

## CREATING SHARED GOVERNANCE

# KEYS TO GOVERNANCE SUCCESS

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### PURPOSE

Understanding what good governance looks like in collaboration helps partners to design the right structures and processes. Governance can be more complex than in a single organization and needs more time and resources to ensure multiple interests and needs are met. It's also critical to review how well governance is working throughout the lifecycle of the collaboration from the first informal stages of working together through to the accomplishment of outcomes.

### HOW TO USE THE TOOL

- Walk through the checklist with your collaboration partners as an educational process and talk about the components of successful collaborative governance. Consider how collaboration governance is distinct from traditional organizational governance.
- Use the tool when designing your collaboration. Think about what would be needed to ensure each statement is true.
- Integrate the considerations into an evaluation of your existing governance to find out what needs to be altered or improved. The checklist can guide an informal conversation among partners or be structured into a more formal questionnaire.

### CONSIDER THESE KEYS TO GOVERNANCE SUCCESS:

#### MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES:

- There is a shared understanding among partners about what we mean by collaboration governance.
- The collective vision and goals of our collaboration are clearly aligned with those of individual partners.
- Partners clearly see the interdependences between each other and don't see themselves as competitors within the parameters of our collaboration.
- The way that resources are allocated (e.g. people, technology, funds) is seen by all partners as effective, fair and rational.
- Our time and energy is not consumed by managing conflicts and crisis related to competition of interests, 'free riders', disputes and grievances.

#### TIPS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

- Consider how governance in a collaboration is different than in a traditional organization and what that means to the structure and processes.
- Find ways to better align the collective vision, outcomes and roles and responsibilities with the interests and expectations of partners and their organizations.
- Clearly state the expectations of each partner in the collaboration.
- Think about who is making decisions about resource allocation and how they are being made to ensure they are transparent; clearly communicate the reasons behind the allocations.
- Put in place a fair and transparent conflict management and dispute resolution process.

## STRATEGIC THINKING AND DECISION-MAKING:

- We keep governance (e.g. oversight, strategy) and operational decisions (e.g. implementation) distinct in our meetings.
- Decisions are based on what is good for the collaboration, not the specific interests of a few individual partners.
- Our individual partners, their organizational leaders and external stakeholders (such as funders) view our governance structure as credible and accountable.
- We usually find the right balance between the need for efficiency in decision-making and the value of being inclusive of different partner's views and interests.
- Those partners who are most affected by decisions feel they have the power to influence them.
- Decision-making isn't held or perceived to be held in the hands of a few people.
- Partners and key external stakeholders are very clear about where decision-making power resides in our collaboration.
- There is a high degree of trust between partners; they feel that power dynamics and decision-making are highly transparent and reasonable.
- We have invested the resources required to nurture participatory decision-making (e.g. consultative, facilitate participation).
- We are making the best decisions, not arriving at distilled compromises that don't work well for anyone.
- Decisions are being made within reasonable timelines.
- Decision-making processes feel seamless between the various decision-making entities and people.

## TIPS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

- Clarify the distinction between governance and operational decisions and ensure that agendas reflect them.
- Think about the ways your collaboration is making decisions and ensure they are clear, rational, inclusive, transparent and effective.
- Ensure that decision-making is shared among as many partners as possible.
- Ensure that the methods the collaboration uses to consult are as transparent, genuine and as engaging as possible.
- Find the right balance between working toward consensus and getting things done well.
- Consider if your selection of leaders are the best people to make good collaboration governance decisions and who have the skills and credibility to do so.
- Provide skills development and education about the techniques of participatory and consensus decision-making.
- Strengthen communication about decisions and how and why they were made

## RESPONSIBILITY, AUTHORITY, RISK AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

- We have clearly documented and agreed to roles and responsibilities of all of our decision-making bodies (e.g. lead agency, steering committee, staff), so that there is no overlap, as well as those functions that cross organizational borders.
- Responsibility is not assigned to a person or group unless there is also the corresponding authority to make decisions.
- We are unleashing and leveraging the full value and diversity of skills, competencies, resources, energy and creativity of all of our partners.
- There are clear reporting mechanisms within our collaboration (both between partners and with their respective organizations) as well as with our external stakeholders.
- Each of the accountability requirements and needs of individual partner organizations is understood and properly fulfilled.
- We are fulfilling the accountability requirements to external stakeholders (e.g. funders, constituents).
- All of our partners are prepared to be held accountable for our collaboration's results.
- We discuss the potential risks to our individual partner organizations as well as to our collaboration as a whole and manage these risks well.
- Each partner has received a comprehensive orientation to roles and responsibilities; who has what authority; how we manage risk; and all our accountability requirements..

## TIPS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

- Develop a clear document that outlines what role each of the partners play in the collaboration as well as where responsibility for governance decisions resides; make sure that if responsibility is assigned, then those people are also given the authority to make those decisions and follow up on them.
- Clearly articulate all the resources available to the collaboration (e.g. skills, talents, knowledge, technology) and make sure that they are fully utilized.
- Complete an accountability matrix.
- Complete an accountability assessment.
- If the collaboration faces significant potential risks, ensure there is a risk management protocol in place that is aligned with each partner's own policies and procedures.

## COMMUNICATIONS:

- Information flows smoothly and openly among partners, while confidentiality is respected.
- Communication is timely, transparent and relevant to the needs of partners and our other key stakeholders.

### TIPS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

- Think about who needs to receive different kinds of communications and the best way to manage these.
- Target communication content to the particular interests and needs of each audience.
- Think about whether you are using technology in the best way to communicate most effectively.

## LEADERSHIP:

- We are very clear about what we expect from the leaders in our collaboration.
- Our structure allows for as many partners as feasible to play a leadership role so that it is not limited to a few people with their own agenda.
- Our leaders demonstrate the ability to be good stewards, connectors, facilitators, mediators and brokers; they don't lead using directives and bureaucratic controls.

### TIPS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

- Clearly articulate your expectations of leaders within the collaboration (e.g. values, skills, competencies) so they are aware of what is expected of them and how their performance may be evaluated.
- Provide training for leaders on collaboration leadership and the unique talents and skills required.
- Think about whether you have the right leaders in place and if necessary, recruit more effective leaders.

## RENEWAL:

- The governance structures and processes have been revisited since we first came together and have evolved with our changing circumstances.
- Our structure and processes are flexible and adaptable so we can respond to opportunities and changing circumstances while also allowing us to be clear about how we work together and achieve results.

## TIPS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

- Regularly evaluate your structure and processes and fix aspects that are no longer functioning well.
- Identify any barriers (e.g. too bureaucratic; leadership is not engaged; partners aren't sure what role they are playing) hindering your collaboration's ability to respond to opportunities and threats and then develop strategies for eliminating or mitigating them.



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