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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Intelligent Collaboration

Working with others to make
a difference

sowing seeds

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Introduction

Public service organisations in Wales are constantly striving to deliver the highest quality services in the most effective ways, focusing on using all resources available in the best ways possible and by using tried and tested methods to make things happen: strategic planning, delivery, streamlining, service design and improvement, systems change and so on. While all of these ‘hard’ systems support organisational development, there is a growing body of research that suggests a more inside-out approach to improving performance of individuals and organisations. This edition of Sowing Seeds introduces the concept of intelligent collaboration.

This is the idea that it is possible to make a real difference through collaboration by applying ideas from research and practice, in a reflective and disciplined way, through a deliberative and experimental approach.

Collaboration is an increasingly important aspect of public service delivery, particularly in the context of increasing demand, reduced funding and the need to do more with less. As a result of legislation such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, public services are at the start of a fundamental shift toward more empowered citizens and communities and a more enabling state. In order to align ourselves with this shift we need to create a leadership culture that cuts across organisational boundaries and sectors.

Collaboration streamlines communications, project delivery and enables teams to be more engaged and productive. However, public servants often find that collaboration is a particularly challenging aspect of their practice, with seemingly little to guide them as they seek to collaborate with colleagues across departments, divisions and organisations. Conflicting agendas and the fear of losing control can contribute to feelings of uncertainty and doubt.

While there is no one off the shelf guide to collaboration that will work in every situation, there are theories and frameworks that can help. By using these ideas intelligently, it is possible to make a real difference for citizens and communities.

This edition of Sowing Seeds offers some of the key ideas from theory and practice to help public servants navigate collaboration in three ways.

- **Personal practice:** Collaboration as part of the everyday role of the public servant, whether working across departmental or organisational boundaries.
- **Partnership development:** Some public servants have a responsibility for a particular formal partnership. In Wales this includes the managers for Public Service Boards or Health Partnerships.
- **Organisational leadership:** Public servants in management and leadership roles who want to promote a collaborative culture in their teams, departments and organisations.

What is collaboration?

Collaboration can be defined as:

“ A very positive way of working in association with others for some kind of mutual benefit. ”

Huxham, 1996

While collaboration can take place in any walk of life, here the focus is on collaboration in public service settings; collaboration that creates public value. This can mean individuals working informally across organisational boundaries at one end of the scale, to formal and legal arrangements involving whole organisations, at the other (*Huxham, 1996*). For public bodies collaboration could mean working across departments, with neighbouring bodies of the same type, with other public sector organisations, with the voluntary sector, the private sector or with the public.

Collaboration is an essential element of many public services and ‘is now central to the way in which public policy is made, managed and delivered throughout the world’ (*Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002*). Wales, in particular, has emphasised collaboration, as opposed to competition, as a distinctive element of policy over recent years (*Andrews and Martin, 2010*).

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 established statutory Public Service Boards (PSBs) in each local authority area in Wales. Local authorities are one of the four statutory members on the board – the other three being the Local Health Board, the Fire and Rescue Authority for the area and Natural Resources Wales. A range of other partners can also be invited to participate.

PSBs purpose is to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being for their communities in Wales by strengthening joint working. It is anticipated that this formal partnership will facilitate progress against issues that one organisation can’t tackle alone. With regard to each Boards local well-being plans, if it isn’t collaborative it shouldn’t be in there.

Collaboration is the term we use while engaging in a range of different interactions with others, however, are we always truly collaborating.

“ Collaboration is the same as competition, co-operation and co-ordination. All are simply forms of power (i.e our ability to impact and influence others) applied in different contexts. ”

Gobillot, 2016

All our relationships are underpinned by power and it takes many different forms depending on the context we find ourselves in. By determining the context, we can determine the right form power should take. Not doing so can mean creating delays through endless discussions when none were necessary or making the wrong decision alone when dialogue would have avoided the need for rework.

Intelligent collaboration

Collaboration is a particularly challenging aspect of practice. Indeed, it has been described as an ‘imperfect art’ (*Huxham and Vangen, 2005*). Nevertheless, public servants can improve what they do by reflecting on what they do and by applying helpful ideas from academia and practice, in their own context, and in their own way.

This approach is called **intelligent collaboration** (adapting the concept of intelligent policy making developed by Ian Sanderson (2009)).

Collaboration takes place in a messy and complex social world and this requires practitioners to adopt a trial and error approach and to rely on experimentation. In complex environments, it is not possible to rely on outside best practice, but solutions must instead be sought through ‘safe to fail’ experiments (*see the **Sowing Seeds: Taking Risks – How to make it safe to fail***).

Intelligent collaboration also means engaging with different forms of advice beyond academic research such as practice wisdom and public opinion. Management guides, local ‘lessons learned’ and advice from colleagues can all be as useful as academic research when building up a sense of what works.

Deliberation is essential. As collaborations, partnerships and cultures are socially constructed by those involved so; good conversations hold the key to effective collaboration. Practitioners should be talking to supervisors and colleagues, partnership coordinators to their partnerships and leaders to their organisations.

Finally, given the complexity and dynamic nature of this subject, learning capacity is more important than any specific goals achieved at any given time. Overall, therefore, a learning and reflective approach is needed. Time-outs and development opportunities are important, as is having a clear record of what works well.

Only collaborate when you need to

A consistent message from research and practice is that collaboration should only happen when it is needed.

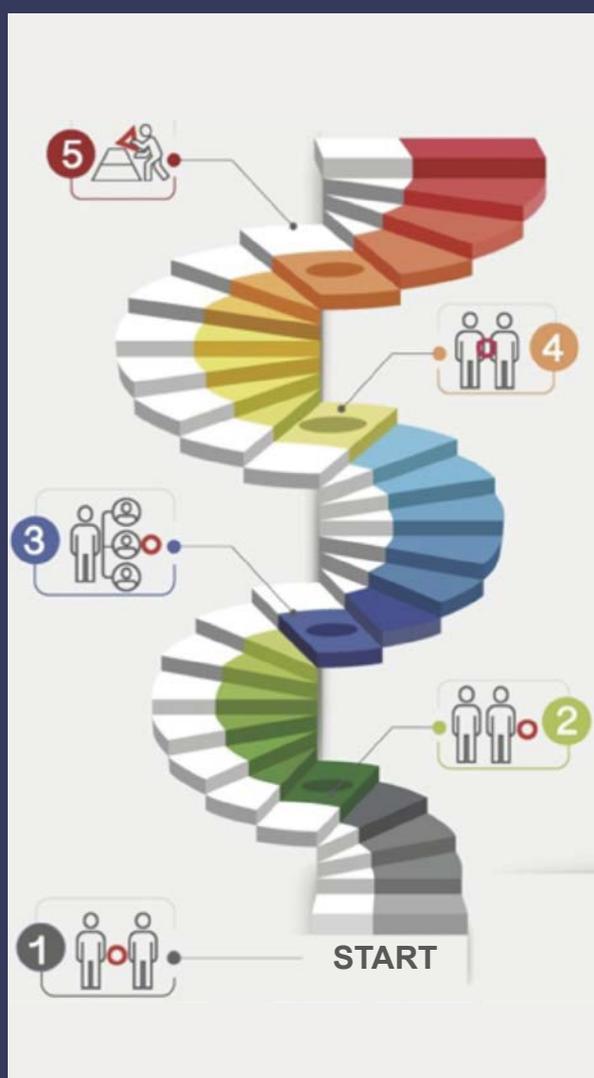
“Unless you can see the potential for real collaborative advantage it’s more efficient to do it on your own.”

Huxham and Vangen, 2005

For many in public services, collaboration may seem like the latest fashionable management trend. However, as Gobillot (2016) points out true collaborative practice requires all those involved to share in all aspects of the process, defining, creating, and delivering the outcome. You may wish to ask yourself ‘Is this what is required’?

It is important to remember that ‘some things are better achieved alone’ and that ‘decisions that can be taken alone should be taken alone’ (Gobillot, 2016). Only when you can see a clear collaborative advantage should you embark on collaboration.

Figure 1: The Power Spectrum



5. Collaboration – cannot be done alone or alongside someone else (as in the case of co-operation) all those involved in true collaborative practice share in all aspects of the process, defining, creating, and delivering the outcome.

4. Co-operation – is about the alignment of resources in the pursuit of a shared goal, co-operation entails everyone contributing their piece to the end goal.

3. Co-ordination – more often than not the most common way we work. The interaction of multiple agencies who each possess a part of the delivery requirement.

The aim is not to share resources but rather to join the output of each agency to create the overall outcome.

2. Consultation – this is the simplest form of interacting with others; two agencies with different or complimentary inputs helping one another to solve an issue.

1. Competition – this is where our individual efforts are up against those of others. It may not necessarily be overt or observable behaviour but will be present in the way we deliver our respective roles and work programmes.

Gobillot, 2016

“ If you can make a decision yourself rather than by committee why collaborate. ”

Emmanuel Gobillot, 2016

Collaboration costs – not just financially, but in terms of time and commitment. Investment in collaboration doesn't have to be all or nothing, however, it is important to be clear what the return is likely be and to invest proportionally (*Archer and Cameron, 2013*). One way to approach the decision of whether to collaborate is to write lists of pros and cons to help decide whether collaboration will have greater benefits than the status quo (*McDermott and Hall, 2016*).

If you do decide to invest in collaboration, whether at the personal, partnership or organisational level, it is important to take an experimental and learning approach – an intelligent approach to collaboration.



Personal practice

Most public servants will need to collaborate with people outside of their normal team, department or organisation. For some it is a small part of their role. For others it is all they do. Collaboration will certainly be informal, it may also sometimes be part of a formal partnership arrangement. In any case, working collaboratively requires personal discipline and careful reflection and dialogue – for ‘dialogue unlocks potential’ (*Gobillot, 2016*). The personal development conversation is therefore a good place to start.

An important precondition for successful collaboration is establishing trust (*Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002*). This depends on three things. The first is that you do what you say you will do, the second is showing that you care about the person you are asking to trust you and the third is acting with integrity (*Mayer et al, 1995*). Overall the aim should be to increase personal trustworthiness (**see *Sowing Seeds: Trust – The foundation of successful teams***).

Another important precondition is appreciating the service user’s perspective, in other words, ‘walking in the service user’s shoes’. This can be underpinned by; creating common purpose, sharing power and insisting on a whole systems approach (*Miles and Trott, 2011*).

Case study: Transforming Mental Health

Staff at Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDUHB) had recognised from candid and often difficult conversations with users of mental health services that users’ experience often does not feel joined up. Of particular concern was an apparent gap in communication between different parts of the service, with many users having to endure repeat assessment before they receive the care that they feel they need.

The Transforming Mental Health programme developed by HDUHB has adopted a comprehensive co-produced approach to redesigning a flagship mental health service. The programme has been refined through a process of continuous engagement and co-design, over a period of two years, drawing on local knowledge, together with national guidance and examples of international best practice. This fact-finding has been tested by service users, their carers and supporters, HDUHB staff and other partners to jointly develop a future model of care and support.

Improving personal practice

Below are five questions to ask as part of personal development that can help improve day-to-day collaboration:

What do I already do well?

Successful collaboration starts by building on the things that already work well. A simple technique for doing this comes from the world of solution focussed therapy.

- First, ask yourself where you are on a scale of zero to ten, where zero is 'I am terrible at collaboration' and ten is 'I am a collaboration superhero'. Write this down.
- Second, write down ten things you have done to get you to that number, ten things that mean you are not at zero. If you found that reasonably easy, write down another ten, and so on.
- What you will have is a list of what works for you; good practice you can acknowledge and build on.

How do I overcome the barriers to collaboration?

In his book *Disciplined Collaboration* (2016), thought leader Emmanuel Gobillot explores the different psychological and organisational barriers to collaboration; as well as providing practical strategies to building a collaborative culture. Gobillot highlights four steps or disciplines required for collaborative success, each of which deals with the following fears that inhibit collaboration.

Profession: The fear of losing personal value and giving away expertise

Promotion: The fear of losing control over the quality of work

Production: The fear of losing the momentum of work

Projection: The fear of losing direct control over things

Understanding your own predilection to these fears is the first step in understanding your own aptitude for collaboration. Reflecting on which of these areas may be slowing down individual collaborative efforts in your team/organisation can help you to remove the fears which may be negatively impacting your personal practice.

How do I talk the language of collaboration?

Collaboration requires the embracing of diversity and difference as well as the need to be solution focussed. Given that language plays an important role in how relationships and therefore collaborations are constructed, the words we use really matter. McDermott and Hall (2016) suggest the following tips for speaking the language of collaboration.

- Use 'we' rather than 'I'
- Replace, 'Yes, but...' with, 'Yes, and...'
- Use neutral language about the behaviour of colleagues rather than insulting or personalising language
- Challenge 'either/or' framing by asking exploratory questions and seeing if you can get to 'both/and'
- Replace problem-orientation questions with solution focussed ones. For example, instead of asking, 'What's the problem?' ask, 'How can we solve the challenge before us?'
- Move from the level of taking positions to a meta level. Ask, 'What frame unites both of these positions?' 'What do both of these positions have in common?'

How can I engage differently?

Effective collaboration will depend on the different techniques used for engaging people. The Liberating Structures website (<http://www.liberatingstructures.com/>) offers 33 simple engagement techniques that can be used to create more exciting and productive collaboration. These techniques quickly foster lively participation in groups of any size, making it possible to truly include and unleash everyone. Liberating Structures are a disruptive innovation that can replace more controlling or constraining approaches.

Case Study: Primary Care Clusters

Primary Care Cluster Leads who are facilitating regional collaboration have had greater success using tools and techniques to engage cluster members. One cluster member commented:

'At a recent cluster meeting the group was tasked with choosing the local and national priorities. Our Cluster Lead divided the meeting into six groups, each tasked with looking at the 'pros and cons' of each priority. This generated discussion, encouraged team harmony and inclusion within the cluster. It helped with creating the consensus by involving people and valuing their input.'

How can I get peer support?

Talking through the challenges of collaboration with like-minded public servants can be really helpful. One option is to get involved with One Team Government, a community of people who are passionate about public sector reform, with a focus on improving services to citizens and improving how they work. One of the principles of One Team Government is to work across borders; professional, departmental, sectoral and national. More information can be found at <https://www.oneteamgov.uk/>

Do I have the skills I need?

Everyday collaboration in public services, also known as boundary spanning, consists of four roles (*Williams, 2012*). These can be used as part of personal development conversations.

- **Facilitating informal networks:** Involves ‘networking and network management, diplomacy, communication, negotiation and influencing without formal power. Reticulists are key conductors of information – receiving, channelling and directing it to best effect’.
- **Building and sustaining interpersonal relationships:** Involves ‘appreciating the diversity of actors and their backgrounds. At the heart of this role is the ability to build and sustain effective interpersonal relationships using skills of communication, listening, empathy, negotiation, conflict management and consensus seeking’.
- **Solving problems:** Involves ‘developing new solutions to complex problems evidencing creativity, opportunism and innovation... using a range of particular skills including problem solving, whole systems thinking, communication, risk taking and managing meanings’.
- **Managing partnerships:** Involves ‘coordination, planning and servicing’ (*see the next section*).



Partnership development

Managing a partnership is as much art as it is science and is as much about the informal activity as the formal processes. For those who manage partnerships or who act in a sponsorship role, it is important to reflect on both aspects of partnership development.

Partnerships can be of a wide range of different types and, even within these types, there can be wide variation. Furthermore, each partnership is subject to a powerful 'locality effect' due to factors such as geography, demographics, organisational boundaries, political culture and the local history of partnership working (*Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002*). Hence there is a need to experiment and learn in order to understand what works in each context.

The academic research on formal partnerships is extensive. However, two recent summaries aimed at practitioners are worth looking at.

Huxham and Vangen (2005) provide 10 tips for collaborating drawn from 15 years of intensive research. The authors ask that these tips are treated with care and seen as a way to provoke thought. However, the first and last can be taken as 'absolute truths'.

1. Don't do it unless you have to! Unless you can see **THE POTENTIAL** for real collaborative advantage it's more efficient to do it on your own.
2. Budget more time for collaborative activities than you normally expect to need.
3. Remember that others around the table will want different things. Be prepared to protect your own agenda and be willing to compromise.
4. Set small achievable goals to start with to build trust. If stakes are high you might need a more comprehensive trust-building approach.
5. Pay attention to communication. Be aware of your company jargon and find clear ways to express yourself to people who do not share your world. Don't be afraid to seek clarification.
6. Don't expect other organisations to do things the same way yours does. Things that are easy to do in one organisation, may be hard in others.
7. Ensure that partnership managers have the autonomy they need so they don't keep having to check back to their parent organisation.
8. Recognise that power plays are often part of the negotiation process. Understanding your own source of power and ensuring that partners do not feel vulnerable can be an important part of building trust.
9. Understand that making things happen involves a mix of facilitation and being more directive.

In summary

10. Assume that you cannot be wholly in control and that partners and the environment will be constantly changing. Then with energy, commitment, skill and continual nurturing, you can achieve collaborative advantage.

(Huxham and Vangen, 2005: 37)

A more recent comprehensive review by Bryson et al (2012) summarises the most useful points for practitioners.

- Make sure there is a clear collaborative advantage to be gained by collaborating, meaning that collaborators can gain something significant together that they could not achieve alone. Make use of windows of opportunity to advance the collaboration approach.
- View collaborations as complex, dynamic, multilevel systems.
- Collaborating parties should take a design approach to cross-sector collaboration. This means starting as much as possible with the end in mind and designing processes, structures, and their interactions in such a way that desired outcomes will be achieved and required accountabilities met. Build ongoing learning into the design, including learning about what goals and performance indicators should be.
- Make sure that committed sponsors, champions, and facilitators are involved throughout.
- Use inclusive processes to develop inclusive structures, which, in turn, will sustain inclusive processes.
- Adopt flexible governance structures that can adjust to different requirements across the life cycle of the collaboration.

Gobillot (2016) suggests that the more partnerships gravitate towards real collaboration the more effort and emphasis that must be put into ensuring individuals and relationships are mature and disciplined in their actions. He suggests that nothing new is needed but that partnerships must focus their attention in a different way as articulated by Bryson above.



Improving partnerships

Here are five conversations for partnerships to have, to help them develop and succeed.

What do we want to achieve?

All partnerships should have a meaningful conversation about what they want to achieve. Clarifying aims will help partnerships to achieve those aims and also help them to decide how those aims might be achieved (*Emerson et al, 2012*). The idea of partnership synergy (*Lasker et al, 2001*) is one way of describing the differences that working together can make including:

- solving pressing problems in creative, holistic, and practical ways
- establishing shared goals that are realistic, widely understood and supported
- creating interventions that connect multiple programs, services, and sectors
- understanding and addressing the needs of service users and citizens

Are the starting conditions right?

The starting conditions for any partnership are particularly important if the partnership is to succeed. Power imbalances, respect for the partnership from the organisations involved as well as any prehistory of negative relationships should all be addressed before collaboration begins (*Ansell and Gash, 2007*).

What structures do we need?

Successful partnerships will adopt flexible structures that can adjust to different requirements across the life cycle of the collaboration (*Bryson et al, 2012*). A useful way to think about this is a four stage model of how a partnership changes over time (*Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998*).

1. **Pre partnership collaboration** – informal networking to build trust and set foundations.
2. **Partnership creation and collaboration** – a partnership board is set up. Membership and formal processes for decision making agreed.
3. **Partnership programme delivery** – the allocation of funds and management of projects may require additional processes and an inner, executive group.
4. **Partnership termination and succession** – partnerships may be time limited or come to a natural end, either way partnerships should be regularly reviewed to decide whether to 'continue as we are', 'let it die' or 'just keep what works well'.

How are we going to work together?

Making a difference in a partnership depends on having the right ‘collaborative dynamics’ between the partners. There are three things that need to be in place for partnerships to be effective (*Emerson et al, 2011*).

- **Principled Engagement:** For example discovering each other’s interests, concerns and values, setting out common purpose and objectives, and creating safe spaces for candid conversations. In other words, setting out the ground rules for ‘how are we going to talk to each other?’
- **Shared Motivation:** For example building mutual trust and understanding of each other’s positions and interests in addition to ensuring the credibility of partners, all lead to shared partnership commitment.
- **Capacity for Joint Action:** For example formal agreements and protocols, leadership and shared knowledge, data and resources.

Do we have the resources we need?

It is essential to have in place the resources needed for the partnership to operate. Collaborative capacity has five levels (*Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002*).

- **Strategic** – the time and commitment to develop and define the collaborative vision and key themes
- **Governance** – supported arrangements for accountability upwards to any superordinate body and outwards to key partners and communities
- **Operational** – the organisational structures and processes to deliver new activities
- **Practice** – those involved have the required skills and abilities
- **Community and citizens** – people have what they need to take part in the process

Case study: Regional Collaborative Committees and The Supporting People Programme (SPP)

Regional Collaborative Committees (RCCs) have an advisory role and make recommendations to the Welsh Government on ‘Supporting People’ spending in their region. The SSP provides housing-related support to help vulnerable people to live as independently as possible.

RCCs bring key stakeholders together from local authorities, health, probation, Supporting People service providers and landlords across each region. Together they ensure that planning and commissioning of ‘Supporting People’ services take account of local priorities and make the most effective use of their programme grant.

Case study: Public Service Board

Public Service Boards (PSBs) local well-being plans set out the areas where the Boards feel collective action can have the biggest impact. Below are a couple of examples from the first well being plans where a collaborative focus is anticipated to deliver immediate results as well as longer term positive change.

Community resilience

PSBs think they can have the most benefit, and maximise their contribution to a more resilient Wales by focussing on subjects such as volunteering. They are looking to create conditions for communities to support individuals from all backgrounds to live fulfilling, independent lives.

PSB organisations reach far into communities (both spatial and interest groups); this provides the means for more effective collaboration. Involving local communities in co-design and co-production will develop and sustain inclusive social networks, cultural connections and independence.

An example of a medium term action would be to develop innovative, responsive and intergenerational ‘hubs’ (physical, virtual and social) as a focus and connection point for communities.

Ageing well

The extent to which older people feel they have control over day to day life is central to their cultural well-being, including their ability to take part in activities they enjoy and are interested in. History, heritage and sense of place were also referred to by older people as contributing to cultural well-being in addition to the use of local services and amenities which they made use of. Accessing these services promoted a sense of community involvement and personal development for older people. Volunteering was also highlighted by older people as contributing to cultural well-being as it provided chances for social contact.

Examples of short and medium term actions include future collaborative interventions to ensure a cohesive and partner based approach to address key areas, including:

- Prevention of falls
- Provide positive learning, employment and volunteering opportunities
- Reduce poverty including fuel poverty and cold-related deaths
- Increase awareness and reporting of crimes that target older people
- Develop age-friendly and dementia supportive communities

Organisational leadership

It is important to remember that, however effective the individual public servant may be at collaborating they will need a supportive environment if they are to flourish (*Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002*). Collaborative leadership is therefore essential to promote and sustain a culture that supports collaboration, whether in a team, department or organisation.

Although significant evidence suggests that collaboration is power and can elicit success when done properly our organisations are not strategically set up to enable collaboration and in fact the act of collaboration can damage the levers of organisational success as we currently know them.

Everything that we do within our organisations is aimed at achieving four things that are key to the delivery of our objectives.

Value – we facilitate value creation from the generation of ideas to the delivery of products and services

Quality – structures that embed quality control mechanisms that meet our needs and the needs of our users/patients/citizens

Momentum – processes that ensure fluidity and agility, providing services at the appropriate speed

Control – structures and processes that give us the ability to control the outcome. There are good reasons why organisational silos exist, they allow us to focus delivery in efficient, effective, predictable and reliable ways.

Getting to a true point of collaboration can be extremely difficult when all of our experiences, our training and the expectations of our organisations focus us on the aspects of co-ordination and co-operation rather than real collaboration – this differential may provide a clue as to why a large number of our partnerships, our collaborations and our community based efforts only go so far towards delivery success or unfortunately, in some cases, fall over.

The fears that were identified earlier as inhibiting individual collaborative practice also work on a macro level. Gobillot's four disciplines, or 'steps to making our divisions add up', when addressed will help to create a collaborative culture, they:

“ Deliver a roadmap to building deeper skills that connects the energy of the real organisation to the delivery of our formal objectives. ”

The Collaboration Pyramid



The Collaboration Pyramid highlights the four disciplines that we, as organisations and individuals, can master to ensure that the above perceived drawbacks of ever more complex forms of social impact are eradicated. Each of the steps addresses the fears that become more prominent as we move through the spectrum of power as featured on page 6.

“ Collaboration does not need separate or new structures and behaviours to work. What we need is a better, more mature and disciplined way to navigate and employ the ones that already exist in our organisations. ”

Gobillot, 2016

How to Climb the Pyramid

Profession (the discipline of value)

- At an organisational level profession is about being able to identify and quantify the value latent in the collaborative endeavor as well as the value of the players in it.
- At a personal level it is about understanding and mastering your value beyond your skills and expertise.

To move through the Profession step, you need to:

1. Understand the unique contribution that each member of a group collaborating will make and be clear about the value these contributions will bring to the effort
2. Identify the likely interactions between individual contributions, and
3. Spot any deficits in the overall mix of the group in light of what they need to achieve.

Promotion (the discipline of quality)

- At an organisational level promotion is about being able to articulate a clear and compelling narrative of the quality we aim to achieve as well as identify the barriers both in our processes and ourselves that may stand in the way of this achievement.
- At a personal level it is developed through having the self-awareness that allows us to identify the biases that lead us to act in certain ways, in pursuit of certain standards.

To move through the Promotion step, you need to:

1. Build the right team, that is, bring people together in a way that ensures the team is fit for collaboration
2. Focus effort – create the conditions for the team to make decisions in the right way.

Production (the discipline of momentum)

- At an organisational level production is about our ability to engage those around us in maintaining the momentum we seek by appealing to their sense of achievement rather than relying on negative correction.
- At a personal level it is about developing the skills to engage in appreciative conversations to focus energy.

To move through the Production step, you need to:

1. Build the conditions for collaboration
2. Develop the culture for collaboration.

Projection (the discipline of control)

- At an organisational level projection means being disciplined in determining the parameters of the collaborative effort to secure the continued engagement of others.
- At a personal level it is about developing the ability to make others more capable by building on their contributions rather than controlling them in order to reach an outcome.

To move through the Projection step, you need to:

1. Complete a set of collaboration readiness checks and balances
2. Spot the possible derailers along the way.

Creating a collaborative culture

Generally a collaborative culture means being adaptive and responsive. For those in leadership roles this will require a corporate or team approach to learning and the willingness to support innovation and experimentation. The leader will also need to be able to manage the tension between the flexibility that the organisation will need if it is to collaborate and the need for a degree of internal coherence and control (*Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002*).

The first thing that a collaborative leader needs is to be able to personally demonstrate a reasonable level of collaborative practice (*McDermott and Hall, 2016*). Any leader seeking to promote a collaborative culture should be able to demonstrate the behaviours they wish to see in others and to 'be the change they want to see in the world'.

A collaborative culture can be achieved through a series of steps (*McDermott and Hall, 2016*). The first is to hold a conversation about collaboration with the whole organisation or group. This will improve understanding and give people a stake. Second, build from inside out. Culture change should start with those in leadership roles those at the centre of the organisation who should themselves demonstrate collaborative behaviours before drawing others into the process. The third step is to set out and integrate collaborative principles. Once agreed these need to be, not only set down in writing, but lived. Finally Leaders should talk consistently and regularly about the principles and vision and not let day-to-day business crowd these out.

Here are two conversations for organisations and teams to have when building a collaborative culture.

What should our collaborative principles be?

If the decision has been made to act collaboratively as an organisation, then a set of principles should be agreed to explain what this means in practice. Examples of collaborative principles might include 'apply win-win thinking', 'always trust everyone', 'take reasonable risks' and 'be responsive and responsible' (*McDermott and Hall, 2016*).

What should our collaborative culture look like?

While generally a collaborative culture will be adaptive and responsive, the following are specific examples of characteristics (*Newman, 1996, cited in Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002*):

- A strong focus on the community;
- Senior managers that can connect well with other stakeholders;
- Effective modes of involving service users;
- Strong strategic partnerships with other agencies;
- Mechanisms for connecting with diverse communities;
- Staff at all levels that can work across boundaries;
- Decentralised service delivery;
- Strong links with international and other bodies.

This description is intended to apply to a whole organisation but can easily be scaled down to apply to a department or team.

Summary

This publication has identified a range of collaborative challenges and improvement strategies for developing both personal and organisational collaborative endeavours. The following Top Tips summarise how: as practitioners, partners and leaders, we may have greater success in personally mediating fears about collaborative practice and in generating team climates and organisational cultures which embrace working with others to make a difference.

Personal

- Demonstrate behaviours which indicate 'Trustworthiness' – why would people wish to collaborate with you unless they trust you?
- Seek common purpose and don't be afraid of sharing power – actively listen to all stakeholders to ensure all perspectives, not just your own, are taken into consideration.
- Use the language and behaviours of collaboration – ensure inclusivity and the valuing of diversity through your words and actions.
- Engage others by involving them in the process with a focus on solutions rather than problems.

Partnership

- Embark on formal partnerships only when true collaboration is required. If you can make a decision on your own then do so.
- Ensure the correct people are around the table and they come with the sufficient level of autonomy and authority required for decision making.
- Appreciate and acknowledge differences in ways of working across partnerships. Don't assume everyone thinks or operates as your organisation does.
- Clarity of purpose is key to successful achievement of objectives. If partners are not all on the same page or not clear why they are there, then discussions and plans are likely to flounder.

Organisational Culture

- Organisations don't need to focus on structural change for collaboration to work, they just need to be more disciplined in the way that they behave.
- Articulate a clear and compelling narrative regarding the collaborative purpose and acknowledge the barriers that may impede progress and achievement.
- Make employees/partners more capable by building on their contributions rather than controlling them in order to reach an outcome.
- Be adaptive and responsive. Develop a corporate approach to learning and be supportive of innovation and experimentation.

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A note on sources

The ideas taken from the academic literature are those that have been cited many times, sometimes hundreds of times, by other scholars. Ideas and frameworks have been shared in their simplest form so it is possible to see what they look like but, of course, much of what sits behind them is lost. It is always worth exploring further to get the most benefit.

Where appropriate and relevant Welsh research and researchers have been highlighted. Partly this is to raise awareness amongst practitioners of Welsh research and researchers, partly because much internationally relevant research is connected with Wales but perhaps, most importantly, to ensure that this report is as relevant as possible for practitioners in Wales.

Examples of 'practice wisdom'; such as books produced by experienced consultants, have also been included where these are known to be useful for practitioners.

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh.