



collaborate to innovate

a resource guide for community
and voluntary organisations



The solid foundations series

Preface

Partnerships, alliances, joint programming, mergers, joint ventures...whatever these new forms of strategic positioning may be known as, they are crucial for the sustainability and survival of many community and voluntary organisations in Ireland today. Over recent years, there has been a dramatic reduction in core funding, grants and donations and this has coincided with an increase in service demand in many cases. One way in which community and voluntary organisations can do 'more with less' is by engaging in one of the many forms of collaboration with another like-minded organisation.

Engagement in collaborative endeavours with other organisations within the sector can have wide-ranging benefits, from reducing costs, to sharing resources and increasing the depth, breadth, scope and accessibility of services for the people that require them.

Looking outside your own organisation and taking the time to identify the right partners and the right areas to collaborate around is one way of ensuring the continued sustainability and survival of your organisation in these challenging times.

Collaborate to Innovate is the sixth guide in our Solid Foundations series, which aims to build capacity in the community, voluntary and charitable sector.

It is based on the project of the same name which we were able to deliver with the generous support of The Vodafone Ireland Foundation and Prospectus Strategy Consulting.

This guide has been developed to help organisations:

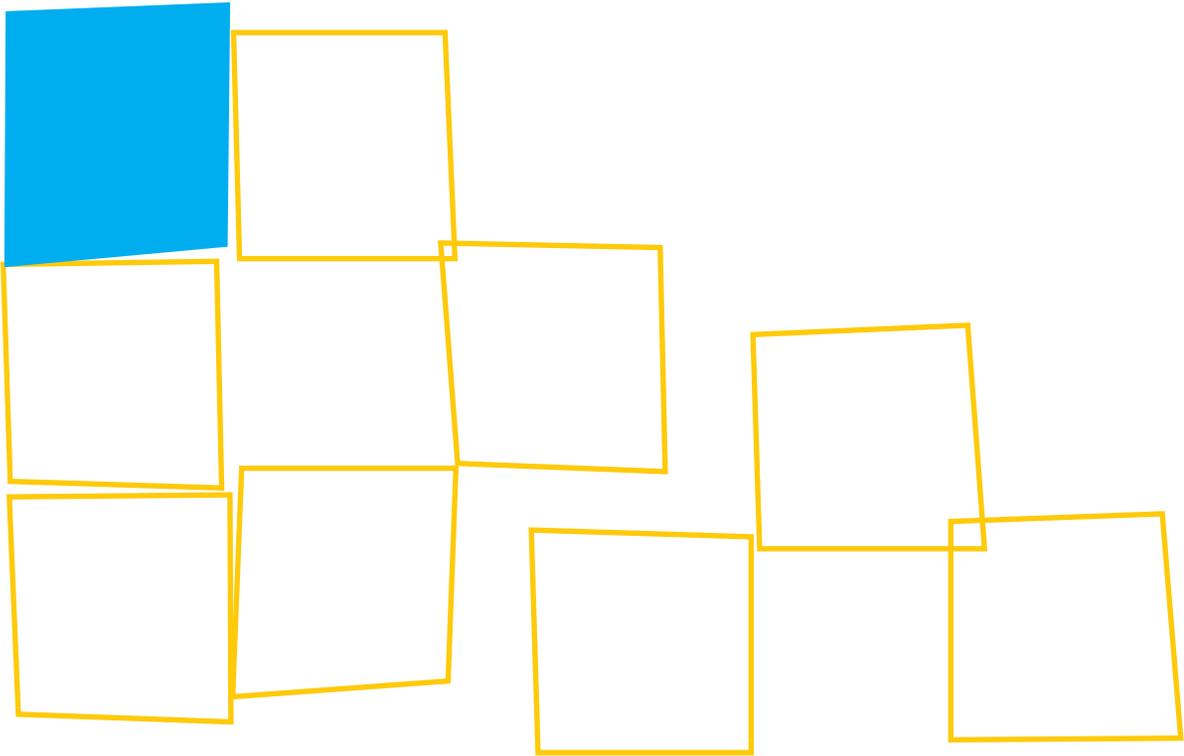
- Understand what 'collaboration' is, and the different degrees of collaboration
- Learn how to identify potential partners and areas for collaboration
- Create a culture of collaboration within their organisations
- Avoid the most common pitfalls
- Collaborate more effectively.

We hope that you find it useful. If you have any additional information for future editions or any questions whatsoever, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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The Wheel is a leading support and representative body for community, voluntary and charitable organisations across Ireland. We provide a wide range of information and support services, training and advice to individuals and organisations involved in community and voluntary activity to help them to get their work done. The Wheel represents the shared interests of our members and the wider community and voluntary sector to government and other decision makers.

Disclaimer

Our goal is to provide comprehensive, timely and accurate information. This publication contains references and pointers to information kept or provided by other organisations. We therefore cannot guarantee their accuracy. It is our policy to correct any errors brought to our attention. Comments and suggestions are always welcome. Note that this is not a replacement for seeking legal advice should that be necessary.

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Who this guide is for

This guide has been prepared first and foremost to meet the needs of established organisations in the Irish community and voluntary sector. Most organisations in Ireland today, both private and public are looking at ways to reduce costs, review and evaluate the services that they provide and use their resources in a more effective and efficient manner. Alongside this, organisations are looking at how they might partner with other organisations to achieve economies of scale, gain wider reach and to avoid duplication and unnecessary replication of services. This guide should prove useful to realising these benefits.

The guide has been written with Boards and Senior Management Teams in mind - i.e. those who set and oversee the strategic direction of the organisation, and those who execute that strategy on a daily basis. In saying that, this guide should prove a valuable resource for all staff within community and voluntary organisations in order to create a culture where mutually beneficial partnerships with other organisations are seen as being positive and conducive to service development and delivery.

We hope that all readers will find something that is of use to them and trust that it will stimulate people in leadership positions to think about collaboration in a strategic way in the months and years to come.

How to use this guide

The guide is divided into five chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Diagnostic Phase
3. Planning Phase
4. Implementation Phase
5. Key 'take-aways'

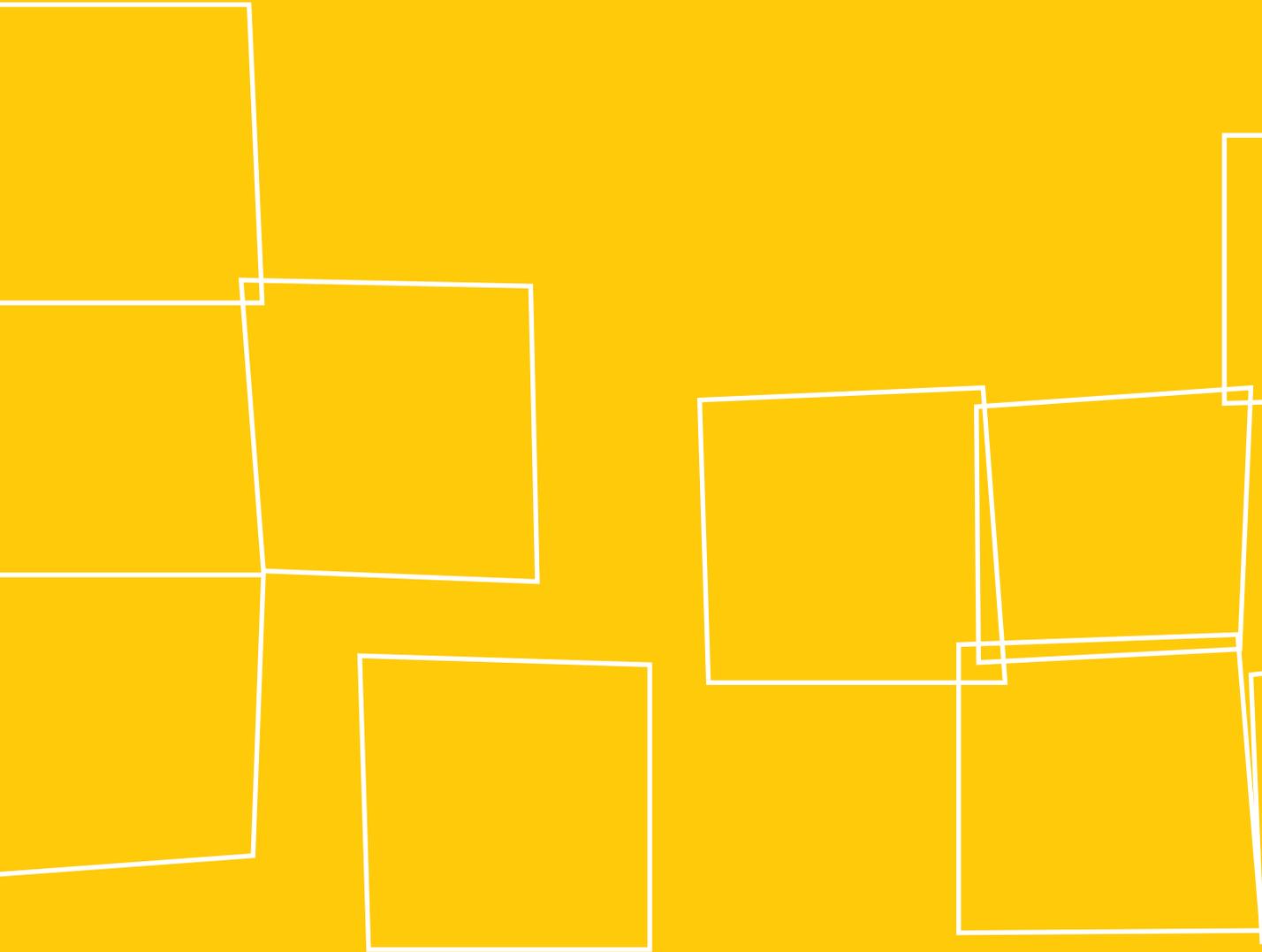
Different sections of this guide will be more or less relevant depending on your organisation and stage of development. Readers should read the introductory chapter to familiarise themselves with the concepts and definitions and then feel free to dip in and out of the guide as they require.

The introduction section will give an overview of the 'Collaborate to Innovate' programme, which was the genesis of this guide. It will outline the steps in the programme and give an overall synopsis of how the programme came about, how participants were chosen and the steps involved in aiding the participant organisations through their collaborative journeys. This section will also serve to introduce readers to the 'Collaboration matrix', a tool used to assess and plot your organisations position along the collaborative spectrum.

The subsequent chapters outline the various phases that any collaborative initiative typically goes through, namely; The Diagnostic, Planning, and Implementation phases. Within these chapters, we also give specific examples of the different degrees of collaboration, namely: Coordination, Alliance and Integration. This ensures that readers can assess what appetite their organisations might have for collaboration in the first instance, and what stage they might currently be at in the second instance.

Key thoughts on specific challenges, benefits, risks, critical success factors and pitfalls associated with each type and stage of collaboration are provided throughout the chapters and a summation of key 'take-aways' is presented towards the end of the guide.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction



1.1 What this guide is about and the process involved in developing it

This guide is about collaboration, and outlines best practice in collaborative working. The origin of this guide is from the 'Collaborate to Innovate' work programme conducted in 2011 which was initiated by a funding application from The Wheel to the Vodafone Ireland Foundation. The genesis of the programme was The Wheel's recognition that there were increasing strains on the community and voluntary sector due to a variety of reasons. A key challenge for everyone in the current economic climate is how can we 'do more with less?' For the country's 8,000+ charities the need is acute, with an ever-increasing demand for services, while government funding is simultaneously falling.

It was recognised by The Wheel that one very important way in which charities can successfully 'do more with less' is by collaborating with similar organisations to continue to deliver their joint-missions successfully, by pooling their resources in a working partnership to achieve economies of scale and deliver efficiencies. There is indeed a strong prevailing view that organisations should be working more closely together in an integrated and holistic manner, with a collective focus on the needs of people who require a number of different supports and interventions.

The programme sought to address the need for greater collaboration among community, voluntary and charitable organisations in Ireland. It was designed to support organisations that were embarking, or were considering embarking, on a process of collaborative working, up to and including merger, so that they could avoid the pitfalls associated with this particularly challenging mode of working, and maximise their chances of attaining a positive outcome to their endeavours.

Ten different clusters of organisations were chosen to receive tailored consulting support from Prospectus Strategy Consultants. Some of the organisations already had an identified partner that they hoped to collaborate with, whilst some organisations wanted to explore the potential areas and potential partners.

Much of the material, hints, tips and information in this guide stem from the real issues, challenges and opportunities that the participant organisations faced during their collaborative journey.

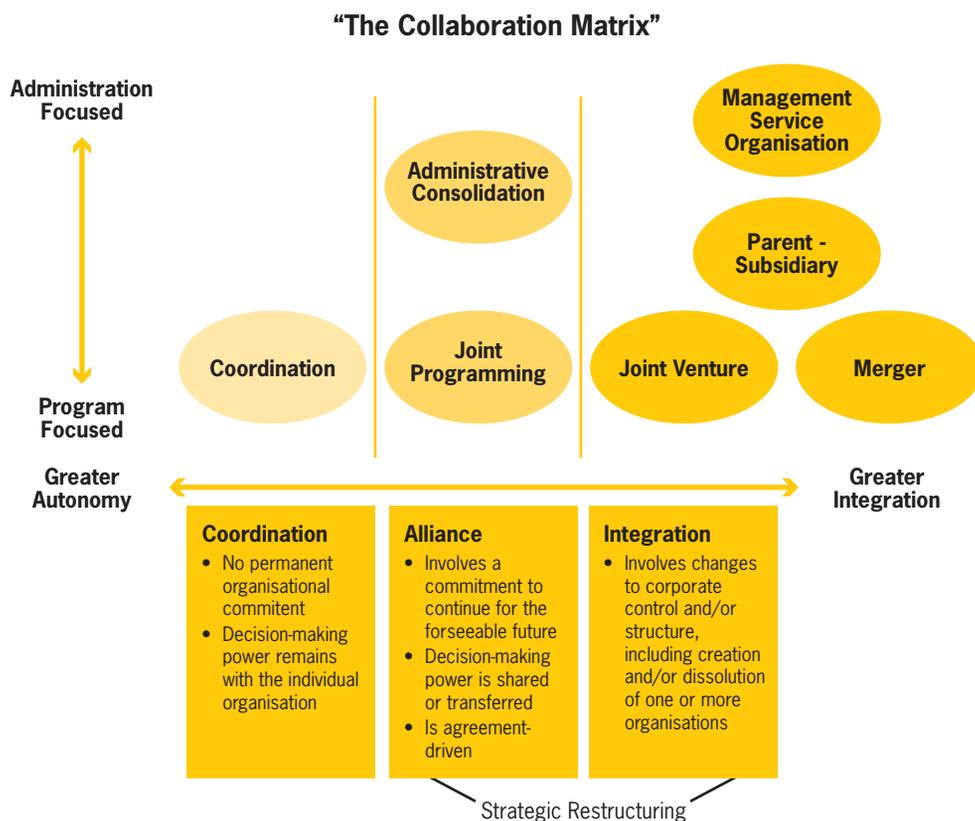
1.2 The ‘Collaboration matrix’

This section serves to introduce readers to the ‘Collaboration Matrix’, a useful tool that can be used to assess your own organisation’s appetite for collaboration and how formal you wish that collaboration to be. The model has been adapted from a report, compiled by David La Piana and Amelia Kohm in ‘In Search of Strategic Solutions - a funders briefing on nonprofit strategic restructuring’. The basic premise of the model is that there are different types of collaboration and they vary in the degree to which they are administration focused versus programme focused, and secondly, whether there is greater autonomy or greater integration of the participating organisations.

We can see from the matrix below that there are three distinct groupings. Firstly, coordination, seen on the far left of the matrix, is the loosest form of partnership, in that there is no formal integration amongst the organisations in question. Information sharing and coordinating efforts typify this type of arrangement and no change in governance or ownership ensues.

Moving toward the middle of the matrix, we can see that there are two forms of partnership type in the alliance category, namely; Administrative, Consolidation and Joint Programming.

These will both be explained overleaf.



Based on model in: *In Search of Strategic Solutions (Grantmakers for Effective Organisations, 2003)*

Both of the alliance type partnerships are agreement driven and usually result in a signed document such as a Memorandum of Understanding or a Service Level Agreement to outline what is expected of each partner.

In the administrative consolidation type of partnership, this might entail sharing office space, office equipment or administrative staff members. In a joint programming initiative, a programme is run cooperatively between two or more organisations, such as an advocacy campaign, an information sharing event, a seminar or even a lobbying initiative. The key with both of these arrangements is that the organisations operate independently under their own governance structure outside these alliances.

TOP TIPS

A worthwhile exercise to engage in for any organisation is to map each previous collaborative initiative into the matrix in order to ascertain where the organisational strengths, skills and experience lie.

This will also give an indication of the organisations 'appetite' for collaboration and will bring focus and clarity when deciding on the type of collaboration and degree of integration in the future.

If we look at the right hand side of the matrix, we enter the integration sphere. Here, the partnerships get more formal and also involve a change in governance, structure and organisational control.

There are four types of partnership under the integration heading, and they are: management service organisation, joint-venture, parent-subsidiary and merger.

The establishment of a management service organisation (MSO) occurs when two or more voluntary organisations establish an organisation to provide some or all of their administrative functions such as finance, fundraising, human resources, information technology, procurement and any other shared back-office function.

In a parent-subsidiary type of strategic restructuring, one of the organisations oversees the other(s). This usually happens when both organisations agree that it makes sense to merge, but one of the organisations funding might be put in jeopardy by this new arrangement. A parent-subsidiary structure is a mechanism which can protect the funding streams of both partners.

A joint-venture is a well known form of partnership in the commercial world and is becoming more common in the not-for-profit, community and voluntary sector also. It entails two or more organisations forming a new structure to further a specific administrative or programmatic end.

Lastly, a merger occurs when previously separate organisations completely combine programmatic, administrative, and governance functions in order to create a new single entity, with one mission, vision, set of strategic objectives, management team and Board of Directors.

1.3 Typical collaboration process

Organisations in the community and voluntary sector usually progress through a number of steps when engaging in collaboration. The first step, the diagnostic phase, is used to understand and articulate the rationale for engaging in a collaborative initiative with another organisation. Questions that should be asked at this stage include:

- What social problem are we trying to address?
- What are our desired outcomes from this process?
- What would success look like?
- What partners should we invite to engage with us?
- What impact will the collaboration have on our organisation?
- What impact will the collaboration have on the sector?
- What are the key drivers for considering collaboration for each organisation?

These are difficult questions to answer at such an early stage, but should be discussed and debated thoroughly in order to set the project up for success. They should be discussed both prior to, and after securing, a partner(s) so that all are on board with this basic first steps.

The second step, the planning phase is where a lot of the work is done and getting this step right is crucial for the success of the collaboration.

At this stage, an organisation will have decided on a collaborative area to proceed with and will have had an initial approach / engagement with their targeted partner(s). The task now is to ensure that the initiative is planned thoroughly and effectively and that good project management principles are employed. Depending on the type of collaboration and the degree of integration required, a number of questions should be considered at this stage:

- Do we have the resources in order to make this happen?
- Who should be communicated to, how and when?
- Are there any inherent risks in going forward with the collaboration?
- Do we need any outside skills; HR, Finance, Strategy, Legal?
- Will the structure and governance of the organisation change?

The third step is the implementation phase and it is here that the change - in whatever shape or form that might be - actually takes place. This can be quite a challenging period as a number of important changes and events occur in quick succession. Again, depending on the type of collaboration, a number of key decisions need to be made around asset transfer, service level agreements, memorandums of understanding, recruitment, training, branding, marketing, organisational governance, structure and hierarchy and all the sensitivities that these decisions entail.

1.4 Participant mix in the process

Prospectus Strategy Consultants, while working with the ten clusters of organisations on the Collaborate to Innovate programme, worked with organisations that covered the whole spectrum of the collaboration matrix.

Each cluster of organisations had a 'lead organisation' which in many cases, came to the process with one or more identified partners. In one instance, it was seventeen partners. Altogether, thirty-six organisations were involved in receiving support for their collaborative endeavours through this programme.

For example, in the Collaborate to Innovate programme, four out of the ten projects were classed as **merger** projects. By this, we mean that two or more partner organisations applied for the programme and came to the table with the objective of either exploring or progressing a merger.

As can be seen from the collaboration matrix diagram, this involves changes to corporate control and is usually more complex than collaborations with less integration.

Moving left across the collaboration matrix, the Collaborate to Innovate programme also had organisations in the **alliance** sphere. For instance, one of the projects in the programme involved two organisations in the learning sector that wanted to set up a policy promotion group in order to initiate a joint advocacy initiative. Through engagement and discussion, this was achieved.

At the left of the collaboration matrix, is the realm of **coordination**, and this can range from a loose alliance or network, to a stronger federation type arrangement. The key test of coordination though, is that decision making power and authority must stay with the individual entities. The Collaborate to Innovate programme involved many of these projects, from an organisation that provides services to those isolated in the community, to an organisation taking the lead role in establishing a suicide prevention network. All of these exciting projects will be discussed in more detail throughout the following chapters.

1.5 Initial thoughts from the Community and Voluntary Sector

At the beginning of the programme a series of half-day seminars were held around Ireland in order to introduce the programme to a wide range of people from the community and voluntary sector. As well as discussing the details of the programme, attendees were asked to participate in an interactive element of the workshop in order to capture their views on various aspects of collaboration. In all, over 120 leaders, managers and staff from community and voluntary organisations were asked the following questions:

- What are the drivers for collaboration?
- What are the potential benefits?
- What are the major challenges?
- What are the key things that need to be present for collaboration to succeed?

A great deal of valuable information was fed back through the groups attending the seminars and it was all the more pertinent due to the fact that these were a representative cross-section of the organisations that were currently facing the challenges mentioned above. The top answers to the above questions are provided here, and the comprehensive lists are found in the appendices.

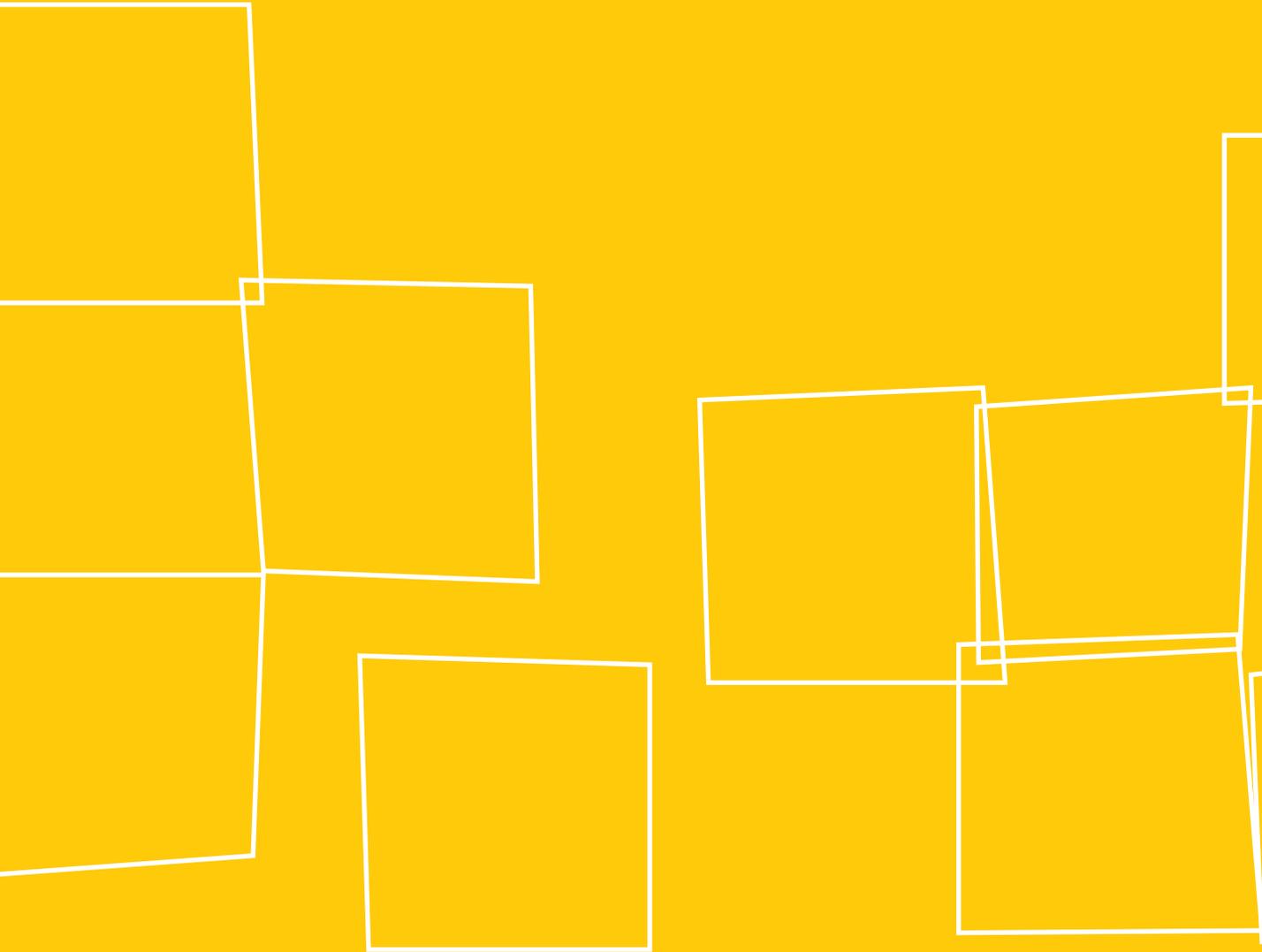
The main drivers for organisations to consider entering into a partnership with another organisation were said to be: to ensure a better provision of services; to avoid duplication; to gain a stronger voice in the sector; for financial sustainability, and; to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

When we look at the potential benefits that collaboration can bring to organisations, we were told that the main expected benefits were: increased service provision in terms of scale, scope and reach; a reduction in costs; an improvement in organisational focus and clarity; a stronger voice together, and finally; increased organisational skill-set.

From our discussion around the major challenges to be aware of when collaborating, the seminar attendees listed the below as being the most important challenges to be aware of: 'keeping up the day job'; having a shared understanding of the desired future state; bridging the organisational cultures; having the right skill-sets to plan and implement the change, and; rumour control.

The key things that the community and voluntary leaders said needed to be present for collaboration to succeed, or Critical Success Factors were: Board buy-in; a real and committed effort to communication, trust, respect and honesty; clear objectives from the outset, and finally; open-mindedness from everyone involved.

CHAPTER 2: Diagnostic Phase



2.1 Introduction

The diagnostic phase is a key phase in any move towards collaboration. In essence, it is this phase that sets the direction of the collaborative endeavour and working to a successful outcome is hugely dependent on making the right start. A number of fundamental questions need to be asked at this point in order to ensure that the right foundation is there for building collaborative relationships. In this chapter, we will explore some of these questions and provide the tools and techniques that can be used depending on whether your organisation is at the Coordination, Alliance, or Integration phase.

2.2 Coordination Projects

As we mentioned in section 1.2, coordination is the loosest form of partnership, in that there is no formal integration amongst the organisations in question and activity is usually centred on information sharing or some other form of joint coordination of efforts. Three out of the ten projects in the Collaborate to Innovate programme were in the 'Coordination' space on the collaboration matrix and those organisations came to the programme as stand-alone organisations looking to explore collaboration.

The three organisations were at the earliest stages of collaboration, which we call, the diagnostic phase. At this stage, the aim is to get a sense for the organisations appetite for collaboration, and explore any previous collaborative initiatives that they may have been engaged in.

TOP TIPS

Key questions to ask at this stage include:

- What does 'collaboration' mean to your organisation?
- What are the key drivers and desired outcomes for the organisation from collaboration?
- What kinds of collaboration have you been involved in to date (if any)?
- What lessons has the organisation learned from previous collaborations?
- Are there any key collaboration challenges unique to your organisation?
- What benefits do you hope to realise from collaboration?

Alongside this, it is useful to have a discussion around any initial ideas that the organisation may have for a collaborative project. There are two parts to this exercise. Firstly, the organisation should decide on the area that they would like to coordinate with another organisation around. For example, is it a loose alliance centering on service provision, or does it entail sharing information, policies, procedures and best practice? Secondly, the organisation should look at the potential partners that they may be able to coordinate with to achieve this agreed aim. As many of the diagnostic tools are relevant to the coordination, alliance and integration types of collaboration, we will elaborate on the above in the next section: Alliance.

2.3 Alliance Projects

As was mentioned in the preceding section, regardless of whether the aim is for coordination, alliance or integration - two fundamental questions in the diagnostic phase are:

- 1. What areas do we want to collaborate around?
 - 2. What partners would we like to invite?
- 

It can be difficult at this stage to think of real and meaningful collaboration areas for your organisation to engage in, so to start you off, here is a list that should prove helpful:

Physical Space
1. National, Regional or Local offices
2. Meeting space and activity space
Shared Services
1. HR (Policies, procedures & admin)
2. Training (Volunteers, members, staff)
3. IT support & training
4. Shared membership databases
5. Accounting & book-keeping
6. Payroll
7. Administrative support
Collective Purchasing
1. Legal advice
2. Insurance
3. Office supplies & equipment
4. Telecoms
5. Transportation
6. Hotel/room hire
7. Printing & publishing
8. Auditors

While the previous list is mainly administration focused and concentrates on back-office savings, there are other areas to collaborate around to achieve your mission:

Joint Organisational Development Work
1. Policies relating to programme work (e.g. volunteers etc.)
2. Joint programme work
3. Board training & governance (boards and/or representative committees)
4. Research
Funding
1. Funding for your members (lobbying for increased resources and funding streams for your members and issues related to your sector)
2. Strategy for increasing core funding from government to NGOs
3. Accessing EU funding (identifying what's available, how to apply, understanding the processes, writing funding applications, etc.)
4. Fundraising (from the public, corporates, etc.)

The above lists are not exhaustive and there are many other areas that your organisation could collaborate around. For instance, one of the projects on the Collaborate to Innovate programme involved two organisations in the addiction services field sharing their staff members with one another, more specifically, one staff member from each organisation was to spend three months in the other organisation in order to improve knowledge sharing, improve the quality of referrals, maintain the retention rate and reduce the reoccurrence rate.

Collaboration can be as easy, simple and effective as that!

2.4 Integration Projects

Once the potential areas for collaboration are discussed and debated thoroughly and then specific initiatives are decided upon, it is time to look at which organisations it might make sense to partner with. This is done regardless of whether your organisation is pursuing the coordination, alliance or integration form of partnership, but is all the more pertinent for this section due to the fact that when we enter the integration sphere, changes to corporate control and/or structure ensue.

It is important to get this right at the outset and a certain amount of due diligence needs to be done depending on whether your organisation is pursuing a coordination, alliance or integration type arrangement.

TOP TIPS

If your organisation is considering entering into any form of partnership agreement, it is advisable that you obtain the necessary legal advice and carry out detailed due diligence. Your organisations legal representatives and accounting firm will be able to assist you with this.

When choosing potential partner organisations, our experience has shown that it is useful to view candidate partners through different lenses in order to ensure a good fit. Some of the key questions to ask about potential partners at this point include:

- How does their mission and vision fit with ours?
- How many staff do they have and what are the contract arrangements?
- What about reputation – do they have any skeletons in the closet that could harm our own brand?
- What sectors are they involved in and what services do they provide?
- Where are they based and what is their reach?
- What is the relative size and scale of both organisations?
- What is the situation with finances and the future sustainability of the potential partner?

It is important to note that there are many more legal and technical avenues that must be explored if you would like to progress with a certain partner organisation, but for the purposes of this phase, i.e. the Diagnostic phase, an initial discussion around the rationale for approaching potential partners will suffice. On the following pages, you will find the key learnings from the Collaborate to Innovate programme, from the organisations that worked through the Diagnostic phase.

2.5 Benefits, critical success factors, pitfalls and templates

The Collaborate to Innovate programme assisted five organisations that were in the diagnostic phase of their collaborative endeavour. Of these five organisations, three were pursuing the coordination approach while two of the organisations were attempting to form an alliance, as seen on the 'Collaboration Matrix'. Seen below, are some of the key learnings that the participants took from the process:

2.5.1 What are the potential benefits from collaboration?

- Shared experiences, shared user benefits and cost benefits
- "You are forced to learn to share your toys!"
- Collaboration stops people from becoming stagnant and ensures progression
- Helped us to look objectively at ourselves as an organisation

- We are now more willing to step outside our comfort zone
- Active networking and sharing of experiences and information
- It reduces isolation and inertia for all partners involved
- It gives local groups access to national and international resources
- Collaboration can lead to enhanced service delivery and all round improved outcomes.

2.5.2 Critical Success Factors?

- To be willing not to be in control
- Willingness to go outside comfort zone
- “Leave the baggage at the door”
- Structure, clarity and accountability
- Comittment to ‘stay the course’
- Authority to make decisions
- Professional chairing of meetings, good facilitation and administrative resources
- An agreed timescale and built in review and evaluation of the process
- Respect, honesty and trust
- Time – be aware that it takes time
- Consistency – having the same people at meetings
- Capturing what has been happening/said at meetings
- Courage, openness, bravery
- Independent facilitation of the process.

2.5.3 Pitfalls to be avoided?

- Taking on an unequal share in the collaboration
- “Too many cooks!”
- Not having done your research into who you might be collaborating with
- Time delays – partner not being ready when you are
- Not being upfront at the outset as to what parties want from the initiative
- Being over-ambitious initially or too prescriptive in terms of outcomes
- Having third parties come into the process at a later stage
- Rushing to the end line without engagement and consultation.

2.5.4 Templates

Once your organisation has come up with a list of potential collaboration areas to pursue, it is useful to rank the areas in order to ascertain which initiatives the organisation should focus on. Depending on your organisations resources, it may only be feasible to pursue one or two initiatives. Use the below template to rank the potential areas. List the options in the far left column and rank them from 1-10 under each heading. The higher the overall score the better.

Collaboration Area	Immediacy of the requirement (1-10)	Impact for the organisation re: achievement of mission (1-10)	Ease of implementation (1-10)	Overall Score
Area A				
Area B				
Area C				
Area D				
Area E				

Once you decide on the initiative(s) that your organisation would like to focus on, it is useful to fill out the below template in order to ‘sense-check’ the idea. Think about the prompts in the left hand column and write in some relevant key points in the corresponding right hand column. Why not do this with your management team and also with your target partner(s) initially?

Alignment with Mission & Vision	
Desired outcome(s)	
Organisational impact (Financial, resourcing etc.)	
Sectoral impact	
Challenges	
Risks	
Sustainability	

2.6 Case study - Diagnostic

An interesting project in the Collaborate to Innovate programme was the 'Rural Transport Collaboration Group'. The group, consisting of five different community based transport organisations, applied to the programme to make progress on an existing collaborative working proposal, with the aim of bringing together local transport stakeholders to counter transport deprivation in the region, and to promote the adoption of smarter travel approaches.

Prospectus Strategy Consultants worked with the group and used the Social Change Model as a framework to progress the collaboration. Firstly, we needed to develop a problem statement, i.e. a clear, distinct and precise statement of the problem that we were attempting to solve. After some discussion and debate in the workshop setting, the group agreed on the following:

There is a lack of affordable and accessible transport in the rural areas of the County for:

- Small social community groups
- Elderly people in the area
- People with special needs
- Unemployed with no access to transport.

Once we had agreed on the problem statement, we were able to flip it so that it became the mission of the group. Therefore, the mission of the Rural Transport Collaboration Group was: "To provide affordable and accessible transport in the rural areas of the County".

The next step for the group was to identify the symptoms of the problem, i.e. how does the problem manifest itself? After a thorough discussion, we came up with the following:

- Lack of access to services
- Inefficient/lack of transport
- Duplication of services
- Lack of coordination between providers.

Once the group had a firm grasp of the symptoms, we turned our attention to the barriers that would inhibit us in solving the problem. We agreed that these were:

- Lack of funding
- Prohibitively expensive insurance costs
- Lack of 'D Licence drivers'
- Communication problems.

Attention then turned to the levers that the group could use to break down the barriers to allow the symptoms to be tackled and eventually address the problem. It was at this stage that the collaborative effort of the group really came to the fore and a sense of focus and synergy was evident to all involved.

*****TOP TIPS*****
When working through the Social Change Model it is important to recognise and focus on the role that your organisation or collaborative partnership will play. Concentrate on the areas where you can make a real impact and don't get carried away by trying to be all things to all people!

For each of these initiatives, the assigned group members completed the 'sense-check' template as shown previously. This was to ensure that the rationale for progressing the collaborative initiative was well justified.

The next step for the collaboration group to undertake was to identify further partner organisations in order to progress the various initiatives. The thinking behind inviting other organisations to join the effort was based on the following question:

What other organisations or individuals do we need around the table to make this project a success?



The members from the five organisations came up with the following levers for change:

- Pooling of organisational resources
 - Transport
 - Funding
 - Human
- Negotiating a 'Joint Insurance Scheme'
- Driver training for 'D licenses'
- Joint planning of transport services
- Lobbying and advocacy
- New funding sources
- Communication between stakeholders
- Provision of new/extended services
- Collaboration with external partners
- Increase awareness about existing services.

Each of the collaboration group members drew on their personal contacts and networks in order to create relationships with the stakeholders that could influence the success of the initiative and this achieved positive results. The criteria that were used to assess potential partners were:

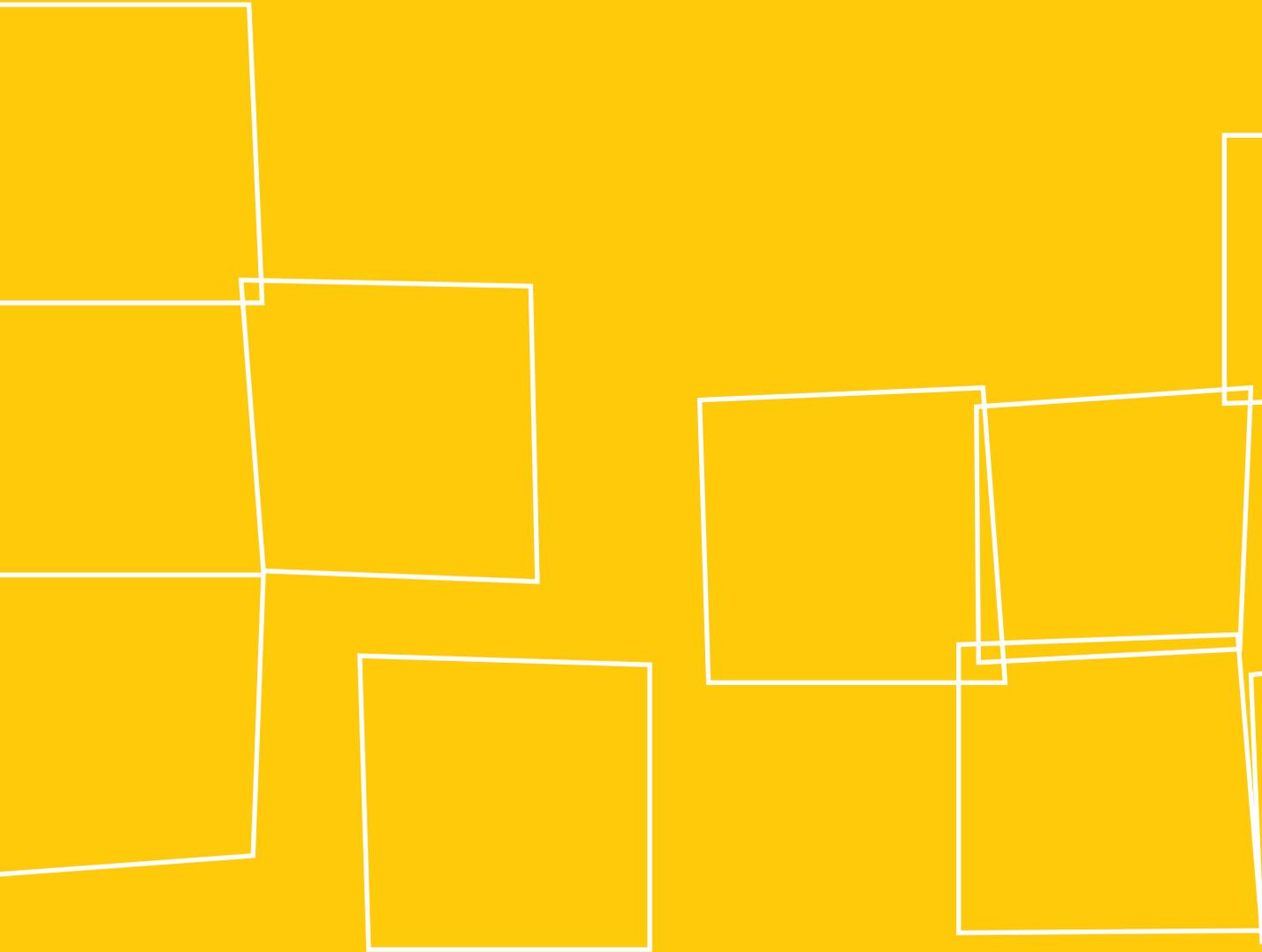
1. Vision and mission
2. Finances
3. Location
4. Willingness to collaborate.

Once this was complete, the group undertook the task of completing a risk analysis, an immediate action plan and a high-level implementation plan, all of which will be discussed in the following chapters. So, how successful was the Rural Transport Collaboration Group?

- They subsequently received funding for a disabled driver training pilot project
- An insurance company provided more competitive quotes for vehicles
- Their insurance company is keen to quote for disabled minibus drivers
- Collaborated with the leading regional University around transport research
- The group has since launched a new 'Smarter Travel' website
- Have organised a Rural Transport Seminar to mark Social Inclusion Week
- Launched the Driver Training Pilot Project.

This success was down to the commitment, dedication and willingness to collaborate, from all members involved in the project.

CHAPTER 3: Planning Phase



3.1 Introduction

The planning phase will be the largest body of work in your collaborative endeavour. At this stage, you will have identified the areas that you would like to collaborate around and you will have identified and approached your collaboration partners. You should be confident at this stage that you have a valid and well reasoned rationale for the collaboration, so don't be afraid to take that leap of faith! The amount of work and type of activities in this phase will vary, and will be largely dependent on the number of partners in your collaboration initiative and the degree of formality around the arrangement i.e. Coordination, alliance or integration.

3.2 Coordination Projects

Moving firstly to the planning phase for coordination type projects, there will be a reasonable amount of work to do in this phase regardless of whether your organisation is coordinating around information sharing, joint training events or any other loose arrangement. For example, one of the projects in the Collaborate to Innovate programme involved two organisations in the education space sharing internal policies, guidelines, standard operating procedures, templates and methods of working for a variety of different departments, from HR, to finance and I.T. The organisations in question also explored the potential for sharing membership lists, holding joint staff development events, joint research initiatives and dedicated meetings for counterparts in the respective organisations to discuss and share information relevant to their particular function. Through the efforts of these counterpart staff members, a great deal of information was shared, and this in turn saved time, effort, resources and money.

Although the above coordination example might seem relatively simple and straight forward, it does take planning and a degree of project management from the people involved.

*****TOP TIPS*****

It is advisable to create a project plan for even the most simple collaboration efforts. This ensures that there is a commitment from those involved, there are timelines set for completion, and there is a logical flow to the tasks in the initiative. A Gantt chart can be easily created from many of the packages in the Microsoft Office suite and there is a dedicated package called Office Project for exactly this purpose. A project plan example is provided in the templates section of this chapter.

In practice, coordination type collaborations do not require as much planning as alliances or integrations as they are not as formal. However, it is good practice to 'get into the habit' of carrying out rigorous project planning and project management... you never know when you might need it!

3.3 Alliance Projects

As we saw from an earlier description, an alliance can consist of administrative consolidation, joint-programming, or a variant of both. The planning required for this form of partnership is more complex than for a coordination type arrangement. Whilst working with the organisations that were in the planning phase, we found it useful to conduct a risk analysis at the outset. We did this to ensure that all possible issues were identified up-front and that they did not surface once the collaboration progressed.

For instance, one of the organisations on the Collaborate to Innovate project dealt in the area of providing information and guidance around the area of unmarried parents and their families. There were a number of collaboration and alliance ideas posed and the project team decided that a risk analysis would help in deciding which areas to prioritise and focus efforts on. Some of the risks that were identified were:

Brand damage, financial implications of over-commitment and the dilution of the mission.



Once these risks are identified, it is useful to plot them into an impact/severity matrix as seen on page 27. It is also good practice to assign a risk manager in order to actively monitor and respond to risks as they arise.

As well as the project planning and risk analysis activities, another core item to be addressed in the planning phase, and especially in the realm of alliances is: Service Level Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding.

A Service Level Agreement or SLA, is a contract between two organisations, which outlines the nature, quality and scope of the services to be provided. Typical contents might include:

- Minimum performance criteria
- Remedial Action
- Penalties for non-performance
- Technical definitions

A Memorandum of Understanding or MOU, on the other hand, is a written agreement put in place to establish a clear understanding of how an arrangement will practically function and each party's role and responsibilities. Contents may include:

- Commitments from each party
- Roles and responsibilities
- Process for changing agreement
- Timeframes

It is advisable to draw up both an SLA and MOU during the planning stage if you are entering into an alliance with any partner organisation(s). You should seek legal advice from your legal representative regarding this.

3.4 Integration Projects

Planning for an integration type partnership will entail carrying out much of the work that we have seen in the last two sections. Here though, because of the sometimes confidential and sensitive nature of the change, a dedicated stakeholder analysis and communication plan is also advised. As we saw at the outset, integration type partnerships can take the form of Management Service Organisations, Parent-subsidiary arrangements, Joint ventures or Mergers. Some of these types of arrangements may impact on the current roles of some staff in the organisation and it is therefore important to ensure the right people are communicated to at the right time, in the right way and with the right message. That rule also holds true for all of your other stakeholders.

As an example, one of the projects in the Collaborate to Innovate programme consisted of two Community Drugs Teams exploring the possibility of a merger. Having gone through the rationale, the plan, the risks, their journey to date and their expectations, we decided to brainstorm a list of potential stakeholders and devise a communication plan. A stakeholder can be defined as "A person, group, or organisation that has a direct or indirect stake in an organisation because it can affect or be affected by the organisation's actions, objectives, and policies". When we used this definition, we arrived at a comprehensive list that contained the following: Staff, Service users, Board, Funders, Local Communities, Politicians, Banks, Suppliers, Media and more.

Once the team generated a comprehensive list we were able to plot the stakeholders into a stakeholder matrix as seen in the template on page 28. We were then able to ascertain which stakeholders would be supportive of any potential merger and which stakeholders might be resistant. The stakeholders were also ranked according to their level of influence, ranging from 'little or no influence' to 'significant influence'.

Once we had done this, we concentrated on creating a communications plan. Key considerations to be taken into account when creating a communications plan for each stakeholder are as follows:

- Communication type
- Communication objective
- Medium
- Frequency
- Audience
- Owner
- Deliverable

In the planning stage for integration type projects, it is also important to work out the timing and sequencing of announcements. This, in itself requires a substantial amount of planning as it needs to take into account each of the stakeholders, the individual message that will be communicated to them and the optimum timing for the communication. Communication leaks and rumours can be detrimental to the success of a project if the right communications plan is not put in place.

3.5 Benefits, critical success factors, pitfalls and templates

Out of the ten projects on the Collaborate to Innovate programme, there were three in the planning phase of their collaborative initiative. Of these three projects, one was pursuing an alliance type arrangement and the other two were attempting an integration.

Seen below are some of the key learnings that the participants took from the process:

3.5.1 What are the potential benefits from collaboration?

- Trust and relationship building
- Renewed enthusiasm
- New impetus
- Progression of service
- Increased efficiencies
- Expansion of expertise, resources, knowledge base
- Savings and cost containment
- New service development and delivery
- Expanded skills mix
- Networking and contact building
- Can help protect an organisation in a time of decreasing resources
- Breaks down anxieties and barriers
- Engaging more effectively
- It builds trust and openness
- Wider geographical reach
- Reducing duplication and waste.

3.5.2 Critical Success Factors?

- Weekly communication
- Monitoring of progress
- Trust
- An independent Chair is beneficial
- Honesty about the bottom line
- Clarity of expectations
- Respect
- Equality
- Communication
- Commitment
- Openness (honesty, open minded)
- Listening skills
- Unity of purpose
- Strong skilled facilitation
- Stepping outside comfort zone.

3.5.3 Pitfalls to be avoided?

- Unrealistic timelines
- Ensure roles are clear from the outset
 - Who does what, and when?
- Lack of clarity around expectations
- Lack of shared understanding
- No shared expectation of benefits
- Having too many people involved
- Ensure mechanisms for decision making
- Obtain agreement/consensus in writing
- Make sure that there is sufficient time to work through the big issues
- Ensure there is sufficient time to progress items between meetings
- Management must have faith in their delegates
- Set the parameters of the merger – be clear why you are doing it.

3.5.4 Templates

A detailed project plan is crucial for the success of any collaborative project and should be completed within the planning stage. Below is a sample template, but feel free to tailor your project plan depending on the complexity of the project.

Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Name of Activity • Name of Sub Activity • x • x • x				
X • x • x • x • x				
X • x • x • x • x				

Activity Timeframe
 Sub Activity Timeframe
 ★ Meeting

The below matrix is a useful tool to use when analysing risks. Hold a brainstorming session to generate a list of risks. Once this is done, plot them into the matrix below depending on the likelihood of them occurring and the impact or severity if they did occur.

		Impact / Severity				
		Minimal	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Certain					
	Likely					
	Possible					
	Unlikely					
	Rare					

The stakeholder analysis matrix is a helpful way to analyse which stakeholders will be allies in the change initiative and which stakeholders may be somewhat resistant. As before, once the stakeholders are identified, plot them into the matrix depending on their level of influence and their perceived support level. This will assist you when developing the communications plan.

		Support Level			
		Unknown	Supportive	Neutral	Resistant
	Significant Influence	Stakeholder A	Stakeholder E	Stakeholder I	Stakeholder M
	Somewhat Influential	Stakeholder B	Stakeholder F	Stakeholder J	Stakeholder N
	Little / No Influence	Stakeholder C	Stakeholder G	Stakeholder K	Stakeholder O
	Unknown	Stakeholder D	Stakeholder H	Stakeholder L	Stakeholder P

3.6 Case study - Planning

A good example of a project in the planning stage of a potential integration initiative, was between two organisations that work in the social care sector. The two organisations applied for a position on the Collaborate to Innovate Programme in order to explore and plan for a possible merger. Prospectus Strategy Consultants hosted three workshops with the CEOs and Chairs of the two organisations to investigate the possibilities.

Firstly we discussed each members' expectations of the process. This was necessary to ensure that all participants were of the same opinion as to what could be achieved. Then two members from each organisation then went to separate break-out rooms to answer the following questions with regard to their organisation:

- Why are we here?
- Who is our work aimed at?
- Who are the stakeholders that affect or are affected by our work?
- What are our core activities?
- What are our specific areas of focus?
- What makes us unique?

Luckily, when both groups came back together, the answers were quite similar. The next task was to explore the reasons and rationale for a possible merger as a group.

Once again, this consisted of working through various questions such as:

- What are the reasons for the merger?
- Why does a merger make sense?
- What are the key drivers and desired outcomes from the merger?
- What issues need to be explored?
- What benefits do you hope to realise at the end of this process?

*****TOP TIPS*****

With an integration project in the planning phase, it is important to have a firm Board commitment and involvement. Ideally, a working group should consist of the CEOs and Chairpersons from each organisation, plus one or two staff members from the Senior Management Team. Try to keep the working group size to 6 or 8 and ensure equal representation from each organisation.

As in other projects, it was decided that the Social Change Model would be a useful framework which could be used to focus on the nub of the issue that both organisations were attempting to address. This was done as a joint exercise between both organisations and entailed identifying and exploring the:

- **Problem statement**
- **Symptoms of the problem**
- **Barriers to change**
- **Leverage that we could use.**

It was decided that if the planning was to proceed, the working group would need to devise a proposal document for their respective Boards. The purpose of this document was to obtain Board approval to proceed with the planning of the merger. Key components of the proposal were as follows:

- The process to date
- Overview of both organisations
 - Size, locations, staff, finances & results
- Basis for merger
 - Rationale, drivers, synergies, & challenges
- Assessment of legal status
- Risk assessment
 - Financial, legal, operational & reputational
- New entity
 - Benefits, services, locations & structure.

Once the team had worked through the Social Change Model, we had an excellent idea of the problem that we were trying to address and we could place the merger discussion within the context of attempting to address the problem as a potential united entity.

As with any large-scale change project, there will be a host of issues and challenges that will arise throughout the planning and implementation phases and it is best to identify and discuss these challenges within the planning phase. It is wise to openly discuss these challenges during the planning phase so that insurmountable problems don't arise during the implementation phase, when a high level of time, resources and effort have already been committed to the initiative.

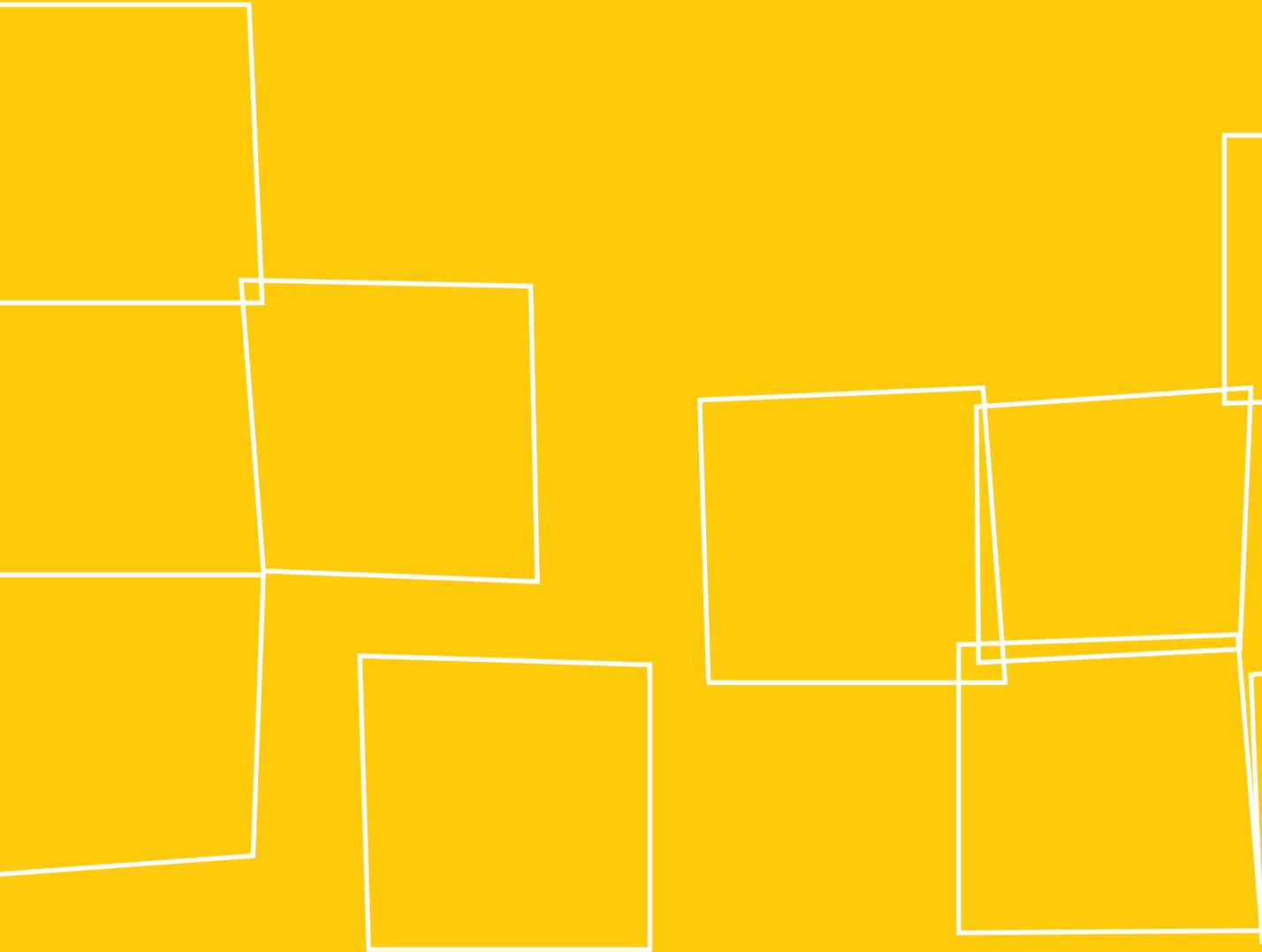
Therefore the team went about identifying potential future challenges facing a possible merged entity. Through a round-robin style brainstorming session, we arrived at the following list of potential challenges that needed to be taken into account at this stage:

- Branding
- Due diligence
- Board issues
- Vision
- Mission
- Target audience
- Legal status
- CEO position
- Culture
- Communication
- Staff buy-in
- Values

Once we had explored each of the above potential challenges, we devised a project plan to take into account the timing and sequencing of each of the activities that were needed to progress the initiative. As was explained in the previous chapter, a project plan is crucial for the success of any project and should outline the action item, start date, completion date, person responsible and any interdependencies between activities.

Considering that progress was going so well, the team then moved into the future piece, where they discussed and outlined what a future potential single entity might look like. The group analysed the various options under the headings of; Structure, Services provided and Additional benefits to members. This gave a sense of what a combined organisation could achieve. The outcome of the project was that a thorough and detailed proposal document was sent to both Boards for consideration. The detailed planning done made the merger a real possibility.

CHAPTER 4: Implementation Phase



4.1 Introduction

Once the diagnostic and planning phases are completed, the partner organisations will have agreed on: the area around which to collaborate; the formality of the collaboration; the number and type of partner organisations involved; and they will have worked through the rationale, benefits, risks, challenges, and; will have created a detailed project plan. At this stage, a lot of the 'heavy lifting' is now done. The phase we discuss in this chapter - the implementation phase - is where all of the planning becomes a reality: information is shared, joint-programmes are planned and delivered, assets are transferred and staff are reassigned... depending of course, on the type of collaboration being pursued. The point is though, that this is where the action happens.

4.2 Coordination Projects

Two of the projects in the Collaborate to Innovate programme reached the implementation phase of their coordination projects within the lifetime of the programme. Firstly, one of the organisations mentioned previously, a group that provides services to those isolated in the community, worked through the diagnostic and planning phases and began to execute and implement their chosen initiatives. One of their collaboration initiatives involved becoming the lead provider of community 'Meals on Wheels' to individuals isolated in the community. They did this by convening and facilitating information sharing events in order to coordinate and organise the current providers, with excellent results. Other initiatives that the group implemented were coordinating with other similar organisations to provide and receive relevant training at a reduced cost, and sharing office and meeting space with other like-minded organisations. In and of themselves, these were three simple initiatives but the outcome was reduced costs, wider service provision and higher quality. This success rests on the energetic staff being willing and motivated to follow through and implement their ideas.

The other organisation that began to implement their chosen coordination initiative was an organisation taking the lead role in establishing a suicide prevention network. The aim of the organisation was to coordinate a network of organisations in the region that would deal in the areas of suicide prevention, awareness, education, response and support. Through the hard work of this individual organisation, they were successful in getting to the implementation stage of the initiative by identifying the organisations that should be involved, getting these organisations around the table and beginning to work on a gap analysis exercise in order to map out existing services, identify areas for improvement and streamline referrals.

These examples show that simple coordination efforts can be progressed quite quickly to the implementation phase if they have the commitment of passionate people.

4.3 Alliance Projects

Considering that there will be significant changes to the organisations within the alliance during the implementation phase, it is wise to think about change management and potential sources of resistance to change at this stage. Understandably, staff and other stakeholders may be fearful or anxious about any impending changes, and they might have concerns about how the change will impact them and their circumstances.

Let's look at some of the common change pitfalls:

- Inability to articulate a compelling change story
- People unclear why the change is taking place
- Lack of a sound business case for the change
- Lack of understanding of what change management involves
- Lack of change management skills and knowledge of tools required
- Stakeholders not managed effectively
- Lack of proper communication plans
- Readiness for change not assessed
- Lack of visible senior management support
- Lack of proper consultation
- Insufficient resources available for the change initiative
- Not enough emphasis placed on the people element of the change

Which of these could inhibit your initiative?

Individual resistance to change is one of the key challenges any large-scale project, such as an alliance in the implementation phase. There has been a great deal of research done on the sources of personal resistance to change, some of the more common ones are outlined below:

- Habit
- Security
- Low tolerance
- Economic factors
- Fear of the unknown
- Lack of awareness
- Social factors / norms
- Parochial self-interest
- Desire not to lose something of value
- Focus on self rather than organisation
- Misunderstanding of change and its implications
- Belief that the change does not make sense for the organisation

One way in which leaders can 'bring their staff with them' is to create a compelling case for change. This can be done by working through the "4-Ps" exercise, explained on page 36. Successful leaders invest in developing their own compelling stories for change that can excite others in the organisation to change. Try and make your own compelling story for change using the 4-Ps template.

As we have seen in this section, it is important to be aware of the change pitfalls and potential sources of resistance if your initiative is to be successful. If not dealt with correctly, it could pose a considerable threat to the success of the implementation.

4.4 Integration Projects

As we move into the more complex implementation phase that is seen in integration type arrangements, leaders need to think about how the organisations will function effectively together in reality. All of the planning in the world will not prevent the failure of an integration type partnership if the culture, ethos and values are not aligned... a topic to which we now turn.

The implementation phase is not just about the signing of a Service Level Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding and then executing the plan. It is also about the consolidation and bedding-down of the new relationship to ensure that the individuals from two or more organisations can work together effectively, share the same space and create that sense of synergy that is present in great teams and partnerships.

So what are these words; culture, ethos and values?

Culture can be defined as "the way we do things around here", how we make decisions, how we take care of clients and how we treat employees.

It is crucial to analyse and understand your organisational culture to ensure that there is a 'cultural fit' with your partner organisation.

Ethos, on the other hand was originally defined by Aristotle in *On Rhetoric* as being trustworthy. He stated that we are more likely to believe people (organisations) who have good character. A more modern definition is “The disposition or character of a person, people, culture, business or movement”. When defining your new joint organisational ethos, ask the question: How do we want our stakeholders to think of us? Some examples might include:

- Honest
- Trustworthy
- Professional
- Passionate
- Caring.

When it come to values, the first thing to do is to identify the desirable behaviours that you would like the staff in your new organisation to espouse. Translate these into a set of values. Define the behavioural indicators you can use to measure staff uptake of the values. Examples of strong values could be:

- Collaboration
- Teamwork
- Professionalism
- Innovation
- Quality.

Culture, ethos and values can not be over-looked or ignored for any new integration type partnership. It is crucial that there is sufficient time given during the implementation phase to working through and embedding the ‘softer side’ of the new organisation. Work through the questions on values and ethos for the new organisation in the template section below.

4.5 Benefits, critical success factors, pitfalls and templates

Out of the ten projects in the Collaborate to Innovate programme, only two of them were at the implementation phase when Prospectus engaged with them. Both of these organisations were attempting an integration type of partnership, more specifically, a merger. Once the process had finished, they were asked a series of questions to help feed into the learnings from the process. Their answers are outlined below:

4.5.1 What are the potential benefits from collaboration?

- Can help to build one voice at national level
- Knowing what each of the other collaboration partners does
- Tapping into the potential of each partner
- Having the time to step back and look at the bigger picture
- Helps individuals to integrate into the process and get more involved
- The chance to look at alternative options, skills and experiences.

4.5.2 Critical Success Factors?

- Communication
- Trust
- Common purpose/vision
- Willingness and commitment to the process
- Energy and motivation
- Understanding and openness
- Excitement to be part of a process
- Being passionate about the endgame
- Willingness to acknowledge the history of all organisations involved
- Bringing CEOs and Chairs together
- Early and proper due diligence
- Need to let go of your own turf
- Need to create a compelling reason to merge
- Professional help from people who know, that will ask difficult questions.

4.5.3 Pitfalls to be avoided?

- Unrealistic expectations
- Make yourself very clear from the outset about what is involved and the timelines involves
- Not having sufficient communication
- Not having both organisations on the same page at the same time
- Not planning properly
- Not consulting or engaging with membership effectively
- Communication not flowing into both organisations in a coordinated manner
- Not having enough financial resources to share 50/50 cost of the merger
- Not understanding that different organisations/Boards act/ behave in different ways and manage accordingly.

4.5.4 Templates

As outlined in this chapter, the “4-Ps” exercise is a useful way to gather your thoughts to create a compelling change story. If you can answer and articulate some points for each of the quadrants below, you will be in a good position to create that compelling case for change.

<p>Purpose</p> <p>What is the overall purpose of the change initiative?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••	<p>Picture</p> <p>Outline a picture of the future state. What is the Vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
<p>Plan</p> <p>What is the plan? Is there a roadmap for getting there?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••	<p>Part</p> <p>What part will the individual play? What is their role in the change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••

Hold a brainstorming workshop with staff from your organisation and your partner organisation. Decide on the words that will jointly define the ethos and values of your new organisation. Use the below template to answer the preliminary fundamental questions.

Questions on Ethos and Values	
How do we want our stakeholders to think of us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
What one word would sum up our new organisation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
Desired behaviours that we would like our staff to espouse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
How do we measure our new organisational values?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •

4.6 Case studies - Implementation

Two projects in the Collaborate to Innovate programme were in the implementation phase of an integration (merger) arrangement. To ensure the richness of the learnings for this guide, a brief overview of each of these projects is outlined.

Firstly, one of the projects that applied to the programme consisted of two organisations in the Childcare Support sector who wished to explore and progress a potential merger. There had been substantial progress made and the merger talks had been going on for a number of years. It was therefore decided that the progress made would be revisited and translated this into a timeline of events. Within the workshop, we had a discussion around what had worked well to date and the areas that could be improved. Prospectus brought the group through a change management framework, outlining key transition management activities, detailing and discussing sources of resistance and ways to combat that resistance.

Discussions then turned to the areas that the new merged entity would focus on in the future. Within the workshop, the two organisations agreed on five key pillars or themes that they would have as strategic priority areas in the future. We discussed and agreed how, in practice, these strategic areas could be mapped and measured for effectiveness from an organisational level, down to departmental level and then to an individual level through a Performance Management Development System.

*****TOP TIPS*****

When developing a Performance Management Development System, ensure to involve staff in the design of the process, after all, it is their performance that is being measured and assessed. As well as this, keep it simple and ensure that the system's benefits to staff are clear, concise, and well communicated. Lastly, make sure to monitor and review progress at regular intervals.

We also had a discussion around ethos, values and culture for the new, merged organisation, asking the question:

How do we want our stakeholders to think of us?



As a team, we arrived at a agreed ethos and set of values for the merged entity, we conducted a risk analysis for the project for its next phase, we worked through the organisational structure options and we started the 'business planning' process.

One of the most beneficial parts of the process was towards the end where we invited both management teams to attend a joint-workshop where we worked through and agreed a joint Vision and Mission, ways of working, standard operating procedures and much more.

The second organisation in the implementation phase of an integration project was a national women's organisation. The initiative was a merger project which entailed seventeen organisations being subsumed into one organisation which would then be the legal employer of the 42 staff members. The members of the project required guidance and advice on the governance arrangements, structures, policies and procedures that such a new entity would require.

The steps that we went through entailed firstly discussing the group's expectations of the process, revisiting the history of the merger pathway and discussing a list of the key issues that the group wanted to discuss as part of the consulting support. As it turned out, the group identified eight areas of crucial importance and this list would also serve as a generic register of items to be addressed as part of any merger initiative. It consisted of:

- Governance
- Planning
- Policies and procedures
- Decision making mechanisms
- Structure
- Ethos, culture and values
- Communication
- Change management.

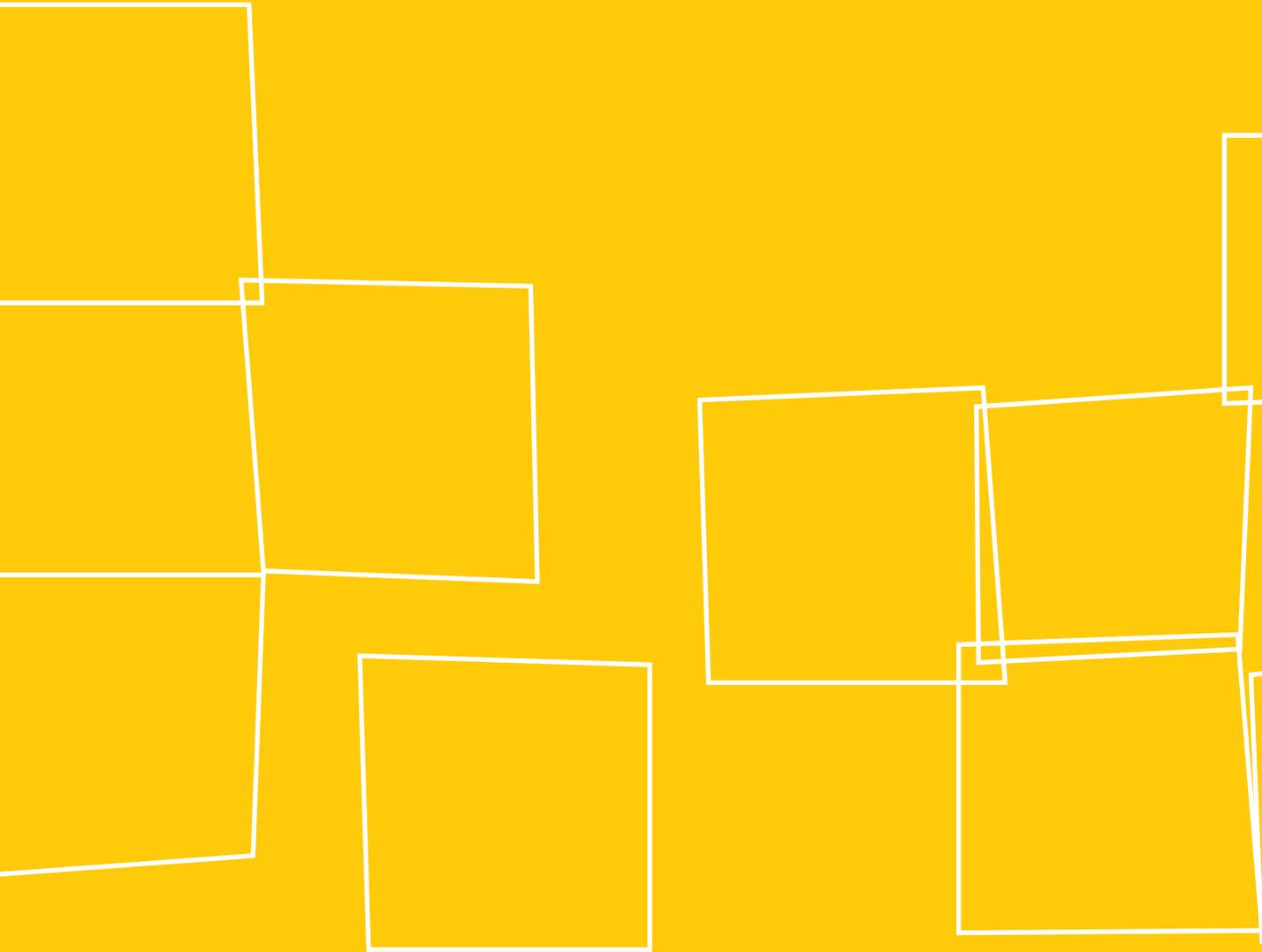
Once the list was complete, we were in a position to develop an implementation plan, where we named individuals as being responsible for follow-up on specific action items. We worked through each of the eight areas of importance over the three remaining workshops and created timelines for implementation, worked out the sequence of events and the resulting resource requirements.

The issue of governance was an area that the participants were keen to understand and progress. In order to do this, we needed to focus on discussing, answering and agreeing a series of questions as seen below:

- How do we select people for the board?
- Structure and composition of the board?
- What skillsets do we need on the Board?
- Appropriateness of the people on the Board?
- What relationship does the Board have with the local committees?

The outcome of this project was that afterwards, the 17 organisations were on their way to being fully integrated into the new organisation. The staff roles and responsibilities had been clearly outlined and the merged organisation had the structures and processes to allow it to work effectively. The emergent new organisation had a clear direction and there was a sense of clarity around how the entity would be managed and governed.

CHAPTER 5: Key 'take-aways'



5.1 Introduction

The Collaborate to Innovate programme was a rich learning experience, both for the participant organisations involved and for Prospectus Strategy Consultants. This was due to:

- The number of organisations involved - thirty-six in total
- The geographical spread of the organisations throughout Ireland
- The size of the organisations, from organisations with ten staff members to organisations with hundreds of staff
- The different areas that the organisations worked in, from Community Drugs Teams to Childcare agencies.

This broad, cross-sectoral representation of community and voluntary organisations were asked a single question at the culmination of the consulting support from Prospectus:

What is your one 'key take-away' from the process?



We received a huge array of answers from the people that had gone through the process, but if we had to boil it down to three key learnings in no particular order, they would be: Preparation, Communication, and Facilitation.

5.2 Preparation

This learning links back to planning, and means that the right fundamentals and foundation must be laid if the project is to be a success. It means carrying out detailed research and due diligence on the partners that you wish to invite to the table. It involves ensuring that the areas that you wish to collaborate around are based on robust decisions that have a clear rationale. It entails making detailed project plans, conducting a stakeholder analysis and risk analysis.

5.3 Communication

We cannot overestimate how important communication is to a successful collaborative initiative. Open, honest, and frank communication from the outset of the engagement is crucial for the sustainability of the partnership. Due to the sometimes sensitive and confidential nature of these projects, rumours and hearsay can jeopardize a successful outcome. Developing a clear communication plan at the start of the project will help to protect against this.

5.4 Facilitation

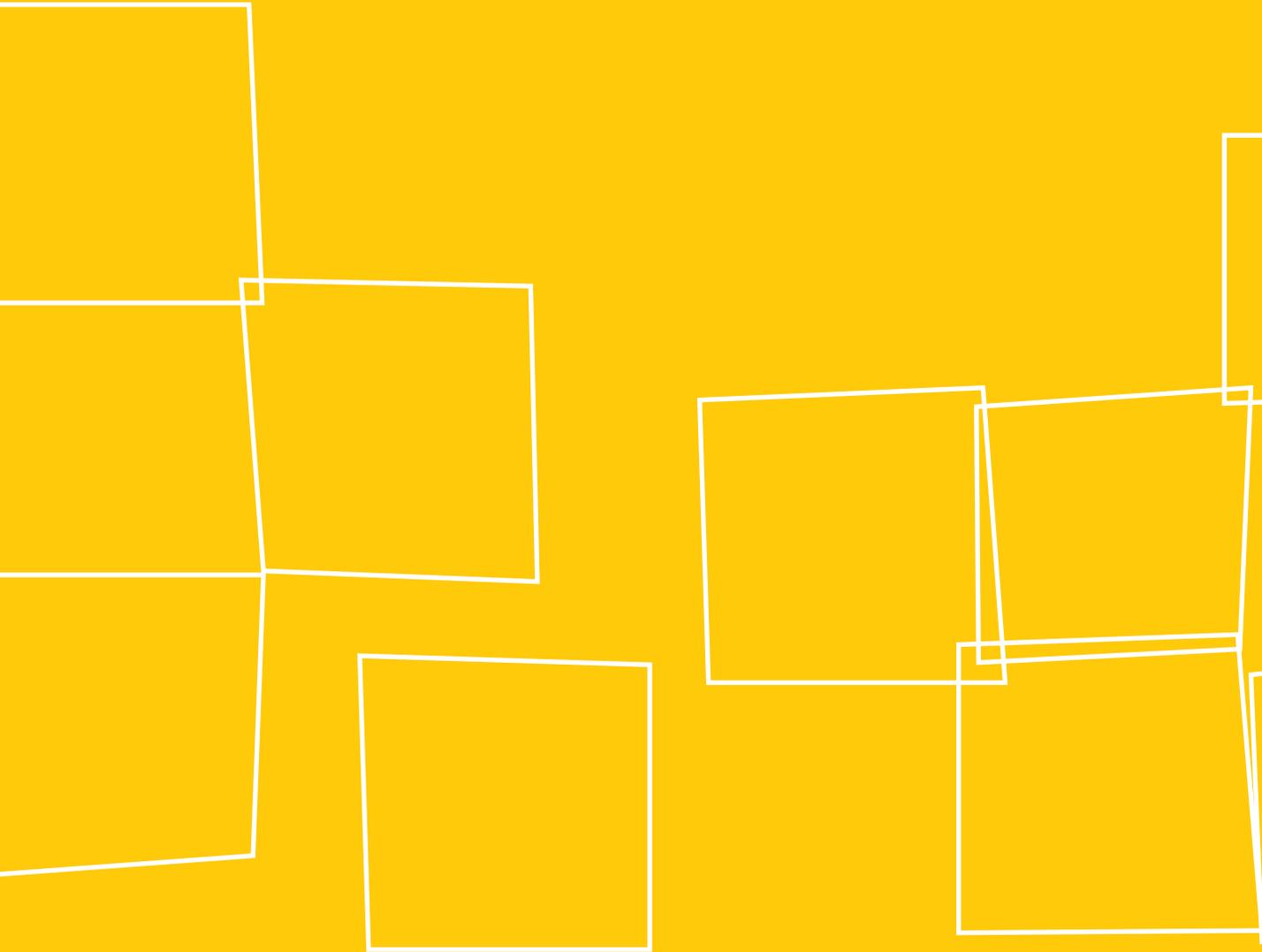
The final key 'take-away' that the participants on the programme brought to light was the need for independent and impartial facilitation by an external individual. The reasons given were that the facilitators could provide the framework, space, and tools to move the process along, being sensitive to the historical intricacies of the organisations and asking the difficult and challenging questions that may not be surfaced otherwise.

5.5 Summary

These days, the community and voluntary organisations that will succeed are the ones that are open to change, the ones that are willing to look outside of their own ranks and to establish links with other organisations to ensure that they remain able to provide a viable and sustainable service for their members and service users. The Wheel wishes you every success in your collaborative endeavours.

**“In the long history of humankind,
those who learned to collaborate
and improvise most effectively
have prevailed”**

Charles Darwin.



Appendix 1 Benefits of collaboration

- Increased knowledge and information
- Better service
- Innovation
- Renewed energy
- Efficiency
- Rejuvenation of staff
- Impact
- Economies of scale
- New perspectives
- Refocus direction
- Positive public perception
- Funding
- Increased research capacity
- National footprint
- Shared space
- Improved quality
- Visibility
- Reducing duplication
- Reducing costs
- Access to different funding
- Sharing premises
- Increased skill-set
- Greater resilience
- Networking and contacts
- Increased knowledge base
- Increased profile
- Can do 'more with less'
- More independence and autonomy
- Sustainability and survival
- More comprehensive service
- Breaking down entrenched views
- Strength in numbers
- Pooling of resources
- Feeding into policy agenda
- Doing the job better
- Rejuvenation of organisation
- Larger pool of volunteers
- Sharing of research
- Sharing of personnel with different knowledge
- Refocus on the issues
- New impetus
- Access to greater resources
- Differing opinion and outlook
- Experience
- Stronger message
- Clearer mission and shared vision
- Board level streamlining
- Collaborating for resources rather than competing for them
- More informed decisions
- Prioritise services
- Gives more weight to organisations
- More accountable
- Avoids insular culture

**What about your organisation?
Write down what you think might
be the top five benefits below:**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Appendix 2 Major Challenges

- Buy-in from all parties
- Uncertainty
- Putting the plan together
- Creating a shared understanding
- Building trust
- Finding the expertise and resources
- Time and capability of Boards
- Upholding the vision
- Agreement on rationale for merger
- Management of the process
- Defensiveness
- Resistance from some staff
- Confidentiality, security & data protection
- Working towards a common goal
- Differing opinions and outlooks
- Relative size of organisations
- Getting service users on board
- Finding champion on the Board
- Personal interest
- Fear of failure
- Developing a shared vision
- Defining the parameters
- Finding an independent Chair
- Fear of job losses and speculation
- Mixed messages
- Inclusiveness

- Asking difficult questions
- Maintaining the day-job
- Personalities and egos
- Different controls and systems
- Power transference
- Due diligence – financial, HR and legal
- The change process
- Preciousness of identity
- Bridging the cultures
- Having the right skill-sets
- Fear
- Agreeing ground rules
- Rumour control
- Staff issues -v- financial sustainability
- De-motivation
- Decision making process
- Agreeing ethos and values
- Deciding on a new Board
- Operational responsibilities
- Missed opportunities
- Dilution of mission and vision
- Lack of communication
- Unwillingness to negotiate
- Maintaining what kept your organisation special
- Leadership over 'herd instinct'
- Timing and change management
- Seeing each other as competitors for funds, audience & resources
- HR Issues

Would any of these be challenges in your organisation? List your top five challenges below:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Appendix 3

The key things that need to be present for collaboration to succeed

- Board buy-in
- Culture focus
- Communication with all stakeholders
- Trust
- Agreed common purpose
- Time and commitment to purpose
- Willingness to compromise
- Openness to problem solving
- Openness to the process
- Willingness to engage
- Transparency
- Celebrating the 'quick-wins'
- An independent Chairperson
- Realistic expectations
- Common mission, vision & goals
- Framework for the process
- Honesty
- Leadership & vision
- Parity in size of the organisations
- Realism
- Desire
- Belief
- Shared Vision
- Time and energy to see it through
- Utilisation of the skills available
- Common sense
- Practical working group size
- A cultural match
- Leadership and Board commitment
- Accurate and timely information
- Balanced stakeholder input
- Drive, ambition, honesty and trust
- Resources
- Synergies
- A clear rationale
- Common purpose and similar aims
- Minimise rumour and speculation
- Motivation
- Patience
- Compassion
- Belief
- Respect
- Have an agreed mediation process
- No hidden agendas
- Active engagement
- Motivated decision makers
- Clear objectives at the outset
- Defined agenda
- Clear responsibilities
- Understanding of governance
- An agreed timeframe
- Joint Board (Delegated authority)
- Diversity

- Open-mindedness
- Being prepared for challenge and confrontation

What are the five things that your organisation would need to succeed in collaboration?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Appendix 4 Drivers for collaboration

- Better provision of services
- To increase efficiency & effectiveness
- To strengthen the sector
- Sustainability
- Fear of service and job loss
- Common link and similarity
- Shared ideas and goals
- Need for change
- Bigger reach and impact
- Stronger voice together
- Commonality of mission
- To avoid duplication
- Being ordered to
- Necessity – no other option
- To boost morale
- To gain a National profile
- Better value for money
- Synergy – the big picture
- Building local resilience
- Common voice - more 'clout'
- Nothing to lose

**What about your organisation?
Write your top five drivers below:**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Appendix 5 Tools and Templates Used

Name	Purpose	Explained on:
The Collaboration Matrix	Places the different types of collaboration on a continuum.	Page 3
'Collaboration Area' Table	Ranks all the potential collaboration areas against useful criteria to aid decision making about which to choose.	Page 15
'Sense Check' Template	Ensures that the rationale for progressing the collaborative initiative is well justified.	Page 15
Project Plan Template	Allows for comprehensive oversight and monitoring of simple as well as complex projects and work plans.	Page 25
Risk Assessment Matrix	Useful for analysing and managing risks associated with a collaborative venture.	Page 25
Stakeholder Analysis Matrix	Helpful way to analyse which stakeholders will be allies, which may be resistant and where the focus of energy should be.	Page 26
The '4-P's Exercise	A useful way to gather your thoughts to create a compelling change story.	Page 35
'Ethos & Values' Table	Captures the words that will jointly define the ethos and values of a new organisation (for mergers).	Page 36

Appendix 6 Participants in the Collaborate to Innovate Programme

As Stand-Alone Organisations

Cope Galway
Southwest Counselling Centre
Treoir

As part of a pair / cluster of Organisations

Ana Liffey Drug Project
Coolmine Therapeutic Community

Hartstown-Huntstown Community
Drugs Team
Mountview-Blakestown Community
Drugs Team

National Adult Literacy Agency
AONTAS

National Children's Nurseries Association
Irish Preschool Play Association

The Carers Association
Caring for Carers Ireland

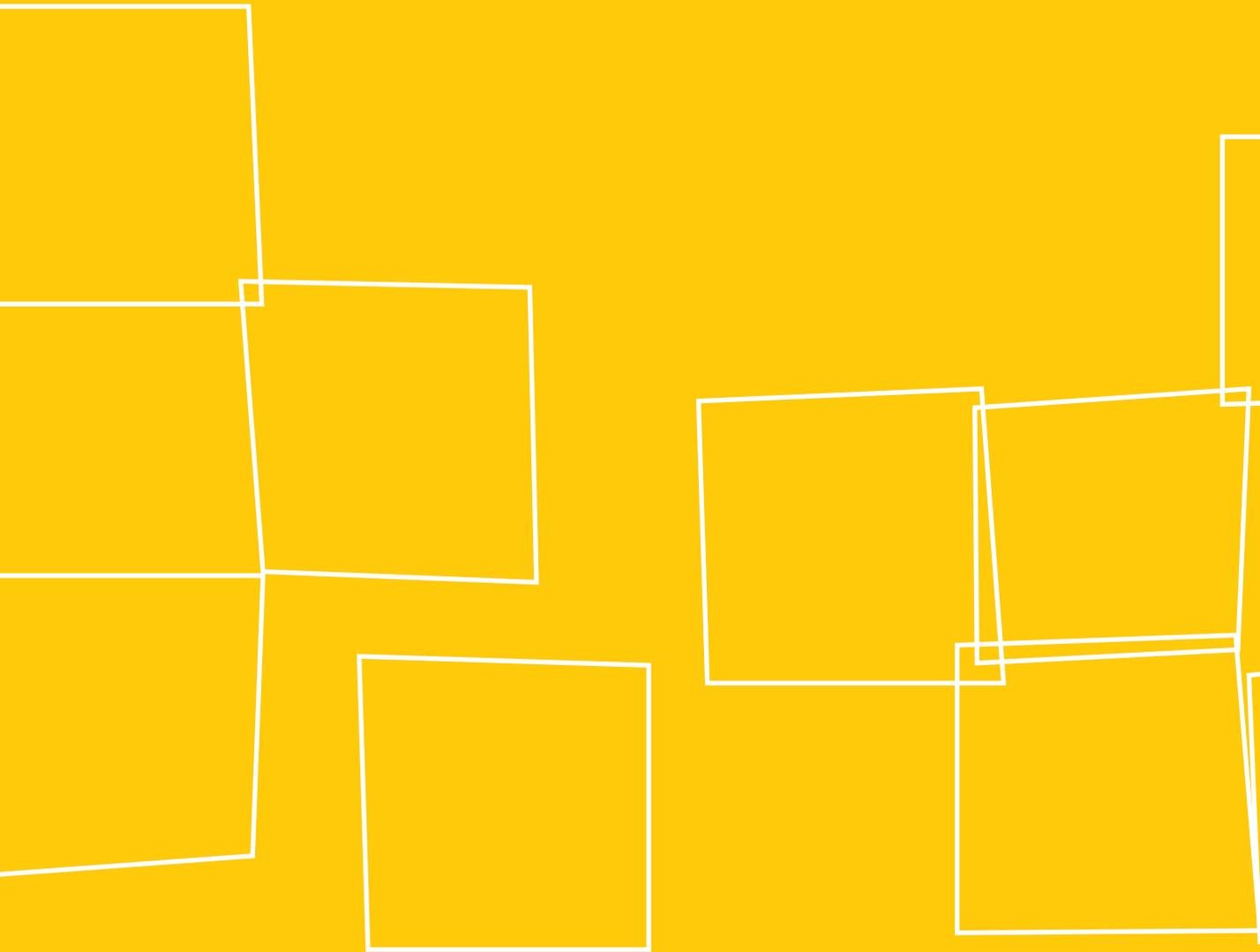
Roscommon Transport Collaboration Group:

- North & South Roscommon Community Forum
- Roscommon Retail Therapy
- Brothers of Charity Services
- Kilbride Community Development Company
- Roscommon Rural Transport Company

National Collective of Community-Based Women's Projects:

- NCCWN
- Dóchas for Women
- Women's Community Project (Mullingar) Ltd
- Blayney Blades
- Claremorris Women's Group Access 2000 (Wexford) Ltd.
- Clare Women's Network
- Clondalkin Women's Network
- Donegal Women's Network
- Limerick Women's Network
- North Leitrim Women's Centre
- Ronanstown Women's CDP
- Roscommon Women's Network
- Rowlagh Womens Group Ltd
- Southside Women's Action Network
- Southwest Kerry Women's Association
- Waterford Womens Centre (Access 2000)
- Women Together Tallaght Network

Prospectus Strategy Consultants and The Wheel would like to thank Grantmakers for Effective Organizations for the use and adaptation of their 'Partnership matrix' as seen in the publication "In Search of Strategic Solutions - a funders briefing on nonprofit strategic restructuring" 2003. The work by Grantmakers for Effective Organizations is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License. Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available by contacting info@geofunders.org





Partnerships, alliances, joint programming, mergers, joint ventures...whatever these new forms of strategic positioning may be known as, they are crucial for the sustainability and survival of many community and voluntary organisations in Ireland today.

This guide has been developed by The Wheel as part of the Collaborate to Innovate programme which supported 35 organisations through their own respective collaboration journeys. The guide has been developed to help organisations:

- Understand what 'collaboration' is, and the different degrees of collaboration
- Learn how to identify potential partners and areas for collaboration
- Create a culture of collaboration within their organisations
- Avoid the most common pitfalls
- Collaborate more effectively.

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[insert respective logos here]

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