From "Let's collaborate" to "Let's collaborate *effectively*"

KALEIDOSCOPE
Health and Care

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Collaboration is as old as civilisation. Yet, few models exist to support organisations develop a strategic approach to it.

Collaboration is about **creating value together**. For it to be meaningful, collaboration needs to be planned 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 organisations and individuals to understand their collaborations' strengths and what they can do to collaborate effectively and create more value together.

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.

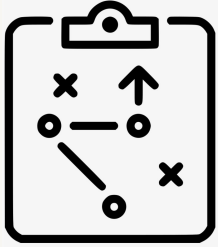| Purpose driven strategy	Partners committed to purpose and empowered to act	Deliberate cultivation of trust and generosity	Leaders who actively span boundaries	Ways to communicate and convene	Ways to measure and improve	Enabling governance processes	Skills and capabilities
A clear purpose and strategy 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 the between activities and goals

Who does it well?

- **Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network (US)**: Used a deliberate and thoughtful process to develop a compelling purpose and strategy.
- **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?

- **Energy Foundation (US):** Members focus on the bigger picture and are aware that achieving mission impact requires vastly more than their own institutional growth.
- **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?

- **'Team of Teams', US military (US):** Fostered inter-agency collaboration built on strategies to develop trust and shared purpose.
- **'Learning from the stories of Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga'(NZ):** In a context of strained relationships, creative tools and approaches were used to encourage dialogue and develop trust

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 deliberately invested in programmes and structures that encourage and enable clinical leaders to understand different perspectives.
- **Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care, Greater Manchester (UK):** Shown improvements in the management of care following the use of a deliberate approach to span boundaries.

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.
- **Clinical Communities, Johns Hopkins Medicine (US):** Celebrates success to maintain enthusiasm. Good news is shared through a variety of channels.

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?

- **Linux, Wikipedia, Github (US):** Use clear governance structures including detailed protocols, processes, and structures for accessing, contributing to, and committing source code.
- **ImproveCareNow (US):** Uses a governance structure that ensures representation and uses a sophisticated family of measures to inform decision making

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

- Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network Case Study
- ImproveCareNow Purpose and Success
- Energy Foundation Review: Four Network Principles for Collaboration Success
- The Buurtzorg Model
- "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
- The role of boundary spanners in delivering collaborative care: a process evaluation, BMC Family Practice
- National Pediatric Cardiology Quality Improvement Collaborative research explained
- Clinical Communities, Johns Hopkins Medicine