

## Questions Journalists Should Consider When Covering Cross-sector Collaboration



### Who's Involved?

- ⚡ What offices, agencies, organizations, and companies are partnering in this collaboration?
- ⚡ Have the partners worked together previously? If so, were those relationships successful (e.g., were they characterized by trust and goodwill, and did they produce desired outcomes)?
- ⚡ Have any of the partners participated in previous cross-sector collaborations? If so, were those efforts successful or not?
- ⚡ Have any critical partners been left out? If so, who are they, why were they left out, and what are the potential downsides of their not being included?
- ⚡ Has the public been consulted on this partnership's work in a meaningful way? If so, how (e.g., through public meetings or hearings, formal surveys, public comment periods, ballot measures)? If not, are partners considering a public consultation process of some kind?
- ⚡ What signs of public support or opposition are observable, if any? What is the reason for this public support or opposition?



### Why Was a Cross-sector Approach Chosen?

- ⚡ What is the partnership's "genesis story"? When did it begin to take shape? What individual(s) or organization(s) initiated the partnership and what initial problem, issue, or event led them to do so? When and why did each partner get involved in the partnership?
- ⚡ What other approaches were considered or attempted before choosing a cross-sector approach? Did an individual or organization consider or attempt addressing this problem on their own before pursuing a cross-sector solution? If not, why wasn't that attempted before involving cross-sector partners?
- ⚡ Why was a cross-sector approach ultimately chosen over other potential approaches?
- ⚡ What problem or issue is the collaboration aiming to address? Do all partners agree with how the problem is defined? If not, where are there differences?
- ⚡ What program or initiative is the collaboration proposing to address the problem or issue?



### What Resources Are Involved?

- ⚡ What resources does each partner bring to the partnership, whether financial or non-financial (e.g., convening power, legal expertise, access to information, authority)?
- ⚡ Does the partnership have the financial and non-financial resources to achieve its goals? If not, what steps will the collaboration take to ensure it obtains the resources to achieve its goals?
- ⚡ Who is providing the funding necessary to accomplish the collaboration's aims, whether members of the collaboration or external parties? If each partnering organization has not provided financial resources to the partnership, why not?
- ⚡ If there is a contract or memorandum of understanding (MOU) involved, who is negotiating on behalf of the public sector?
- ⚡ What taxpayer resources are allocated to this project? How much does the partnership's work depend on these resources?



## What Risks and Rewards Is Each Partner Taking On?

- ⚡ What does each partner have to gain by joining the collaboration, whether financial or non-financial benefits (e.g., access to technical expertise, increased political influence, improved brand reputation or standing within the community, access to data)? Do these potential gains present conflicts of interest for any partners?
- ⚡ Which partner has the most to gain if the partnership achieves its goals? Is that partner's contribution to the collaboration appropriate considering this potential gain?
- ⚡ What risks is each partner taking on by joining the collaboration, whether financial, reputational, political, or otherwise?
- ⚡ Which partner has the most to lose if the partnership does not achieve its goals? Is that partner's level of involvement and authority in the collaboration appropriate considering this potential loss?
- ⚡ How will the partnership's work affect the public, in both the short and long term, either positively or negatively, both if it achieves its goals and if it does not?



## How Are Partners Working Together?

- ⚡ How are decisions made within the collaboration? (For example, do all partners make every decision together? Does a select group of partners or representatives from partnering organizations make decisions? Does the collaboration require absolute consensus among partners or some form of majority rule? Do certain partners have authority to make certain decisions without consulting others?)
- ⚡ What responsibilities is each partner taking on through the partnership?
- ⚡ How are partners accountable to one another, whether through formal mechanisms like contracts, MOUs, or partnership agreements, or informal mechanisms like the desire to protect organizational reputation or maintain key strategic relationships?
- ⚡ What disputes have arisen during the partnership — whether about the partnership's processes, goals, or otherwise? How have they been resolved?
- ⚡ What examples is the partnership learning from?



## What Are the Potential or Actual Outcomes?

- ⚡ How is the collaboration defining success?
- ⚡ How is the collaboration measuring success? What data, whether quantitative or qualitative, are being used, and how are the data being collected?
- ⚡ When will the partnership be able to assess whether it has been successful or is showing signs of success? Will it share interim signs of success or failure with the public or other stakeholders?
- ⚡ What will the partnership do if it does not achieve its goals in the decided timeframe?
- ⚡ How will the partnership be held accountable for its outcomes, whether by the public, funders, or other external and internal stakeholders?
- ⚡ What would be the implications of failure for each partner?
- ⚡ What would be the implications of failure for the public?
- ⚡ Which partner will own what at the end of the partnership (e.g., assets such as physical infrastructure, data, or intellectual property)?