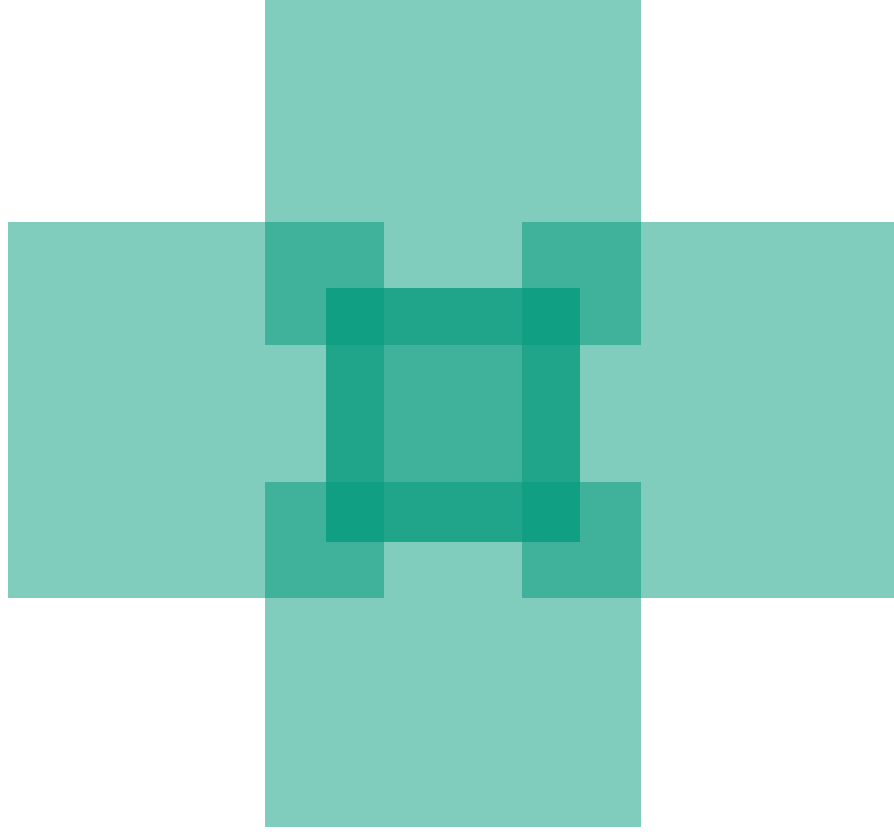




Level of Joint Working





Some of the brightest ideas for social change grow in the spaces between organizations and sectors. Yet few organizations have systems to make collaboration happen.

SATISH NAMBISAN (2009)

What's it all about?

Inter-organisational working, collaboration, partnership ... Call it what you will, the drivers for businesses coming together to deliver activities are growing. However, in building a joint working initiative the participants do not always consider the nature of the group they are building. This is important in shaping the success factors and outcomes that the group may be striving for. It can help avoid disappointment and frustration around what is achieved.

Joint working is usually good for:

- Addressing complex problems
- Improving efficiencies and gaining economies of scale
- Leveraging new resources
- Providing a larger and more diverse skills base
- Accessing specialist expertise, which can support capacity and capability building
- Improving outcomes through working towards common or related goals

What's it for?

The purpose of this tool is to help you plan the nature of your joint working relationships from the outset, to determine your purpose, processes, and structure according to the joint working model that is right for you. It should also help you manage the expectations of the group.

Using the tool

This tool is based on a framework (Figure 1) that outlines various levels of joint interaction. This can be used to determine the most appropriate level of collective working for your business and/or project. You will need to undertake the following:

1. Define the issue you are hoping to address
2. Undertake a review of the key issues you need to consider
3. Review the joint working framework levels (Figure 1)
4. Determine the level that you feel fits your purpose, context, partners and beneficiaries
5. Set goals and benchmarks
6. Identify partner roles
7. Decide how to approach the issue or opportunity
8. Establish timelines
9. Determine the resources needed – not just what is already in place
10. Decide what type of evaluation is needed
11. Agree direction with prospective partners
12. Agree relevant documents with partners
13. Establish an action plan

What Next?

Consider other joint working projects you have been a part of. Using the levels framework, how would you characterise that collective approach? Is that what was agreed at the outset or did it evolve over time? How might you have organised it differently?

Quick tips

- Often joint working projects start out with the aim of leaping straight to ‘collaboration’. Be clear about the context, purpose and histories of the group to determine the right level to work at
- There is nothing to stop a joint working group moving from one level to another if that is appropriate
- There is sometimes a tendency for joint working groups to focus on tasks. Pay attention to process and structure as much as tasks and purpose

References

Hogue, T. (1994). Community Based Collaboration: Community Wellness Multiplied. Retrieved June 2008, from <http://crs.uvm.edu/nnco/collab/framework.html>

Nambisan, S. (2009). Platforms for Collaboration. Stanford Social Innovation Review, 43-49.

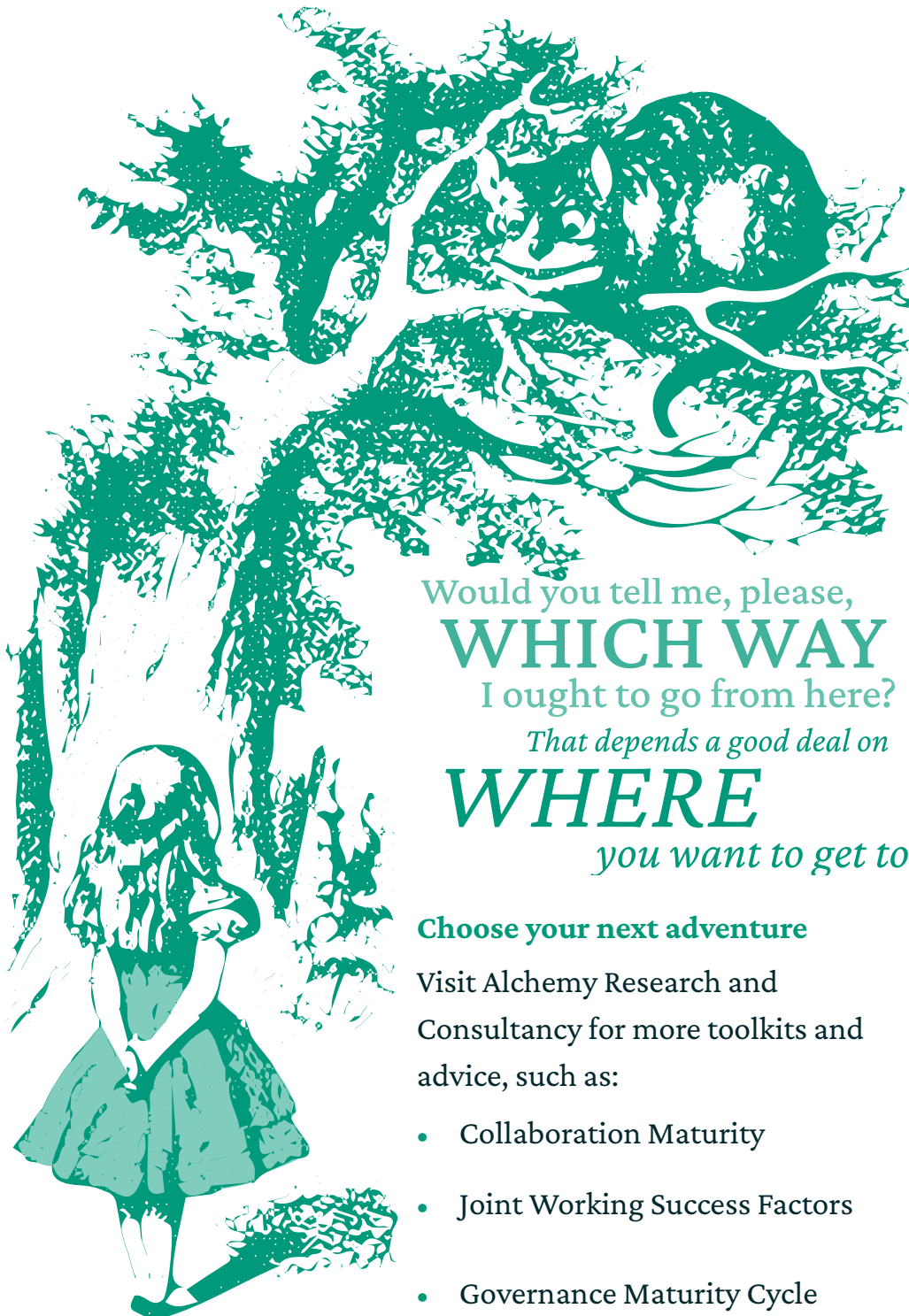
Figure 1 Joint working framework (adapted from Hogue, 1994)

Level of joint working	Purpose	Structure	Process
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue • Sharing understanding • Information distribution • A base of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-hierarchical • Loose/flexible links • Roles loosely defined • Communication is the primary link between members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-key leadership • Minimal decision making • Informal communication • Little conflict or resistance
Co-operation or alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match needs and provide co-ordination • Limit duplication of services • Ensure tasks are done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central body of people who act as a communication hub • Semi-formal links • Roles somewhat defined • Links are advisory • Little or no new resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitative leaders • Complex decision making • Some conflict • Formal communication within the central group
Co-ordination or partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to a common goal • Share resources to address common issues • Merge resource base to create something new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central body of people who are decision makers • Roles defined • Links formalised • Group develops new resources and joint budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomous leadership but focus is on the common issue • Group decision making in central and sub-groups • Communication is frequent and clear

Level of joint working	Purpose	Structure	Process
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share ideas and be willing to pull resources from existing systems • Develop commitment for a minimum of three years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members involved in decision making • Roles and time defined • Links are formal with a written agreement • Group develops new resources and a joint budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared leadership • Decision making is formal, involving all members • Communication is regular and prioritised
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomplish a shared vision and impact benchmarks • Build interdependent system to address issues and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus used in shared decision making • Roles, time and evaluation formalised • Links are formal with written agreements and work schedules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership is high, trust levels high, productivity high • Ideas and decisions are equally shared • Highly developed communication systems



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