

Item 10 –

What makes collaborative processes work?

An excerpt from 'Reflections on the Collaborative Governance Process of the Land and Water Forum' (Baines and O'Brien, 2012, pg 11-12)

This excerpt summarises lessons others have learned about effective collaborative processes. It identifies key success factors that can inform how the Collaborative Stakeholder Group approaches its work.

“2.4 Conceptual framework for thinking about collaborative-based processes¹⁸”

The research team has worked on a definition of collaborative governance as an arrangement where one or more public agencies engage with non-state stakeholders (commercial and community) in a collective decision-making process. Such a forum is formally organised and meets regularly, works to achieve decisions by *consensus* and focuses collaboration on solutions or outcomes. Governance here is not about one individual making a decision but rather the pooling of resources so groups of individuals or organisations can make decisions that cannot be solved alone – coming together with the intention of solving problems for the wider community – with the purpose of guiding and steering the community.

Throughout the research process we have been guided by our earlier literature review (see Appendix C). That broad body of experience indicated that certain key factors contribute to the success of a collaborative governance process. These key success factors – the elements of a conceptual framework – have been used by the researchers to guide the observations and reflections set out in this report. They would also usefully inform the thinking of personnel in central and regional government when considering how future applications of collaborative governance should be set up and implemented.

The literature points to the following five key success factors:

A commitment to legitimacy: Legitimacy comes from addressing satisfactorily matters of representation in the collaborative governance processes that are established. The collaborative process includes not only the “deal makers” or “deal breakers” but also those *affected* by outcomes of the process.

A commitment to change for the common good: The parties involved in the process are committed to participate positively – seeking constructive responses to conflict situations. This ensures that participants are energized to engage with one another and push for agreement and mutual gain. Mutual gain can involve a push towards a common “superordinate” goal. Commitment to change for the common good needs to be an article of conduct required of participants and constantly reinforced during the deliberative process.

¹⁸ This section is informed by the work of:

Ansell C, Gash A. 2008. Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice. In *J Public Administration Research and Theory* 18 (4): 543-571. Advance Access published on line Nov 13, p1. doi:10.1093/jopart/mum032

Berkes F. 2009. Evolution of co-management: Role of knowledge generation, bridging organisations and social learning. *J Environmental Management* 90:1692-1702.

Innes J, Booher D. 2010. *Planning with complexity*. Routledge

Zadek S. 2008. *Collaborative Governance: the New Multilateralism for the 21st Century*, Published in Global Development 2.0, Brookings Institute, Washington DC

Takahashi L & Smutny G. 2002. Collaborative windows and organizational governance: Exploring the formation and demise of social service partnership. *Non Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 31:165-85

McCoy ML, Scully PL. 2002. Deliberative Dialogue to expand civic engagement: What kind of talk does democracy need? In *National Civic Review* 91 (2):117-135.

Bandura A. 1997. *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: WH Freeman.

O'Brien M. 2010. Briefing Paper: The Development of a Regional Future Energy Security Strategy – A Collaborative Governance Research Project. Cawthron Institute, October. (Unpublished)

A commitment to authentic face-to-face dialogue: This requires that –

- participants are involved in a deliberative process characterised by direct and sincere engagement so that assumptions can be challenged, value and belief systems tested and stereotypes discarded;
- deliberations cannot be dominated by those with power outside the process;
- everyone involved must have equal access to all the relevant information and an equal ability to speak and be listened to, ie, all participants have a real voice and listening becomes as important as speaking!
- knowledge relies on what participants know from their everyday lives and not just on specialised, scientific expertise;
- participants have time to explore a range of views about an issue and have the opportunity to sort out what is going on around them – crucial to developing a sense of ownership of the issue at stake.
- authentic, face-to-face dialogue depends on how deliberations amongst participants are structured, facilitated and resourced.

A commitment to flexible and facilitative leadership: This brings the parties together and assists them to overcome pre-existing conflicts, builds trust and creates a foundation for working relationships. This is crucial if participants are to examine publicly the attitudes – values, beliefs and assumptions – underlying their own views and the views of others. Depending on the way in which the deliberative process is set up, aspects of leadership may be distinguished from the role of facilitator(s) and be shared by, and be evident in the behaviour of all participants.

A commitment to the creation of an ongoing learning culture: As participants are engaged in authentic dialogue they ask questions, listen, interact and learn about one another – assumptions are tested, thoughts are challenged and new ways to move forward progressed. A commitment to a learning culture also requires that participants believe in the collaborative process and believe they are capable of accomplishing significant social change. This change starts with participants having the capacity to think about alternative ways of working but also to imagine their successful implementation.

These factors are not independent. For example, a commitment to dialogue will have spin-offs for the creation of a learning culture, and so on. Since initiating the research, and as a result of ongoing issues around resourcing, we have added a further factor: *A commitment to appropriate resourcing*”.
