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**Practice Note: Methodology for Evaluating the Quality of Collaboration**

Drawing on the work of Ansell and Gash (see Annex A), Borden and Perkins (1999), and Evans (2012, 2013, 2018a&b&2019), existing research suggests that the following factors influence the collaborative process. After reading a brief description for each of the areas place an X in the box (see Figure 1) that best reflects your opinion of how your collaboration is functioning in each of the areas using the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

**Starting conditions – constraints and enablers to collaboration**

1. Is there a strong pre-history of collaboration?
2. Resource incentives – *does the collaboration have access to needed resources – physical, in-kind, financial, and human*? *Is collaboration incentivised through funding and performance management and measurement?*
3. Trust – *do the partners recognise their interdependence*? *Is there parity of esteem amongst members*?

**Vision and values**

1. Common Purpose – *is there a clear mission, negotiated problem definition and values*?
2. Catalysts – *was the collaboration started because of an existing problem(s) that required a comprehensive approach*? *What is it about the nature of the problem that requires a collaborative approach? Has that changed over time?*

**Facilitative leadership**

1. Facilitative leadership – has the leadership facilitated and supported team building, and capitalized upon diversity, capability development and individual, group and organizational strengths?
2. Clear accountabilities – does the collaboration involve clear leadership accountabilities for action? Is there a special responsible officer with specific reporting requirements for key areas of activity?

**The collaborative process**

1. Shared ownership of process – does the collaboration involve inclusive decision-making, process transparency and accepted ground rules?
2. Clear channels of communication and connectedness – does the collaboration possess open and clear channels of communication? Is there an established process for communication between formal meetings? Are members of this collaboration connected and have they established informal and formal communication networks?
3. Sustainability – this depends on the nature of the task (project, program) does the collaboration have a formal plan for sustaining membership, activities and resources?
4. Research and Evaluation – has the collaboration conducted a needs assessment or obtained information to establish its goals and does the collaboration collect data to measure goal achievement? Does the collaboration engage in shared learning and diffuse better practice?
5. Policies/conventions – has the collaboration changed existing policies, protocols and/or conventions to allow the collaboration to function effectively?
6. Positive spill-over – has the collaboration led to other forms of collaboration and resource sharing?
7. Understanding the policy community – does the collaboration understand the policy community, including its people, cultures, values and habits?
8. Contestability – does the collaboration have the capacity to outperform feasible alternative arrangements?

The presence or otherwise of these four sets of factors – starting conditions (barriers and enablers to incentivise collaboration), vision and values (to provide collaborative purpose), facilitative leadership (to drive collaborative problem-solving) and collaborative processes (to deliver valued outcomes) –can provide a useful set of benchmarks for evaluating the quality of collaborative practice.

**Figure 1**
The Collaboration Checklist

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| **A COLLABORATION PROGRESS CHECKLIST** |
| Factors | StronglyAgree1 | SomewhatAgree2 | NeitherAgree orDisagree3 | SomewhatDisagree4 | StronglyDisagree5 |
| 1. Common

Purpose | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Trust
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Shared ownership
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Communication
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Sustainability
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Research andEvaluation
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Resource incentives
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Catalysts
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Policies/conventions
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. + spill-over
 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Connectedness
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Leadership
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Understanding the policycommunity
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. A prehistory of collaboration
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| 1. Capacity to outperform alternatives
 | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| Totals | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |
| Grand Totals | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

Identifying the strengths and challenges of collaboration will allow for better monitoring, documentation of success stories and the degree of reflexivity necessary to introduce mitigating strategies where appropriate. Borden and Perkins observe that “if the group scores from 0-30 the collaborations has many components that comprise a successful collaboration. There are goals, working members, and strong leadership. If the collaborative group scores between 31 and 48 the group has some of the factors; however, there is some need to develop the inter-workings of the group. The group may need to determine new ways of working together. However, if the group scores between 49 and 65 the group may wish to refocus their goals and leadership. Establishing a partnership's strengths and challenges can serve as a springboard to building more effective collaboration.

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**Annex A: The ingredients of effective collaborative governance**

Chris Ansell and Alison Gash in their article, ‘Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice’ evaluate 137 cases of collaborative governance across a range of policy sectors. They use the data from this investigation to build a model of successful coordination of collaborative governance. Figure 2 presents the critical variables that will influence whether or not this mode of governance will produce successful collaboration. These variables include developing a strong understanding of the prior history of conflict or cooperation, the incentives for stakeholders to participate, power and resources imbalances, leadership, and institutional design. They also identify a series of factors that are crucial within the collaborative process itself. These factors include face-to-face dialogue, trust building, and the development of commitment and shared understanding. They observe that a virtuous cycle of collaboration tends to develop when collaborative forums focus on ‘‘small wins’’ that deepen trust, commitment, and shared understanding.

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***Figure* 2. Collaborative governance – what works?**