Office for the Community Sector  
Department of Planning and Community Development  
Victoria, Australia

Guiding Principles for Collaboration between Government and Philanthropy

Working together for a strong community sector

2012
Guiding principles for collaboration between government and philanthropic organisations

Government and philanthropic grant-makers both provide funding to not-for-profit community organisations. Both government and philanthropy recognise that value and efficiency can be added when they work collaboratively. These guiding principles have been developed to support collaborative relationships.

1. Creating the Environment

1.1. Engage each other early when the potential idea/interest/need for a collaborative approach is being considered
1.2. Ensure that expectations about goals and how partners are going to work together are clarified early on in the collaboration’s development
1.3. Recognise that collaboration works most effectively when the partners have shared values and principles, and when it meets each organisation’s guidelines and agendas
1.4. Government/philanthropic collaborations work better when each sector understands the others directions and priorities and philanthropy understands government’s policy environment.

2. Shaping Partnerships and Building Relationships

2.1. Understand each other’s roles, policies, priorities and limitations
2.2. Ensure sufficient time to develop trust, mutual respect and agreed approaches
2.3. Ensure the right people are at the table(s), with commitment and involvement from senior and operational representatives of each partner organisation, as appropriate. Seek consistency of personnel representing the partners over the length of the collaboration, as far as possible
2.4. Develop a formalised ‘Statement of intent’, once principles, goals, outcomes, expectations, roles and responsibilities are agreed.
2.5. Build in a flexible approach to roles, responsibilities and collaboration activities in order to accommodate changing circumstances and opportunities as they arise
2.6. Appoint a member of the collaboration to drive and co-ordinate governance, operational and communication activities and build this role into their job description for the duration of the collaboration (this role would generally be taken by the lead agency).

3. Decision Making and Management Practices

3.1. Agree to processes for selecting organisations to be funded and the nature of projects to be jointly supported
3.2. Communicate frankly throughout the collaboration time frame
3.3. Document the history, context and development of the collaboration. Where there is a change of personnel, ensure that a formal handover process is put in place to ensure adequate information about the history and culture of the collaboration is passed on.

4. Evaluation and Sustainability

4.1. Ensure there is an evaluation framework and the resources available to undertake the level of evaluation agreed upon
4.2. Address sustainability issues early including development of a funding plan, where appropriate. As part of this, plan and develop an exit strategy if the collaboration, or partners’ involvement in it, is time limited.