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Contents

Foreword

This document is based on the experience shared by 31 participants at a workshop organised by the Institute of Public Health in December 1999. It is offered as a model for those involved either directly or indirectly in Partnerships for Health, to assist with building more effective and sustainable partnerships.

In the Institute, we are working towards strengthening partnerships. We are keen to develop this work by building on the knowledge and experience of many people who are involved in partnerships. The workshop in December 1999 was a first step in that direction and we are very grateful to those who came and shared freely of their time and knowledge, with us and with each other.

Hosting a conference on Partnerships for Health in June 2000 was a further step for the Institute in the process of strengthening partnerships. This provided an opportunity to influence policy in favour of partnership working and contribute to building the capacity of those working in partnerships by sharing the knowledge and expertise of participants and listen to international experts. It also provided an opportunity for networking across sectors and across the island of Ireland. This Partnership Framework was well received by conference participants. We are now making it available to all who would like to use it in their own work and we would welcome feedback on your experience in using it. In the Institute, we are currently testing it as a tool for partnership evaluation.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Anne McMurray, Organisational Development Consultant, for her assistance in developing this work.

Leslie Boydell

Associate Director

Institute of Public Health in Ireland

1   Introduction: Origin of the thinking

The need for multi-sectoral collaboration to tackle the physical, economic, social and cultural determinants of health is highlighted in Health 21, the Health for All Policy Framework for the twenty first century produced by the World Health Organisation (European Region)[1]. This Policy states that multi-sectoral action should provide a more effective, efficient and sustainable way to achieve improved health. This need for multi-sectoral collaboration is recognised in the health strategies of both Ireland (Shaping a Healthier Future)[2] and Northern Ireland (Well Into 2000)[3].

The aim of the Institute of Public Health is to improve health in Ireland by working to combat inequalities and influence public policies in favour of health. There is growing evidence that the main determinants of health are people's economic and social circumstances and that partnerships between government, statutory and the community and voluntary sectors, at national and local level, are essential to bring about change in these factors. The Institute has therefore identified strengthening partnerships for health as one of its strategic objectives[4].

The aims of multi-sectoral collaboration are more difficult to achieve than many people anticipate and considerable time and effort is required for the establishment of such partnerships. The Institute is working to increase understanding of how to ensure that this is the case and on using this learning to build the capacity of those involved in establishing such partnerships. To do this, the Institute is collaborating with people who have experience of working in partnerships to bring about improvements in health.

1. *Health 21 - Health for All in the 21st Century. World Health Organisation, Regional Office for Europe. 1998.*
2. *Shaping a Healthier Future : A Strategy for Effective Healthcare in the 1990's. Department of Health and Children. 1994.*
3. *Well Into 2000 : A Positive Agenda for Health and Well-being. Department of Health and Social Services. 1997.*
4. *The Institute of Public Health in Ireland. Strategic Plan : 2000-2003. 1999.*

It was with this in mind that the Institute held a workshop in December 1999 with people involved in partnerships. It was attended by 31 people from different disciplines, sectors and parts of Ireland, North and South (Appendix). The purpose of the workshop was to identify the barriers to, and solutions for, partnership working.

The technique used was the story-dialogue method which involves the use of narrative[5]. Four people prepared stories based on their experience of overcoming difficulties in partnership working. This was followed by a structured dialogue involving all participants. This enabled people to make explicit their knowledge and insights. This is the foundation for the content of this paper, which seeks to describe a framework which can be used by partnerships to understand the complexities of working in partnership and increase the likelihood of achieving shared goals.

The material presented in this paper is based on a collaboration framework developed by the National Network for Collaboration, USA (1995). This was produced through the efforts of 11 land grant universities and the Co-operative State Research, Educational, Extension Service (CSREES)[6]. Its authors encourage its use and adaptation to build and sustain partnership working and have responded positively to our work to develop it into a model for partnerships for health.

This paper is a description of how the Institute of Public Health has developed the framework, using the outcomes of the December 1999 workshop.

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5. *The Story Dialogue method is described in the "Handbook on Using Stories in Health Promotion Practice" by Ronald Labonte and Joan Feather and published by Health Canada, 1996.*

2   Framework model

Technically, collaboration is a process of participation through which people, groups and organisations work together to achieve desired results. Starting or sustaining a collaborative journey is exciting, sometimes stressful, and even new for many people, groups and organisations.

2.1   Initiating collaborations

When beginning the journey, it is critical that all existing and potential members share the vision and purpose. It is this commonality that brings members together to focus on achieving a mission. Several catalysts may initiate a collaboration – a problem, a shared vision, a desired outcome, to name a few. Regardless what the catalyst may be, it is critical to move from being problem-driven to vision-driven, from muddled roles and responsibilities to defined relationships, and from being activity-driven to outcome-focused.

Often groups form as a result of an existing problem or perhaps a crisis. While problems may be the initial catalysts in forming a collaboration, defining the vision and desired outcomes begins to give shape and direction to the future collaboration. Moving from problem-driven solutions to vision-driven solutions offers greater potential for maximising resources, developing sustainable outcomes, greater community ownership and commitment to the course of action. Vision-driven solutions also keep us from getting caught up in old stereotypes that often interfere with our ability to bring a diverse membership together. Without this movement, there is a tendency to solve practical problems by grabbing at ready-made solutions that neither address the fundamental causes of a problem, nor challenge thinking in new directions.

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6. *The Original Framework can be accessed on http:// crs.uvm.edn/nnco/collab/framework.html*

Building relationships is fundamental to the success of collaborations. Effective collaborations are characterized by building and sustaining "win-win-win" relationships – the kind of relationships where expectations are clear and understood by all members of the collaboration and by those who are working with the collaboration. Defining relationships assists in identifying tasks, roles and responsibilities, work plans and ultimately reaching desired outcomes.

2.2 Defining the relationship

The first steps focus on defining existing or potential relationships. A range of relationships have been defined in the "Levels of partnership – choices and decisions" matrix (figure 1). This matrix defines five levels of relationships and the purpose, structures, and processes for each level. Using "Levels of partnership" together with the framework, provides focus and clarity in the establishment of new partnerships.

Figure 1 Levels of partnerships – choices and decisions

Levels	Purpose	Structure	Process
Networking	* Dialogue and common understanding * Clearing house for information * Base of support	* Loose/flexible link * Roles loosely defined * An area of common interest	* Low-key leadership * Minimal decision-making * Little conflict * Informal communication
Co-operation or Alliance	* Match needs and provide co-ordination * Limit duplication of services * Ensure tasks are done.	* Central body of people as communication hub * Semi-formal links * Roles somewhat defined * Links are advisory * Group leverages/raises money	* Facilitative leaders * Complex decision-making * Some conflict * Formal communications within the central group

Co-ordination	* Share resources to address common issues * Merge resource base to create something new	* Central body of people consisting of decision makers * Roles defined * Links formalised * Group develops new resources and joint budget	* Autonomous leadership but focus on issues * Group decision making in main group and subgroups * Communication is frequent and clear
Coalition	* Shared ideas and willingness to pull resources from existing systems * Develop commitment for a minimum of three years	* All members involved in decision-making * Roles and timescales defined * Links formal with written agreement * Group develops new resources and joint budget	* Shared Leadership * Decision-making formal with all members * Communication is common and prioritized
Collaboration	* Accomplish shared vision and impact benchmarks * Build inter-dependent system to address issues and opportunities	* Consensus used in shared decision-making * Roles, timescales and evaluation formalised * Links are formal and written into work assignments	* Leadership high, trust level high, productivity high * Ideas and decisions equally shared * Highly developed communication

For our purposes, we prefer to use the term partnerships to cover the range of working arrangements described in this matrix, of which collaboration is the most developed form.

**2.3   The partnership framework**

The framework has been designed as a comprehensive guide to the formation of new partnerships to enhance existing efforts and/or to evaluate the progress of developing partnerships.

The framework model is represented in figure 2.

Figure 2

The partnership framework

OUTCOMES

Impact

CONTEXT

Process

Foundation

Grounding : Diversity
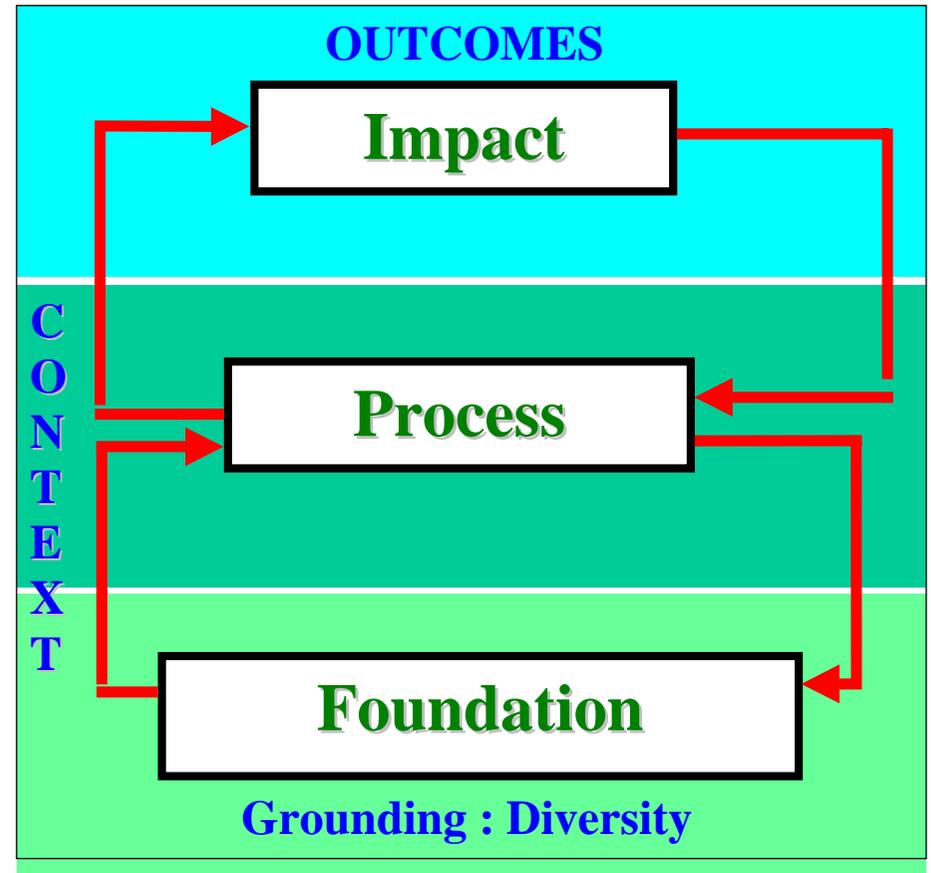
The elements of the framework are:-

❖ **The grounding:** building on a bedrock of diversity of people , groups and organisations, who share a desire to work in relationship with each other

❖ **The core foundation:** the shared purpose and hoped for benefits of collaborative efforts

❖ **The outcomes:** what is achieved, planned and unplanned, by working in collaboration

❖ **The process and contextual factors:** which affect the everyday activities of the Collaboration.

3 Description of the framework

"Partnerships are hard work!"

In the description of the framework which follows, insights gained during the workshop in December 1999 are in italics.

3.1 Contextual factors

As can be seen in the framework, all aspects of partnership working are embedded within the context of the wider community. It is this context which provides the diversity of interests which the partnership must reflect. Context factors are external to the

partnership and exert influence through presenting opportunities and constraints to the efforts of the partnership. As the partnership proceeds, the relationship between contextual factors and process factors will be reciprocal and mutually influential. Contextual factors are characteristics of the environment which impact on the effectiveness of the partnership. The partnership may be able to influence these characteristics, but the group does not have control over them.

Contextual factors are different for every partnership. Each partnership will have to identify them and increase members' understanding about how they impact on the process and achievements of the partnership. The selection which is described in this section may not be exhaustive, but cover a range of factors which typically are present. They are offered and explained as a way of heightening awareness.

Within the partnership framework, six contextual factors have been identified as important for the partnership: connectedness or social cohesion; history of working together or co-operation; political climate; policies/laws/regulations; resources and catalysts.

3.1.1   Connectedness or social cohesion

A sense of belonging and connectedness is an important human need, and the extent to which it is present will determine the success of the partnership. It may already exist prior to the partnership, or it may have to be cultivated during the grounding, core foundation and through the phases of ongoing work. This requires there to be some commitment from members to get "connected".

Connectedness refers to the linkages between individuals, groups, and organisations i.e., how people know each other or how they are connected to one another. People are drawn together socially through organisations and groups, and by informal and/or formal rules, resources, and relationships.

On an individual level, connectedness can be a measure of whether an individual feels a linkage or bond with another individual. On a group level, people may feel that they have associations or a sense of belonging to different groups and organisations. At the

community level, connectedness refers to the extent to which there are universally understood principles and values within the community. It provides an indication of the ease or difficulty with which a partnership can be established. Partnerships that employ both formal and informal networks of communication to support them are more likely to succeed.

3.1.2   History of working together/co-operation

History, here, has to do with an organisation or community's past with regard to working co-operatively or competitively. Usually, where there is a long history of co-operation, there exists a corresponding history of solving problems. Difficult issues are resolved by employing the available resources and developing creative, inclusive solutions based on the desired outcomes. Moreover, where a history of co-operation exists, the people trust each other as well as the partnership process. A diversity of members is welcomed as a resource and this diversity enhances creative solutions. Partnership is more likely to succeed where there is a history of working together co-operatively.

"Ideally select partners who are prepared to work together"

If past experience has been negative, there will be "baggage", preconceived ideas and assumptions which the leadership will need to address. The extent to which this is a negative contextual factor will influence the time it takes for the new partnership to complete the grounding and core foundation phases.

In communities where a competitive history exists, awareness raising through dialogue with and between potential collaborators regarding the benefits, costs and processes of collaboration may be necessary as part of the grounding stage.

3.1.3   Political climate

The political climate is the history and environment surrounding power and decision making. A healthy partnership ensures that the political climate affecting or potentially affecting the partnership has been identified, is being addressed and ideally utilised in the positive development of the partnership. Recognising and welcoming the political

climate as a resource sets the stage for engaging a diversity of support for the shared vision of the partnership.

" The job of democracy is enormous, the task of leadership is huge. There are competing principles, values and views"

Widespread political support is important in developing and sustaining partnerships, particularly for policy making and implementation of policy. In collaborative political climates, there is a demonstrated willingness to dialogue, to accept and negotiate new ideas, to navigate through conflict, and to be open towards emerging trends. Moreover, it is important that a partnership has members who know which decision-makers need to be influenced and how to influence those decision-makers. Partnerships which have the support and endorsement of key people, groups and organisations in power are more likely to be effective in reaching the agreed upon outcomes.

3.1.4   Policies/laws/regulations

Solving problems collaboratively means transforming and changing policies, laws and regulations. Indeed, policies, laws and regulations represent all the concepts and activities that are used to resolve problems. Partnerships are more likely to succeed when supportive policies, law and regulations are in place. This is especially true with regard to the policies and regulations within the collaborating members' groups and/or organisations.

Policies, laws and regulations contribute to the political climate, but also directly affect the environment. Thus, whether systems and their structures, norms and decision-making processes are open and supportive of working in partnership depends in part on existing policies, laws and regulations. Sustainability of partnership is often dependent on the policies and practices in place.

3.1.5   Resources

Within a partnership, resources refer to four types of capital: environmental, in-kind, financial, and human. Much of what has already been presented has to do with environmental capital.

In-kind capital has to do with what each of the members and their organisations contribute to the partnership, such as meeting rooms, supplies or computers. Financial capital involves monetary resources, which are often assumed to be the most important. However, it is worth noting that partnerships that co-operate only to seek funding are more likely to fail than partnerships that form as comprehensive community-wide responses to a problem. This emphasis shifts into a vision.

"The need to spend funding and to produce outputs can distract the partnership from process issues and from its mission".

"Funders may precipitate problems by imposing tight timescales".

Human capital is the most important asset in a partnership. The investment of people's time, expertise and energy into a partnership is an essential contribution to achieving the shared vision. Margaret Mead once said,

> *"Never doubt that a small group of people can change the world,*
> *indeed it is the only thing that ever has".*

Each partnership member and organisation demonstrates commitment to the partnership by contributing and/or realigning resources to the partnership. The contribution can be to one or all four of the types of capital mentioned previously. However, the contribution of human capital to a partnership is a crucial investment for sustainability.

3.1.6   Catalysts or drivers

Catalysts or drivers get the partnership started. The existing problem(s) or the reason(s) for the partnership to exist must be viewed by the potential members as a situation that requires a comprehensive response. In this way, the problem(s) or reason(s) are the catalyst. For example, before the prevention of youth violence can be an issue to

collaborate around, the community must view youth as having skills and gifts that can enhance the quality of life in the community.

In addition to a community-wide issue, the second type of catalyst needed is a convenor. This is the person who calls the initial meeting of a partnership and draws everyone into a dialogue about possible solutions to the situation. If the partnership is going to move forward and establish a shared vision, the player who convenes the group must be respected and viewed as a "legitimate" player. Convenors must have organisational and interpersonal skills, and must carry out the role with passion and fairness.

Finally, a catalyst for the formation of a partnership may be government policy, which is seen as a way of "hot-housing" and accelerating social and economic developments which left to "organic " processes would take a longer time.

3.2   The grounding

All elements of the framework are grounded in valuing and respecting diversity. Valuing diversity means respecting and honouring the validity of the unique contribution, role and position which each person, group and organisation brings to the partnership. It is recognising the interdependence of all of the constituent parts, as members of a wider system, and how important each is to the whole.

" Tolerance of difference is the strongest route to unity. There needs to be mutual adjustment. Difference should be celebrated"

Diversity brings a critical balance to any level of partnership. The more diverse the group, the more power an emerging shared vision will have to both unite the group's efforts and also to influence external people.

"The principles which should underpin a partnership at all levels include participation, equality of esteem, resource allocation, agreement about outcomes, respect for diversity and individual and collective responsibility for ensuring things go well"

Grounding happens when the members of the group are able to understand each others' perspectives on current reality, even if different, and each other's ideas about courses of action. It encourages the examination of underlying stereotypes to deepen mutual understanding. Understanding and recognising diversity is not a one–off process. It should be a guiding principle and enacted consciously throughout the partnership.

The aim of partnership is to preserve diversity – not to act as a *"food processor to make a homogenised soup".*

Differences of opinion are likely to emerge in a partnership. This should not be seen as a problem, but as healthy and predictable. The challenge is to use difference constructively as an opportunity to increase understanding and produce a meaningful, well thought through vision about purpose.

Insights about diversity:

- *Expect conflict in a group, people are human and will gradually change in relationship to each other. Consensus is something you arrive at after negotiation.*

- *We need to acknowledge that everybody has an agenda, a right to have an agenda and the right and responsibility to put this agenda on the table.*

- *Differences should be valued. They create dynamism in partnership – we need to recognise different cultures.*

- *Valuing difference is the raison d'être of multi-sectoral partnership and must be recognised as a strength and a core principle. Partners' strengths should be identified and utilised, and time needs to be taken to learn about each other and promote understanding, as this will go some way towards promoting trust.*

- *It is important to be clear about one's values on joining a partnership, and to act in a way that is consistent with them.*

- *Each partnership needs to establish its own unique identity*

3.3 The core foundation

The core foundation represents the common ground for the partnership: a shared purpose and strategy.

Building the foundation will be the first task of a newly formed partnership. It includes the development of the following:

VISION	Image of a desired future
MISSION	Purpose of working together and the fundamental reason for the partnership's existence
PRINCIPLES	Guidelines for style of working and decision making
VALUES	The beliefs individuals and the group hold
MEASURING IMPACT	How impact will be evaluated
INFRASTRUCTURE	How the day-to-day business will be carried out
CONTRIBUTION	Making explicit what is expected from members, why they are there, how they will be held accountable and the incentives they need to stay involved

The vision and mission describe why the collaboration matters because it defines the partnership, what it exists to achieve and how it fits into the larger world.

"If you don't dream, you can't have dreams come true"

Planning the operational infrastructure is necessary to create transparent processes from the outset, which enables participation. Establishing the contribution that each member can make, helps manage expectations about commitment.

Insights about setting up of partnerships

- *People wander into partnership. They need to know why the partnership was set up and what they are there for.*
- *The induction process is important. Partners need to know where others are coming from.*
- *Members need to decide how success will be judged.*
- *At the beginning, people need to remember that there are other ways of doing things and a partnership may not be the best way to achieve aims.*
- *Partnerships involve 'working in relationship to others'. This might be a better way of describing the process.*
- *People need to agree purpose, to be clear about agenda and to establish to what extent there is mutuality of interest.*
- *Rights and responsibilities of partners need to be articulated and agreed, including ground rules.*

To do all of this takes time. It involves a:

"Multi-skilled process of negotiation between all stakeholders to reach collective agreement on shared action to address an issue"

It is necessary to remove obstacles to people's participation at the outset. Obstacles may be physical or in people's heads.

Insights about enabling participation

- *People need support to participate*

- *There needs to be mutual benefit in engaging*
- *The process needs to be guided. Do not assume that people know how to do partnership*
- *Everyone needs to be able to get their agenda across to others*
- *Collective agreement on principles helps make the process of power sharing work.*
- *Members need to set principles for the partnership*
- *The community sector needs to be resourced to participate*
- *The statutory sector needs time allocated for them to attend*

People may need to be facilitated to participate fully. This may mean transport, child care and social care, as well as ensuring that presentation of documents and information is in an accessible form.

It also takes time to develop trust and overcome suspicions of each other and each others' organisations.

"People should not make assumptions - agencies can be stereotyped by outside perceptions."

The partnership may need external guidance and support in setting itself up, especially round the development of infrastructure. There is liberation in having an agreed "playing field and set of goalposts".

"Informality can be a problem and some formal mechanisms are needed."

Insights about developing infrastructure

A steering group could be formed to agree:
- *Organisational and operational issues*
- *Terms of reference for subgroups*

- *Procedures*
- *Staff support/contracts/recruitment*

It may be helpful to establish a formal partnership agreement at an early stage with ground rules, principles of working together and the rights and responsibilities of members. There needs to be awareness raising in stakeholder organisations about what's involved in partnership working, so that they understand their obligations and responsibilities to support their representatives and the partnership as it begins to build up momentum.

3.4   Process factors

Process factors are internal and relate to the specific skills and dynamics of the partnership, which are needed to build effective working relationships and capability.

The interaction between the contextual and process factors and the impact which the partnership makes on the external environment will influence to what extent the partnership achieves its vision (figure 3).

It is important that members understand the dynamics created by the interaction between contextual and process factors, so that they are able to diagnose the reason why difficulties and problems arise, as well as being able to spot opportunities which can be exploited in their interest.
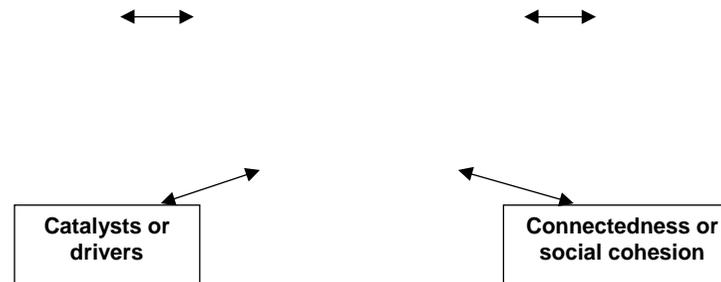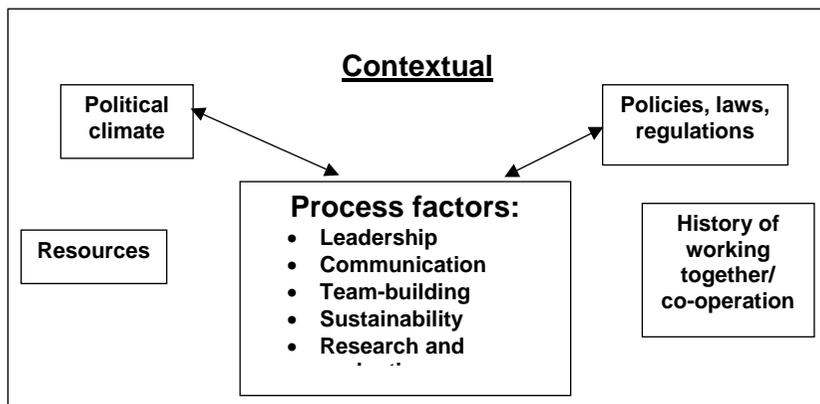
Contextual

Political climate

Resources

Process factors:
- **Leadership**
- **Communication**
- **Team-building**
- **Sustainability**
- **Research and**

Policies, laws, regulations

History of working together/ co-operation

Catalysts or drivers

Connectedness or social cohesion

Figure 3: Contextual and process factors

3.4.1   Leadership

Partnership requires effective leadership. There are three aspects to leadership in partnership working. First, the chair of the partnership needs to give effective leadership. Secondly, the membership must consist of leaders from the representative groups and organisations, i.e. people with authority, who can take decisions, and represent the interests of their constituency. Thirdly, leaders will emerge within the partnership to drive specific issues.

a)   Showing leadership as chair:

❖ Ensure the right people are in the partnership
❖ Establish structures, roles and responsibilities
❖ Develop mechanisms for decision-making and conflict resolution
❖ Facilitate and support team building
❖ Capitalise on diversity and ensure political and cultural sensitivity
❖ Optimise group and individual strengths

Insights on the role of the chair

- *The integrity of the chair is very important*
- *The role of the chair should be neutral*
- *The chair needs courage to act as a referee*
- *The chair needs to develop the capacity to understand group dynamics, resolve conflicts and negotiate*
- *The chair needs mentoring and coaching*
- *The chair needs to be resourced*
- *The chair needs to work both inside and outside the meetings*
- *A good chair needs skills and needs to take the role seriously*
- *Because of the time involved, this limits the choice of chair*
- *The chair becomes the guardian of the process and structure*
- *A good chair mobilises partners, listens to their concerns and shapes the work of the partnership in such as way that it leads to positive outcomes*
- *Because of the importance of this role, there is a need to invest in the chair to ensure he/she has the required time, resources and support to do the job*
- *The role of the chair is key and there is a need to build the capacity of the chair to facilitate him/her in the role*

b) Showing leadership on behalf of an organisation or group:

Anyone nominated to represent their organisation or group must have the authority to:

❖ Judge when to take risks and make decisions on behalf of their organisation/group

"Partners should be clear at the outset what they and /or their organisations can contribute to the work of the partnership"

"A partner needs commitment from the top of the organisation to be able to fully participate and support the partnership"

"If the partnership is to work, senior people within the organisations represented must sign up"

"The support of the Chief Executive Officer is critical"

c) Showing leadership as a member

Members need to play an active rather than passive role in all aspects of the work of the partnership. This means keeping oneself informed, being prepared, challenging and supporting others to ensure issues are thoroughly explored and resolved. In certain areas of interest, it means being prepared to give leadership to others to progress the efforts of the partnership.   The role requires partners to:

❖ Signal membership and commitment by turning up and engaging actively in discussion and negotiations
❖ Give personal investment and commitment to build the credibility of the partnership
❖ Facilitate problem solving and try to find ways forward when an impasse is reached
❖ Enable others to participate to the maximum

"The chairman's position can be very lonely. Members should share responsibility with the chair."

"All partners need to take collective responsibility for achieving the outcomes of the partnership"

Leadership is also required to deal with conflict in partnerships so that it does not block progress and can become a stimulus for the growth and development of the partnership.

Insights about conflict

- *Conflicts should be dealt with openly and honestly*
- *There is a need to integrate community development principles*
- *Imposed solutions generate oppositional behavior*
- *If people don't feel part of something they will not go along with it*
- *Decide how decisions are to be made at the beginning*
- *Have anticipatory mechanisms in place to deal with conflict*
- *Skills are required to deal with conflict. Training is needed*

- *Don't make enemies where you can't make progress*

3.4.2 Communication

Partnership efforts depend on clear and open communication. Norms of communicating should be established which agree language usage acceptable to all members, especially with regard to terminology and jargon.

"Partners need to learn each other's language and culture"

Formal communication processes need to be established between members e.g. fax, phone, e-mail. How proceedings and decisions are recorded also needs to be considered.

"Writing the papers can bias the presentation of other partners' views"

This comment reflects the "power of the pen", of which scribes need to be aware and to which "watchdogs" on the partnership need to attend.

Communication with the outside world and broader community needs to be established, if necessary developing working relationships with the media or using other information channels. This can be for the purposes of building the image of the partnership to achieve support, as well as increasing visibility with funders and resource providers.

Informal networking and communication are also essential for "off the table" discussions and explorations.

3.4.3 Team building (within the partnership)

Team building is a process which requires its own pace. As any group of people come together, they will go through the four stages of group formation[7].

Storming - everyone's values, ideas and aspirations are thrown together
Norming - common ground begins to be established
Forming - the group forms its own purpose and identity
Performing - the group begins to do its work and make progress

The factors which are integral to this process include deepening understanding of each other's experience and recognising the validity of each others' viewpoints. The goal is to increase mutual understanding about each other as a "community of interest". It also means increasing understanding about any community which may be affected by the activities of the partnerships.

Through team work, the partnership is able to mobilise resources (money, people, time, skills and networks) to overcome potential barriers and achieve change.

A sense of trust is essential to successful collaboration – actions do speak louder than words. In partnerships, it is what people do more than what they say that engenders trust and commitment to the collaboration from internal and external stakeholders.

Finally there is the issue of power

"There needs to be acknowledgement that not all partners are equal, that power differentials do exist. Open acknowledgement of these is helpful."

Insights about equality and power

- *Not all partners are equal. Some partners have to be prepared to give up some power.*
- *Partnerships need to be constructed with a balance of power. This needs to be contrived. There needs to be equality within the partnership forum.*

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7. [7]Tuckman, B. W. (1965) "Development sequence in small groups", Psychological Bulletin, 63, 6:384-99.

- *There is need for risk-taking. This changes the balance of power. Risk taking makes people vulnerable.*
- *There will always be power imbalances. 'Power is getting interests met'. There needs to be a collective agreement on equality of esteem and respect. This should be part of the ground rules. Perceptions of power may differ from actual power. Individual power and collective power or power of the sector may be different. The statutory sector may not have an agreed position between themselves, but are often perceived as powerful.*
- *People may not recognise their own power and may need help to realise it.*
- *Statutory sector representatives may be disempowered outside their own sector.*
- *There needs to be some pooling of resources. If one partner holds all the resources they can 'pull the rug' at any time.*
- *If the partnership is to work, senior people within the organisations represented must sign up.*
- *Everyone comes with an agenda – personal, ideological, political, organisational.*
- *You have to recognise you're in conflict before you can negotiate your way out of it.*
- *Neither the community sector nor the statutory sector are homogeneous.*
- *Men and women have different ways of working. Women may be better at partnership because they have learnt to negotiate from a position of powerlessness with no resources. This is the working experience of many women. Yet in a group they are treated unequally.*
- *Partnerships are an arena of participatory democracy.*

The process of team building involves recognising the diversity of strengths and weaknesses, and enabling each person to make their optimal contribution. It also means respecting the boundaries of each members' arena of operation and activity. This can clarify the decision-making constraints between different parties and negotiate limits.

Deepening understanding about the community which will be affected by the efforts of the partnership involves consultation, participation, and ultimately increased ownership of any action initiated by the partnership. Potential new partners can be identified and insights gained with regard to sensitivities about "turf" issues.

3.4.4   Sustainability

"Partnerships die if they are not watered"

In order for partnerships to be sustainable, it is essential that systems are put in place to provide sustained membership, resources and effort. This will involve membership guidelines relating to terms of office and replacement of members.

"Reshuffle the deck – partnerships need to be invigorated on a regular basis"

Formal operational agreements may be necessary. Efforts must be ongoing to ensure that the appropriate level of time and resources are available to pursue the mission of the partnership. Planning must be both short-term and long-term. The partnership needs to be able to identify emerging trends and issues and develop strategies for action.

Insights into developing sustainability

- *There needs to be investment in the future development of the partnership*
- *You need to review process as you go along*
- *Mechanisms should be in place to engage in reviews of the process and for blocks to be discussed*
- *Tight timescales create problems*
- *There is a need to redefine the partnership periodically. The purpose of reshuffling is to prevent people becoming entrenched*
- *There needs to be capacity within the different agencies to support the partnership when people leave and new people join*

Finally, *"partnerships may outlive their usefulness"*.

This is not a sign of failure but a signal about reality.   Finding ways of closing down partnerships, as with all relationships in life, requires skills in recognising what has been positive, what has been achieved and that the time is right to let go and move on.

"Partnerships need to celebrate success and learn to dance and laugh more!"

3.4.5   Research and evaluation

"Partnerships help to create knowledge between people. Connections help to generate theory."

Obtaining and utilising information is essential for partnerships. Reviewing examples of other successful models of partnership will help in adopting or customising a partnership model. Data must be collected which establishes benchmarks for future impact and outcomes analysis.

Evaluation efforts are essential to monitor progress related to a partnership's goals and objectives and to make modifications as necessary. Numerous methodologies may be employed in this process including quantitative, qualitative and participatory strategies. Strategies for communicating impact should also be carried out.

Insights about evaluation

- *Partnerships need to pay attention to evaluation and how success will be measured – all partners need to be involved*
- *The job of the partnership has to be done in tandem with developing new ways of working*
- *As the partnership develops, partners should receive feedback*
- *Evaluation should be seen as a developmental tool with equal attention and value attached to process and outcomes*
- *Partnerships need to find creative ways of measuring the qualitative and quantitative successes of their work*
- *It is important to recognise the impact of individual personalities on the success of the partnership*

- *All should be involved in considering how evaluation is to be carried out*

3.5   Outcomes

How does a partnership demonstrate that it has made a positive difference as a result of its efforts? Every partnership will have different constituencies to whom it needs to demonstrate tangible improvement - funders, policy makers, the community, stakeholder organisations.

As previously noted, a partnership is a process of participation through which people, groups and organisations work together to achieve desired results. Outcomes represent the desired "conditional" changes. While a vision articulates a picture of the future that the partnership seeks to create, the outcomes address specific "conditions to be achieved".

Outcomes are usually, but not exclusively, defined following the development of a shared vision. Focusing on defining the desired outcomes in the initial stage of building the partnership is more likely to increase its effectiveness. In addition, it increases the likelihood of engaging greater participation by a wide cross section of people and groups in achieving the vision.

The partnership framework identifies six common outcomes for partnerships involving the statutory, community and voluntary sector: public safety; education; economic well-being; family support; health and the environment (Figure 4).
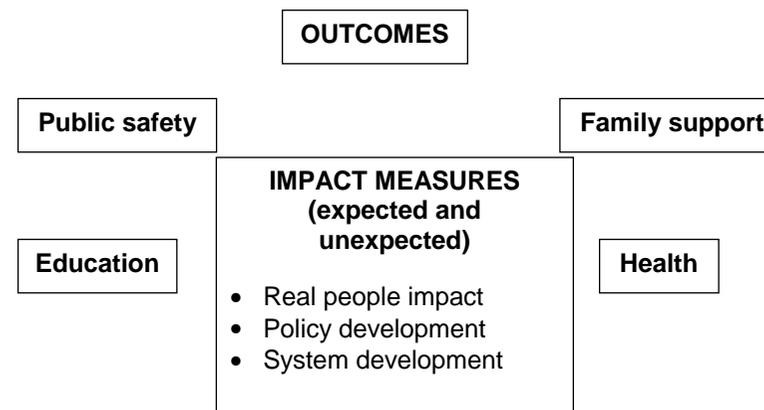
OUTCOMES

Public safety

Family support

IMPACT MEASURES (expected and unexpected)

Education

Health

- Real people impact
- Policy development
- System development

Figure 4: Outcomes and impact measures

Outcomes are slow to achieve and indicators provide short term measures of
achievement. Indicators may include data counts or changes in beliefs or behaviour.

The following is a list of possible outcomes and indicators:-

Public safety

Communities are safe, enriching and participative and provide access to
essential services. **Indicators** – lower crime rates; increased use of leisure
facilities.

Education

People are well-educated and capable. **Indicators** – increase in literacy rates
and school leaving age.

Economic well-being

Economic diversity exists which generates desirable jobs and higher income for
citizens. **Indicators** – increase in personal income; increase in employment
rates.

Family support

Families are competent, self-reliant, skilled, knowledgeable, cohesive and
nurturing. **Indicators** – civic and occupational participation, family participation in
intergenerational support.

Health

A healthy society defined by individuals who are mentally and physically healthy
with harmonious social relationships and neighbourhoods and places of
employment which are more heterogeneous. **Indicators** – live birth rates, lower
alcohol and drug rates, and higher number of women receiving prenatal care.

Environment

Retaining and bettering quality of life characterised by natural environments, vital
communities, accessible services and responsive political and social institutions.
Indicators - air quality, land use policy, transportation services and available
housing.

As can be seen from this list, outcomes do not include increases in services or
new facilities. These might be regarded as strategies to attain desired outcomes.

In addition to these outcomes, the process of being involved in partnership is
likely to change people and their organisations, and this in itself is a form of
impact which can be measured.

3.6   Impact measures : expected and unexpected

The difficulty with outcome measures is that it is virtually impossible to attribute the
achievement of outcomes directly to the efforts of the partnership. The framework
therefore includes impact measures. These are specific measures that can be directly
related to the activities and outputs of the partnership and which support sustainable
change, which creates the conditions necessary to achieve outcomes. They can
eventually lead to changes in the overall context or system which maintains the
conditions which perpetuate the problem that the collaboration is trying to address.

Impact measures can be expected and unexpected. For example a partnership may
plan to increase the number of a target group of people participating in a certain activity.
An unexpected impact might be that as a result of this experience, new coalition and
networks are formed which generate their own activity.

"Partnership is a subversive activity because it changes the way people work. It begins to change systems within the partner organisations. It is critical to invest in the partnership if this is to happen"

The four categories of impact change are described below. There are two types of impact which may occur: expected and unexpected.

Real people impacts	Behaviour changes which occur in people/among groups or families and within communities or organisations These changes may stem from the acquisition of new information as a result of being involved, e.g. changing mindsets or altering stereotypes and result in new paradigms, thinking, decision-making and actions In addition people's sense of identity and self-esteem may increase through being recognised for their contribution; their sense of "can do" and enterprise is likely to increase and be given expression in how they live their lives
Policy development	Evidence of policies and procedures which have changed to support and sustain ongoing efforts within organisations, locally or nationally Examples within organisations include changes in how strategy is developed and implemented through the utilisation of consultative networks, which previously did not exist or were even unknown

	As partnerships develop their identity, they are able to articulate a "voice", and become a consultative point and lobbying influence for local and national government
Systems development	Evidence of improvement in co-ordination, infrastructure or the development of new services between organisations, agencies and groups of people working together for a common cause Examples are where business, public sector, local government, community and voluntary organisations collaborate to improve public transport locally, to create a "win-win" for all
Resource development **Resource development continued**	An increase in the social and economic capital for a geographical area or a community of interest. This includes increasing knowledge, skills, levels of activity and capacity - at a collective and individual level, as well as securing new capital - money, equipment or premises For example, attracting new funding or investment into an area to undertake re-generation or economic development is a tangible material impact. Less easy to quantify is an increase in knowledge and skills capital in an area, which some see as the real key to future self-sustainability

4   Summary

Respect for diversity lays the groundwork for a dynamic partnership. The framework foundation provides a purpose for partners to gather around. In sum, the contextual factors influence and are influenced by the process factors. The dynamic interaction among these factors determine the possibility of having a successful partnership. In order to prepare for possible obstacles and pitfalls, the contextual factors (connectedness, history of working together, political climate, policies/laws/regulations, resources and catalysts) can be evaluated before forming/developing a partnership. Additionally, these factors can be used in the ongoing evaluation of a partnership.

The framework itself can be used as a tool for communication, setting direction and focus, defining results, leveraging new resources or diagnosing problems. Although a few suggestions for applying the framework follow, those using the framework are encouraged to expand these examples and to share them with the Institute of Public Health.

4.1   Practical application

This partnership framework is for people who want to learn to sustain a partnership. It is for people who want to make partnerships more effective in realising specific outcomes. And it is for people who are interested in addressing an array of complex problems which resist "simple" fixes.

Using the framework, people can:

i.   Design or change the direction of an existing partnership or address the beginnings of a new partnership. In the process, users will recognise increased skills in communication, negotiation, decision making and applying research.

ii.   Diagnose problems within a partnership. Viewing the framework as a "template" and placing it over an existing partnership will help dissect the workings of the group. Often one or more elements may be causing underlying problems within the group.

iii.   Be guided in dealing with daily problems and opportunities in partnership working.

iv.   Focus on investing in their capacity to develop new solutions through partnership, optimising existing resources.

v.   Customise the framework to reflect the reality of their own context and processes, to build a deeper shared understanding of what the partnership stands for, where it is going, its own community environment and how it intends to make its outcomes a reality.

vi.   Examine the membership and ensure inclusiveness of the partnership. By reviewing the process factors a group may decide to add a member who agrees to facilitate the meetings or provide evaluation expertise. Key people may be added who are viewed as "catalysts" to making things happen.

vii.   Design the fundamental mechanisms that increase the stability and value of the membership. For example, using existing communication systems such as newsletters, telephones and electronic mail is far more effective than creating new systems.

In summary, the framework can assist you in your partnership. The Institute of Public Health invites you to join our evolving dialogue.

Appendix

List of participants who attended the workshop in December 1999:-

Marie Abbot, Programme Co-ordinator, Communities in Action, International Fund for Ireland
Linda Barclay, Director of Programme Development, Health Promotion Agency, Northern Ireland
Martin Beirne, Inter Agency Liaison Officer, North Western Health Board
Mary Black, Co-ordinator, North and West Belfast Health Action Zone
Leslie Boydell, Associate Director, Institute of Public Health in Ireland
Hugh Campbell, Lecturer in Youth and Community Services, University of Ulster
Hilary Curley, Co-ordinator, PLANET (The Network of Area Based Partnerships)
Kieran Doherty, Senior Executive Officer, North Western Health Board
Carmel Dunne, Co-ordinator of Social Development, Eastern Health Board
Ann Godfrey, Assistant Director of Social Services (Children), Southern Health and Social Services Board
Gillian Gibson, Co-ordinator, Footprints Women's Centre, Belfast
Eleanor Gill, Project Manager, Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone
Seamus Heaney, Co-ordinator, North West Community Network, Northern Ireland

Sharon Henry, Health Promotion Commissioning Officer, Eastern Health and Social Services Board
Stevie Johnston, Community Development Co-ordinator, Worker's Educational Association, Northern Ireland
Anna Lee, Manager, Tallaght Partnership, Dublin
Geraldine Luddy, Director, National Women's Health Council, Ireland
Siobhan Lynam, Community Development Co-ordinator, Area Development Management
Seamus McAleavey, Director, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
Bernadette McAliskey, Project Co-ordinator, South Tyrone Empowerment Programme
Theresa McAteer, National Co-ordinator, Forum for People with Disabilities, Ireland
Paedar McKenna, Outgoing Chairman, Armagh District Partnership
Anne McMurray, Corporate Change Executive, South and East Belfast Health and Social Services Trust
Frances McReynolds, Executive Officer, Co-operation and Working Together, Western Health and Social Services Board
Karen Meehan, Co-ordinator, Derry Well Woman Centre, Northern Ireland
Owen Metcalfe, Associate Director, Institute of Public Health in Ireland
Brigid Quirke, Project Worker, Pavee Travellers Centre, Dublin
Fiona Ryan, Public Health Specialist, Southern Health Board
Sheelagh Ryan, Chief Executive Officer, Western Health Board
Jane Wilde, Director, Institute of Public Health in Ireland
Evelyn Wright, Senior Environmental Health Officer, Dublin Corporation

Do not print this page – the last page should be the questionnaire page.