Checklist for a successful partnership and collaboration activity

Adapted by Christine Macdonald and Jane Measday from the checklist developed by **Harris et al.** in **Working together: intersectoral action for health. June 1995 Commonwealth of Australia.**

Working Together: Intersectoral Action for Health.

The checklist provided here is an abbreviated version, adapted to palliative care, of a checklist developed by a team of researchers who investigated the factors that contribute to successful intersectoral action for health. The list resulted from a report commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health in 1995 as part of a strategy to develop the infrastructure for health promotion in Australia. The checklist is based on the authors' premise that for intersectoral action to be effective it must meet six preconditions. These preconditions were identified through an extensive literature review and consultation process. Their conclusion was that intersectoral action is complex and difficult - but it can be understood. Steps can be taken to minimise risk and to increase the chances of success if the participants understand and create conditions for effective intersectoral action.

Results from the review indicate that there are six preconditions for working together effectively:

- Recognition or perception by potential participants of the **necessity** to work together on an issue, and in the proposed way rather than in some other way;
- **Opportunities** in the wider operating environment that enable intersectoral collaboration (e.g. the community understands and is supportive).
- The sectors/organisations involved have the **capacity** to undertake the proposed action (resources, time, skills and knowledge);
- **Relationships** between those involved are established and strong enough to enable the participants to undertake and sustain action;
- A well conceived **plan** that can be implemented and evaluated; and
- The inclusion of due consideration to **sustain** outcomes. [1]

1. Necessity

Organisations are interested in working with other organisations to take action that will achieve their organisational goals and ensure their survival. The more the planned action meets these criteria the more the senior managers in each sector are likely to contribute resources and show a high level of commitment.

Consider

1.1 What are the areas of common business in the area of rural palliative care that have been or could be advanced by joint activity in our region?
1.2 For each participating organisation, does the identified common core business ensure/enhance organisational survival by

- protecting resources

[1] Harris E, Wise M, Hawe P, Finlay P, Nutbeam D. *Working together: Intersectoral action for Health.* Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health, AGPS, Canberra. June 1995

- gaining resources
- protecting areas of influence
- expanding areas of influence
- building community/sector support.

1.3 Or does shared business create potential conflict or risks?

2. Opportunities for Action

The chance of an issue or program being taken up and maintained by all the players depends on the opportunities that exist in the broader environment of each participating organisation.
Opportunities for action are made up of two components:

- an environment in which the need for action arises; and
- triggers for action

Consider

Environment **–** *(time, locations, social environment, political environment, immediate organisational environment)*

2.1 Are there policies in the health sector, or other sectors, that create a supportive environment or give a mandate for action? What are they?
2.2 Are there social movements that support or could potentially support the proposed action?
2.3 Are there general levels of community concern on the issue that may affect support for the proposed action?

Triggers for action *(opportunistic events, community concerns, knowledge and energy, new ideas, redefinition of acceptable standards)*

2.4 Are there any triggers to create more collaboration in rural palliative care in our region?

3. Capacity for Action

Building capacity requires action within the organisations involved as well as between them. Three factors influence the capacity of organisations to work together: the availability of organisational support, resources and skilful people.

Different parts of the structure may be important to success at different times. In the early identification of an issue, the involvement of senior people is crucial. The commitment of staff at lower levels will be important for implementation.

Differences in structure in different organisations means that different amounts of time are taken to make decisions, different methods are used to select priorities, and to measure performance. For intersectoral action to be effective, the individuals involved must have the power (or access to it) to commit their organisations to act or to contribute resources, and to accept timeframes that reflect the greater length of time that decisions are likely to take when several organisations are working together.

Consider

3.1 Where is the current capacity to promote rural palliative care within each organisation?
3.2 What are the limitations? Is there organisational support? Skilful people? Resources? Risks?

4. Relationships for Action

Consider

4.1 Have steps been taken to develop positive relationships based on trust and respect between the sectors/organisations?

4.2 Have negotiations taken place with other sectors and organisations on the nature of the relationship, as distinct from the proposed action?

4.3 Have decisions been made on:

- formality of the relationship;
- intensity of contact;
- the extent to which each organisation is prepared to relinquish autonomy to act on the issue;
- duration of involvement in the action;
- time is allocated to regularly review the relationship and clarify any issues that may

4.4 Where have effective relationships been established in our region in the area of rural palliative care?

4.5 How formal are they? What has worked, what hasn't?

4.6 How do we maintain the relationships?

5. Planning for Implementation & Evaluation

Implementing a project that requires links with other organisations or sectors is not very different from planning and managing any other project. However, in addition to effective project management seven issues have been identified as particularly important to planning and implementing intersectoral or inter-organisational actions:

- clear recognition of why it is important for the organisations or sectors to work together on an issue;
- acknowledgment that the process is changing and emergent;
- a clearly articulated, achievable goal that reflects outcomes valued by all sectors;
- ·an agreed way of working;
- opportunities at every stage to renegotiate the relationship;
- clear recognition that each organisation must foster a sense of joint ownership; and
- establishment of designated staff who have the resources to undertake the action.

Implementation
Check that:

5.1 The reason that the sectors and organisations have agreed to work together on this issue forms the rationale for the plan of action.

5.2 Clear roles and responsibilities for action and expected outcomes are clearly spelt out in the plan of action.

5.3 Decisions have been made on the strategies that will be used by each organisation and sector involved, to implement its roles and responsibilities.

5.4 An agreement has been reached on how credit for the action will be attributed.

5.5 Specific resources for use in the action have been identified.

5.6 Methods for dealing with disagreement and conflict are in place.

5.7 Regular reviews are held to redefine the range and types of action being taken and the difficulties/outcomes to date.

Evaluation
Check that:

5.8 Outcome measures have been developed that are relevant to the various organisations participating in a partnership for palliative care.

5.9 The methods and extent of evaluation have been related to the amount of funding, size and expected outcomes of the action.

5.10 The quality of evidence produced by the evaluation is acceptable to all parties concerned.

5.11 The 'evaluation' demands are sensitively negotiated along with the 'project' demands.

6. SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

Consider

6.1 What resources, systems, strategies are in place to ensure that positive outcomes are sustained?

6.2 Have there been any assumptions made about continued joint activity?

6.3 Has the accrued knowledge of the successful partnership been documented?

6.4 How are the lessons being disseminated to the relevant decision makers and managers ?