

LEARNING POINT 29:

collaborative gain

- test out the tools for identifying collaborative gain and share evidence about their effectiveness;
- support people to develop the skills they need for collaborative gain;
- promote a holistic view of community regeneration to funding bodies and local decision-makers.

Partners in Regeneration

Partners in Regeneration was set up by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration as a network for interaction, rather than collaboration.

Organisations use the partnership to share information, develop relations with others and improve their understanding of other organisations. But the potential to go beyond this is huge. Individual partners could think about how they can use this resource to develop collaborative working and other ways to add value to their own work. Website: www.partnersinregeneration.com

Further reading

Chris Huxham has written several articles and publications on the theory and practice of collaborative gain and advantage. These include:

Managing to Collaborate: The Theory and Practice of Collaborative Advantage by Chris Huxham and Siv Vangen, Routledge, 2005.

Realising the advantage or succumbing to inertia?, published in *Organisational Dynamics*, Vol 33 No 2, pp199-201.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information about any of the issues mentioned in this learning point, please contact:

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Our Learning in Regeneration Skills Pack and How to Guides can also be found online at: www.scr.communitiescotland.gov.uk

Other formats

You can also ask for this publication in large print, Braille or on audio cassette, and we can also provide translations into other languages. Please contact Janette Campbell on 0131 479 5162 or email her at translations@communitiescotland.gsi.gov.uk.

The Scottish Centre for Regeneration is part of Communities Scotland, the Scottish Government's housing and regeneration agency.



What are learning points?

Learning points share what people have learned from their experience in regeneration. They share the lessons from people working or talking together, or from research into issues and evaluation of what is happening. Learning points are one of the ways that help people and organisations identify what works and what doesn't work to improve their practice.

What is this learning point about?

This learning point looks at 'collaborative gain'. Also known as collaborative advantage, collaborative gain helps organisations understand the benefits and challenges of cooperation more fully.

This learning point captures some of the issues and lessons from a Partners in Regeneration learning event on collaborative gain held in June 2007.

December 2007

The learning point also draws on the work of Chris Huxham at Strathclyde University who has researched partnerships in the public and private sectors.

What are the important issues?

Regeneration can make a real difference to people's lives by providing better services to local communities to achieve lasting change. But the task is complex and cannot be achieved by one group or profession working in isolation. For this reason, collaboration between organisations is promoted as a good thing within the regeneration sector. But there can be differences in why people choose to collaborate, what they assume collaboration means, and what happens in practice. This raises several issues including:

- how can we show that collaboration is providing benefits to all partners and to local communities;
- how can we measure the success of collaboration;
- how can collaboration take place so that it is not an end in itself but delivers real change;
- how can we make sure that collaboration does not run out of steam with nothing to show for it;

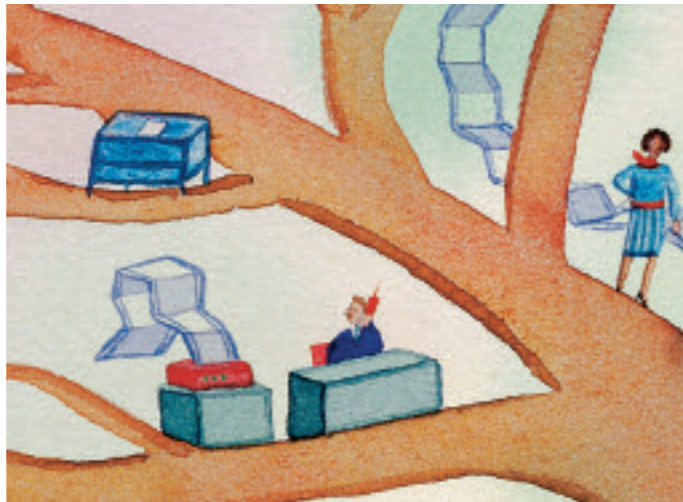
What is known already?

In every community, the relationships between housing, education, the economy, and the environment affect local people and their quality of life.

Organisations involved in these issues are committed to working together on community regeneration and there are many examples of successful collaboration. However, some groups have a stronger tradition of joint working than others.

Collaborative gain happens when partnerships:

- gather evidence of need in the communities and the benefits achieved;
- agree shared objectives and ways to measure performance, both annually and in the longer term;



- enable and empower members to deliver objectives themselves;
- do not collaborate just to secure funding;
- are clear about what they can offer and deliver in a partnership;
- establish clear accountability; and
- can describe what they would have been doing if they hadn't been in partnership.

What did people learn from this?

There are lots of tools and techniques that can help with taking a collaborative approach.

- 'Technology of Participation' is a way to describe complex problems. It encourages different views to be expressed and then helps create a consensus about what needs to be done.
- 'Mind mapping' can help identify causes and effects. It visually describes the key problem and builds a picture of the issues and factors that affect it. It is also a good way to show the connections between these different factors.
- 'Cross-impact analysis' shows how addressing some problems may indirectly help to improve other issues. It helps you to decide which actions should happen first and which will give most benefit.
- 'Action planning' turns an objective into a set of actions. It helps you focus ideas and decide what steps you need to take to achieve specific goals.

- 'Open space workshops' are a democratic way to allow groups of people to identify the issues that are most important to them. They can be used either to agree priorities or to identify specific actions to solve an issue and who should lead on delivering them.
- 'Customer blueprinting' examines how people in communities experience local services. It can show if poor collaboration is creating problems of which individual service providers are unaware of.
- The 'value chain network' helps organisations to identify what their strengths and weaknesses are and where they would gain from collaboration.
- 'Forcefield analysis' identifies forces which will help or threaten a planned change. This allows resources to be targeted at the barriers to change. It also helps show the roles that different partners can play.

As well as the normal skills needed for successful partnership working, collaborative gain is more likely if you:

- communicate and engage people so you can share the lessons from the collaboration back to people who have been involved or benefited;
- monitor and track what you are doing to make sure that the collaboration is worthwhile and making a difference;
- clearly link what you are doing with your organisation's strategic objectives or business plan; and
- manage knowledge so everyone involved can learn from research and experience elsewhere.

If you take a collaborative gain approach it will help you to:

- describe complex situations;
- provide different viewpoints on the causes of a problem;
- decide which problems need to be tackled first;
- create opportunities to be innovative and to do things differently;

- understand how changes in one area such as housing development can have a positive or negative impact on other issues;
- understand that sometimes small changes can have a bigger impact than expected;
- look at your work and see if anything contradicts what other partners are doing; and
- decide if and how to change policies and actions to make them similar to successful projects by others so that your work has a bigger impact.

Collaboration can help you:

- work more efficiently through cooperation and coordination;
- reduce the duplication or overlap of work between organisations;
- target a wider area or group of people or take a longer-term approach thanks to a larger pool of resources;
- attract special funding from other agencies;
- influence other organisations or mainstream service providers; and
- influence national policy.

What next?

The inevitable challenges of collaborative working can be managed and minimised.

In the future it will be important to:

- continue to learn from others who have been able to demonstrate the benefits of collaboration;

