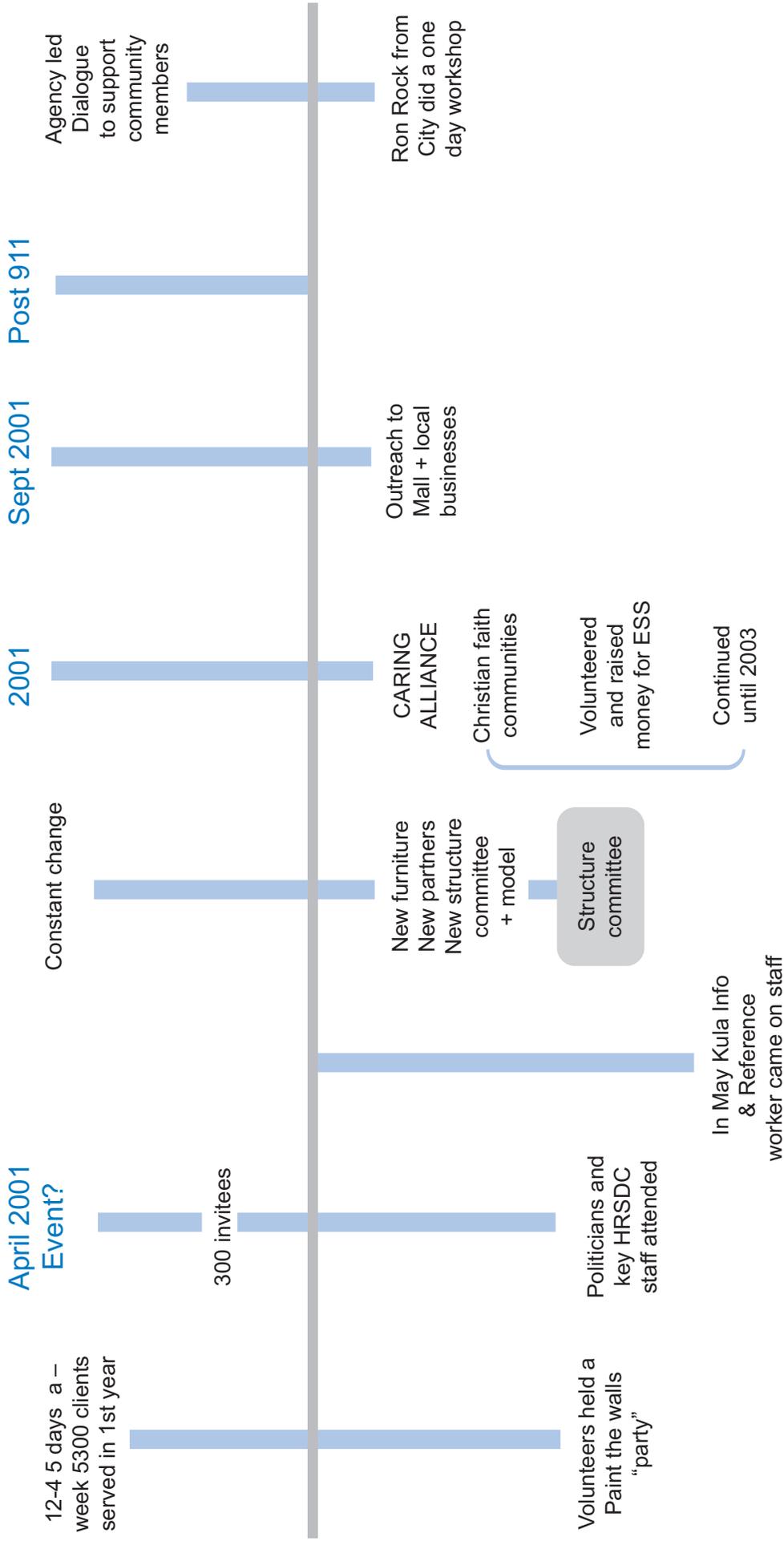


The Early Years!

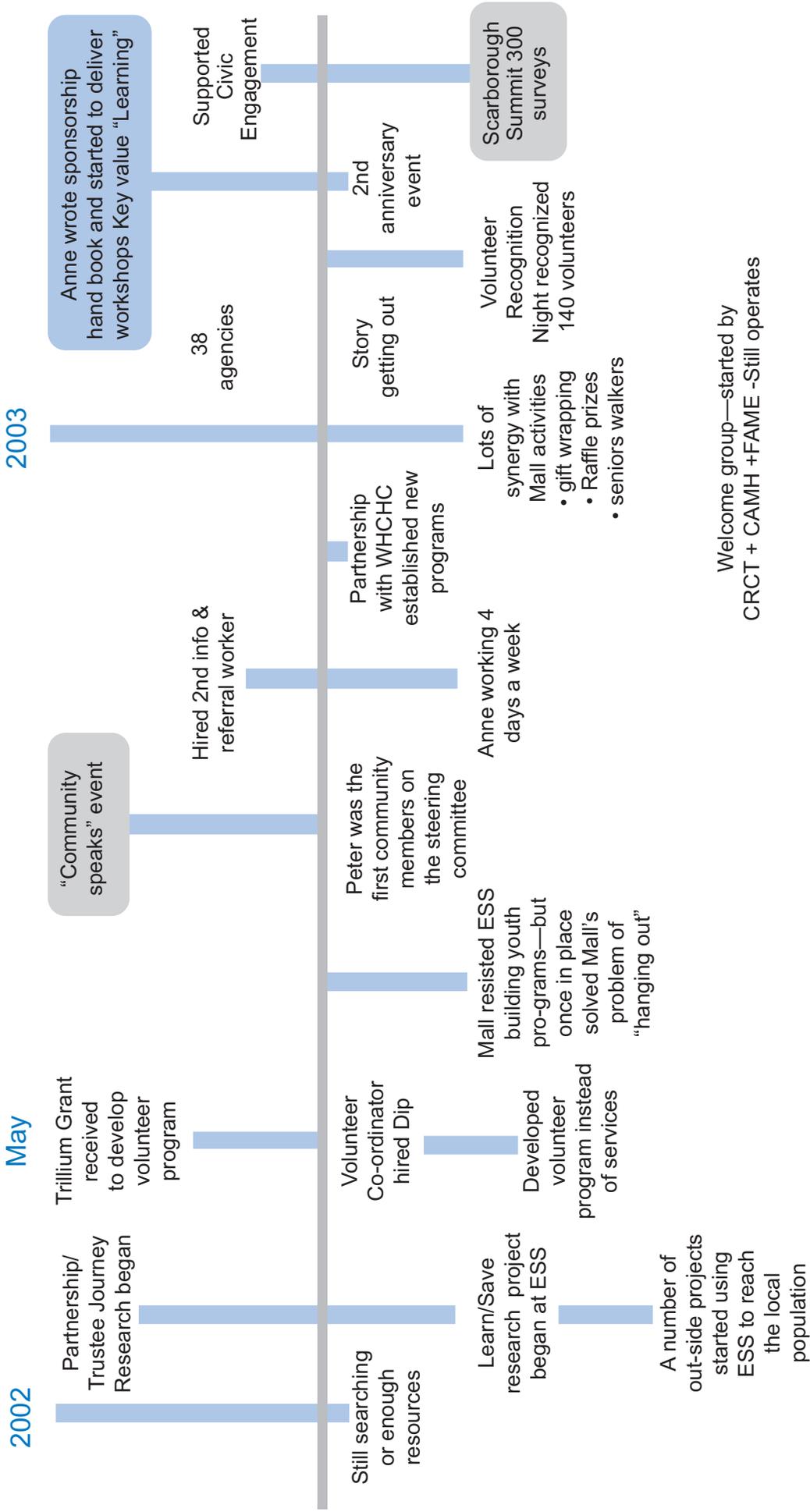


The Middle Years

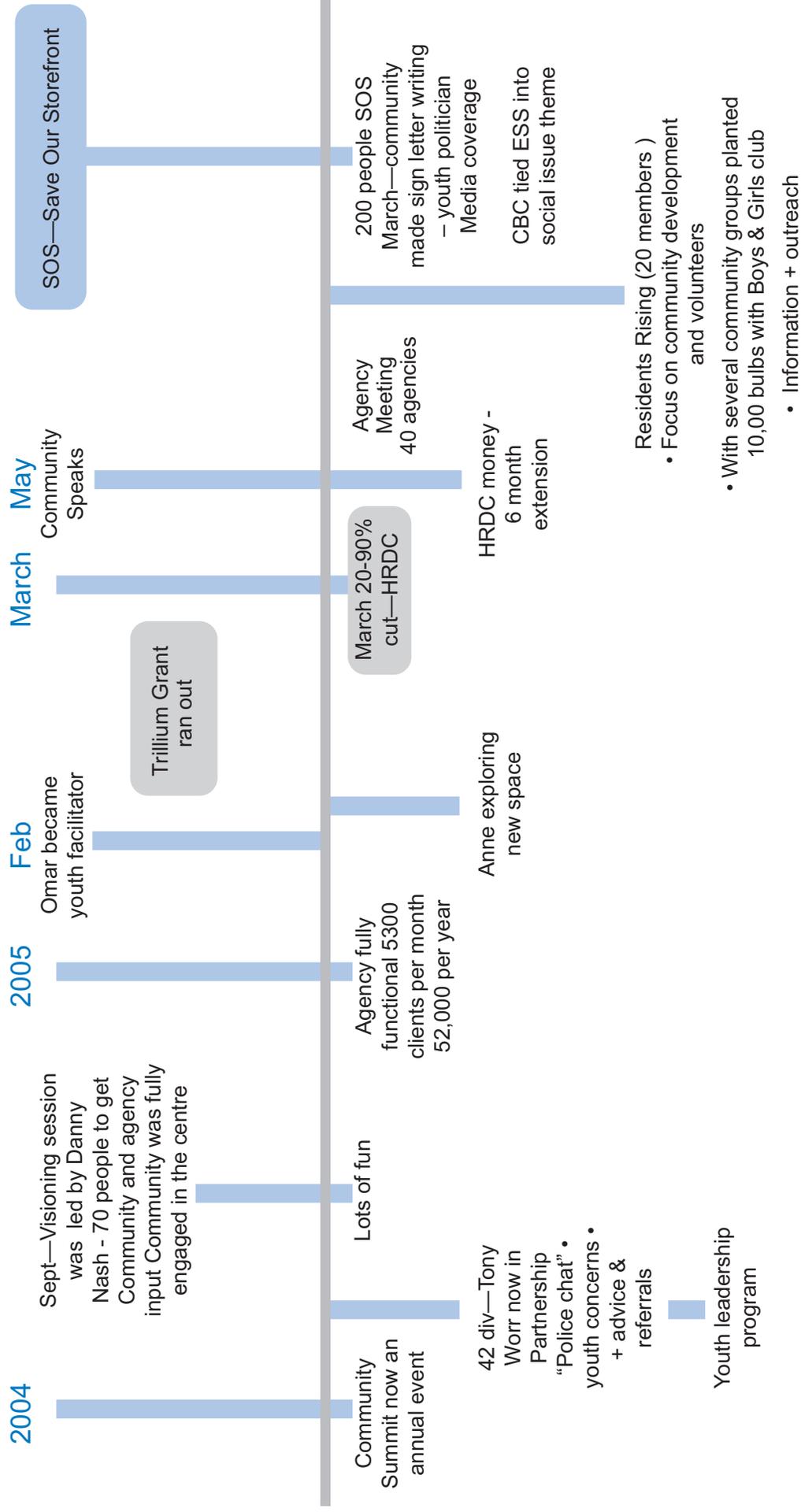
Adolescence



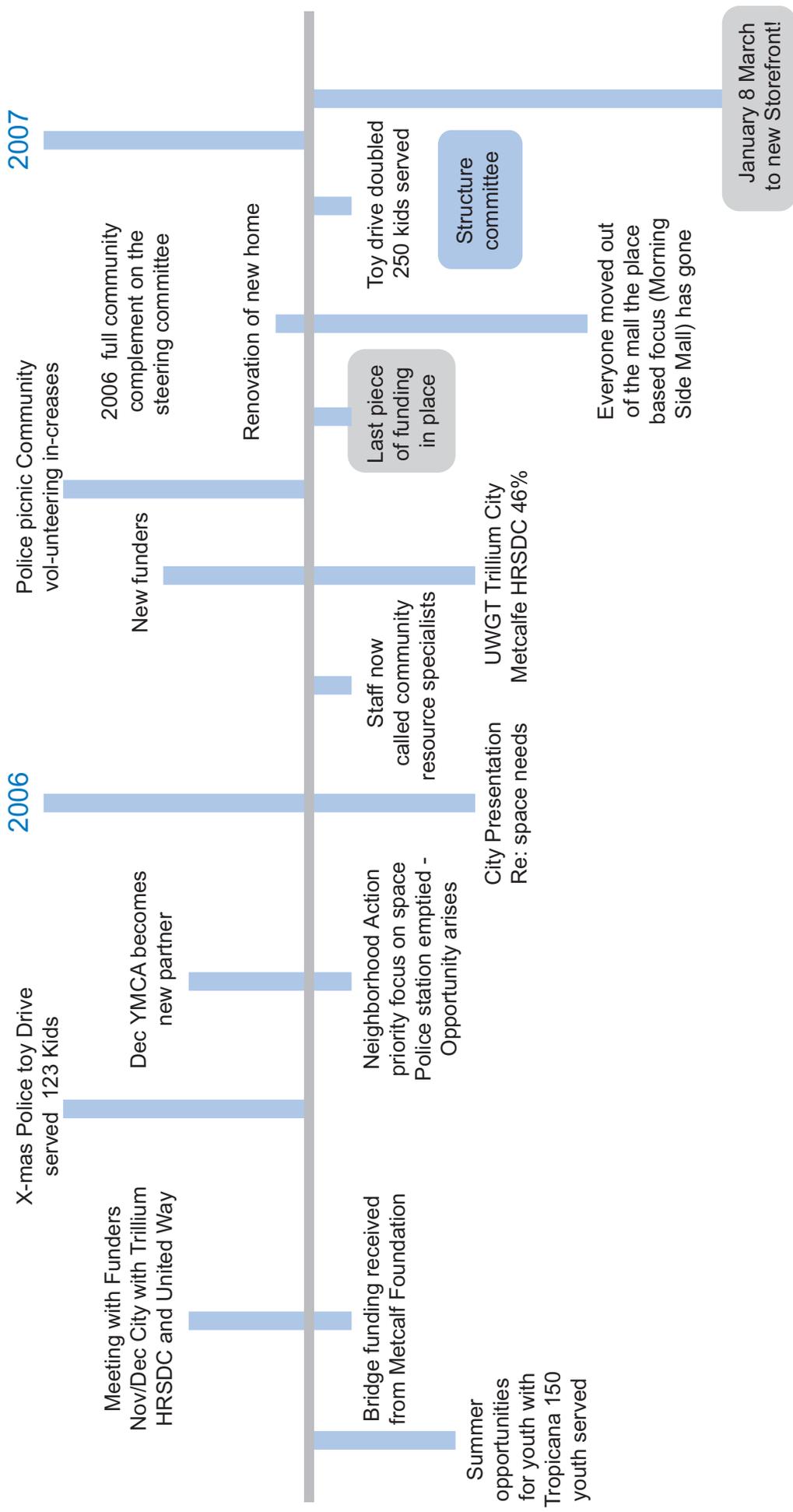
Adolescence continued



Adulthood and Year from Hell



Found our Voice



Re-Visioning Project with the Korean Interagency Network

By Joan Roberts

Rationale and Purpose of the Project:¹

The Canadian Korean community in Toronto is over 44 years old. It numbers nearly 100,000 persons and continues to grow, as a result of new births and ongoing immigration from Korea. This growth creates a more critical mass in terms of influence, as well as new challenges. Today, second generation Korean-Canadians are assuming more prominent roles socially and economically.

As growth continues, the community must try to meet the needs of newcomers, youth, and earlier migrants who are now seniors. It was in response to this reality that the Korean Interagency Network (KIN) was formed in 1998. KIN's mission is to co-ordinate the services, programs and resources of agencies in the Korean-Canadian (KC) community and in the mainstream, providing leadership to identify and meet the needs of the K-C community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). KIN member agencies work cooperatively to support this mission, through regular cross-agency meetings to share information and discuss strategies for improving service delivery; participation in advocacy; and the production of an information booklet (in Korean and English) about services available to the K-C community. The member agencies have also hosted 4 health and social service fairs (KIN EXPO). Their website even illustrates this collaborative history through the display of a photo from the Korean Central Daily of April 4th 2002, showing members at an event to Support Medicare.

KIN consists of 14 agencies, and a few independent persons, who, combined, have been providing ethno-cultural services to this diverse community since 1998. Of these 15 agencies, only 7 are ethno-specific agencies (serving only the Korean community), with only 1 considered stable with core funding, while the rest rely on sporadic project funding and volunteers to deliver services. The other agencies are considered mainstream and provide ethno-cultural services to the Korean community.

Given the increasingly complex needs of this expanding community, KIN finds that it requires better integration, organization, and judicious access to social service resources. As such, KIN's desire to coordinate services, programs and resources of its member agencies is consistent with the aims of the Wellesley Institute's Collaboration Project, which explores inter-organizational collaboration among health and social service providers in Toronto.

¹This paper is meant to be read in tandem with the workshop designs and workbooks included as appendices to this report.

PROJECT RESEARCH PARTNER:

The Wellesley Institute (WI) is the rebirth of the former Wellesley Central Hospital. Its new mandate is to improve the health of urban communities specifically. During the past five years, WI has remained true to this mandate by developing a community-based research curriculum to transfer learning and skills to community members and non profit organizations, in order to help them to participate in community based research projects more effectively. Recently WI has broadened its mandate to advance urban health concerns at a national level, through our community based research, capacity building and public policy activities.

Working with KIN to build its network capacity presented a good opportunity for the WI to test the design and development of our educational and facilitation process tool, while at the same time strengthening the already existing internal collaboration desired by KIN members, as well as providing an opportunity to engage in a collective learning process. Working with the WI project provided KIN an opportunity to engage in the collective learning of the project, and enhance badly needed capacity in their network.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT:

- To identify unique characteristics of network-type organizations, in order to increase the understanding of what is necessary for KIN to build a trans-organizational system successfully.
- To build the capacity of this Network to adapt to current challenges, and explore opportunities for closer collaboration among members of the network.
- To develop a common vision for the network, which may include a collaborative service delivery system for the Korean-Canadian community.
- To document the learning from this process.
- To share insights generated by this process in the Wellesley Institute Interagency Service Collaboration Project Report.
- To refine an educational and process tool that can be used by groups of agencies (networks) to develop service collaborations.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES /SCOPE OF WORK:

1. Introductory meeting, including contract agreement, and brief group visioning exercise.
2. How to Think Like a System workshop, to enable systems analysis capacity.
3. Revisioning KIN workshop, including: identifying strengths/vulnerabilities/opportunities; identifying critical issues; conducting an environmental scan; setting goals; and creating an action plan.

METHODOLOGY / APPROACH TO THE WORK:

The methodology used, action research (AR), is a qualitative research methodology that combines both action and research to generate social change in real time with a group of participants. It is an iterative process that alternates between action and critical reflection, creating a seamless process in which participants learn together about the environment and the need for change, through exploring possibilities and developing action plans in a collective conversation. This entire process is participatory, and data collected during each facilitated session is used to inform the design of subsequent events.

ORGANIZATION MEMBERS OF THE KOREAN INTERAGENCY NETWORK:

- Catholic Community Services of York Region
- For You Telecare Family Service
- Hong Fook Mental Health Association
- KCWA Family and Social Services
- Korean Canadian Cultural Association
- Korean Canadian Physically Challenged Adult Community
- Korean Personal Support Worker Association
- Korean Senior Citizens Society of Toronto
- Nanoom Mission Centre
- Rainbow Information & Social Services
- Settlement Workers in Schools
- Toronto Public Health
- Toronto Police Service
- Y.M.C.A. Korean Community Services
- Mid Toronto Community Services
- Canadian Mental Health Association

February 7, 2007 (15:00-15:45) Contracting Meeting:

OBJECTIVES OF THIS MEETING INCLUDED:

- To contract with KIN members to engage in the Wellesley Institute's Interagency Services Collaboration Project
- To provide a short experience of an experiential, vision exercise to build enthusiasm and energy for the project

10 people from KIN attended the initial contracting meeting held on February 26, 2007. After conducting an initial facilitator introduction, WI brochures and a draft copy of the Project Agreement were circulated to serve as background info for the meeting.

The draft project agreement was then presented, reviewed and accepted. After vetting the project agreement, a brief visioning exercise was performed, in which small groups of participants were to write up a brief news story, such as might appear in a future issue of the local Korean paper. It was to reflect an ideal vision of the Korean community and KIN's (anticipated) accomplishments in the non-profit service sector three years on.

SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM THIS FIRST MEETING:

Although it was agreed that English was to be the working language of this project, language proved to be a bit of a barrier; many participants did not speak English fluently, and the few younger participants who did, were not necessarily fluent in Korean. Also, many people didn't know each other previously, making cooperation a bit awkward. As such, the visioning exercise could not be thoroughly completed, and its content ideas were limited to facilitating increased services and better leadership in the Korean-Canadian community. Also, many people remained distracted during the 45 minutes, with cell phones, and coming and going from the room. This delay was the result of a pre-existing heavy agenda of events already scheduled by KIN. Upon review of this report, KIN members feel that an interpreter should have been provided, that they did not fully understand the project proposal and felt there were comprehension problems throughout the project.

June 26, 2007 (15:00-18:00)

Thinking like a SystemWorkshop

RELATED APPENDICES:

- KIN Appendix 1 – June Meeting – How to Think Like a System WORKSHOP DESIGN
- KIN Appendix 2 – June Meeting – How to Think Like a System WORKBOOK

OBJECTIVES OF THIS MEETING INCLUDED:

- creating a safe space for mutual sharing and learning
- building a foundation of trust for further collaborative work
- building awareness of systems
- facilitating a desire to work together

INTRODUCTIONS, CHECK-IN, AND HOPES & FEARS EXERCISE

After participant and facilitator introductions, they were asked to explore what their hopes and fears were about moving forward. Very little emerged in the way of fears or apprehension; but below are the hopes and aspirations (most likely indicative of an early stage of group development) which participants articulated.

- Build more of an organization
- Define common goals
- Develop common agenda and work on goals
- Create a stronger partnership, i.e. by team building, and by increasing trust and equitable decision-making
- Improve communication capacity
- Schedule more regular meetings
- Increase participation
- Clarify roles
- Seek more consistency in attendance
- Increase leadership capacity to address lack of cooperation and initiate more activity

ICEBREAKER: BALLOON BOP

In this icebreaker, participants circled up and, with strict constraints, had to keep a balloon aloft between themselves for two minutes. This allowed them to experience and reflect on whether the group acted successfully as a system, how emotions affected the dynamics, whether a sense of shared purpose was evident, and what factors interfered with systemic functioning. The group only kept the balloon aloft for 45 seconds. But due to an intense expressed need to "keep it," "learn from mistakes," and "overcome challenges," they insisted on having another try. The second time, they lasted much longer and felt they had performed more successfully. Afterwards, participants observed that people were in a hurry, and that some did not manage their anxiety effectively. Other members shared their realization that they have to take responsibility to help the group succeed, and that when they don't perform, the group may not either.

A discussion ensued around the topic that systems are composed of human beings and that humans are not machines but have feelings and need to feel comfortable in the group. To think like a system means one looks at the world in terms of relationships and the needs and behaviour of human beings. Keeping a focus on the needs of its members as people -- not just organizations, -- was something to be mindful of as KIN moves forward.

INTRODUCTION TO SYSTEMS THINKING EXERCISE

Participants were asked in small groups to think of an example of a system from their professional or personal experience and, using a flip chart, describe it in short sentences or bullet points, and create a diagram. Systems they chose to illustrate include:

- The KIN organization
- The human digestive system
- The health care system
- The Korean community in Canada
- The recycling system in Toronto
- Society

After reconvening as a large group, they were asked to use the workbook to compare textual and graphic representations of their system, considering factors such as clearly identifiable purpose, comprehensiveness of their illustrated example, boundaries, usefulness as a communication tool, how it might be improved, and how it might help illustrate dynamics of other systems. Their participation and responses indicated that they understood the concept of systems well.

GROUP SYSTEMS EXERCISE

Due to time constraints that emerged, we were unable to do this exercise.

SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS EXERCISE

Participants in small groups were asked to list on flip charts 5-7 characteristics of their home organization, including its function, mission, organizational culture characteristics, size, etc., as a way to produce word pictures or organizational bio's of their respective home organizations. (Note: not all KIN member organizations were present this day). Each group then reported back to the larger group, and clarified information by answering questions. Most of the groups were unable to complete the exercise fully, largely because of language barriers. Therefore, their reports back to the group lacked a lot of requested detail, especially around the task of identifying organizational cultural traits distinctly their own, and contrasting & comparing that with other member organizations. But the characteristics which each group did provide are illustrative and are detailed below. Notably though, two similarities, or recurring themes across all organizations, did emerge in the form of abiding anxieties over the sustainability of their respective enterprises, and – related to this – equitable access to public resources.

KOREAN SENIOR CITIZENS SOCIETY OF TORONTO (KSCST)

According to its members, this organization is comprised entirely of ethnic Korean seniors, both men and women, almost all of whom communicate primarily in Korean. They work to increase access to social services for Korean seniors, and to continually expand their membership base (currently 1,000 out of a potential 10,000 eligible seniors). Services and programs offered are seen as a "total care system," and range from assistance with light daily tasks to heavier (more physical) tasks, as well as events to cultivate physical, mental and intellectual health, and creative pursuits.

KOREAN CANADIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (KCWA) FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

This non-profit community-based organization was established in 1985, with a mission to assist Korean women in difficulty (i.e. family problems, domestic violence), and help Korean newcomers resettle. They believe everyone should have equitable access to services, job opportunities, education, and health care, etc. Governance is in both English and Korean, by volunteer board members recruited from different sectors of the community, and elected by the broader general membership (which is also responsible for development and approval of Constitution and

Bylaws). Their programs are oriented toward family counseling, settlement services (i.e. job search, citizenship training), and education (in such areas as breast cancer awareness, Korean culture and language, food adaptation skills, and multiculturalism). In this, they maintain a "culturally and linguistically appropriate" style of service delivery, that is, mainly in the Korean language but also providing services in English. They are largely funded by government grants as well as monies raised in the Korean-Canadian community and mainstream society.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES OF YORK REGION (CCSYR)

CCSYR member representatives noted that they value multiculturalism, with services available in 40 languages, and are committed to respecting all religions and cultures. Their programs include immigration and settlement and Focus on the Father, which are offered at locations in Thornhill, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, and Markham. Their substantial cumulative institutional skills include expertise in teaching, law, social work/counseling, academic research, and government policy.

FOR YOU TELECARE FAMILY SERVICE (FUTFS)

This organization, according to its members, offers programs in many areas including: family counseling; youth counseling & workshops; seniors' counseling; women's counseling; telephone counseling; and a regular health fair. They also offer many programs, services and events oriented specifically toward youth, such as: youth nights; youth days; volunteer training; Habitat for Humanity involvement; youth retreats; web design seminars; a youth solidarity collective; and various other workshops. Some of the challenges they say they face involve staff shortages, budget shortfalls, difficulty managing so many programs, all combining into overall sustainability issues.

HONG FOOK MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION (HFMHA)

The representatives of Hong Fook celebrated the organization's Silver Jubilee (25th) anniversary in 2007. They see themselves as flexible and proactive, and as a leader in "culturally competent" mental health care. Their motto is: "mental health for all." They maintain strong relationships with stakeholders, and are the only mental health organization dedicated to serving six East and Southeast Asian communities in Toronto. They offer a broad continuum of services, from prevention through treatment, and value principles such as community empowerment, capacity building, and holistic health.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A NEW SYSTEM EXERCISE

Due to time constraints that emerged, we were unable to do this exercise.

PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATIONS OF WORKSHOP

WHAT WORKED?

- *The way of speaker's presentation is very interesting and fun. I had a chance to think about system of KIN & our main agency.*
- *I understand what system is. Collaboration is very important because when we do collaboration we know about each other and get better purpose.*
- *It was simple and clear. A lot of frontline workers (most of KIN) don't have opportunity to think at system level so good chance to reflect on system factors/variables. Interaction + opportunity for each person to speak*
- *It was very well organized and planned.*
- *"System" presentation.*
- *I've learned about "importance of conversation".*
- *I have an opportunity to think of KIN.*

WHAT DIDN'T?

- *KIN members who left early! / lack of participation.*
- *It would be better if we started earlier and had more time to finish.*
- *Not enough time to discuss details about KIN Expo 2007.*
- *I can't see any specific plan. We can make it next time.*

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

- *More parts & share information.*
- *I hope that at the all-day training, we can go in-depth to get to the roots of existing tensions, issues among KIN members.*
- *More activities (small group and whole group).*
- *Need more time, a day training workshop, etc.*
- *We could meet more often.*

CHECK-OUT

As a group and as individuals, participants shared insights about challenges and benefits of working like a system, as well as other insights gained from the workshop. The date was also set for next workshop session.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

- Older people are more used to rote learning and authoritarian forms of leadership.
- One member wondered how he would learn in such an environment, but in the end he really enjoyed the experiential exercises.
- People enjoyed getting to know each other and their agencies.
- People were able to network more effectively than before.
- There was consensus about the need for better team building.
- A generational gap was very apparent.
- Analyzing these problems was more challenging than they expected.
- Many barriers need to be addressed to move forward, requiring a lot of patience.
- They learned quickly as a group, and have developed a better understanding of divergent needs and agendas within KIN.
- At closing, the chairperson (a senior) noted how wonderful it was to see younger people participating.

FACILITATOR OBSERVATIONS

Organization and punctuality were difficult at this meeting (late arrivals meant a 30-minute delay in starting, as the mid-town location had parking difficulties; the bare-bones room was without flip charts or refreshments; and no staff person was available to help resolve these problems). Also, group members decided ad hoc to have an earlier finish time (due to child care issues), and arrived and left at staggered times throughout, attending to cell calls, etc. Plus, many members seem to take on too much responsibility individually. Firmer time-boundaries and more systematic planning and responsibility-sharing are needed.

July 25, 2007 (9:00-17:00)

Revisoning Workshop

RELATED APPENDICES:

- KIN Appendix 3 – July Meeting – Revisoning KIN WORKSHOP DESIGN
- KIN Appendix 4 – July Meeting – Revisoning KIN WORKBOOK

OBJECTIVES OF THIS MEETING INCLUDED:

- To build capacity
- To build trust among members
- To lead participants through an adaptive planning process – scanning their environment, prioritizing collective issues, and creating action plans
- To help KIN operate as a coordinated system, rather than as a collection of autonomous organizations

AGENDA:

- Environmental Scan
- SWOT Exercise
- Identify Critical Issues & Tentative Future Goals
- Force Field Analysis
- Action Plan with Concrete, Measurable Goals

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN EXERCISE

The group brainstorm about the context or environment in which KIN operates revealed many concerns, ranging from macro/systemic issues to more localized community issues, especially relevant to migrants. Overall, concerns related to issues such as:

- violence & security
- environment & energy
- the economy & employment difficulties
- political priorities & values affecting health & education services

- social tensions & inequality, i.e. barriers to migrants' advancement & integration
- external pressures & pull-factors (cultural & economic) on family, religious & gender traditions, and on individual value choices & priorities related to generation clashes, language barriers, domestic violence, seniors' isolation
- competition, disorganization & lack of professionalism in the service sector

STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES/OPPORTUNITIES/THREATS (SWOT) EXERCISE

SWOT brainstorming about KIN revealed the following perceptions.

- **Strengths:** group cohesion & common goals; sizeable, talented population with cumulative experience & skills; confidence, enthusiasm, independence & endurance.
- **Weaknesses:** language & generation gaps; reluctance to admit mistakes; communication, trust & participation problems; self isolation from cultural mainstream; lack of professionalization.
- **Opportunities:** expanding number of immigrants/potential members-clients; interested pool of youth; potential support from Korean churches and other organizations; networking with other ethnic populations; need for family counseling services; possible collaborations with mainstream agencies & cooperation between Korean agencies; potential to become more politicized; possible discovery of more public funding sources.
- **Potential threats:** stress of urban survival; weakened traditional values; community indifference; language barriers; technology; lack of funding; bureaucracy; conservatism; resource competition; duplication; mainstream Korean workers.

CRITICAL ISSUES EXERCISE

The group then identified six key issues (see below) as presently being critical to the success of KIN, and for each identified a set of necessary goals.

1. Language, age, culture barriers
2. Lack of professional development & organization
3. Lack of community support
4. Lack of accountability
5. Duplication of services
6. Lack of participation and commitment

Through a voting process (a technique called dotmocracy where each participant voted with a certain number of stickers), these six issues were further reduced to the three MOST critical issues that group members felt must be addressed immediately.

1. Accountability
2. Participation/commitment
3. Professional development & better organization

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS EXERCISE

The group then analyzed systemic forces in the broader environment that might work for or against their accomplishing the group's stated top three objectives; that is, facilitating and hindering forces. For the most part, the plus side of this equation synthesized the strengths and opportunities factors from the SWOT analysis above, while the minus side synthesized the weaknesses and threats factors. Aside from those already identified then, additional "for" and "against" forces here included the following:

Forces for accountability:

- Established organization, relationships & skills
- Common worldview
- Agreement on goals & the need for improvement

Forces against accountability:

- Personal issues (self interest, old baggage, divisive alliances)
- Little sense of accountability, avoidance of responsibility, high turnover
- Low awareness of/respect for rules, lack of transparency
- No conflict resolution strategies & structures, no clear authority structure.

Forces for participation/commitment:

- Existing policies & long term goals
- Incentives & recognition
- Ability to structure meetings & responsibilities
- Interesting activities

Forces against participation/commitment:

- Scheduling conflicts
- Geographically dispersed membership
- Divisive personal issues
- Accumulated inertia (lack of motivation/interest)
- Lack of productive results from past meetings

Forces for professional development & better organization:

- Funding opportunities
- Innovation, commitment, sense of ownership
- Ability to work methodically
- Simple vision & objectives
- Leadership & teamwork skills

Forces against professional development & better organization:

- Diverse vision, needs, interests
- Lack of time & money
- Language barriers
- Competing ideas & goals
- Impatience, seeking quick results over long term sustainability

ACTION PLAN WITH MEASURABLE GOALS

Finally, after considering forces working for and against their objectives, the group identified specific, realistic goals they could pursue toward their top 3 critical priorities.

1. Accountability – Goals

- Establish incentives & rewards for participation; expand membership
- Regularly review KIN policies & agreements; clarify roles & responsibilities
- Record minutes faithfully & report to members a.s.a.p. about results of meetings
- Standardize decision-making; highlight respect & human rights; enforce rules
- Maintain ongoing discussion among members & improve interpersonal relations
- Establish conflict resolution measures, including:
 - Learn from past & current disputes; regularly conduct self-surveys & "trust-building" sessions to identify needs and improve trust & respect
 - Establish clear accountability policy & enforcement mechanisms; maybe enlist help of objective outsiders; reward successful conflict resolutions
 - Develop role for KIN as inter-agency advocate/mediator

2. Participation/Commitment – Goals

- Carry out decisions & plans w/out delay; visibly increase benefits of participation
- Clearly identify what resources each member organization can contribute
- Establish guest speaker series & develop professional invitation letter; identify topics of interest that are clearly beneficial & educational for members
- Facilitate ongoing training & education, including system-level, common issues, not only smaller organizational issues
- Develop lobbying, advocacy & fundraising capacity

3. Professional Development & Organization – Goals

- Work with professional trainer on communication, management, conflict & other skills
- Identify clear roles and assign specific responsibilities (e.g. communications & marketing; lobbying; outreach; training; administration; needs assessment; coordinating volunteers)
- Develop & enforce policies; incorporate & apply for charitable status; apply for funding
- Complete a needs assessment to identify service gaps; create sustainable referral service
- Study public policies affecting Koreans; develop working relationships with government
- Create better partnerships between member agencies & establish closer relations with mainstream organizations & society
- Get youth (1.5 generation) more involved in KIN (valuable resource)
- Investigate problem of stigma for Korean clients

WRAP-UP

As the workshop wound down, members made concrete personal commitments to various tasks relating to priorities we had established, as illustrated by the following statements:

- I will come to meetings
- I will design and put up the website
- I will make sure the youth voice is heard
- I will help the chairperson make things happen
- I will help make it more fun and enjoyable
- I will make sure people are involved and participate

IN SUMMARY, THE MOST FREQUENTLY RECURRING ISSUES INCLUDED:

- Infighting & alliances between members over resources
- Age/language/culture gaps between members (i.e. different generations)
- Lack of organization, professionalism, accountability, clear directionLack of member involvement/commitment
- Low profile in the Korean community and in Toronto
- Eroding social supports for Korean families
- Duplication of available services
- Sense of stigma that prevents some Koreans from accessing social services

FACILITATOR OBSERVATIONS

The group's energy was high in comparison to earlier meetings. Several women arrived extra early with food & refreshments; most participants contributed more to the discussions. Punctuality and full attendance were still problems. Because of late arrivals, the session didn't start until 9:30 and distractions were plentiful throughout the day, with half of the participants leaving before the end.

Also, noticeable generational tensions surfaced. Some youth seemed frustrated; older people recognized the split, but this generation gap was not addressed in a direct or sustained manner. Triangulation was also happening as people complained about others. Demographically, more than half of the participants were 40 years old or older, with a few youth and a few seniors on either end; most were women, with only three men present. Tensions over changing gender roles were also apparent at times between the young women and the senior women, while the men seemed disengaged from the issue.

Most in attendance were paid community workers. Duplication of services was not addressed, as the group decided to focus on building the capacity of KIN in areas such as organizational standards, communication, consistency, accountability, transparency, and team building. Also, at one and the same time, members seemed to desire a more developed organizational structure (re: accountability), as well as a more sociable, inviting atmosphere (re: participation).

Overall, there was genuine interest and commitment among all present. They were a personable, hospitable group who interacted easily. They all were engaged with the process, and seemed enthused and committed to it, interacting well with each other, and appearing candid. Those who were left at the end of the day seemed satisfied they had accomplished something worthwhile, and left looking and sounding encouraged, enthusiastic, and committed.

KEY FINDINGS:

Participant turnover and lack of time discipline are not only characteristic of this group but also problematic with the participants of the Wellesley Institute's training programs. Staff time in non-profit organizations is prioritized towards the administration and securing of funding and program delivery; other contributing factors include the need for staff to go to off-site locations for the meetings, as well as irregular workdays and part time work. When a meeting is focused on routine business, late arrivals do not create much of an issue; but when the meeting is a facilitated process designed to build a good group dynamic and reach consensus on critical organizational issues, the late arrivals of people disrupt the design and impede the ability of the facilitator to achieve desired objectives. Full participation is critical to decision-making when participants value egalitarian power sharing among members and need to have members' input and opinions put forward to make effective and lasting decisions. If participation is withheld, the sustainability of the project/group is at risk.

Individual participation in the KIN project events was inconsistent, presenting a good example of the way participant turnover in a multi-event process stymies good group process and trust. As the intervener, I expected by the third session a good group dynamic would have developed with all the participants feeling included in the group and a minimum level of trust developed among participants in order to be ready to address difficult issues. However, with new participants, the group goes back to ground zero in terms of the stages of group development. So even when expert facilitation is provided in an inter-organizational developmental process, many factors present themselves that detract from the conditions necessary to achieving desired process objectives. In their defense, KIN members feel that I did not fully inform them of the need for consistent participation and of the difference in types of meetings.

How to Think Like A System was a mixed-methods workshop including both training and facilitation exercises. Even though the design had to be truncated because of the time issues discussed above, it met the overall purpose and objectives of helping participants think systemically and learn about the elements that make up an effective system including common purpose, communication, and boundaries.

Motivation to collaborate emerged as a critical element in the KIN process too. When participants were engaged in the systems characteristic exercise, anxiety emerged over the sustainability of their organizations and concern over their community's equitable access to public resources – clearly these issues were their motivation to continue in the process. It is interesting to note that the mainstream and larger organizations that are members of KIN did not participate in the project. This may lead one to assume that they do not share the same issues that motivated the participants and it is probably not in their self-interest to participate to the same extent as the smaller agencies. One can safely assume from the data that the smaller, less stable organizations in KIN see partnership processes as ways to enlarge their existing resources or build the support for enhanced funding.

One of the most interesting learnings from these sessions was the way the group collectively prioritized their critical organizational and individual capacity issues. The issues they prioritized were all organizational and individual capacity issues. Although duplication of services was identified as one of their six critical issues, they collectively agreed that they needed skills, capacity, and mutual trust before addressing systemic issues as defined by their top 3 issues:

1. Accountability
2. Participation/commitment
3. Professional development & better organization

By observing the decisions made through the process, we learned that this group chose to build the internal organizational capacity of KIN before attempting system planning.

Conclusion

Through this project, we learned about the unique characteristics of networked-type organizations, their issues and motivation, and the need for the resources and capacity to increase effective collaboration. Barriers to effective process intervention in the NPO sector arose, including time pressures, participant turnover, and the lack of funding that could permit consistent participation from member organizations.

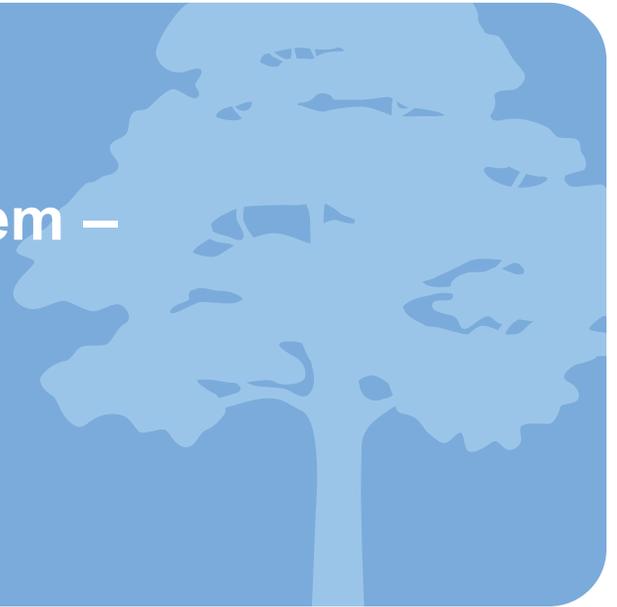
Through the preparatory stages of this project, a vision process tool was developed that others can use. The tool consists of three elements -- contracting, training, and facilitation, all of which are designed to instill the skills needed to work in interagency collaboration and build capacity as a trans-organizational system².

As the project consisted only of the process intervention, the future will hold the answer to whether the Korean Interagency Network now has the capacity and motivation to implement the plan developed through the project

²Trans-organizations systems (TS): a technical term to describe supra-systems that consist of separate autonomous organizations that span organizational boundaries.

How to think like a system – workshop design

By Joan Roberts



WELLESLEY INSTITUTE
advancing urban health

Workshop Design

OBJECTIVES OF THE HALF-DAY EVENT: HOW TO THINK LIKE A SYSTEM:

- Build a foundation of trust for further work
- Create a safe space for mutual sharing and learning
- Build system awareness and the desire to work together

<p>CHECK IN- BALLOON BOP 3:00-3:30 PM</p>	<p>To transition into the space</p> <p>To understand the impact of systems issues on teamwork.</p>	<p>Name and organization:</p> <p>How are you feeling? What is the most important thing to remember as KIN moves forward?</p> <p>Introduction:</p> <p>To think like a system means we look at the world in terms of relationships and integration. When systems are composed of human individuals then the system is intrinsically dynamic and not rigidly structured due to the nature of human behaviour.</p> <p>Balloon Bop: (10 minutes)</p> <p>The purpose of this exercise is to see the impact of EI and systems issues on teamwork.</p> <p>Participants are in a circle and must pass the balloon to each other in order, keeping a balloon in the air for two minutes in total, following these rules:</p> <p>The balloon can't touch the floor.</p>
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		<p>The balloon can't go over the head of the tallest person.</p> <p>Participants can only touch the balloon once in the go- round.</p> <p>If any of these rules are broken, the clock stops. Or, rather than stop the clock, impose a penalty for breaking the rules.</p> <p>Debrief: (15 minutes)</p> <p>What happened in that exercise?</p> <p>Was the group a system? Did it have the components of a system?</p> <p>What emotions played apart in system operations?</p> <p>What was its purpose?</p> <p>Was it a successful system?</p> <p>If not, why?</p> <p>What were the events that prevented the system purpose from happening.</p> <p><i>(Points typically mentioned include: people being in a hurry, not able to manage their anxiety effectively, and people failures due to problems in the system.)</i></p>
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<p>3:30- 4:10</p>	<p>Introduction to Systems Thinking</p> <p>To be able to define a "system."</p> <p>To be able to describe the main characteristics of a system.</p>	<p>Small Group Activity 1: (30-40 minutes)</p> <p>Think of something that you have heard described as a "system." This can be something from everyday life or your professional life. If nothing comes to mind, think of this course. Using flip chart paper, describe this system in words or bullet points. Use one page for this. (10 min.)</p>
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Now the small groups are to draw a diagram of the system you have described. (10-15 min.)

Large group discussion:

Using the diagrams developed in the small groups, pose the following questions on page 5 of the workbook:

Looking at your text and the diagram. Try to identify any information that is present in the text and not in the diagram, or that is in the diagram and not in the text.

If you wanted to describe your system to others, would you show them the text or the diagram?

What role do boundaries play in your diagram?

Do you think your system has a purpose? Can you define what this is? Write this purpose down as the title of your diagram.

How do the system players obtain information about the effectiveness of their work? Can you show this in your diagram?

Look at the diagram of simple system on page 8 and use these terms to explain what is going on in your system picture.

Can you improve your diagram by adding any of these characteristics we just talked about? Try to do this now. Don't worry if your diagram is getting a little untidy.

What can this model contribute to your understanding of the organization you work in?

<p>4:10-5:00 PM</p>	<p>Group Systems Exercise</p> <p>Understand what it feels like to experience change in a human system.</p>	<p>Group Activity: [10 minutes.]</p> <p>Everyone stands up and forms a large circle.</p> <p>Ask each person to eyeball 2 other people in the room. Choose 2 people whose position in the room could form an isosceles triangle with you as one end of the triangle. (You might want to demonstrate this in case there are some people who don't know what an isosceles triangle is.) Now, one person takes a step. The other two people as points on the triangle must maintain the isosceles triangle but move too. Now we are all free to move but we must maintain our original isosceles triangle using those same 2 people as coordinates of an isosceles triangle.</p> <p>Movement can continue for 5 -10 minutes.</p> <p>Cease movement.</p> <p>Group Debrief: (20 minutes)</p> <p>What happened when you chose to move?</p> <p>What did you observe when others chose to move?</p> <p>Did you make assumptions about what was happening?</p> <p>How did you feel when the shape changed?</p> <p>What did you relate the experience to?</p> <p>What is the learning you can transfer back to your workplace?</p>
<p>5:00-5:20</p>	<p>Break</p>	

<p>5:30-6:00 PM</p>	<p>System characteristics</p>	<p>Mission statement-sharing. Identifying differences and similarities. Categorizing them.</p> <p>Ask participants to list about 5-7 characteristics in bullet point form about their home organization on flip chart paper and to include what they do, their mission, characteristics of organization culture, size etc.</p> <p>Ask each group to report out and ask the group for clarifying questions.</p> <p>Summarize by saying these are word pictures of the organizations that belong to KIN.</p>
<p>6:00-6:30 PM</p>	<p>Characteristics of a new system</p>	<p>Split the group into two groups and ask them to use these similarities and differences to prioritize what they would like to see in a new combined system. Write up the characteristics into a statement of some sort.</p> <p>Debrief:</p> <p>Is there anything additional you would like to include that does not exist in any of the originating systems?</p> <p>Is there anyone not here who should be in the system planning event to make these characteristics happen?</p>
<p>6:30- 6:50</p>	<p>Closure and evaluation</p>	<p>Brainstorm Benefits and challenges of working like a system, if time permits</p> <p>Toss the balloon to each participant and ask what is the key learning they are taking from the workshop.</p> <p>Negotiate the date of the all-day session. Ask them to fill out the evaluation form.</p>

How to Think Like a System Workshop Handbook

For the Korean Interagency Network - June 26, 2007

By Joan Roberts

Introduction to Systems Thinking:

1. WHAT ARE SYSTEMS?

When using the term system in the context of people and organizations, a system is considered a group of purposeful people. Organizations, governments, and families are all systems. However, crowds or audiences are not, as they do not work together on a common cause. Systems have a history, a character, and distinctive competencies.

LEARNING ACTIVITY:

Think of something that you have heard described as a "system." This can be something from everyday life, or something from your professional life (if nothing comes to mind, think of this course). Using flip chart paper or the page below, describe this system in words or bullet points. Use one page for this. This should take about 5 minutes

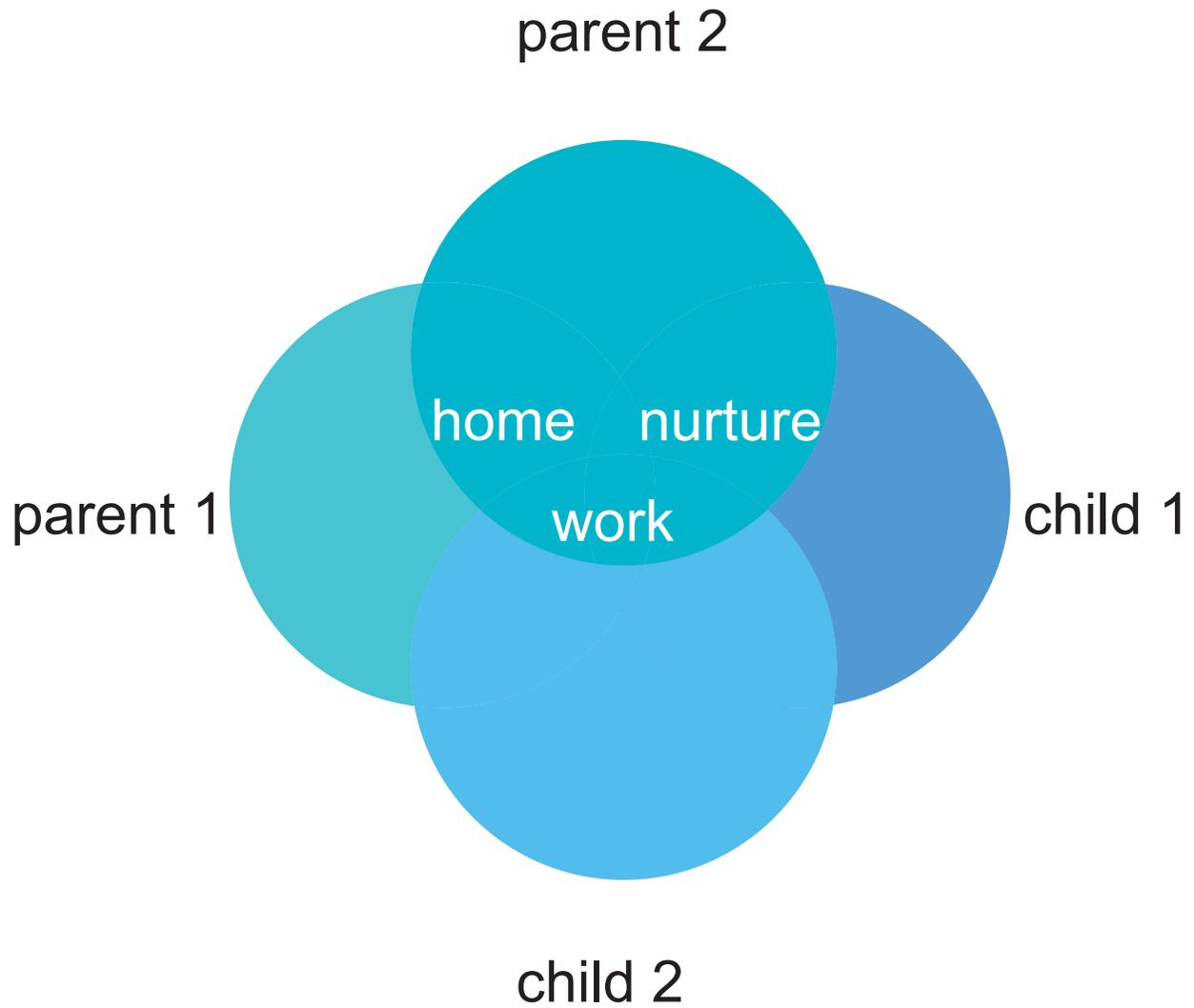
Now draw a diagram of the system you have described; take another 10-15 minutes for this part of the activity.

For example:

A family:

- is an economic unit
- is a place to have and raise children
- is more than one person
- can cross generational lines
- can be related by blood but doesn't have to be
- creates a home for itself
- supports its members

DIAGRAM OF A FAMILY SYSTEM:



YOUR DIAGRAM:

ACTIVITY CONTINUED:

Looking at your text and the diagram, try to identify any information that is present in the text and not in the diagram, or that is in the diagram and not in the text.

- If you wanted to describe your system to others, which would you show them - the text or the diagram?
- What role do boundaries play in your diagram?
- How do the system players obtain information about the effectiveness of their work?
Can you show this in your diagram?
- Look at the diagram of simple system and use these terms to explain what is going on in your system picture.
- How can the learning about boundaries and feedback that we did in our last session enhance our knowledge of how systems work?
- What can this model contribute to your understanding of the organization you work in? How about the sector?

SYSTEM DIAGRAM:

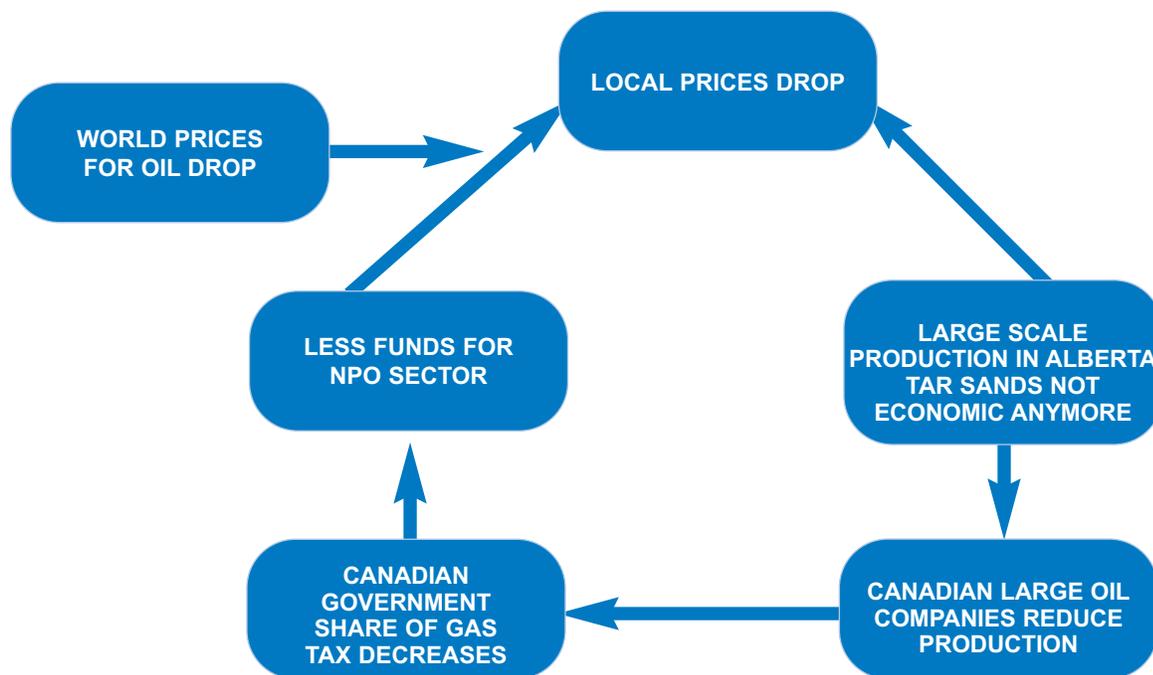
A system is:

Input-process-output, with a feedback loop and a boundary.



Everything, from atoms, to people, to organizations, to nations, to the Universe, operates as a system. Things go in, things are transformed, and things come out. Feedback is generated. Feedback is used. Boundaries define, differentiate, and connect/interface.

EXAMPLE OF FEEDBACK TO A SYSTEM



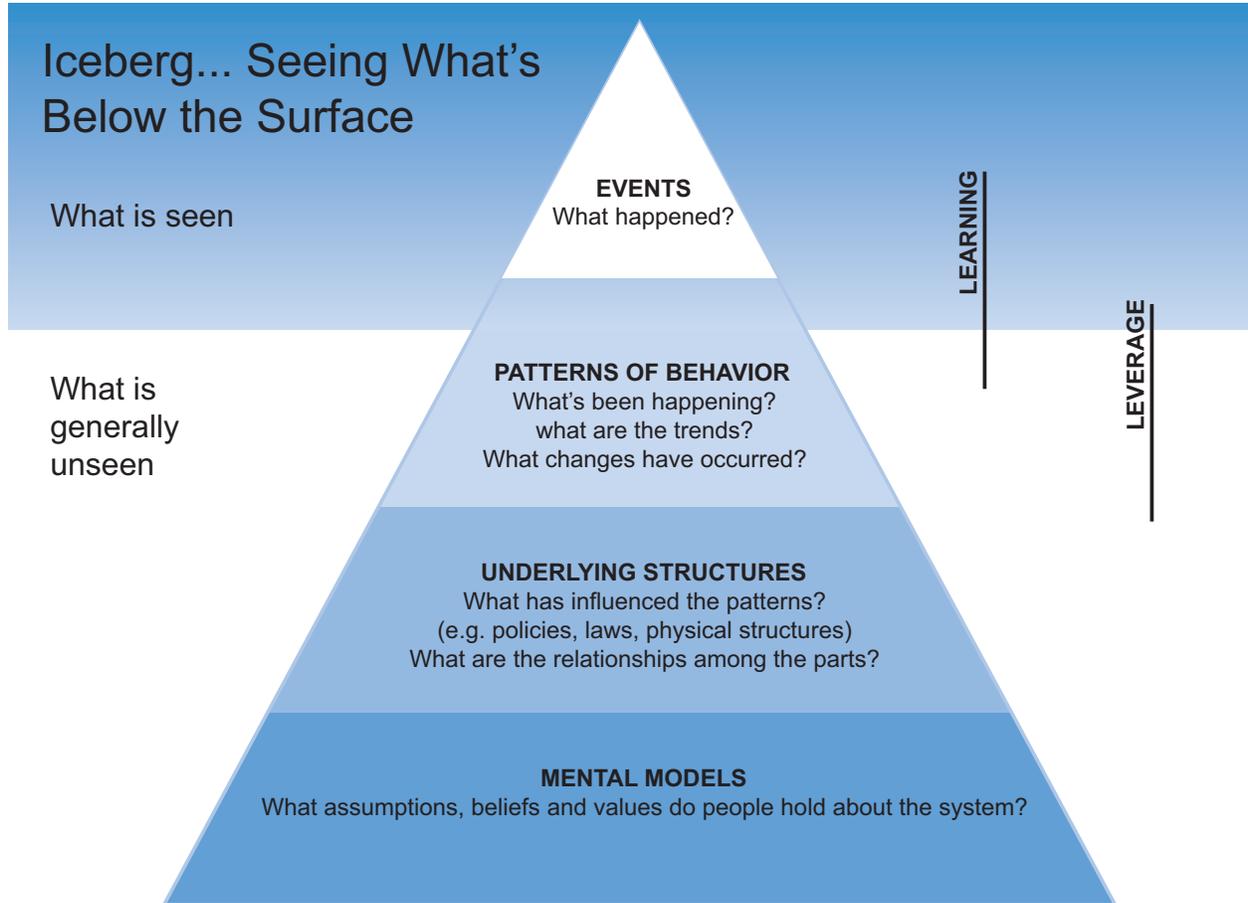
SYSTEMS THINKING IS A TOOL TO EXPLORE WHAT'S BELOW THE SURFACE!

If you were close to an iceberg in a boat, you would notice only the ice above the water. Unknowingly you could miss the tons of ice underneath the water line and run aground.



This is a photomontage created by Uwe Kils of what a whole iceberg might look like. It can be downloaded from www.biologydaily.com/biology/Iceberg.

Systems thinking helps to explore what is lurking below the surface of an issue or problem.



Adapted by Waters Foundation, CFSD from Innovation Associates Inc. 2/99

EVALUATION OF TODAY'S EVENT:

What worked for you?

What didn't?

What could be improved?

KIN Planning Workshop Design

By Joan Roberts

Re-visioning KIN Event at the Wellesley Institute

JULY 25 DETAILED DESIGN

9:00 - 4:30/5:00

OBJECTIVES OF THE EVENT

- To build capacity
- To build trust
- To lead the participants through an adaptive planning process – scanning their environment, prioritizing collective issues, and creating action plans
- To get them to work like a system rather than a collection of autonomous organizations

Materials:

<p>9:00</p>	<p>Welcome to the WI. Remarks re bathrooms, turning off cell phones, timing of breaks, lunch, water</p> <p>Icebreaker and introductions</p> <p>What is the one item in the front of your mind as we start this retreat?</p>	<p>30 MINUTES</p>
<p>9:00</p>	<p>Environmental scan -- a brainstorm with the large group. Instruct the group to answer the following questions:</p> <p>What is happening in the environment of the KIN in Toronto that they need to respond to? What are the significant changes in the NPO world that have occurred in the last 3-5 years? Review rules of brainstorming in workbook.</p>	<p>45 MINUTES</p> <p><i>Review system in environment info in workbook</i></p>

<p>10:15</p>	<p>SWOT exercise -- review the model in the workbook</p> <p>Use the data gathered in the environmental scan and the data from the system thinking event to fill in the blanks of the SWOT on flip chart paper. (30 min)</p> <p>Once all the groups have completed their SWOTS, have them report out. (15 min)</p>	
<p>11:00</p>	<p>Break</p>	<p>20 MINUTES</p>
<p>11:15</p>	<p>Identifying critical issues exercise and prioritizing.</p> <p>Review the criteria for a critical issue in workbook and on a separate paper.</p> <p>Ask them to scan the data from the SWOTs and select critical issues. If data is related to the external environment of KIN, determine if it is a priority using the loose-leaf sheets. If it is related to KIN's capacity, then use the list in the workbook. (30 min)</p> <p>Ask each group to report out to the large group the critical issues they agreed KIN needs to address. (15 min)</p>	<p>45 MINUTES</p>
<p>12:00</p>	<p>Noon</p>	
<p>1:00</p>	<p>Vision -- Desirable, Achievable Future Goal Setting</p> <p>Small group work</p> <p>Brainstorm goals or objectives that can address the agreed priority issues. They do not have to be sequential or in order of priority. (30 min)</p> <p>Trainer to integrate all the identified goals and choose the top 3. (30 min)</p>	

<p>2:00</p>	<p>Introduce Force Field Analysis Tool</p> <p>The group is to identify barriers to the goals agreed to above: Pose these questions to prime the thinking pump:</p> <p>How realistic are these priorities, given available resources?</p> <p>What potential consequences do these priorities have for your home organizations?</p> <p>What are the consequences of not implementing these priorities?</p> <p>What would the relationships among system members look like in a re-visioned system?</p>	
<p>2:45</p>	<p>Break</p>	
<p>3:00</p>	<p>Action plans with Measurable Goals</p> <p>Assign one goal to each group. Ask participants to self-select into the small groups associated with each goal and ask them to plan for the 3 goals using action planning sheets.</p> <p>Have the small groups report out and integrate the suggestions. If needed, set up a small group to do further integration.</p>	
<p>4:00</p>	<p>Closing go-around:</p> <p>To what extent are you committed to making KIN work? What will you commit to doing to ensure the 3 plans happen?</p> <p>Fill out evaluation.</p> <p>Next steps for this project</p> <p>Write up the plans from today, then a full report.</p>	

Re-visioning KIN

Planning Day For the Korean Interagency Network as part of
the WI's Interagency Service Collaboration Project

By Joan Roberts

Agenda

1. Opening exercise
2. Environmental scan
3. SWOT
4. Identifying critical issues
5. Lunch
6. Future goal setting
7. Force Field Analysis
8. Action plans with Measurable Goals
9. Wrap up and evaluation

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to the Wellesley Institute for this last session in the Re-visioning KIN project. Today we will spend the day engaging in what process people call a whole systems change exercise. We spent the last session laying the groundwork to gain a better understanding of systems and the system you are building. We have gathered as many members of KIN as could join us. By bringing everyone together in the same room at the same time we will engage in a learning process and conversation to find out where we can agree to go together as KIN in the future.

ACTIVITY: ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING

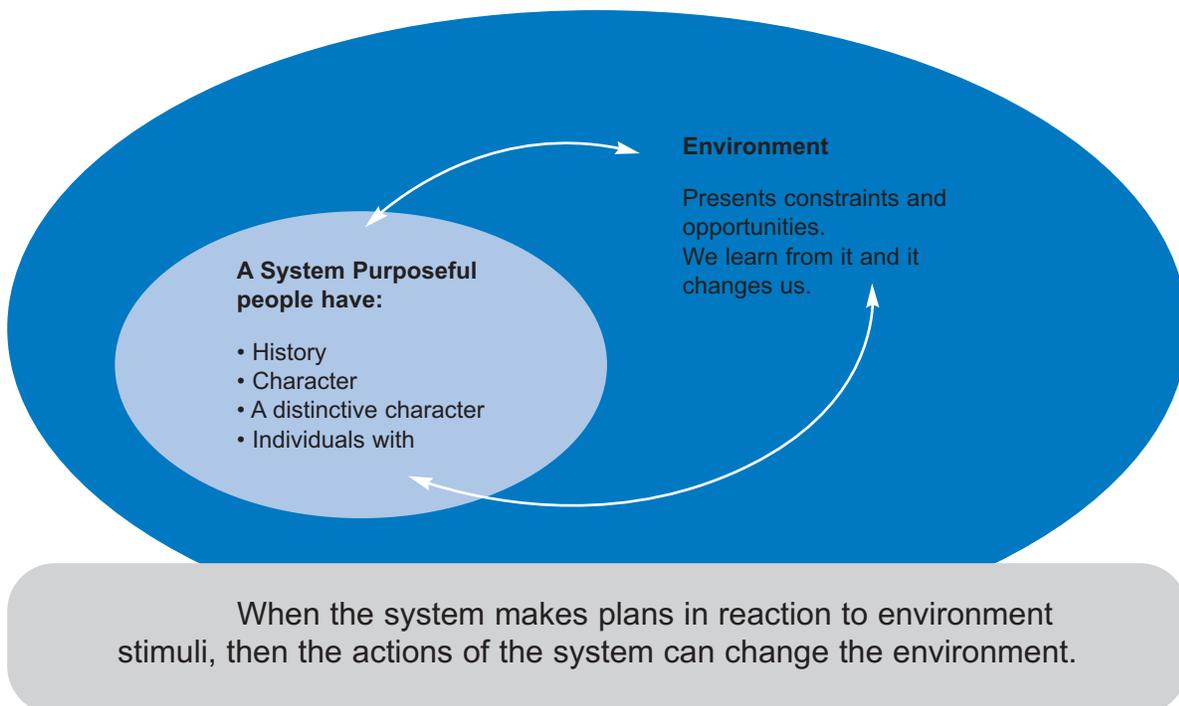
Systems are situated in an environment and must adapt to the changes in that environment. Environmental change is almost always the stimulus for systemic change. Because of changes in our environment, we look for opportunities to change the system to adapt to those external changes. If we don't adapt we may become irrelevant.

MANAGING UP AND DOWN:

In non-profit organizations, managers spend as much time managing up into the environment as down into the service delivery. This environmental management is part of the interdependency between non-profit organizations and the larger political system.

When the system makes plans in reaction to environmental stimuli, then the actions of the system can change the environment.

SYSTEM IN ENVIRONMENT



ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING TOOL:

A scan is a conscious action of identifying trends and emerging developments. Trend scanning can be as informal as a group exercise (as in our session) or as formal as a well-funded trend monitoring system, with an ongoing network of people, a wide range of information resources, and regular publications.

It is best to do environmental scanning frequently on a weekly or daily basis as an individual leader to provide yourself with a “future radar” that constantly functions to identify emerging threats and opportunities.

Typical scan questions:

- Who else is doing what we do?
- How are others doing what we do?
- What is happening in all levels of government with the issues that affect our client group?
- What are the government’s priorities in terms of social policy generally and in our sector?
- How does the government view the non-profit sector?
- What new legislation might affect our work or our client group?
- Is there competition with what we do?
- Can we find a cheaper supplier?
- What new technology is on the horizon that might affect the work we do?
- What is happening with respect to labour relations in our sector, in general?
- Does our workforce have the skills and competencies to deliver the new programming needed?

BRAINSTORMING PRINCIPLES AND RULES

POSTPONE AND WITHHOLD YOUR JUDGMENT OF IDEAS.

- Do not pass judgment on ideas until the completion of the brainstorming session. Do not suggest that an idea will not work or that it has bad side-effects. All ideas are potentially good, so do not judge them until afterwards. Avoid discussing ideas, which includes not criticizing and not complimenting ideas.
- Ideas should be put forward both as solutions and also as a basis to spark off solutions. Even seemingly foolish ideas can spark off better ones. Therefore do not judge the ideas until after the brainstorming process.
- Note down all ideas. There is no such thing as a bad idea.
- Evaluation of ideas takes up valuable brain power which should be devoted to the creation of ideas.
- Maximize your brainstorming session by spending time only on generating new ideas.

ENCOURAGE WILD AND EXAGGERATED IDEAS

It is much easier to tame a wild idea than it is to think of an immediately valid one in the first place. The wilder the idea the better. Shout out bizarre and unworkable ideas to see what they spark off. No idea is too ridiculous. State any outlandish ideas. Exaggerate ideas to the extreme.

Use creative thinking techniques and tools to start your thinking from a fresh direction. Use specialist software such as Innovation Toolbox to stimulate new ideas more easily.

QUANTITY COUNTS AT THIS STAGE, NOT QUALITY.

The more creative ideas a person or a group has to choose from, the better. If the number of ideas at the end of the session is very large, there is a greater chance of finding a really good idea. Keep each idea short, do not describe it in detail - just capture the essence of the idea. Brief clarifications can be requested. Think fast, reflect later.

Go for quantity of ideas at this point; narrow down the list later. All activities should be geared towards extracting as many ideas as possible in a given period.

BUILD ON THE IDEAS PUT FORWARD BY OTHERS

Build and expand on the ideas of others. Try and add extra thoughts to each idea. Use other people's ideas as inspiration for your own. Creative people are also good listeners. Combine several of the suggested ideas to explore new possibilities.

It is just as valuable to be able to adapt and improve other people's ideas as it is to generate the initial idea that sets off new trains of thought.

EVERY PERSON AND EVERY IDEA HAS EQUAL WORTH

Every person has a valid view point and a unique perspective on the situation and solution. We want to know yours. In a brainstorming session you can always put forward ideas purely to spark off other people and not just as a final solution. Please participate, even if you need to write your ideas on a piece of paper and hand it out. Encourage participation from everyone.

Each idea presented belongs to the group, not to the person stating it. It is the group's responsibility and an indication of its ability to brainstorm if all participants feel able to contribute freely and confidently.

Please visit www.brainstorming.co.uk, internet and computer resources for creativity and brainstorming. ©1999 Infinite Innovations Ltd. All rights reserved.

Downloaded July 23, 2007 <http://www.brainstorming.co.uk/documents/brainstormingrules.pdf>

ACTIVITY: SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis is a framework for analyzing your strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats your system faces. It combines environmental and system scanning. The data gathered under the strengths and weakness is an internal organizational scan and the data gathered under opportunities and threats is related to the organization's external environment.

The tool can help you to focus on your strengths, minimize weaknesses, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities available.

SWOT ANALYSIS

INTERNAL FOCUS

Strengths:

- What advantages do you have?
- What do you do well?
- What relevant resources do you have access to?
- What do other people see as your strengths?

Weaknesses:

- What could you improve?
- What do you do badly?
- What should you avoid?

EXTERNAL FOCUS

Opportunities:

- Where are the good opportunities facing you?
- What are the interesting trends you are aware of?
- Useful opportunities can come from such things as:
 - Changes in technology and markets on both a broad and narrow scale
 - Changes in government policy related to your field
 - Changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc.
- Local Events

Threats:

- What obstacles do you face?
- What is your competition doing?
- Are the required specifications for your job, products or services changing?
- Is changing technology threatening your position?
- Do you have bad debt or cash-flow problems?
- Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your business?

The following is data we have collected about the organization (KIN) that you use for the SWOT exercise. Feel free to bring in other data too.

HOPES AND FEARS FROM HOW TO THINK LIKE A SYSTEM WORKSHOP:

- Build more of an organization
- Define common goals
- Need to develop common agenda and work on goals
- Need to create a stronger partnership, increase equitable decision-making, increase trust, improve team building
- Improve communication
- Include more regular meetings
- Increase participation
- Clarify roles
- Seek more consistency in attendance
- Increase leadership to address lack of cooperation and create more action process

DATA FROM SYSTEMS EXERCISE RE CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTNERS:

CHARACTERISTICS OF: KOREAN COMMUNITY AT LARGE

1. Relatively recent immigrant community compared with some others
2. The second generation is taking over more and more in many areas, socially and economically
3. Immigration from Korea is continuing, enlarging the community, bringing more power or importance in the host country but more problems too
4. There is a need for more organized and cohesive help from various social service organizations, based on need assessment

KOREAN SENIOR CITIZENS SOCIETY OF TORONTO (KSCST)

1. All Koreans (visitors, permanent citizens)
2. Language (almost 99% Korean)
3. Members (men & women, over age 60)
4. Services (Total Care System)
 - Paper work (Mental Doing)
 - Social Services (Physical Doing)
5. Program (Health, Intellectual Activities, Talents, Sports...)



UNDER THE SURFACE OF THE ICEBERG:

1. How can we invite others [non-members] to join KSCST (GTA=10,000, KSCST=1,000)?
2. How can we provide facilities (place, program, volunteers...)?
3. How can we make fundraising more effective?
4. Not enough staff.
5. Election of board members by seniors only at General Mtg.

KCWA FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES:

Established in 1985. The Mission is to help women who are having difficulties such as family problems, to help newcomers, and to help immigrants settle down.

- Program:**
1. Family counseling
 2. Settlement program
 3. Education

1. Board members are not to be counselors.
2. Settlement issues – job opportunities, citizenship training
3. Education – breast cancer, RSHC, Korean language classes, cooking classes, cultural society, multicultural issues, introduction to other cultures.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES OF YORK REGION:

1. Multiculturalism
 - [services available in]40 languages
2. Various Programs
 - ISAP/SEPYR/JSW
 - HOST/SHIFT
 - Focus on Father

3. Different Locations

- Thornhill, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Markham

4. Diverse work experience among members

- teaching, law, social work/counseling, academic research, government policy

5. Respect for all religions & cultures

FOR YOU TELECARE FAMILY SERVICES (FUTFS):

- Family counseling
- Youth counseling & workshops
- Seniors' counseling
- Women's counseling
- Telephone counseling service
- FUTFS has a number of different Youth Programs:
 - Youth Night
 - Youth Day
 - Volunteer Training
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Youth Retreat
 - Web Design Seminar
 - Youth Solidarity Collective
 - Various workshops
- Health Fair
- Not enough staff
- Facing challenges such as
 - sustainability
 - budget
 - Too many programs

KCWA FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES:

CHARACTERISTICS

- 1) **Main Mission:** Settlement services and family services for newly arrived immigrants, mainly from Korea
- 2) **Method of service delivery:** Culturally and linguistically appropriate ways. Delivery of service mainly in Korean

- 3) **Governing body:** Volunteer board (members recruited from different sectors of the community), elected by general members Governance – English and Korean Constitution and By-laws developed and approved by General Membership meeting
- 4) **Resources:** Government grants and funds raised from the community (Korean & mainstream)
- 5) **Status:** Non-profit community based organization
- 6) **Philosophy:** Equity – equal access to services and opportunities for jobs, education and health, etc.

HONG FOOK MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION:

- Continuum of services (from prevention to treatment)
- Only mental health organization providing care for 6 East + Southeast communities
- Guiding principles of empowerment, community capacity building, holistic health
- 2007 marks the association's Silver Jubilee
- Strong relations with its stakeholders
- Motto: "Mental health for all"
- In the forefront as a provider of culturally competent care
- Flexible + proactive to change

CENTRE FOR INFO & COMMUNITY SERVICES CICS:

- settlement-related services/programs
- cultural diversity
- middle-sized agency (approx. 100 staff)
- well-structured, reflecting staff feedback
- future-oriented
- serving Scarborough & North York areas
- growth in programs & staff size
- open communication
- people-oriented
- Motto: "Serve for a better future"

Recurring theme: Sustainability; equitable access to resources

Activity: Creating the Action Plan

ACTIVITY: IDENTIFYING CRITICAL ISSUES EXERCISE AND PRIORITIZING

WHAT IS A CRITICAL ISSUE?

A critical issue is one that meets most or all of the following criteria:

Is related to a core problem and

- affects the lives of a significant number of people either directly or indirectly
- can be addressed through the competencies and resources of the organization or project
- needs to be addressed if the organization or project is to be able to progress in its work
- builds on the strengths of the organization or project and/or the opportunities available to it
- addresses weaknesses in the organization and/or assists the organization to deal with threats to its work or existence.

To proceed with our visioning process, it would now be useful for you to identify the critical issues that must be addressed by the end of the process. These issues can be external or internal, or concern the way KIN organizes itself or its work.

PRIORITIZING

Prioritize the external issues by answering the following questions:

- Which of these must we deal with within the next six months if our work is to progress effectively?
- Which of these should be dealt with within the next year to ensure the long-term ability of the organization or project to survive and do its work?
- Which of these should probably be dealt with in order to improve our working environment?

Adapted from the Strategic Planning Toolkit by Janet Shapiro from the Civicus website
<http://www.civicus.org/new/default.asp>

PRIORITIZE THE PROBLEM ISSUES BY ASKING THESE QUESTIONS:

- What are we best qualified to offer in order to address the problems identified?
- Is anyone else already doing what we can do? If so, do we have anything to add?
- In the areas where we are qualified, where can we make the most significant difference? (Where will we have the most leverage)?
- What are the pros and cons of intervening in this way?
- Will this make the best use of the resources we have available? Is it worth the opportunity cost?

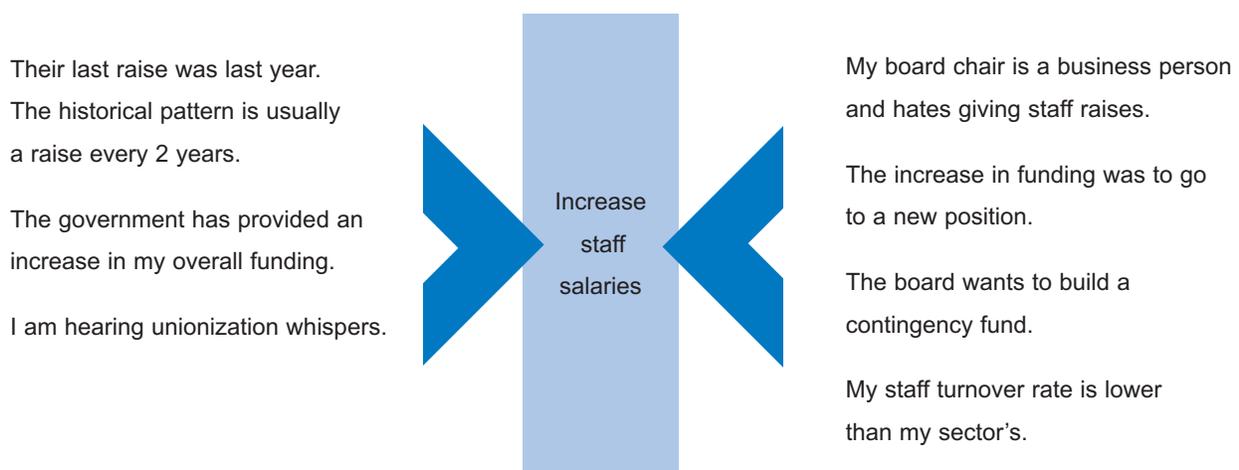
ACTIVITY: CREATING THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW VISION

A TOOL TO UNDERSTAND BARRIERS AND OBSTACLES: THE FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

The Force Field Analysis is a useful technique for looking at all the forces for and against a decision, or for planning how to implement a decision once it has been made. In effect, it is a specialized method of weighing pros and cons. And by carrying out the analysis you can plan to strengthen the forces supporting a decision, and reduce the impact of opposition to it.

For example, if you are a manager deciding whether to give your staff a raise you might draw up a force field analysis like the one below.

ISSUE: INCREASE STAFF SALARIES



Once you have carried out an analysis, you can decide whether your project/cause is viable. In the example above, you might initially question whether it is worth going ahead with the raise.

Where you have already decided to carry out a project, a Force Field Analysis can help you to work out how to improve its probability of success.

Here you have two choices:

- To reduce the strength of the forces opposing a project, or
- To increase the forces pushing a project

Often the most elegant solution is the first: just trying to force change through may cause its own problems.

People can be uncooperative if change is forced on them.

If you had to implement the project in the example above, the analysis might suggest a number of interventions:

- Find out if staff are unhappy about their salaries, or are there other issues that are leading to the unionization whispers.
- Keep scanning to see what other organizations are posting in terms of job opportunities for your staff.
- Have an off-the-record discussion with your funder about possible sources of funding for a wage increase.
- Start preparing your chair and your board for the eventual salary increase discussion.
- Build into next year's budget room for salary increases.

KEY POINTS:

The Force Field Analysis is a useful technique for looking at all the forces for and against a plan. It helps you to weigh the importance of these factors and decide whether a plan is worth implementing. Where you have decided to carry out a plan, Force Field Analysis helps you identify changes that you could make to improve it.

Consider the leverage points!

Researchers in systems thinking speak about leverage points -- those small, well-focused actions that can, when used at the right time and in the right place, produce significant, lasting benefits exponentially beyond the effort required to take the action step itself.

What are the benefits of leverage points?

- Will often increase your chances of success.
- You can stimulate a change process easily or more quickly.
- Change often happens more easily at the margins of a system.
- Using others' learning and experiences may be a leverage point by implementing best practice techniques.

Use the force field analysis tool to identify and explore the barriers to the goals identified in the last exercise.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

AN ACTION PLANNING WORKSHEET

What are the barriers, obstacles, and challenges that might emerge in trying to reach our goal?

What steps must now be taken to overcome the obstacles and reach our goal?

If action is required, who will assume responsibility?

What would be some evidence that we are making progress toward the goal -- a milestone?

How might we celebrate upon reaching a milestone?

RE-VISIONING KIN WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Your response will assist us in improving the package for future delivery.

Was the workshop of benefit to you? Why?

What aspect of the workshop did you find the most useful?

What improvements do you suggest?

Glossary of Terms



ALLIANCES (ALSO, STRATEGIC ALLIANCES)

Non-profit alliances involve sharing knowledge, expertise, and innovation between organizations in the areas of services and solutions to social problems. Oriented toward common social goals, alliances involve shared/common strategic objectives (such as expanding clientele or reducing risk and costs), as well as a focus on achieving policy objectives through advocacy. In contrast to what occurs in the business sector, non-profit alliances seldom involve transfer of liquid or capital assets between organizations; however, they may develop a formalized structure depending on their function. This term is used interchangeably with partnerships and coalitions.

COALITIONS

Coalitions facilitate control over a common environment by coordinating information and actions. Minimally structured, these impermanent affiliations among organizations are mainly organized around common terms of reference or decision-making protocols. While a coalition may reflect established business or political interests, most often it is oriented toward advocacy in the public interest, especially favoured by health-promoters to achieve community-level interventions in such areas as social marketing or advocacy campaigns. In advocacy circles, a coalition forgoes a vision development process in favour of one that facilitates agreement on larger strategic objectives. This term is used interchangeably with alliances and partnerships.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration is a distinct form of cooperation between autonomous, self-governing organizations who work together in order to achieve a common goal. For this purpose, the non-profit entities come together to enhance service delivery, often prioritizing ideal practices such as decentralization and egalitarianism. This type of collaboration consists of well-defined and mutually beneficial relationships, common agendas, visions and program functions.

It involves jointly developed structures and processes for sharing resources, risk, responsibility, mutual authority, accountability, and rewards, creating a trans-organizational system (TS). Collaborations are found in areas such as planning, delivery, intake and assessment, monitoring, referrals, case coordination, back office functions, etc.

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

CCIs facilitate the engagement of diverse sectors to work collaboratively over the long term in order to tackle a wide range of interrelated issues. They encourage partnering and collaborative work, including alliances among disciplines, sectors, and community members that impact whole systems to effect neighborhood and city-wide change processes, often undertaking whole community or inter-sectoral strategic planning.

CONVENER

The role of the convener in a collaborative process is to bring all legitimate stakeholders to the table. The power to convene may be derived from the holding of a formal office, through a long standing trustworthy reputation, or from a reputation as an unbiased expert on the problem. The convener role requires both the legitimate demonstration of this authority to organize the domain and the ability to induce people to participate fully.

CONSOLIDATION

Consolidation involves the merging and amalgamation of formerly autonomous organizations to form a distinctly new entity comprised of all combined resources. Consolidation differs from partnership, alliances and collaborations in that it eliminates governance structures of previously autonomous organizations.

CONSORTIUM

A term borrowed from the business sector, consortiums allow for mutually beneficial sharing of diverse skills, capabilities, and knowledge among several independent entities (individuals, organizations, governments) that agree to undertake joint work together toward a common goal. Member organizations remain autonomous, with consortium control limited to specific joint activities, while the rights and obligations of each member are clearly delineated. A consortium may be a temporary arrangement, but is usually a more permanent collaborative arrangement.

CO-OPETITION

A type of collaboration (cooperation) between competing enterprises, who consult and coordinate with each other to maximize benefits and minimize risk in a common market. In the business sector, cartels are examples of companies working together in order to limit fair competition (e.g. Apple and Microsoft building closer ties on software development). NPOs may also cooperate in this way to specialize service delivery to a common clientele in order to minimize duplication. One example is the disability sector in Toronto coming together to create a joint recruitment campaign for workers.

INTER-ORGANIZATION

Inter-organization refers to the linkages in relationships and processes that exist between and across organizations, tying them together – as opposed to relationships and processes within an organization (intra-organization). Examples of inter-organizational ties include partnerships, coalitions and alliances.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information Technology (IT) is a field concerned with the study, design, development, implementation, support and management of computer-based information systems – especially software applications and computer hardware. Overall, IT involves electronics, computers, and software programs to store, convert, protect, process, mine, transmit and retrieve information in secure and sustainable ways.

JOINT VENTURES

Essentially, a Joint Venture (JV) is a new entity (trans-organization system) formed between two or more parties to undertake project activity together. These parties agree to jointly contribute resources, and share revenues, expenses, and control, throughout the duration of one specific project only, or as an ongoing relationship. This is in contrast to a strategic alliance, which involves no equity stake by the participants, and is a much less rigid arrangement. JVs may also involve multiple stakeholders and types of stakeholders, and may involve international partners. They are always formalized through contractual agreements, often becoming a corporation (non-profit or for-profit), a company, or other legal structure (depending on tax and liability considerations).

MANAGEMENT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Management Service Organizations (MSOs) are private and non-profit organizations that provide operational support to non-profit organizations. Sometimes the service is funded by a funder or a foundation, and provides management and/or consulting services to their clientele. In the area of membership associations, MSOs handle the administrative tasks necessary for the functioning of a membership association, including the provision of office space, staffing, financial and information-management services.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROCESSES

Multi-stakeholder processes refer to the nature of a collaborative process rather than a type of collaboration. For instance, a multi-stakeholder process can be considered an alliance, coalition, consortium, joint venture, network, or partnership, consisting of many parties who share similar interests and objectives, and work together to create a mutually beneficial alignment of system components. Also, members usually share equal decision-making power, except when applied by a government for policy consultation purposes that involve input and recommendations only. This process is often used with public interest issues such as health or environment (e.g. public consultations about Medicare).

NETWORK (SEE ALSO SOCIAL NETWORK)

This concept usually refers to the structure created by processes such as social networking and technological networking (which often work together). A network may be considered an emerging form of collaborative organization. A good illustration of the network concept might be the image of a spider web. In broad terms, a social network involves relationships between individuals and organizations with compatible interests, who maintain ongoing connections for practical, ideological or sentimental purposes (e.g. professional opportunities, political aims, or friendship).

PARTNERSHIP

In the business sector, collaborative members often avoid this term because of its legalistic connotations (especially related to liability). Currently, the term is favoured by government policy-makers who most often equate it with private/public partnerships (sometimes it serves as a code term for outsourcing and contracting out government services to the for-profit sector, often controlled by contractual agreement). The value of partnership often assumes inclusive and equal decision-making and is often expressed as “working in partnership with.” The term is used interchangeably with alliances and coalitions in the non-profit sector.

SOCIAL NETWORK (ALSO NETWORK)

A social network is an evolving social structure made up of nodes (generally individuals or organizations) that are linked by one or more specific types of relationships (e.g. financial exchange, friendship, enmity, trade, communication links, transport routes, etc.).

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES (ALSO, ALLIANCES; STRATEGIC PARTNERING)

This is the most frequently used term to describe a cooperative arrangement between two or more organizations designed to achieve a shared strategic goal and gain competitive advantage in the private sector. In the business private sector, alliances may be equity-based (e.g. stock investments, joint capital ventures, majority investment).

STRATEGIC FIT (ALSO, STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT)

Strategic Fit denotes the degree of compatibility, the extent to which activities of organizations working in partnership complement each other in beneficial ways. The strategic fit of one organization with another is often a factor in decisions about whether to collaborate; thus, success of a strategic alliance or collaboration will be affected by the degree of strategic fit. Advantages of good strategic fit include cost reduction, and transfer of knowledge and skills.

TRANS-ORGANIZATION SYSTEM

Trans-organizations systems (TS) is a technical term to describe supra-systems that consist of separate autonomous organizations that span organizational boundaries. A TS functions as more than the sum of its separate constituents by enabling decision-making and task-performance on behalf of member groups, who retain autonomous identities and goals. Examples include alliances, coalitions, partnerships, and joint ventures.

COLLABORATION REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS:

The following members were invited to contribute their knowledge of the community non-profit sector in Toronto – in particular with respect to the Wellesley Institute's three priority social determinants of health and their knowledge of the sector's involvement in collaborative initiatives. In addition, they made suggestions regarding key people to invite to participate in the research activities.

MANY THANKS TO:

Mini Alakkatusery, Senior Program Officer
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Chris Brillinger, Director, Social Development Division, City of Toronto
Community Resource Unit, City of Toronto

Rob Howarth, Coordinator
Toronto Neighbourhood Centres

Amanuel Melles, Director of Organizational Capacity Building, United Way
United Way of Greater Toronto

Collette Murphy, Community Program Director
George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation

Tonya Surman, Executive Director
Centre for Social Innovation

Winston Tinglin, Director of Community Engagement
Community Social Planning Council of Toronto

Charlotte Young, Director of Practice
ENVision...synergy

Proceedings from a Roundtable

Held on October 11, 2007 in Toronto

By Joan Roberts and Krista Banasiak



WELLESLEY INSTITUTE
advancing urban health

Roundtable Event

The second phase of the Inter-agency Service Collaboration Project consisted of a Roundtable event, held on October 11, 2007. 40 capacity builders, researchers, funders, and policy-makers from three different levels of government attended the event. The objectives of the day were as follows: to share the findings from the 7 Wellesley Institute reports on inter-agency service collaboration and reflect on them from the perspectives of practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers; to identify the rationale for undertaking collaborative activities; to articulate the challenges and obstacles to inter-agency service delivery; and to find common ground on which to move forward.

The day began with a slide show that presented the Wellesley Institute reports. The rest of the day consisted of interactive activities, such as small group discussions and peer interviews where participants expressed their reactions to the reports, as well as their ideas, thoughts, and concerns about NPO collaboration.

The research questions explored included:

- What do we want collaboration to achieve in the NPO sector?
- How can the NPO sector apply what we've learned today?
- How can the government/funder sector apply what we've learned today?
- How can researchers apply what we've learned today?

METHODOLOGY

Participants received a report one week prior to the event. The report provided an overview of the project, summarized the findings and questions raised by the report, and included a brief executive summary of each of the stand-alone reports. The 7 draft reports were available to roundtable participants on a private webpage.

The Roundtable began with a PowerPoint presentation of high-level findings. A facilitator then managed a large group discussion to validate the findings of the research reports. Further discussion was held in small groups. Tables were organized to have a balance of researchers, funders, and service providers in order to surface and learn from the different perspectives. In the afternoon session, the facilitator used spider facilitation to explore the questions of how to apply the learnings to the different sectors. This large group methodology involves a 4 Step process, using individual reflection, interviewing in pairs, small group synthesis, and large group sharing. At the end of the day, the process produced a list of recommendations that everyone present could help move ahead.

WHAT DO WE WANT COLLABORATION TO ACHIEVE IN THE NPO SECTOR?

It is important to mention that participants noted the need to have organic or bottom-up, as opposed to forced, collaborative activities. It is more effective to have collaboration arise from the ground up than having it forced from

the top down by either government or funders. Often, when collaboration originates at the level of the NPO sector, it arises to satisfy a need or needs of the clients of the organizations involved. Participants felt that client-motivated organizational collaboration is more successful than collaboration mandated by government or other funders who themselves may be pursuing a different agenda (for example, using collaboration as a first step to full integration of services). Collaboration should occur when it makes sense, not as an automatic requirement.

Participants expressed their desired outcomes for collaborative arrangements in the NPO sector. It is hoped that collaboration can benefit agencies because partnering agencies can pool their resources to address a complex problem or gap in existing service or to facilitate ease of access to the service system. We expect pooling resources to promote efficiency and effectiveness, high flexibility, and adaptability. In fact, pooled resources are an objective at the government and funder level. Nonetheless, it might be feasible if the required high investment in capacity building was made. However, participants noted that funders are currently not funding the extra time it takes to build the necessary capacity for inter-organizational cooperation. At the system-planning level, inter-agency collaboration builds a more comprehensive system map and can foster the trust-building that complex system change requires. At the client level, it is hoped that collaboration will achieve better-coordinated services. Collaboration can create multiple points of access to a service system. Furthermore, it also allows for a more efficient referral system. Taken together, this alleviates the need for clients to navigate fragmented services. According to the participants, the desired achievements of NPO collaboration will benefit both the organizations involved and the clients utilizing their services.

While the sharing of ideas was an important aspect of the Roundtable, discussions of the practical applications of the research were more significant. Participants offered different ways participants and their organizations could apply the information shared at the Roundtable to their collaborative activities.

LEARNINGS FOR THE NPO SECTOR:

In terms of practice, collaborating agencies need to develop shared definitions of collaboration before beginning their conversation. Throughout this project, definitions tripped up effective communication because informal definitions, rather than widely adopted formal definitions, are in use throughout the sector.

Participants felt that collaboration needed to be used more strategically. They advised NPOs to think about collaboration as an opportunity to enhance what the organization does and link collaboration as a strategy with the mission of the organization/agency and as a tool in strategic planning (for example, from the front-line workers to the Board). Above all, agencies should think about collaboration as an opportunity to enhance the functions of the organization by finding collaborative opportunities that fit with its specific strategies.

Participants noted the lack of academic evidence and urged each other to tell the stories of successful collaboration in order to build the evidence base. As well, they noted the need for additional skill-building, and urged that forums for support and learning be created where they can share agency visions, tools, and different evaluation methods. Finally ,

in terms of practice, they urged a more thoughtful approach to the development of collaboratives with a conscious approach to addressing the power differentials between member agencies.

Participants mentioned that a priority for organizations should be to push back when funders attempt to force collaboration. As previously mentioned, forced collaboration is not seen as conducive to a positive outcome and should be avoided. Also, NPOs should voice the need to fund the development of infrastructure to make collaboration work. Participants also recommended educating funders about funding practices and about the need for full-cost recovery. As funders support only part of the cost of providing services, organizations have little capacity to invest in developing complex collaborative structures. NPOs as well need to understand fully how funding works so they will be in a better position to advocate effectively for changes in funding criteria.

LEARNINGS FOR FUNDERS:

Echoing the previous arguments, participants noted that governments should be funders only and not try to impose their own agendas on NPOs. Governments/funders need to be clear about their intended outcome for collaboration. Lots of conversation emerged about whether or not funders see collaboration as an interim step towards a more integrated or rationalized system, and how the resulting mixed message only further antagonizes the sector.

Additional research on collaboration and a review of the goals of funders could help re-establish their position as funders and not directors of NPO activities. When funding inter-agency collaboration, government and funders must consider the range of skills, and often high-level skills, required to undertake it. The funding needs to take into account the development of this complex skill-set, which includes an ability to deal with a high level of conflict. Funding must also take into account the intense collaboration process, which is expensive and time-consuming. The support available from funders should reflect this reality and be both plentiful and flexible. Participants also felt that funders need to create a safe environment where NPOs are encouraged to discuss collaboration and its process without fear of retribution. As members of collaboratives, each organization has its own mission and interest. Project visions and goals need to be flexible enough to accommodate their evolution over the life of the process. This would create more open communication between funders and organizations, since the organizations would not need to fear they are putting their funding opportunities at risk by reporting an intervention strategy that is different than what was first envisioned. Also important is the need to fund research about collaboration and to evaluate it. This information would inform other forming partnerships by providing information on characteristics leading to successful collaboration. In the interim period prior to the development of a substantial literature, governments and funders could undertake better documentation and transfer of knowledge to enhance and create an ongoing corporate memory in the sector. This could include more documentation of process to ensure knowledge transfer, to record preferred practices, and to track emerging themes.

In general, the participants would like governments to allow more opportunities for groups to facilitate/convene and to collaborate. It is a tough sell but it needs to occur to provide continuity and depth of knowledge, and to make possible better partnerships and trust. Once various sectors are brought together, in order to deepen the conversation it is

necessary to bring government to the table to discuss what collaboration means for them.

As one participant said, collaboration at the agency level is not an antidote for the silos that exist in government. There is a need for silo busting across all levels of government.

LEARNINGS FOR RESEARCHERS

The discussion of how researchers could apply the information at the Roundtable centred on the direction of research. Participants suggested researchers investigate the different types and levels of collaboration, focusing on questions about what works and how. Research would also clarify assumptions and definitions.

This type of work could help to bring clarity to the process. Since NPO collaboration is such a unique topic, researchers should use a variety of methods, approaches, and sources to explore it fully. Using case studies, ethnically diverse research methods, and exploring the “grey,” non-academic literature will help to paint a more complete picture of collaboration. Longitudinal studies of the lifecycle of collaboration could be particularly useful. Interesting topics for further study include investigating ways of building research capacity, particularly in linguistically distinct and marginalized communities. Looking to other innovative approaches for cultural/ethno models that might work in diverse settings would also be beneficial. Collaboration needs the participation of ethno-cultural groups because it connects them to the mainstream.

Research could examine the politicization of funding and the way it can shift as the driver/inhibitor of collaboration. Another tack could be to look at the role of culture (organizational and ethno). Is it a barrier and a driver? Some felt a focus on service delivery outcomes is too limited. Instead we need to measure the way collaboration outcomes (increased trust and information-sharing) have an impact on client outcomes.

Policy audits could be done to assess the ways in which incentives that may undermine stated support for collaboration are built into funding requirements and accountability mechanisms. Another suggestion would be to examine the politicization of funding and the ways in which these shifts drive or inhibit collaboration. There was an overall agreement about the need to build an outcome-evaluation literature and a comprehensive research agenda. The “how-to’s” of undertaking research with collaboratives was discussed, including the development of a cost-benefit-ratio tool, using existing data that funders already possess, in order to undertake outcome evaluations and answer the need to produce documentation/research that is accessible. That would require funding for dissemination and knowledge transfer.

Roundtable participants were also asked how they could apply what they learned and move the agenda forward. Many promised to take information and concepts from this workshop back to their own and other organizations and disseminate through sector associations and/or Departments/Ministries.

Conclusion

Some of the recommendations that emerged from the day's discussions are worth highlighting here. First and foremost, participants stressed the need to find a consensus of what collaboration means. Is it an outcome or a process? Formal or informal? What do we mean by collaboration? Can we define a continuum of collaboration and value the different kinds of benefits generated along the continuum?

Second, there is a need to establish the priority for collaboration. Is it to produce more efficiency? Is it to provide better service? Or is it to build expertise? Moving past definitional and evaluative discrepancies will help foster a common understanding of what collaboration is and what it is meant to accomplish. Other recommendations included selecting more NPO-friendly evaluation methods that recognize the value of informal collaboration. Participants also advocated fostering a culture of innovation within the NPO sector that allows risk-taking. As in government, there is no tolerance for risk-taking by NPOs, which is stifling innovation. Providing NPOs with permission to fail would allow them to try out more creative solutions to issues and more innovative approaches to collaboration. Finally, participants felt that the best way to move forward would be to begin a conversation where all parties involved -- NPOs, researchers, and government/funders -- are considered equals. If each group is able to speak for its own interests and at the same time gain a better understanding of the needs of the others, participants feel collaboration will be more successful.

The Roundtable provided a wonderful opportunity not only to validate the findings from the research, but also to digest it through the lived experience of representatives of the entire human services system. The recommendations of the Roundtable are a wonderful addition to the findings of the research reports and helped provide the direction of the final report.

List of Participants

Mark	Aston	<i>Executive Director</i>
Mini	Alakkatusery	<i>Senior Program Officer</i>
Rob	Howarth	<i>Coordinator</i>
Amanuel	Melles	<i>Director of Organizational Capacity Building, United Way</i>
Collette	Murphy	<i>Community Program Director</i>
Winston	Tinglin	<i>Director of Community Engagement</i>
John	Campey	<i>Executive Director</i>
Charlotte	Young	<i>Director of Practice</i>
Lynn	Eakin	<i>Consultant</i>
Liz	Janzen	<i>Director, South Region Family Health & Healthy Lifestyle</i>
Rick	Edwards	<i>Director of Community Integration and Urban Health</i>
Subha	Sankaran	<i>Resource Centre Manager</i>
Beth	Ward	<i>Manager</i>
Sheryl	Lindsay	<i>Acting Executive Director</i>
Blake	Poland	<i>Professor</i>
Anne	Gloger	<i>Manager</i>
Norm	McLeod	<i>Manager of Strategic Policy</i>
Gillian	Mason	<i>Strategic Initiatives and Community Partnerships</i>

Waseem	Syed	<i>Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Community Investment</i>
Jenn	Miller	<i>Acting Director</i>
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Gay	Spiegel	<i>Voluntary Sector Relations Unit</i>
Barry	Monahan	<i>CEO</i>
Bok Sil	Shin	<i>Chairperson , KIN</i>
Suyeon	Jin	<i>KIN member, and ED of For You Telecare for You, For You Telecare Services</i>
Wilma	Jenkins	<i>Director, Settlement and Intergovernmental Affairs</i>
Katherine	Babiuk	<i>Regional Program Advisor</i>
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Anne	Wotjak	<i>Senior Director of Performance Management</i>
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