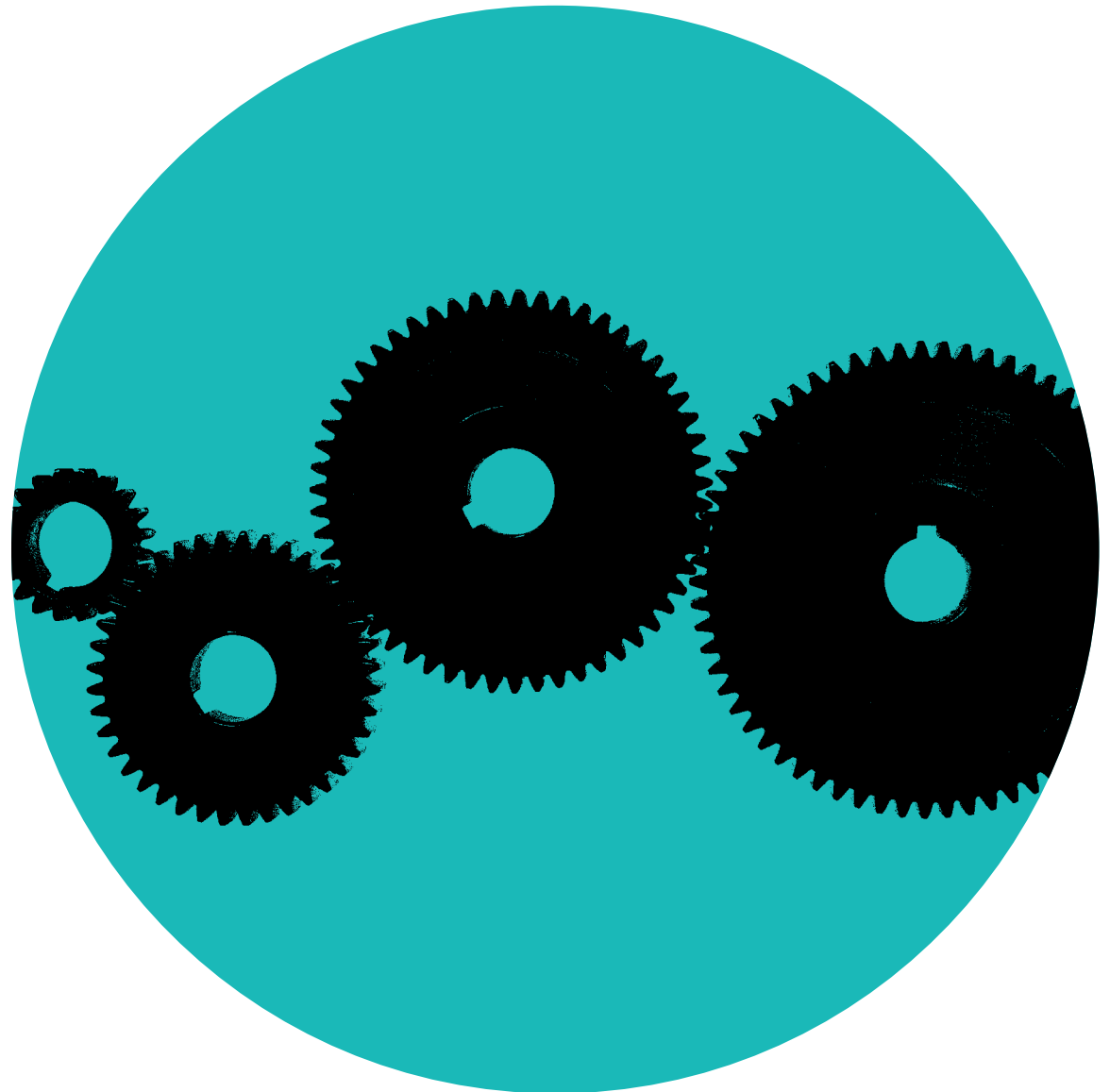


In Focus:

Effecting change through collaboration



Why is it important?

Change cannot happen without the active support and cooperation of others. Collaboration of some form therefore lies at the heart of successful campaigning and influencing.

There are many benefits to working in collaboration:

- A stronger, more united voice equals increased profile, credibility and influence with the general public and decision-makers.
- Increased chances of you not being picked off by providing a coherent and co-ordinated voice.
- Expertise are strengthened by bringing different skills and assets to one campaign, such as technical expertise on an issue with another's access to wide networks of people.
- Shared workloads and pooled resources may be desirable to funders.

The complexity and scope of many issues also mean that a single organisation will rarely have all the necessary resources and expertise necessary for large campaigns, nor the capacity to reach out into different communities, mobilise support and deliver on a number of fronts all at once.

'If I have seen further than others, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.'

Isaac Newton

Current climate

Now more than ever, you need to consider how to best work with others to ensure that your campaigns are successful. This is because of:

- Resource pressures faced by the voluntary and community sector.
- Expectations, from both government and general public alike, that voluntary and community organisations work together wherever possible on issues of shared concern.
- Common use of coalitions and partnerships in campaigning, particularly with single issue campaigns e.g. Make Poverty History.
- Use of new social media which allows much greater participation in campaigning than ever before.

In an environment where there are more opportunities and expectations to collaborate as well as stretched resources for campaigns and policy work, it makes sense to think more strategically about campaigning collaboratively.

'A number of key elements have ensured a successful partnership. A common aim – everyone involved in the Trust really wanted to help children and young people who have communication needs. The passion in the sector is extraordinary.'

The Communications Trust

What does it involve?

It is worth thinking about the key criteria that go towards making up successful collaborations since you are likely to spend a great deal of your life involved in collaborating with others.

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION
SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING:
1 SHARED VISION
You have a shared vision of what you want to achieve and why you want to work together.
2 TRUST AND COMMITMENT
You are actively committed to work in partnership and trust the individuals and organisations you are working with.
3 CLEAR TERMS OF REFERENCE
This should include what you propose to do, how you intend to work together and the different roles and responsibilities ascribed to particular individuals and organisations. In some cases, you may wish to consider a signed, written agreement.
4 OPEN, HONEST COMMUNICATION
All partners are kept informed and up-to-date about each others' work; problems are raised and addressed as they arise.
5 APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES
Depending on the nature of collaboration, you may wish to set up a steering group, comprising all the key partners, to oversee the planning and delivery of work.

Decisions about when to collaborate will often be complex and you need to weigh up the costs of working across a range of organisations and the time and resource needed to make a collaboration successful against the increased benefits and leverage that are brought about by working together.

When thinking of working in collaboration you need to consider:

- Is this the most effective way of pursuing your campaign goal?
- Is your goal shared by the other organisation(s) and if not what compromises can you accept for the advantage of greater leverage?
- If you don't co-operate will this damage your capacity to achieve your goal with your target audience or create conflicting or competing messages with the public?
- Do you have the capacity to be an active member of the partnership?
- Is there the potential to create the level of trust and co-operation between the organisations involved? It helps if there is also trust between the individuals involved.

MODELS OF JOINT WORKING ¹	
STYLE	TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS
Networks	A common interest may be the only membership criteria. Usually typified by an informal structure but sometimes has a coordinating secretariat. Often involves regular personal contacts. Emphasis mostly on sharing information and ideas and support rather than joint programmes of work. Members can invest as little as they wish and leave as they wish.
Coalitions	Joint working, often among diverse organisations, around a single event, issue or campaign. Members invest significant resources and coordinate their messages, strategies and activities. Different organisations divide the tasks in the most appropriate ways but the structure tends to be formal and requires a high level of trust between participants. Everyone recognises that the coalition has a limited lifetime.
Alliances	Long-term formalised agreement on common ideals between very trusted partners. Very regular consultation between organisations that make a big investment of time in order to make it work. Alliances are usually long-term in nature. Strategies and plans may be jointly developed and implemented.

Where do I start?

The following guidelines relate primarily to collaboration that takes place at the organisational level.

Stage 1: establish whether you should collaborate and how

There are many reasons why you may wish to collaborate with other individuals or organisations. These are often very practical:

- To share limited financial or human resources.
- You are working on the same issue(s).
- You work with or represent the same group.
- To pool different skills, expertise or knowledge.

Different forms of collaboration will inevitably require the involvement of different people within your organisation. The decision to establish a coalition or a strategic alliance with another organisation, for example, will most likely require the involvement of senior staff and trustees. Whereas working collaboratively on specific activities might only require involvement of those actually working them.

Criteria to apply when assessing whether you should collaborate are:

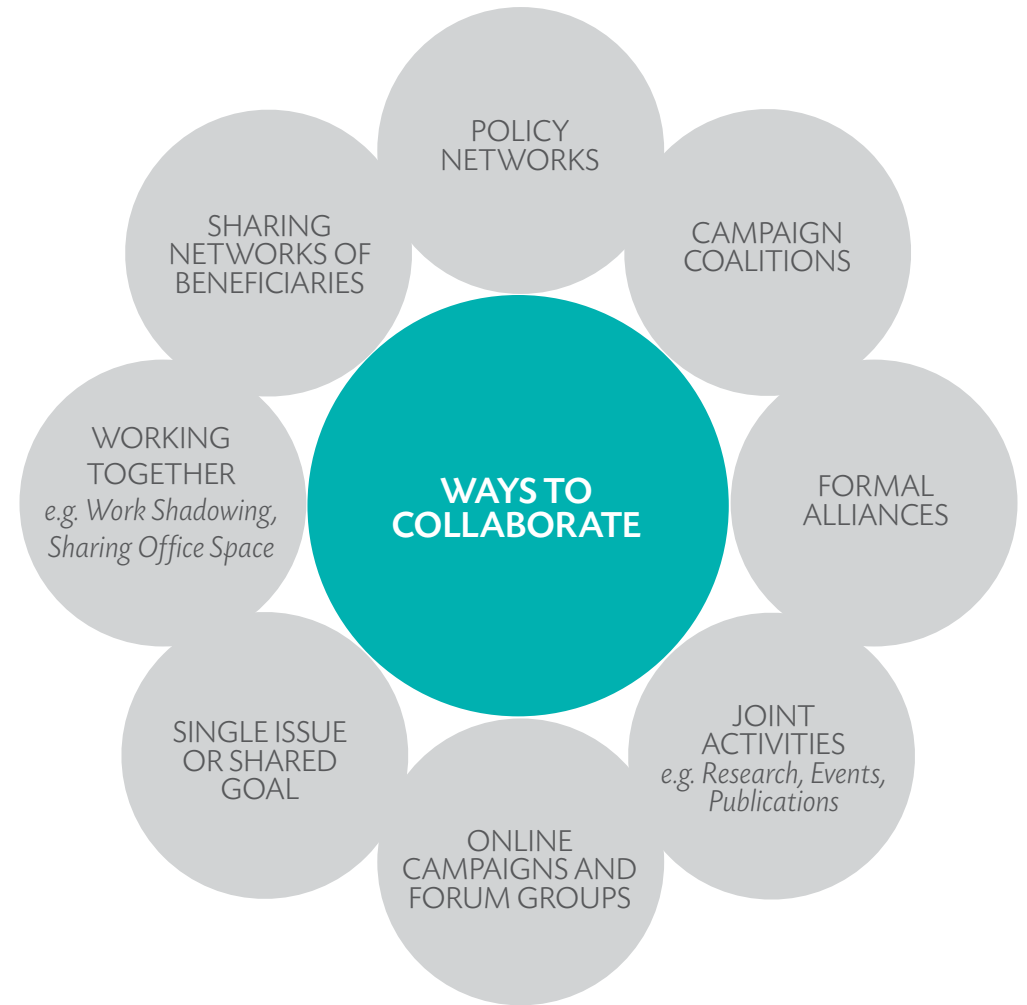
- 1 Does it enable better responsiveness to the needs of your beneficiaries?
- 2 Does it enable better use of resources?
- 3 How does it affect access to resources and funding?

'Collaborative advantage' is achieved in one of two ways:

- 1 When an objective is met that no organisation could have produced on its own;
- 2 When each organisation is able to achieve its own objectives better than it could alone.

Stage 2: decide on your approach

Once you have decided that collaborating will be a benefit to your campaign you need to think about how you are going to approach your collaboration. Here are some ways you might think about collaborating:



TIP For any given collaborative opportunity, review against the benefits and risks/challenges outlined previously. Do the benefits of collaboration outweigh the potential risks in your particular case?

The more formal ways of collaboration will normally require some sort of leadership role and governance to operate effectively and efficiently. If you choose the more formal ways of collaboration either in formal alliances or coalitions you will also need to clearly set out the roles, responsibilities and resources of the alliance or coalition.

Things to clarify may include the following:

- Roles and responsibilities of individuals and organisations
- Timescales of specific activities
- Resource implications, including contributions to be made by each organisation (financial, human resources, equipment, etc)
- How work will be branded and communicated externally
- Intellectual property/authorship (in the case of research or publications)
- Monitoring and evaluation
- An exit strategy

In the case of networks, coalitions or alliances, you will need to consider the process for inviting or accepting members, such as whether you will have membership criteria or a set of principles that all new members sign up to. You will also need to consider how to promote membership.

If you are planning a specific campaign, consider how you intend to involve your beneficiaries and how the different beneficiaries or members of different organisations might work together. It is always important to produce a written record of what is agreed. For more informal activities, this might simply be in the form of meeting minutes or a follow up email; for more formal, this might be in the form of a Terms of Reference document or a legal contract.

Using more informal ways to collaborate through networks or social media offer a different kind of network campaigning which does not depend on formal alliances but does depend on dispersed networks. Using social media can open the door to leaderless campaigning.

You should also consider if your campaign is focused on a single issue or if the goal can be shared with other groups or organisations who have their own issue campaigns but the goals coincide.

Plane Stupid campaign

The campaign launched a 'adopt a resident' scheme which brought climate change activists together with residents threatened by Heathrow's third runway to support the goal of stopping the build of a third runway at Heathrow. These two groups had separate reasons to want to halt the build, but the goal was the same so together their campaigns were stronger.

TIP Use Twitter to provide a 'leaderless' platform for ideas and messages to develop collaboratively amongst mass numbers of people, without formal coordination or leadership. Popular key words and phrases (or 'hashtags') allow millions of people to connect, based on their views on a current event or issue.

Stage 3: decide who to collaborate with

You may already have specific organisations or individuals in mind but if not, a stakeholder analysis is a great way to start thinking about potential collaborators. Simply draw up a list of all the individuals and organisations that have an interest in or are affected by the issue(s) you are working on. Then group them according to whether you think they might be potential allies, opponents or 'floaters'. Of the organisations you identify as possible allies, consider the following questions:

VALUES, MISSION AND ETHOS OF ORGANISATION(S)
What are the values, mission and ethos of their organisation? Are there clear synergies? Are there any significant differences?
BENEFICIARIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES
Who are their beneficiaries? Who are they accountable to? How are their beneficiaries currently involved in campaigns and policy work?
PRIORITIES AND APPROACH
What are their current campaigns and policy priorities? What is their typical campaigning approach and style?
TRACK RECORD AND REPUTATION
Do they have a strong track record of campaigns and policy work? Are they respected by those you seek to influence?

HISTORY
Have you worked with them before? Do you have any established links with policy and campaigns staff?
RISKS AND CHALLENGES
Are there likely to be any difficult 'personalities' to contend with? Is the organisation financially secure? Are there specific areas where it may be difficult to achieve consensus? Are there significant risks to your reputation by associating with them?
BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES
Do they have specific knowledge, skills or expertise that you do not have? Would you make an unusual alliance?

A 'Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities or Threats' (SWOT) exercise may also help you assess and shortlist potential partners and allies.

Always consider 'unusual suspects' from both within and outside the sector. Building unusual alliances or bringing new voices to a debate will increase your chances of success. Decision-makers will be particularly receptive to those who do not typically engage with your particular issue, or even those who do not typically get involved in campaigning.

The Farm Animal Welfare Forum

This forum is made up of large organisations, though for some farm animal welfare is only a small part of their work.

The members of the forum decided to work together because they recognised the value of co-ordinated and integrated action and because a significant new funder wanted to encourage greater collaboration between voluntary organisations, business and academic institutions working on farm animal welfare.

Stage 4: agree a shared vision

The way in which you approach prospective partners will depend entirely on how you intend to collaborate with them and your existing relationship to date.

It is essential during the initial discussion stage to establish a shared understanding of what you want to achieve, how you will go about it and how you intend to work together. Use the initial discussions to talk through your expectations and what each of your organisations can 'bring to the table'. You should also consider at this stage what concessions or compromises you might be prepared to make as part of the collaboration. All partnerships inevitably involve a bit of give and take so you need to be clear where you need to draw the line. This might concern practical issues, such as how much time and money you have to commit to a piece of work and who does what. However, it might also concern content issues, such as the policy positions you develop, the influencing tactics you use and the involvement of your beneficiaries.

Stage 5: agree processes for communication and coordination

Clear communication channels and effective coordination between all partners form the basis for successful collaboration. To this end, you will need to consider, for example, who needs to be involved in making particular decisions, how frequently meetings need to take place and what can be discussed by email or phone. It is worth agreeing the finer details as early as possible, even down to who is responsible for organising meetings and producing minutes.

For larger, more formal collaborations, you might want to consider setting up a steering group. In some cases, it might be necessary to set up a number of working groups to lead on specific areas of activity.

TIP Take advantage of the wealth of collaborative tools that are now available online. You can use social networking sites, for example, to set up online groups, post discussions, run polls and arrange meetings, as well as share and collaborate on documents.

Stage 6: monitor and evaluate your work

Monitoring and evaluation should be embedded within all campaigns and policy work. Working in collaboration provides no exception to the rule.

Whilst you will inevitably want to monitor and evaluate your collaborative efforts as a whole, you will equally want to evaluate your organisation's specific contributions.

Monitoring and evaluation activities are likely to centre around three main questions:

- 1 Did working in collaboration help you achieve more than if you worked alone?
- 2 How well did our collaborative efforts work in practice?
- 3 What unique contributions did your organisation make? What impact did this have?

The indicators you use will be determined by what you are trying to achieve and the nature of your collaboration. However, you may wish to consider the following:

Are You Collaborating Effectively?

Indicators:

- Clear added value from working together
- Early negotiation between partners about objectives and strategy
- Early achievements that keep partners motivated
- The value of different contributors are recognised
- Sufficient opportunities for members to participate
- Clear structures and transparent decision-making processes
- Sound information and communication
- Good leadership
- High levels of trust
- Efficient implementation
- Clarity about exit strategies.

'If you all start with common expectations and a common understanding of the rationale behind the decisions to collaborate you are less likely to encounter difficulties later on.'

The Good Campaigns Guide, 2005

What next?

Putting it into practice

If you have five minutes...

- Read the Getting you Started factsheet on 'campaigning in collaboration'.
- If you haven't already, join the Forum for Change website, which allows you to network with other policy and campaigning professionals. There is a dedicated 'collaboration' discussion group for you to share information and advice on all things collaboration related.

If you have one – two hours...

- Identify and shortlist possible collaborators by carrying out a stakeholder analysis. You could do this as part of a team meeting.
- Research existing networks, alliances, coalitions or informal groups that either you individually or your organisation could join.
- Carry out a review of your organisation's experience of collaborative working to date. What has worked well? What hasn't? Identify what lessons you can learn and draw up some principles for working in collaboration in the future.

If you have one day...

- Host a seminar or roundtable meeting for key organisations or individuals working on a similar issue(s) to your organisation. Use the meeting to allow participants to share their expertise and knowledge, as well as explore ways in which you could coordinate or collaborate on specific areas of work.
- Buddy up or shadow someone from another organisation that is working on a similar issue(s) to you. This is a great way to share information and expertise and keep up to date with what other organisations are doing.

Further reading

Toolkits and guides

Getting you Started: Campaigning in Collaboration

Published by NCVO, 2008

Campaigning in Collaboration

Published by NCVO, 2007

Campaigning in Collaboration – free executive summary

Good guide to campaigning and influencing

(For print version with no hyperlinks)

All guides can be found at:

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/campaigning-collaboration

Case studies

How the Women's Institute and WWF-UK campaigned together to reduce the threat of hazardous chemicals.

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/influencingtheeu/WI

Online resources

Campaigning in Collaboration

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/
campaigning-collaboration](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/campaigning-collaboration)

*Webpage with advice on how best
to campaigning in partnership,
alliances and coalitions.*

Forum for Change collaboration group

[http://www.forumforchange.org.uk/group/
collaboration](http://www.forumforchange.org.uk/group/collaboration)

Collaborative working

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/
collaborative-working](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/collaborative-working)

*Advice and support from
NCVO on collaborative working.*

About Campaigning Effectiveness, NCVO

Campaigning Effectiveness, NCVO supports and empowers people and organisations to change their world through campaigning and influencing policy. We bring together experience and expertise and drive excellence in campaigning and policy work across civil society by providing support, knowledge, tools and resources.

For further information about our work go to www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/campaigningeffectiveness

About Forum for Change

The Forum for Change, funded by the Big Lottery Fund is a network for people influencing policy and campaigning for change across the voluntary and community sector. Membership is free and open to everyone.

To join or for further information go to www.forumforchange.org.uk or email forumforchange@ncvo-vol.org.uk

About In Focus

In Focus guide are produced for Forum for Change members as part of the Policy Skills Development Programme. Other titles include:

- Building your evidence base
- Commissioning research
- Influencing devolved governments
- Involving people that matter
- Policy development
- Making sense of the external environment

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