

Checklist for successful collaborations

Collaborating with government, public knowledge and healthcare institutions, companies and patient organizations is often crucial within the public health domain to be able to create impact. What is important to keep in mind if you start such a collaboration? This checklist will help you with a few guidelines.

‘A collaboration is promising when people and organizations connect with each other in a meaningful process, which reflects mutual interests and aims at a significant ambition’ according to Edwin Kaats and Wilfrid Opheij, authors of *Leren samenwerken tussen organisaties*. ‘The real crux of collaboration remains the **shared ambition**. This ambition doesn’t necessarily have to be grand and compelling, but it has to go beyond the idea that everyone has to get something out of it (money or meeting funding requirements). Otherwise it is only about (a series of) transactions between parties. If you don’t share the same ambition, you shouldn’t get into a collaboration or set up a consortium, just purchase (if possible) what you need.’¹

The five indicators for promising collaboration are: ambition, interests, relationships, organization and process. Answering positively or negatively to the following checklist questions, will give you an indication of how successful the collaboration is or will be.

For an overview of the complete checklist, see the publication of Kaats and Opheij.

Ambition

- Do the collaborative parties have a shared ambition?
- Are the ambitions supported by the stakeholders of the parties?
- What position does the collaboration have within the participating organizations? Is the topic of the collaboration appealing to the participating parties?
- Is the ambition in line with the (collaboration) strategy of the participating parties?
- To what extent are the parties dependent on the functioning of the partnership? Does the ambition of the parties also appeal to other stakeholders?
- Are the stakeholders of the participating parties regularly involved in determining the ambition of the partnership?
- Are personal beliefs and motivations of key players taken into account when determining the ambition? Is the ambition of the partnership of personal importance to the key players?
- Is the shared ambition tested regularly? Are new developments being monitored?

¹ [Edwin Kaats en Wilfrid Opheij: Zonder samenwerking komt er niets tot stand - Boekblog - Managementboek.nl](#)

Interests

- Are the parties genuinely interested in each other's interests? Do they also take the time to consider these interests in more depth?
- Is there a willingness to consider the interests underlying the points of view? Are the skills available to discuss each other interests?
- Is there an opportunity for all parties in the partnership to create added value and a win-win situation? Does the collaboration also create value for external stakeholders?
- Is there an adequate balance between give and take and is this sufficiently seen and valued by the parties?
- Is an atmosphere and place created where all perspectives and viewpoints can be discussed and heard? Is there enough attention for spoken and unspoken words?
- Is attention paid to corporate, organizational and individual interests?

Organization

- Is there a person or group of persons who take the initiative in the collaboration? Is the leadership of this person or persons accepted?
- Does the organization and structure of collaboration fit the desired proportions of the partnership? Is there an over or under organization? Do the consultation structure, governance, day-to-day operations and rules provide incentives to achieve an effective collaboration?
- Do the parties involve their stakeholders in the decision-making processes of the partnership? Is the importance of support ('draagvlak') taken into account in the choices of actions and measures?
- Is the collaboration organized in a way to encourage concrete actions and results? Is the contribution of decisive personalities taken into account in composing the team?

Relationship

- Do the parties have sufficient personal ability to commit? Are the personal abilities to connect taken into account in the composition of the team? Are sufficient incentives organized to establish a personal connection?
- What is the group dynamic? Does it strengthen the individual and collective effectiveness in the collaboration?
- Is the relational connection between participants such that it will also keep interaction going in times of crisis or conflict?
- Is the degree of mutual trust raised? Do the parties make an effort to develop confidence and undertake activities to do so?

Process

- Are there different distinct phases in the process? Do the parties know at what stage they are? Are the different phases highlighted and communicated?
- Do the parties pay attention to keeping and delivering agreements? Do they make each other accountable for meeting these agreements?
- Is there a clear division of roles in the collaboration? Is the leading role held and accepted? Do the parties give each other feedback on this?
- Is attention paid to reaching ambitions and goals in the collaborative process?
- Does the attention to progress and achieving ambitions and goals lead to updates and interventions?