

From “Let’s collaborate”
to “Let’s collaborate
effectively”



From “Let’s collaborate” to “Let’s collaborate *effectively*”

For it to be meaningful, collaboration needs to be purposeful and conducted with rigour.

We looked at the evidence base and existing high-performing collaborations.

What we found was that while the purpose and activities can vary widely, successful collaborations consistently share a set of **eight characteristics**.

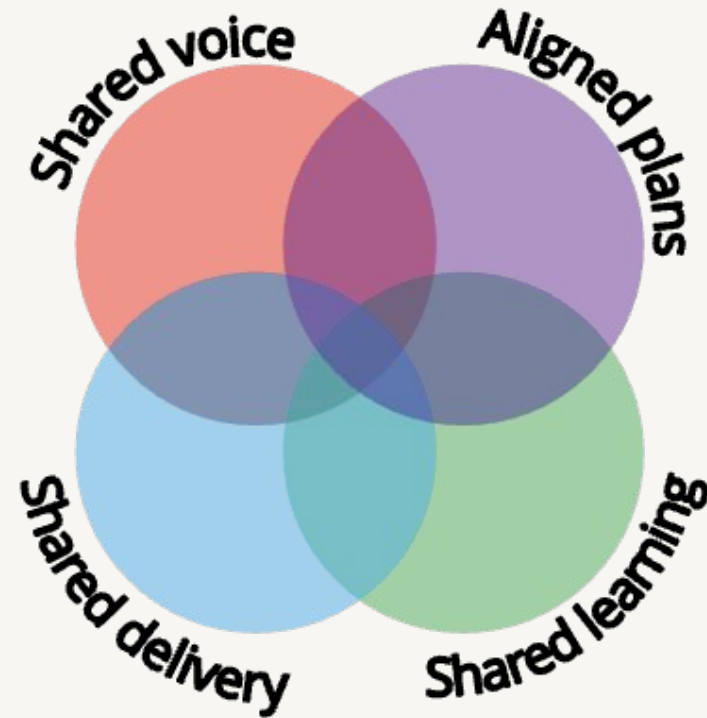
We use these characteristics to guide systems, organisations and individuals to understand their collaboration's strengths and what they can do to collaborate more effectively and create more value together.



Creating value together

There are four distinct – but not mutually exclusive or time bound – ways collaborations create value together.

Being clear at the outset on the way(s) the collaboration aims to create value, enables leaders and partners to deploy the most appropriate and effective processes and practices.

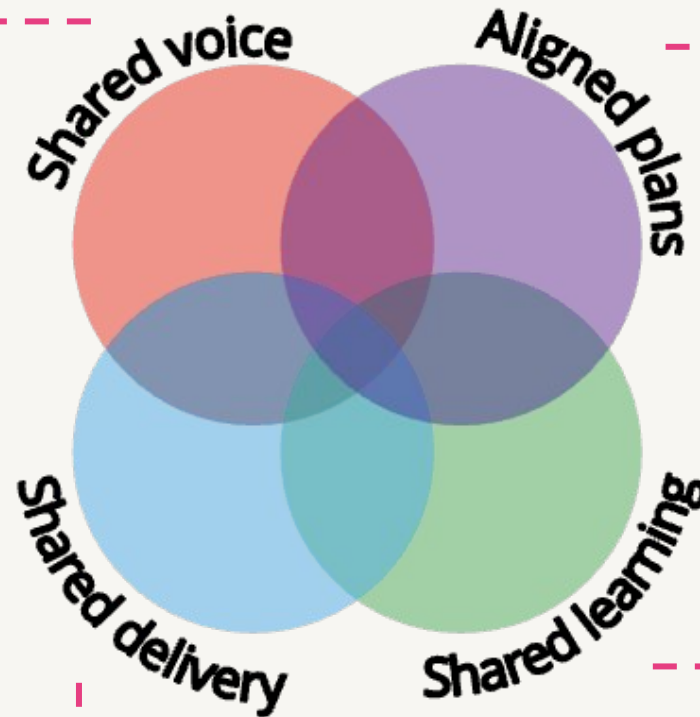


There are four distinct - but not mutually exclusive - ways to collaborate for value. But clarity matters because the ‘why?’ shapes the ‘how?’



Shared voice - Collaborating to amplify the voices of partners, which are more powerful the larger and more diverse collaborators are. Examples include labour and social movements and advocacy initiatives.

Shared delivery - Collaborating to develop, test and implement new products or services. Examples include primary care networks and safety collaboratives.



Aligned plans - Collaborating to ensure that member activities are coordinated so that at a minimum they don't overlap or duplicate and aiming to complement each other to achieve shared goals. Examples include aligning community activities and initiatives.

Shared learning - Collaborating to learn from each other. This enables the transfer of best practice and avoids duplication of efforts and repetition of mistakes. Examples include the Virginia Mason Institute Partnership and the Global Digital Exemplar Learning Network.



Eight characteristics of effective collaborations

High-performing collaborations have a **clear, shared purpose...**

...with a focus on building the right **culture...**

...and the **resources and structure** to succeed.



Purpose driven strategy

Partners committed to purpose and empowered to act

Deliberate cultivation of trust and generosity

Leaders who actively span boundaries

Ways to communicate and convene

Ways to measure and improve

Enabling governance processes

Skills and capabilities

A clear purpose and strategy with defined, realistic goals.

Partners aligned and committed to a shared purpose and empowered to act autonomously.

Culture of trust, sharing and giving (over and above that mandated by formal requirements).

Leadership with the skills to bring different groups together and make connections to external organisations and collaborations

Processes to enable partners to connect easily, geared to meeting purpose.

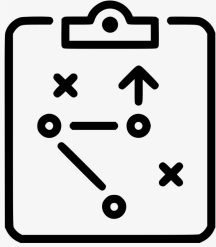
Skills to turn purpose into measurable goals, and providing regular data which is used for learning.

Proportionate governance structures to enable clarity of decision making & promote diversity and inclusion.

Realistic and appropriate resources provided to and by partners.



1. Purpose driven strategy



A clear purpose and strategy with defined, realistic goals.

Why is this important?

- Common purpose is the cornerstone of success. It should be expressed as a clear statement explaining the collaboration's reason for being.
- Your purpose should be compelling to partners and set out an explicit unifying direction.
- Clear purpose supports clear decision making and can also support community building.

Indicators

- ✓ Purpose statement and goals are clear and transparent
- ✓ Purpose and goals are used to motivate and inspire action
- ✓ Regular planning takes place and is used to inform what work is done and how it is done
- ✓ A theory of change makes clear the link between activities and goals

Who does it well?

Love2Care Devon: 6 Point Promise. For Love2Care Devon, its purpose – to focus on what matters most to the people they support and value the people who work with them – is paramount.

ImproveCareNow (US): Has fostered and maintained a culture of relentless focus on the network goal of improving clinical remission rates.



2. Partners committed to purpose and empowered to act



Partners aligned and committed around a shared purpose and empowered to act autonomously.

Why is this important?

- Collaboration can't run on goodwill alone. There needs to be genuine commitment from partners.
- Clear agreement between partners on levels of investment is crucial - whether that's time or resources.
- Although the levels of investment may vary, what should not be negotiable is the commitment to the principles of collaboration.

Indicators

- ✓ Partners able to consistently articulate the collaboration's purpose statement
- ✓ Partners routinely fulfill their expectations
- ✓ Partners report that their voices are heard and that they are able to make influence decisions

Who does it well?

The Climate Group: An international non-profit founded in 2003 to achieve a goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Corporate and government members set their own targets and action plans to meet the collaborative goal.

Buurtzorg (Ned): Has built a culture of international self-management enabled by a shared commitment around a clear and motivating purpose.



3. Deliberate cultivation of trust and generosity



Culture of trust, sharing and giving (over and above that mandated by formal requirements).

Why is this important?

- Entering into collaborations often involves a level of cost and risk for partners.
- To mitigate this, partners need to trust each other and feel that everyone is acting in the common interest.
- Collaborative relationships are not transactional, they are about sharing without 'keeping score'. Without trust and generosity, it is competition, not collaboration.

Indicators

- ✓ Partners are able to get help from peers in a timely way
- ✓ Partners and leaders routinely fulfil expectations
- ✓ Generosity is routinely celebrated and promoted

Who does it well?

Microsoft: When Satya Nadella became CEO of Microsoft in 2014, he made the members of his senior leadership team read the 2003 book 'Nonviolent Communication' by the psychologist Marshall B. Rosenberg.

'Team of Teams', US military (US): Fostered inter-agency collaboration built on strategies to develop trust and shared purpose.



4. Leaders who actively span boundaries



Leadership with the skills to bring different groups together and make connections to external organisations and collaborations.

Why is this important?

- Leadership and responsibility should be distributed amongst partners, providing resilience and long term sustainability.
- Leadership should model collaborative behaviours to create psychologically safe environments where different perspectives are heard and valued.
- Looking beyond silos and taking inspiration from other sectors and contexts often produces remarkable insights and learnings.

Indicators

- ✓ Leadership is diverse and representative of the collaboration
- ✓ Multi-disciplinary teams regularly form and contribute towards towards the collaboration's goals
- ✓ Social network analyses depict connections across traditional silos

Who does it well?

Dorset ICS (UK): Has invested in programmes and structures that enable clinical leaders to understand different perspectives.

The Eden Projects: Sir Tim Smit brought together musicians, artists, botanists and architects to create the exhibits that make up The Eden Projects. He was able to bridge boundaries and align partners behind his vision.



5. Good communication and connection



Processes to enable partners to connect easily, geared to meeting purpose.

Why is this important?

- Pooled resources are an important part of fostering community and enabling people to learn together and share knowledge and experiences - strong communication is crucial to this.
- It's important that collaborations have a clearly agreed mode of communication, that's regular, accessible and efficient.

Indicators

- ✓ Makes use of a broad range of communication and convening mechanisms (email, social media, web-based platforms)
- ✓ Events are well attended and reported by participants as valuable
- ✓ Robust mechanisms for capturing and sharing knowledge and learning
- ✓ Collaboration partners report feeling informed and engaged

Who does it well?

National Pediatric Cardiology Quality Improvement Collaborative (US): Clinicians and family members partner to produce 'lay' summaries of relevant literature.

Wikimedia: Wikimedia ensures there are many ways for contributors to communicate and convene, including: local meetups; in-person and virtual edit-a-thons; virtual meet-ups to connect editors from around the world.



6. Ways to measure and improve



Skills to turn purpose into measurable goals, and providing regular data which is used for learning.

Why is this important?

- It can be challenging to measure the impact of collaboration. Some results can be long term, and sometimes can go undetected.
- However, expected outcomes and how success is measured needs to be clearly articulated from the start
- Collecting relevant, accurate and timely data needs to be embedded into the process, and help to articulate the story of impact

Indicators

- ✓ The collaboration has a set of measures linked to the goals
- ✓ Measures have clear definitions and are shared transparently.
- ✓ Data is routinely collected and reported and is of high quality and completeness
- ✓ Resources and processes are in place to analyse the data and develop insights to inform learning and decision making

Who does it well?

Midlands Decision Support Network (UK): Produces bespoke system reports to enable members to understand and learn from data.

ImproveCareNow (US): Data from every patient and every visit is entered by network members. Data is analysed monthly to identify positive deviants and which members need support.



7. Enabling governance processes



Governance structures that enable clear decision making and promote diversity and inclusion.

Why is this important?

- Governance structures make explicit the expectations of all participants and enable partners to be clear on their roles and priorities.
- They ensure that decision-making is transparent, effective and efficient.
- Effective help ensure the right people are represented who reflect the diversity and the interests of the community.

Indicators

- ✓ Decisions routinely made using evidence and data
- ✓ Decision making processes are clear and transparent and key decisions are communicated in a timely way
- ✓ Leaders and partners that reflect the communities they represent and serve

Who does it well?

Sheffield Primary Care and Mental Health Transformation (PCMHT): A clear set of objectives and requirements were established at the outset. A small core team were empowered and trusted to undertake the work minimal board oversight.

Linux, Wikipedia, Github (US): Use clear governance structures including detailed protocols and processes for accessing and contributing to source code.



8. Skills and capabilities



Appropriate and adequate resources provided to and by partners.

Why is this important?

- Especially when teams are under increasing pressure, time to participate in collaboration should be protected and prioritised.
- Collaboration requires different skills from across individuals and teams, which come together to collectively serve the purpose.

Indicators

- ✓ Leaders and partners have the resources they need to fulfill their expectations
- ✓ Leaders and partners have the training and capabilities to lead the collaboration

Who does it well?

National CYP Diabetes Network (UK): The Network has partnered with the Royal College to offer quality improvement training.

Clinical Communities, Johns Hopkins Medicine (US): Supported by an Institute that coordinates research, training, and operations for quality improvement and patient safety.



Resources and further reading

- [Love2Care Devon: 6 Point Promise](#)
- [ImproveCareNow Purpose and Success](#)
- [The Climate Group](#)
- [Energy Foundation Review: Four Network Principles for Collaboration Success](#)
- [The Buurtzorg Model](#)
- [Microsoft non-violent communication](#)
- [“Koe wai hoki koe?!”, or “Who are you?!”: Issues of trust in cross cultural collaborative research](#), Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences
- [Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World](#), General Stanley McChrystal
- [Dorset ICS Case Study](#)
- [The Eden Project](#)
- [The role of boundary spanners in delivering collaborative care: a process evaluation](#), BMC Family Practice
- [Wikimedia](#)
- [Midland Decision Support Network](#)
- [Sheffield Primary Care and Mental Health Transformation \(PCMHT\)](#)
- [National CYP Diabetes Network](#)
- [National Pediatric Cardiology Quality Improvement Collaborative research explained](#)
- [Clinical Communities, Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)