

Strengthening Collaboration in Ontario's Not-for-profit Sector



Research Team

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About the Ontario Nonprofit Network

The Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN) is a network of networks that facilitates communication and coordination amongst nonprofit organizations working for the public benefit in Ontario. ONN brings people and groups together to strengthen the capacity of the nonprofit sector.

In response to the Ontario Trillium Foundation's call for proposals for collaboration research, ONN assembled a consulting team with extensive and varied expertise through their developing consultant constellation. Lynn Eakin, a consultant and Metcalf Innovation Fellow at ONN, lent her broad sector perspective to the research analysis discussions.

The Research Team

The team of three consultants put forward by ONN - Heather Graham, Catherine Lang and Linda Mollenhauer - worked collaboratively with the Ontario Trillium Foundation research team to deliver on the research objectives. Together, they bring a depth and breadth of experience and knowledge in:

- applied research with a focus on community-based/participatory research approaches, qualitative research and community engagement strategies,
- hands-on involvement in developing collaborations,
- the challenges facing the not-for-profit sector,
- the current issues and policies affecting funding, and
- an appreciation of the diversity of Ontario's communities and the not-for-profit sector.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose:

The purpose of this Research Project is to explore what is new, emerging and evolving or changing in collaborations within the not-for-profit sector in Ontario, and to identify opportunities to enhance the Ontario Trillium Foundation's (OTF) role in supporting effective collaborations among its grantees and funders.

Trends, Opportunities & Challenges:

An analysis of key informant feedback provided by OTF staff, collaborative funders, and individuals, organizations and communities that are engaged in collaborative work, combined with a literature review, revealed a number of themes with respect to new and emerging trends, opportunities and challenges. Highlights from the research findings are summarized below.

- A confluence of factors in today's environment is causing a shift in the not-for-profit landscape and is leading to new ways of working together. Not only are there a growing number of collaborations and a critical mass of matured collaborations within the not-for-profit sector, they are taking new forms, achieving innovative solutions to deeply entrenched issues and breaking down traditional barriers between regions and across sectors. The not-for-profit sector is increasingly seeing collaboration as a key strategy for achieving mission, building community and better serving clients.
- The 'one size fits all' approach to creating, maintaining, supporting and evaluating collaborations doesn't work. Collaborations form organically and therefore different supports and measurements are required at different stages in their development. To be successful and to innovate, collaborators need to be able to build authentic relationships, take risks with new strategies, and shape and reshape their work together as it evolves. Many respondents talked about the importance of funders enabling rather than mandating collaboration. There may be a perception that collaboration is being mandated even when the intent of the funder is simply to avoid duplication or to encourage the achievement of more significant impacts.
- Trust is at the heart of successful and innovative collaborations. It takes time and resources to achieve significant outcomes and impacts, and requires a certain level of risk. While not all collaborations should be sustained, there is an important distinction between those that collapse because they didn't have the right resources and those that choose to dissolve because the work is accomplished.
- A significant number of not-for-profit collaborations are crossing over sectors, geography, cultures and populations. New types of collaborations are leading to new governance models, forms of financing and access to resources. Bringing together diverse partners, sometimes those who sit on opposite sides of an issue, creates an additional layer of complexity. Intermediaries are playing an increasingly important role in supporting and

catalyzing effective and innovative collaborations by acting to foster, broker, streamline and facilitate. More needs to be learned about the role of various intermediaries in advancing the work of the not-for-profit sector through collaboration.

- There is a growing interest among funders to position themselves as collaborators with the sector, not just as sources of funds. As well, there are a growing number of funder collaborations that create learning networks, accomplish joint strategies, streamline processes and/or address issues. The same best practices that apply to nonprofit collaborations also apply to funders. Respondents felt that there is a credibility gap with funders who ask that not-for-profits collaborate, yet continue to work in silos.
- A great deal of research is available on frameworks, typologies, and models as well as key success factors and ingredients of effective collaboration. However, this knowledge is not readily accessible or translated into easily applied tools and resources. There is also an opportunity to more effectively link researchers and practitioners across regions, sectors, communities and even nations to share what they are learning and to prompt further sector innovation.
- Collaborations, especially those with social change goals, are challenged by demands for outcome evaluation that seek short term results. There is a need for more research on the best approaches to measuring collaborations, such as developmental evaluation, and to identify metrics that can be used to evaluate its different types, stages and forms. It is also important to understand and document the unintended impacts and ripple effects that can come from collaborative efforts.

Recommendations to OTF

Building on its existing leadership and commitment, there is an opportunity for OTF to play a more catalytic role in advancing innovative and effective collaborations in partnership with sector stakeholders across Ontario. The recommendations that follow are grouped under five broad themes. They represent strategic opportunities for OTF to:

- Position itself as a collaborative partner with the sector,
- Achieve greater organizational and sector-wide impacts through collaborative efforts,
- Enable promising collaboration models and initiatives to take hold and flourish, and
- Promote a climate for innovation in and with the not-for-profit sector.

Framing the Recommendations:

In order to achieve these recommendations, OTF will need to:

- Pay particular attention to emerging trends and innovations in collaboration within the not-for-profit sector landscape;
- Develop different internal approaches, including the adoption of a broader definition of collaboration, to be able to respond flexibly and creatively to the new and evolving forms of collaboration that may involve different governance structures or non-traditional partners;
- Define and communicate its own language to describe innovation and effectiveness in collaboration in a way that is clear and useful to its processes, culture and mandates;
- Better understand, respond to and measure the success of the different stages of collaborations - -- from the beginning exploration and building of relationships to the formative stages in which partners formalize relationships, through implementation and achievement of outcomes, to transformation or dissolution.

1. Act as a Change Partner: Convene strategic partnerships with key funders and stakeholders within the not-for-profit sector.

Key informants acknowledged the important leadership role that OTF currently plays in bringing together key sector funders and stakeholders and encouraged them to build on this to:

- Help connect nontraditional partners and sectors;
- Explore ways to effectively support hybrid models that benefit the sector;
- Broker sustainable funding for promising collaborations;
- Find ways to measure the long term impacts of collaborative initiatives and practices; and,
- Shape public policy and funder practice.

2. Mobilize Knowledge Generation and Exchange: Make strategic investments that have a sustained impact.

While there is a lot of knowledge about collaboration within the not-for-profit sector, a more strategic approach is required to help the sector to generate and harvest learning about effective and innovative collaborative models, practices and measures. OTF can build on its current commitment to knowledge exchange by:

- Dedicating funds to enable knowledge generation and exchange so that the sector can document and disseminate learning about effective and innovative collaborative models, practices and measures, and translate that learning into practical, accessible tools and resources.
- Building OTF's capacity to identify knowledge needs and gaps and ensuring that the learning generated through OTF granting experience is integrated and accessible to OTF stakeholders and to the not-for-profit sector.

- Brokering relationships with universities, colleges, researchers, capacity builders and practitioners to advance learning about collaboration within a participatory/community-based research framework.

3. Create Space for Critical Reflection and Dialogue: Provide quick access to flexible funds that support collaborative relationships to grow and evolve.

The research identified that collaborations are more successful if they have the thinking space, including time and resources, to explore and create authentic relationships; find ways to innovate and stay relevant; address conflicts; and reflect on the progress toward outcomes. Supports should be flexible and creative, and could include the funds to hire a facilitator or mediator, travel, purchase technology or undertake research. OTF can support this by:

- Dedicating quick release funds to support groups and organizations to reflect and stimulate dialogue.

4. Sustain Promising Collaborations: Provide access to flexible, multi-year funding to build sector capacity.

Not all collaborations should continue over the long term. Yet key informants described the challenges of sustaining those promising collaborations that have something important to contribute to the sector. In order to be sustained, these collaborations require a long term commitment that responds flexibility to their evolving or changing needs through the different stages of development. OTF can help to sustain these promising collaborations by:

- Working closely with grantees to provide flexible, multi-year funding that recognizes their needs at different stages of collaborative development.

5. Strengthen OTF Volunteer and Staff Capacity to Advance Effective and Innovative Collaborations: Invest in skills development, enhance internal mechanisms and ensure a collaborative review process.

In order for OTF to be able to deliver on the recommendations, it is important to build its internal capacity by:

- Better understanding the different development stages of collaborations so it can provide the right supports when needed.

- Drawing from the learning acquired through OTF's research, convening, community consultations, and granting experiences to develop better internal mechanisms for evaluating collaborations and to build internal confidence in dealing with the complexity of collaborative models;
- Providing Community and Province-wide granting staff with the right skills, knowledge, time and resources to enable them to play a prominent role as facilitators and conveners, and;
- Ensuring OTF's grant review processes encourage cross-sectoral and region-wide perspectives; comfort with innovative thinking and measured risk taking; and includes experience and knowledge of best collaboration practices at the local, regional and provincial levels.

Introduction

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is a leading funder of collaboration in Ontario's not-for-profit sector. Since 2005, OTF has invested \$136M in funding to collaborations across Ontario. During this time, support to collaborations has increased from 20 to 25 percent of OTF granting. This includes 200 grants valued at \$32M to facilitate new forms of collaboration in the sector.

OTF's Challenging Times research (2009) identified a growing appetite for collaboration and the need for enhanced collaboration within the not-for-profit sector and among funders. Many organizations spoke about partnering with non-traditional organizations outside their sector, and suggested that the recession may have accelerated this trend.

Supporting new forms of collaboration is a strategic opportunity for OTF that has been endorsed by its Board of Directors, with a focus on OTF as a catalyst to foster greater collaboration, to support innovation, and to build greater resilience in the sector. Without the considerable support that OTF has provided many non profits would not have been successful in advancing their collaborative efforts.

The report that follows shares the results of our research on the state of collaboration in the not-for-profit sector in Ontario conducted on behalf of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The research offers an opportunity to learn more about collaboration, innovation and impact in the not-for-profit sector and provides recommendations to support OTF in building on its considerable strengths and leadership in the field to date. It represents yet another phase of OTF's exploration of, and work in, collaboration.

Purpose

The purpose of this Research Project is to explore what is new, emerging and evolving or changing in collaborations within the not-for-profit sector in Ontario, and to identify opportunities to enhance the Ontario Trillium Foundation's (OTF) role in supporting effective collaborations among its grantees and funders.

Methodology

The research methodology included a comprehensive literature review of key articles and papers, an online survey with 66 collaboration practitioners across the province, and 35 key informant interviews with identified stakeholders (funders, intermediaries, researchers and practitioners) that brought a unique and informed perspective. As well, three focus groups were conducted with OTF staff and collaborative funders. The research also included a focus group, key informant interviews and online surveys from the francophone community. Please refer to the list of interviewees at the back of this report for further details.

Definitional Frameworks:

For the purpose of this research, collaboration was defined as 'two or more different partners (e.g. individuals, organizations, networks) coming together from various sectors, groups or regions to work

toward common goals'. This broad definition captures the wide continuum of collaborative arrangements and the range of diverse partners. However, our research does not focus on government or private sector collaborations.

There is little consensus in the literature or in practice about the language of collaboration. For example, people use collaboration interchangeably with networks, learning groups or communities of practice, strategic alliances, partnerships, coalitions and mergers. A collaboration and a collaborative may mean the same thing, yet these groupings of people and organizations and their collaborative processes come in many different forms.

Instead of defining innovation, respondents were invited to identify what innovation looked like from their perspective and experience. The responses indicated that innovation is used to define the collaboration or the outcomes achieved. Some talked about innovation as an intentional outcome of their efforts, while others described it as an unintended outcome. Respondents also described a wide variety of innovations including: the ability to bridge across neighbourhoods, regions and international boundaries; the structure that is used to make the collaboration work; or simply the fact that new people were sitting around the same table in an effort to solve issues. We also found that what may be considered innovative in one community or sector, may not be in another. Many of the respondents didn't immediately describe their work as innovative.

The language used to describe the many forms and structures of collaboration, the evaluation metrics, and best practices is still evolving.

Trends, Opportunities and Challenges

Innovation usually needs collaboration to be successful but collaboration doesn't have to be innovative to succeed.

The Broader Environment is Evolving

A confluence of factors in today's environment is causing a shift in the not-for-profit landscape in a way that is described as both threatening and energizing. There are reductions in government funds; increased demands for services; and intensified expectations of impacts. At the same time, traditional sector boundaries are blurring -- businesses are developing not-for-profit subsidiaries, corporations are seeking to be socially responsible; not-for-profits are developing fee-for-service programs; social enterprise is both a source of funds and a means to tackle social issues outside of traditional not-for-profit programming; and social entrepreneurs are bringing a different kind of energy and innovation to solving issues. All these factors are leading to new ways of working. Even the language and positioning of the sector is changing to reflect its critical role in community, as "catalysts, community builders, and creative problem solvers".

Collaboration is evolving as a critical way of working within the not-for-profit sector.

New social media tools are also allowing people to think about relationships differently and to more effectively connect and engage with diverse people and perspectives across geography, cultures, sectors and national and international boundaries. These tools are “driving a fundamental change in how groups are formed and work gets done... that are characterized by principles of openness, transparency, decentralized decision-making, and distributed action”¹. For example, this enabling technology allows disparate stakeholders, like a client, family member, care worker, and hospital personnel to exchange information, resolve issues and organize in a way that could not be done before.

Younger people, in particular, have a comfort level with the new technology so they are “less tied to any organizational form and more open to creating their own structures and networks to advance social values”. This is changing the way that “individuals fulfill their service goals and interests,

notions of membership, volunteering and social engagement”².

“...Sector conversations appear to be moving away from discussion of reliance on, or even hope for, improved or increased funding. Many have simply withdrawn from discussion, moving instead to learning about new highly collaborative models of operation and more entrepreneurial ways of thinking about and generating revenue”.

From: Reflections on Starlings, Collaboratives, and the Nature of the Nonprofit Sector, 94

Collaborations are Maturing and Innovating

Through our research we heard that there is a growing number of collaborations and a critical mass of mature collaborations within the sector. Respondents describe an array of outcomes achieved by collaborative initiatives ranging from shared space or a joint AGM to the tackling

of complex and deeply embedded social issues.

With the experience and knowledge gained from participating in collaborations, not-for-profit leaders are taking a more measured approach to joint programming and action based on what has proven to work and not work. They are more intentional about why and with whom they collaborate. Most don't hesitate to bring in expertise, such as legal advice, facilitation and mediation specialists, when and where it is needed. There are also a growing number of leaders who have been in the trenches of collaborations and are willing to share their knowledge and experiences.

“New forms of collaboration, both within and across the sectors, and new ways of working can be observed, reflecting new media and new technologies, greater knowledge about the innovation process itself, and new understanding about complex systems, about how people organize, and how ideas move. These new ways of working involve different partnerships; the adoption of cross-sectoral strategies; and the development of new networks and means of networking.”

From: Social Innovation in Canada v

¹ Acting Wikily, pg. 1

² Convergence: How Five Trends Will Reshape the Social Sector, pg. 5

With the current environment and the maturing of collaborative practice, collaboration is increasingly seen as a key strategy for achieving mission, building community and better serving clients. One example is the Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition (EBFC). It is a collaborative of 40 community partners that work together to plan, develop and deliver services and programs to improve the health and well-being of young children within the context of their families and their communities. The coalition has been jointly delivering services and programs throughout Etobicoke for 12 years.

There are organizations in the sector that could gain from collaboration, but resist it because there is a fear of losing resources. Others pursue collaboration for the wrong reasons – for example, to take advantage of an opportunity to get access to funding. But many are proactively working together with an authentic desire to do a better job for their clients and communities. One respondent observed, “I see a laser beam focus on mission, that people are able to set aside turf issues...I am seeing much less the ‘our stuff’ is better than your stuff”.

At the same time, key informants and the literature review identified a number of challenges that create barriers to not-for-profit organizations embracing collaboration. Many not-for-profit organizations don’t have sufficient core funding to do long term planning, support experimentation and risk taking, or to take the time to reflect on the possibilities of achieving impact through collaborations. Many volunteer boards are also challenged by their deep loyalty to a particular organizational mission, constituency and/or community and struggle to step out of this comfort zone when collaborating with non-traditional partners or different communities. While the management team may see the merit of collaborations and are sitting at a number of community tables, they aren’t always supported by Boards to take on collaborative initiatives. Similarly program staff engaged in program related collaborations report that they do not always have adequate support from senior management.

Creative Waterloo Region Services (CWRS) Collaborative supports transformational change in the arts, culture and creative sectors of Waterloo Region. It aims to act as an enabler/accelerator, strengthening the arts sector to attract and retain innovative young thinkers. Waterloo Region has a significant number of permanent full time jobs that it cannot fill. The challenge has been to attract young people to move to this part of the province to fill these jobs. Creative Waterloo Region is a strong partnership of business, Municipal/Regional governments and the Arts.

The Creative Enterprise Agenda, developed out of the Prosperity Council of Waterloo Region, links arts and the creative process to a far wider range of economic activities. It encourages innovative thinking, fosters entrepreneurial business development and builds a community while attracting and retaining a diverse work force.

Collaboration has Diverse Forms, Processes and Stages of Development

There is little homogeneity in collaborative forms or processes. Respondents, both not-for-profit leaders and funders, recognized that the ‘one size fits all’ approach to creating, maintaining, supporting and evaluating collaborations doesn’t work. They pointed out that collaborations don’t mature like an organization. A number of typologies found in the literature describe the evolution of a collaboration, with four distinct stages:

“It is no longer fashionable to work in isolation.”

- beginning with an exploration of potential partners and shared outcomes,

- to a formation stage in which partners move from an implicit understanding to explicit rules of engagement,
- through implementation and achievement of outcomes, and
- transformation or dissolution.

One respondent also noted there is a “vast difference between the challenges faced by a single issue or outcome focused collaborative compared to those who are addressing multi-faceted and complex issues”.

A key learning, highlighted by collaborative leaders and funders alike, is that collaborations evolve organically and that different stages of collaboration, however they are described, require different kinds of supports. Funders must take into account the evolutionary continuum and determine how they can best support, through a variety of means, the various stages.

Funders Should Enable Collaborative Relationships

Many respondents talked about the importance of enabling, not mandating collaborations. Research on collaborations confirms that the most successful collaborations are the ones that happen because individuals, groups and not-for-profit organizations identify a shared need, not because a funder requires it.

“Often those who resist collaboration cite past instances when collaboration was forced on them, or when it was used as an excuse to reduce funding. Those legitimate negative experiences are hard to overcome.”

Some may perceive that collaboration is being mandated even when the intent of the funder is simply to avoid duplication or to encourage the

achievement of more significant impacts. For example, when a funder suggests that a project would have a better chance of being funded if the organization were to collaborate with other partners; this may be understood by the applicant to be a funder requirement. In the case of the East Scarborough Storefront in Toronto, a number of funders came together after the collaborative initiative was well underway to see how they might offer support to a promising model.

Time and again, we heard that trust is at the core of successful and innovative collaborations. In order for collaborations to build trust, respondents emphasized that they need the time, resources and space for individuals to build authentic working relationships. Not only does this process require a unique set of skills, it also requires the ‘breathing room’ to find common cause; to move from committed individuals to deepened institutional commitment; to continue to reshape the outcomes and identify the ‘magnetic attractor’; and to find the right balance between the need to formalize the relationship through structure and processes, while remaining nimble, responsive and innovative. There is a key role for funders in providing resources to help collaborations take shape and evolve.

The London Abused Women's Centre has recently held a public launch of their new No Wrong Door website supporting learning and practice at the intersection of services for women who are victims of violence, mental health and addictions services. Prior to this initiative all three sets of services operated independently without recognizing their interdependence. The project began in London, Ontario as a geographically specific OTF grant of a collaborative of women engaged in the three service areas. Once the model was built, OTF funded a short exploratory grant to develop a larger scale-up of the approach to cross-sectoral training and service. Currently the group has a 3 year grant that began with a collaborative of 24 players across the province. One year into this grant they continue to grow -- engaging more and more organizations in more communities. In the first stage of the work the collaborative was tight, small and relational. They have now devised mechanisms including large teleconferences, intersectoral training and web presence, to extend the learning process and community-level organizing into an increasingly large network of community-based collaborations.

As one funder describes it, “the focus should be on a process of enabling -- in which the funder asks what supports can create a rich conversation that may lead to a common cause”. Another respondent described the process as igniting relationships. Those supports might take the form of funds for space, staff time to meet, travel and/or access high quality facilitation, the creation of thought papers to better understand the landscape, or even just access to a description of organizational missions.

Ontario Trillium Foundation staff, for example, helped bring together the London Francophone Community Roundtable. Through the process participating groups learned they shared significant issues and objectives. They are working together to submit a collaborative application to OTF. In another instance, the Toronto Community Foundation showcases successes of community organizations and makes this information available as a tool that allows organizations to ‘see who is doing what in the

“When people gather, collaboration happens”.

community’ and to identify where intersections can happen.

The challenge for funders is to feel confident ‘putting dollars into something that is emerging’. As one respondent said, “the most successful collaborations are breaking some kind of rule”. We know that funders must meet certain accountability standards and need formal application processes, yet collaboration leaders feel pressured to describe outcomes before the collaborators have had a chance to find shared goals, clarify roles, understand the legal and regulatory implications and create structure and processes that work for them. One respondent articulated this by saying: “There is a demand for a set of fine tuned outcomes, before the story has been written”.

Achieving Significant Impacts Takes Risk, Time and Resources

Successful collaborations, particularly those that are addressing complex issues and are working towards broader social change, require a certain level of risk. As stated in *Accelerating our Impact*: “social change is complex, not simple; emergent, not fixed; and generally, although not always, long term rather than quick”³. They add: “Being innovative means allowing for surprises and unintended consequences, being comfortable with the unknown, and learning from mistakes”⁴.

Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win: The North-South Partnership for Children seeks to improve life for children, youth, and families in remote First Nation communities in northwestern Ontario.

In a unique collaboration, the partners — 30 remote First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario including individuals and voluntary organizations based in “southern” Ontario — are building respectful, sustainable relationships.

These caring relationships facilitate healing, development, and the exchange of resources. The depth of exchange is helping the partners identify immediate and long-term solutions to the difficult conditions and challenges faced by the communities.

involved patience in realigning outcomes and expenditures as the groups have needed to change and shift courses, facilitating, and granting higher than what was requested to demonstrate faith in the longevity of the approach.

“It took at least 10 years to get solid – the collaborative almost dissolved at least once a year during the first decade”

³ Accelerating Our Impact: Philanthropy, Innovation and Social Change, pg. 21

⁴ Ibid. pg. 21

To some degree, the current environment creates an aversion to risk and therefore some Boards of Directors and senior management with not-for-profit organizations may not embrace collaboration. For many years Boards have been directed to focus inward, and address legal and regulatory compliance issues. It's difficult in the evolving environment of collaboration to stretch and be open to new collaborative forms and the potential risks these present. Funders are also driven by the need to demonstrate clear and significant outcomes and high levels of accountability.

One of the challenges that emerges from the risk aversion is a lack of funds for research and development in the sector to support the 'let's try it and see' kinds of activity that may be characteristic of collaborative initiatives. Sector stakeholders are seeking to try new things, and in the process, to share risk – not only with organizational partners, but also with their funders. For example, OTF's Future Fund is testing and piloting different forms of grantee engagement to ensure that they allow for as much flexibility and innovation as they can while still satisfying accountability requirements. Respondents in our research suggest that OTF can learn from its success with the Future Fund and integrate that learning into its granting to all collaborative projects/initiatives.

“Being the lead organization is a mixed bag; it can mean you get too much or too little credit for your contribution.”

They also stress that the work of collaborations takes time and adequate resources – it can't be done 'on a shoestring' or 'can't have a strict timetable for outcomes'. The Wellesley Institute research paper, *Collaboration in the Third Sector*, states that collaboration is not free and can't be used to deliver more services for less money. The report goes on to say: “Regardless of the

intended outcome of collaboration – whether its purpose is to get more funding, pool resources, or increase the spectrum of services – collaboration is complex and to be successful consumes money, time and resources”⁵.

We heard that there is an important role for coordination, management and facilitation of such activities as strategic link-making, stakeholder relations, communication, decision-making, and recognition. Even managing the multiple and differing funder applications and reporting procedures can take significant time and resources. As well, respondents pointed to the need for technology capacity and the right use of social media tools to enhance communication, and the research capacity to properly evaluate and make the case for sustained support. The Green IT Collaborative, for instance, developed a web-based collaboration platform that is now being utilized by a number of other environmental collaborations.

At the heart of the issue, say respondents, is the reality that short-term, one time, and/or project funding does not adequately support the long term time frames or capacity needs of collaborations. While not all collaborations should be sustained, respondents distinguished between those that collapse because they didn't have the right resources and those that choose to dissolve because the work is accomplished.

Requiring a Lead Organization Presents Benefits and Barriers

Most funders require one not-for-profit organization to receive and manage the funds for the collaborative. This presents a number of opportunities for the lead organization, such as increased

⁵ Collaboration in the Third Sector: From co-opetition to impact driven cooperation, pg. 24

visibility and credibility, and the chance to nurture and demonstrate leadership skills and capacity within the organization, in the community and to multiple funders.

However, this requirement can create barriers to effective collaboration. The perception of inequality can arise from disproportional contributions among partners in collaborations. A lead organization is sometimes expected to provide more resources while other partners may grow complacent about their contribution or may not feel their contribution is being equally valued. The increased risk arising from accountability demands from funders or because of legal and regulatory requirements, for example in signing a lease for shared space, can also put undue pressure on lead organizations. We learned from respondents that these pressures can result in partnerships in name only – ones that are not true collaborations.

While not all lead organizations are able to effectively foster leadership development amongst other partners or build the capacity of smaller, less resourced partners, we heard that some lead organizations demonstrate extraordinary collaborative and community leadership. For example, in Toronto several Francophone newcomer women’s groups are now emerging as organizations and applying for funds on their own to expand their opportunities as a result of the leadership of RDEE and their success in convening and incubating the groups through collaboration.

We learned that those organizations that play a lead role in highly effective collaborations may be called on repeatedly to convene stakeholders in their community or sector or to facilitate new partnership projects. One example is Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA), a grassroots citizen coalition with volunteers from diverse sectors that fosters community leadership and action in the Headwaters region (Dufferin County). Following on its success in developing a local trail network and releasing a series of Community Wellbeing reports, HCIA has been asked by the Chamber of Commerce to take a lead role in convening economic development officers from eight local municipalities with the local tourism association to explore joint marketing initiatives.

These leaders demonstrate the best in a growing trend of collaborative leadership. However resources may not be readily available to enable them to continue to host collaborations, while simultaneously keeping focused on their own organizational mission, mandate and programming.

For several complex collaborations in Ontario, these challenges have been addressed creatively by making the strategic decision to work through intermediary organizations, such as TIDES Canada and the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI). TIDES provides a comprehensive support platform that includes financial management, legal services

Blue Green Canada is an alliance between the United Steelworkers (USW) and Environmental Defense (ED) to advocate for working people and the environment in key areas of global trade, the use of toxic chemicals in commercial activity, the creation of green manufacturing jobs, and in the development of strategies to address climate change. Referring to themselves as a 'strategic alliance', the two members (USW & ED) work together recognizing and respecting their differences and rallying together around the issues of common interest. This strong alliance has been a leader in the sector in Canada and it is continuing to expand its work by attracting and engaging other players, including some other 'unusual bedfellows', who are interested and invested in issues and needs of working people and the environment. OTF has been supporting their work since 2009.

“The problems and opportunities we are facing are bigger and more complex than ever before, and people are coming at it from multiple sectors to find solutions. We need a better understanding of how and why to work out of silos.”

and governance, for collaborative social change projects that are a fit with their charitable purposes and mission. CSI uses a shared space model to spark and support innovative social change ideas through incubating emerging organizations, connecting groups, and animating collaborations through facilities hubs. The Ontario Trillium Foundation has adjusted their own policy to simultaneously fund multiple projects through TIDES.

There is a Crossing of Boundaries in Many Collaborations

A significant number of not-for-profit collaborations are crossing over sectors, geography, cultures and populations. Corporations seeking to fulfill a growing demand for social responsibility are working collaboratively with the not-for-profit sector to find mutually beneficial ways to address issues and strengthen community. Leaders in sectors such as arts, health and the environment are innovating to create programs that address shared objectives. Not-for-profit organizations are increasingly recognizing that significant and embedded issues are too complex to be addressed in silos. A growing focus on the community is driving previously unlikely partners to the collaboration table.

For instance, LIEN (Low Income Energy Network), is a collaborative of ‘unusual bedfellows’ who got together to address an issue of common interest – how to increase energy conservation while supporting low-income communities in the province. Another local example is a unique collaboration between Community Living and Theatre Orangeville. Together they raised over 2 million dollars to develop space for Community Living Dufferin’s non-residential programs and most of Theatre Orangeville’s off-stage operations. The collaboration and collocation have resulted in innovative theatre programming for persons with intellectual disabilities. The new building is also available for use by a wide range of community groups, bringing people together and contributing to more collaborative possibilities.

These new types of collaborations are leading to new governance models, forms of financing and access to resources. While respondents agreed that these cross-over collaborations can achieve outcomes that are innovative and have deeper impacts, they also present a number of challenges. Bringing together partners, sometimes those who sit on opposite sides of an issue, creates an additional layer of complexity. More time is required to find mutually acceptable outcomes and common cause between disparate mandates; uncover assumptions; identify assets and capacities that can be brought to the table; determine how to co-brand; create structures and models to address decision-making; learn the language of the diverse partners; and address issues of power inequity and partner inclusion.

Respondents suggested that Funders' could play a role in facilitating connections to other non-traditional partners, including the private sector, various levels of government, academics, sustainable funding partners, etc. For example, Funders could suggest how best to approach non-traditional partners, and might convene forums that provide opportunities for diverse collaborative partners to meet and explore potential synergies.

It is important, say respondents, for funders to view these collaborations through a different lens and find creative ways to enable them to experiment and innovate. For example, a foundation may be wary of a collaboration that includes a corporate partner because of a concern that their dollars will not be directed to public benefit. Respondents also suggested that Funders' application and review processes or priorities are often geared to single applicants or single sector organizations or may exclude co-applicants such as school boards or colleges making it difficult for collaborations to find the right fit.

As well, these innovative collaborations present emergent governance and organizational models that don't fit into the existing grant decision making frameworks. For example, collaborations that work through intermediaries could be rejected by funders because they are viewed as repeat applicants.

Funders Are Working More Collaboratively

There is a growing interest among some funders, including foundations, corporations, not-for-profit funders (e.g. United Ways) and governments, to position themselves as collaborators with the sector, not just as sources of funds. Select funders also seek to collaborate with each other more effectively. Evidence of this is found in a number of initiatives. The Partnership Project, initiated by the province of Ontario, is being supported by a partnership between OTF and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, and involves a close collaboration with the Ontario Nonprofit Network. The Project aims to strengthen the relationship between the government and not-for-profit sector and enhance the capacity of the sector. Community Foundations Canada recently published a paper that documents and encourages collaborations among its members. United Way Toronto has developed a framework to recognize its strategic commitment to partnership. Hilary Pearson, President of

The ArtReach Toronto Fund is an innovative funders collaborative created as an outgrowth of the 'Youth Engagement Through Culture' committee of the Intergovernmental Roundtable of Arts Funders and Foundations (IRAFF). Its purpose is to improve access to arts programming with excluded youth/youth at risk in under-served areas of the City.

The program, which features high engagement, multiyear funding to youth led organizations, as well as unincorporated groups and individual artists, was designed by all members of the Funders Collaborative. An Executive Committee was comprised of financial contributors including OTF. The Laidlaw Foundation administers the program. The Grant Review Team was comprised of a minimum of 50% +1 youth who are artists, community animators and one member of the Funder's Collaborative.

Much preliminary work took place to establish this fund and to design and communicate strategy. This included the use of an outside facilitator to work with individual funding partners to build group consensus; research with youth-led organizations, arts organizations serving youth, and excluded youth; and consult with a collaborative of youth-led and youth engagement organizations in Toronto.

A collaborative approach has enabled partners to pool their resources and provide financial and technical assistance in a coordinated way. It has created an opportunity for funders to be innovative in meeting the needs of excluded youth by reducing barriers to accessing funds. It has also enabled funders to learn from each other, share risk, and contribute to a larger pool of funds that ultimately has the potential to deliver greater impact.

Philanthropic Foundations Canada, describes the growing interest in foundations working together in her article, *Funder Collaborative: Trend or Tool*.

Funders cite many reasons for collaborating with each other. The Philanthropic Foundations of Canada research found that some foundations are motivated to work together 'because it is good practice'. A number of funders identified a desire to 'leverage the impact of our grants and to influence policy'. The literature and our interviews point to a variety of ways that funders collaborate - from learning and strategic networks, to sharing of staff and program design and joint project management, to streamlining of application processes, to pooled funds and policy development.

Our research highlighted a number of challenges faced by funder collaboratives. These include: the blending of mandates; varying levels of risk tolerance; issues of control; disputes about recognition; a lack of time and resources; a clash of cultures and personalities; and communication breakdowns. Some informants commented on the limited number of funders interested in collaborating and the need of those who do to carefully assess the benefits of collaborating given the challenges. Funders that have participated in funder collaboratives also admit that they often don't take the time to reflect on and learn from those difficult experiences that may not have been successful. It is interesting to note that most of the challenges and solutions described by funders working collaboratively are identical to those described by not-for-profits involved in collaborations.

We also heard about a "credibility gap" with funders who ask that not-for-profits work together, yet continue to fund and work in silos. Both funder and not-for-profit respondents call for funders 'to model best collaboration practices' in the way they engage with each other and with the sector. One funder stated: "What we are asking of not-for-profit collaboratives, we should be asking of funder collaboratives".

Recognizing and responding to a lack of services in a high-need neighbourhood of East Scarborough, some 30 agencies from different parts of the city came together to figure out a means for joint service delivery for this community. Under the leadership of the East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club (the only local org), the East Scarborough Storefront (ESS) model was born in early 2000s. Space was secured and the participating organizations started delivering their services through this satellite location. OTF has been supporting ESS since 2002, and has worked closely, over a 12-month period, with four other funders (The City of Toronto, United Way of Greater Toronto, Service Canada and HRSDC) to develop a funding model for this unique collaborative that has since grown to a membership of 40+ service delivery organizations and has grown into a Tides Canada project.

There is an Increasingly Important Role for Intermediaries

Intermediaries are playing an increasingly important role in supporting and catalyzing effective and innovative collaborations by acting to foster, broker, streamline and facilitate. They take diverse forms, such as community leaders or institutions that convene partners to discuss issues and explore the potential for mutual support and action. They may be organizations that incubate initiatives by connecting groups, bringing in experts, brokering funding, or providing space and back office resources during the developmental stages of a collaborative. They can also be funders who bring grantees together, in a particular community, sector or across sectors, to foster dialogue and share learning and promising practices.

There are multiple examples of intermediaries supporting strategic alliances between not for profits and their stakeholders. In Ontario these include: RDEE Ontario; Pillar Non Profit in London; New Path Foundation/Common Roof in Barrie; CSI in Toronto; and TIDES Canada, among many others.

More needs to be learned about the role of various intermediaries in advancing the work of the not-for-profit sector through collaboration. Tides Canada Initiatives, through ONN, has recently established a learning circle of funders, policy-makers, academics and legal experts to examine how their support platform can increase the impact and effectiveness of not-for-profits and emerging charitable initiatives.

One critical role for intermediaries is their capacity to link not-for-profit collaborative initiatives 'on the ground' with public policy at various levels. Overwhelmingly, respondents pointed to the inability of various levels of government, without significant support and intervention, to respond flexibly to and partner with the sector.

“Convening discussion with different kinds of people around the table is like a kaleidoscope. You shake it up and see different patterns.”

Respondents also commented on the need for sustainable funding models, which may be linked to policy. Again, intermediaries could play a role, with the sector and their funders in advocating, innovating and testing new forms of financing and funding for collaborative initiatives.

The Social Purpose Enterprise Network, Toronto – a collaborative group of managers of social enterprises that provide training and/or employment for persons who are employment disadvantaged – decided that the research being done on social enterprise was not necessarily supporting them to become more effective. In fact, the research was taking increasingly more time to respond to, and using critical staff time that they couldn't spare. In 2010 SPEN decided to commission their own social enterprise benchmarking research by partnering directly with Carleton University. The research will be owned and used directly by the Network members to represent their interests at policy tables, to more effectively document and describe their development paths, and to reflect on, and build more effective, social enterprises. That research is now underway. Even at this early stage of the project, it's clear that the information documented within enterprises is determined more by what funders require in their funding applications and reporting, than by what the enterprises may need to operate effectively. The research results, when completed, will be shared with funders to discuss how reporting requirements and policies can more positively impact social purpose enterprise development.

A Growing Body of Knowledge Needs to be Accessible

Undertaking a literature review on collaboration ten years ago would have been a quick process. Today the number of papers, articles, resources, blogs, workshops, conferences and symposiums on collaboration has exploded. A great deal of research is available on frameworks, typologies, and models as well as key success factors and ingredients of effective collaboration.

Yet many respondents felt that the knowledge being generated is not readily accessible or translated into easily applied tools and resources. They talked about the need to translate the collaborative learning and research into a language that can be understood by not-for-profit staff, volunteers and directors who are busy with the work of running their organizations. They also called for easy access, ‘when you need them’, ‘nuts and bolts’ tools and resources, such as partnership agreement templates, case studies, and checklists as well as skill development. As one respondent said, “there may be a lot of theory, but not much that I can use easily to ensure our collaboration is effective”. Another asked: “how can we lift out the lessons learned?”

“There is currently a great deal of powerful research knowledge that is not being used by the community sector. Sector leaders may not know about it, the information may be packaged in a form that is inaccessible to practitioners, or the conditions for successful collaboration with researchers does not exist.”

We heard from respondents that collaborations are important sites for learning. An increasing number of collaboration experts or leaders have developed considerable knowledge and experience about effective practice to share with others. The challenge is that these people are repeatedly asked to consult with others who ‘just want to talk to someone who has done it’ or to join learning circles, or contribute to research.

There is an opportunity to more effectively link researchers and practitioners across regions, sectors, communities and even nations to share what they are learning and to prompt further sector innovation. Foundations have a unique role in supporting this kind of exchange, given their ‘bird’s eye view’ of the not-for-profit sector. They can play a role, with intermediaries and sector leaders, in integrating the knowledge being generated through collaborative action and helping translate it into effective policy.

“(One challenge is our) difficulty finding other collaborations in Canada with whom we can discuss best practices. We have created a small international network of like-minded organizations which has helped.”

Evaluation Must Measure the Intended and Unintended Impacts of Collaboration

Collaborations, especially those with social change goals, are often multifaceted in their approaches and outcomes. As such they are challenged by demands for outcome evaluation that seek short term results. As well, we heard that collaborative initiatives have impacts, such as network building and learning, that are not explicitly valued in funding mandates and programs.

While the literature review uncovered a number of studies on the evaluation of collaborations, respondents told us that more work is required. They pointed to the need for more research on best approaches for measuring the work of collaborations, such as developmental evaluation, and to identify metrics that can be used to evaluate different types, stages and forms of collaboration. As one respondent observed, “we need to be able to test our assumptions about collaboration” and to evaluate the return on investment. Respondents also cautioned to not underestimate the power of stories.

Respondents talked about the importance of understanding and documenting the unintended impacts and ripple effects that can come from collaborative efforts. For instance, key informants told the story of the collocation of several Francophone arts and cultural organizations, including College

Boreal and Théâtre français de Toronto, that led Francophone businesses to locate in the near neighbourhood leading to significant economic as well as social/cultural development. They noted that any measurement system should uncover and explore those important outcomes.

Conclusions

The research identified a number of emerging strategies and approaches to advance collaboration practice in the not-for-profit sector in Ontario.

- Continue to support core capacity in nonprofit organizations so they have the resources and time to reflect and effectively engage in collaboration as a strategy to achieve mission.
- Ignite relationships between individuals, groups and nonprofit organizations by supporting and creating opportunities to explore common cause, particularly across different sectoral, cultural, and regional boundaries.
- Allow trust to build in the early stages of collaboration development by facilitating the acquisition of skills and the time and capacity to put processes and structures in place that will help ensure success.
- Recognize that collaborations can be complex and that achieving outcomes takes time and resources by building higher risk tolerance and longer term horizons into granting processes; supporting mutually acceptable outcomes; and allowing for repeat funding along the continuum of collaboration development.
- Help leverage funding and policy support for those promising collaborations that are continuing to transform and achieve significant impacts.
- Provide adequate support for collaborations, recognizing that collaborations are a means to achieving greater impacts, not a strategy to do 'more with less'.
- Seek out different 'lead organizations' as a way to nurture leadership and capacity building while also finding alternative ways to fund collaborations so there isn't the need for one partner to receive the funds.
- Remove decision-making and eligibility barriers to funding collaborations that cross over boundaries (e.g. geography, populations, sectors) and present different governance forms.
- Encourage funders to be strategic partners with the not-for-profit sector and to model effective collaboration practice in the way they work with the sector and each other.
- Promote funder collaboration where appropriate as a way to streamline application processes; address joint projects and issues; and find ways to generate and exchange knowledge.
- Support the work of intermediaries to play a unique and important role in nurturing diverse collaboration initiatives.

- Increase the body of knowledge about promising and innovative practices in collaboration by ensuring it is accessible and can be easily applied; by building bridges between universities, colleges, researchers and practitioners; by identifying and supporting strategic gaps in learning; and by generating, integrating and sharing learning for the benefit of the sector as a whole.
- Support recognized collaboration leaders so they have the resources to share their knowledge, and to coach and mentor other collaborative initiatives.
- Find ways to better evaluate collaborative processes and impacts for different types and stages of collaboration, factoring in short and long term indicators as well as the unintended outcomes.
- Celebrate success in collaborations in order to generate stories, share learning and demonstrate impacts for the sector (e.g. recognition awards).

Recommendations to OTF

Building on its existing leadership and commitment, there is an opportunity for OTF to play a more catalytic role in advancing innovative and effective collaborations in partnership with sector stakeholders across Ontario. The recommendations that follow are grouped under five broad themes. They represent strategic opportunities for OTF to:

- Position itself as a collaborative partner with the sector,
- Achieve greater organizational and sector-wide impacts through collaborative efforts,
- Enable promising collaboration models and initiatives to take hold and flourish, and
- Promote a climate for innovation in and with the not-for-profit sector.

Framing the Recommendations:

In order to achieve these recommendations, OTF will need to:

- Pay particular attention to emerging trends and innovations in collaboration within the not-for-profit sector landscape;
- Develop different internal approaches, including the adoption of a broader definition of collaboration, to be able to respond flexibly and creatively to the new and evolving forms of collaboration that may involve different governance structures or non-traditional partners;
- Define and communicate its own language to describe innovation and effectiveness in collaboration in a way that is clear and useful to its processes, culture and mandates;
- Better understand, respond to and measure the success of the different stages of collaborations -- from the beginning exploration and building of relationships to the formative stages in which

partners formalize relationships, through implementation and achievement of outcomes, to transformation or dissolution.

1. Act as a Change Partner: Convene strategic partnerships with key funders and stakeholders within the not-for-profit sector.

Key informants acknowledged the important leadership role that OTF currently plays in bringing together key sector funders and stakeholders and encouraged them to build on this to:

- Help connect nontraditional partners and sectors;
- Explore ways to effectively support hybrid models that benefit the sector;
- Broker sustainable funding for promising collaborations;
- Find ways to measure the long term impacts of collaborative initiatives and practices; and,
- Shape public policy and funder practice.

2. Mobilize Knowledge Generation and Exchange: Make strategic investments that have a sustained impact.

While there is a lot of knowledge about collaboration within the not-for-profit sector, a more strategic approach is required to help the sector to generate and harvest learning about effective and innovative collaborative models, practices and measures. OTF can build on its current commitment to knowledge exchange by:

- Dedicating funds to enable knowledge generation and exchange so that the sector can document and disseminate learning about effective and innovative collaborative models, practices and measures, and translate that learning into practical, accessible tools and resources.
- Building OTF's capacity to identify knowledge needs and gaps and ensuring that the learning generated through OTF granting experience is integrated and accessible to OTF stakeholders and to the not-for-profit sector.
- Brokering relationships with universities, colleges, researchers, capacity builders and practitioners to advance learning about collaboration within a participatory/community-based research framework.

3. Create Space for Critical Reflection and Dialogue: Provide quick access to flexible funds that support collaborative relationships to grow and evolve.

The research identified that collaborations are more successful if they have the thinking space, including time and resources, to explore and create authentic relationships; find ways to innovate and stay relevant; address conflicts; and reflect on the progress toward outcomes. Supports should be flexible and creative, and could include the funds to hire a facilitator or mediator, travel, purchase technology or undertake research. OTF can support this by:

- Dedicating quick release funds to support groups and organizations to reflect and stimulate dialogue.

4. Sustain Promising Collaborations: Provide access to flexible, multi-year funding to build sector capacity.

Not all collaborations should continue over the long term, but key informants described the challenges of sustaining those promising collaborations that have something important to contribute to the sector. In order to be sustained, these collaborations require a long term commitment that responds flexibility to their evolving or changing needs through the different stages of development. OTF can help to sustain these promising collaborations by:

- Working closely with grantees to provide flexible, multi-year funding that recognizes their needs at different stages of collaborative development.

5. Strengthen OTF Volunteer and Staff Capacity to Advance Effective and Innovative Collaborations: Invest in skills development, enhance internal mechanisms and ensure a collaborative review process.

In order for OTF to be able to deliver on the recommendations, it is important to build its internal capacity by:

- Better understanding the different development stages of collaborations so it can provide the right supports when needed.
- Drawing from the learning acquired through OTF's research, convening, community consultations, and granting experiences to develop better internal mechanisms for evaluating collaborations and to build internal confidence in dealing with the complexity of collaborative models; and
- Providing Community and Province-wide granting staff with the right skills, knowledge, time and resources to enable them to play a prominent role as facilitators and conveners;
- Ensuring OTF's grant review processes encourage cross-sectoral and region-wide perspectives; comfort with innovative thinking and measured risk taking; and includes experience and knowledge of best collaboration practices at the local, regional and provincial levels.

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The grant making organization, which has been at the forefront of support for collaboration, has identified and showcased exceptional nonprofit collaboration efforts through The Collaboration Prize. It provides models and best practices for the field through the Nonprofit Collaboration Database, a resource for everyone seeking real-life examples of how nonprofit organizations are working together.

MaRS: <http://www.marsdd.com/index.html>

MaRS provides resources — people, programs, physical facilities, funding and networks — to ensure that critical innovation happens. They stimulate, identify and harness great ideas, nurture their development and guide the transformation of those ideas into reality.

Social Innovation Generation; <http://www.sig.uwaterloo.ca>

Social Innovation Generation, University of Waterloo (SiG@Waterloo), goal is to generate new knowledge about social innovations and the social innovation process in Canada. In particular, the dynamics of learning, adaptation and innovation in the arena of sustainable development and in the mental health domain. They disseminate new knowledge through publications and learning events from graduate programs to lecture series developed inside and outside the university research community.

Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement; <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca>

Tamarack provides workshops, research, institutes and an e magazine to bring inspiration, ideas and resources to envision and create vibrant communities.

The Centre for Advancement of Collaborative Strategies; <http://www.cacsh.org/index.html>

The Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health at The New York Academy of Medicine helps partnerships, funders, and policy makers realize the full potential of collaboration to solve complex problems related to health or any other area. Working closely with people and organizations involved in collaboration, the Center conducts research studies, policy analyses, and joint learning activities to identify and explore key challenges associated with collaborative problem solving. The Center also develops practical tools and training programs based on the knowledge it obtains.

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation; <http://www.emcf.org/how/growthcapitalpilot/index.htm>

This foundation is involved in Growth capital aggregation funding, which is piloting large aggregated granting from a variety of funders (co-investors) to support the growth of certain initiatives.

The Philanthropist; <http://thephilanthropist.ca/index.php/phil>

The Philanthropist is a quarterly journal for practitioners, scholars, supporters and others engaged the nonprofit sector in Canada. It publishes articles and useful information about the sector's important contributions to our communities, our country, and our world.

Tom Wolff and Associates; <http://www.tomwolff.com/>

This website provides free access to tools, useful links and articles on building collaborations and coalitions.

List of Interviewees

Individual Key Informants:

Michelle Baldwin, Pillar Non Profit
Judith Baril, United Way of Leeds and Grenville
Cathy Barr, Imagine Canada
Rose Bellosillo, Hot Docs
Ian Bird, Sport Matters
Courtney Bourns, GEO
Sylvia Cheuy, Dufferin Not-For-Profit Support & Capacity Building Project
Ethel Côté, l'Art du Développement
Annie Dell, RDEE Ontario
Robert-Guy Despatie, Réseau en Ontario/Conseil scolaire Centre-Sud
Tim Draimon, SiG@MaRS
Abe Drennan, Celebrate Youth Movement
John Ellis, Family Service Ontario
Constance Exley, ONN
Judy Finlay, North South Partnership
Stéphane Gauthier, Carrefour francophone
Allyson Hewitt, SiG @ MaRS
Jan Jaffe, GrantCraft
Tim Jones, CEO, Artscape
Chris Kang, Schools without Borders
Bev Lepischak, Sherbourne Health Centre
Cindy Lindsay, Community Foundations of Canada
Cheryl May, SiG @ MaRS
Kelly Murumets, ParticipACTION
Monica Patten, Community Foundations of Canada
Claudette Paquin, TFO
Hilary Pearson, Philanthropic Foundations Canada
Erica Phipps, Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE)
Pramilla Ramdahani, SE-Fad Group
Shahina Sayani, Artreach Toronto
Marsha Sfier, Springtide Resources
Jini Stolk, Creative Trust
Tonya Surman, Centre for Social Innovation
Lynne Toupin, Human Resource Council for the Voluntary Sector
Leslie Wright, TIDES Canada

Focus Groups:

Ontario Trillium Foundation, Collaboration Project Advisory Group
Ontario Trillium Foundation, Francophone Staff Focus Group
Funders Focus Groups (2) – convened by Ontario Trillium Foundation as part of Partnership Project

Interview Guidelines

Interview Script for Individual Key Informants:

Thank you for taking the time to contribute your views and experiences to OTF's State of Collaboration research.

Trillium Foundation is undertaking the research to uncover ways it can support collaboration in the not for profit sector more effectively. Your name has been selected as a key informant in the Francophone community who can provide an important perspective on collaboration in Ontario.

The initiative will focus on what is emerging and changing in the practice of collaboration in the not for profit sector. This includes identifying new and innovation approaches to collaboration as well as assessing where current collaborations may be heading in the near future.

The research is one aspect of a larger process, led by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, to advance learning on collaboration and to enhance the impact of the not for profit sector through collaboration.

As a key informant, you will have a chance to contribute to that learning and shape the OTF strategies and directions.

The interviews will be confidential, and will be combined with the results of an online survey, focus groups, and other key informant interviews to identify aggregate themes and trends. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes.

Interview Questions:

1. What kind of new and emerging trends in collaboration are you seeing in the field?
 - Are these new models innovative? In what ways?
 - What particular trends have you seen in the use of collaboration to achieve social change/social innovation?
 - What issues are emerging as existing collaborative initiatives are maturing?
2. What opportunities do you think new models and emerging trends in collaboration present for the NFP sector?
3. If you look out 5 years in the future, how might collaboration look different than it does today?
4. What kinds of challenges do new and changing forms of collaboration present: to your organization, to the Trillium Foundation, to the larger NFP sector, to other funders?
5. What do you think the NFP sector in Ontario needs to be a leader in collaborative practice?

- How could Trillium support collaborative practice in the NFP sector as it innovates and matures?
 - What other supports, tools or technical supports do you think the NFP sector requires for collaboration to be impactful and effective?
6. What else do we need to know/understand to advance collaborative practice in the sector?
- What more do we need to learn specifically about emerging trends and models in collaboration in order to support them effectively?
 - Are there other questions you think we need to ask about collaboration that could move our thinking and practice forward?

Feedback

1. Is there anything we didn't ask that we should have?

Any final comments?

Questions for Funders' Focus Groups:

1. How do you think collaboration in the not for profit sector is evolving?
 - Are there particular trends in collaboration that you are watching?
 - What opportunities do these trends and/or emerging forms of collaboration present for the NFP sector and for Ontario communities?

2. There are a number of creative ways that funders are currently collaborating. We've heard from community practitioners that they would like to see funders collaborating to partner and engage with funders to achieve outcomes, to learn together, to reduce workload in applications and reporting, to enhance the impact of their collaborations.
 - Are there new opportunities emerging for funders to collaborate to support the work of the NFP sector?
 - What contributes to successful funder collaborations?
 - What needs to happen for more and more strategic funder collaboration to occur?

3. What opportunities are there for OTF to be a catalyst for successful collaboration? In the not for profit sector?
 - What roles could other funders play?

4. What else do we need to know/understand to advance collaborative practice among funders, within the NFP sector, and between funders and the sector?
 - What do we need to learn specifically about emerging trends and models of collaboration in order to support them more effectively?
 - Are there other questions we need to be asking?