

COLLABORATION AMONG GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NEW ZEALAND: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to critically evaluate the literature, from both New Zealand and overseas, on collaboration across government agencies. Collaboration does not simply mean putting people together and expecting a better result. Collaboration is about structuring an arrangement for the joint provision of outputs and outcomes, and has substantial policy implications. The aim here is to provide a comprehensive overview that builds knowledge about the issues associated with collaboration as a service delivery strategy.

INTRODUCTION

The growing focus by governments on the provision of social services for individuals, families and community groups has increased research and policy interest in interagency collaboration. For the purpose of this paper, “collaboration” denotes government agencies (also referred to as “participating organisations” or “parties”, “partners” or “stakeholders”) working across sectoral boundaries to achieve common goals. While the present review is not focused on collaboration between funders and service providers, existing literature suggests that most, if not all, of the basic issues apply similarly.

The aim of this article is to critically assess the international literature on the policy implications of collaboration as a service delivery strategy. The following research questions that guided this review looked at collaboration in general, but with a particular focus on their application in a New Zealand context:

- a) Collaboration in general
 - What is meant by collaboration?
 - What are the basic features of collaboration?
 - What are the conditions for the success of collaboration?

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- What are the barriers to collaboration?
- What are the mechanisms for achieving, preserving and enhancing collaboration?

b) Collaboration in New Zealand

- What has been the impact of collaboration as a service delivery strategy in New Zealand?
- What are the conditions required to facilitate collaboration in New Zealand?
- What impedes collaboration in New Zealand?
- What could be done to overcome the obstacles to collaboration in New Zealand?

COLLABORATION IN GENERAL

Definition and Scope of Collaboration

Collaboration is a service-related concept, focusing principally on service delivery to individuals, families and community groups. There is substantial literature on collaboration.

Collaboration according to Bardach (1998:8) involves “joint activity by ... agencies that is intended to increase public value by their working together”. Bardach, however, acknowledges that the nature of joint activity can be varied and that determining what constitutes public value is subjective.

Mattessich et al. (2001) define collaboration as a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organisations with a commitment to a set of common goals, a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility, and mutual authority and accountability. They maintain that relationships based on trust and a shared vision potentially enhance the ability of the parties to achieve qualitatively better outcomes.

According to Gray (1989), collaboration is a process through which stakeholders, who may see problems differently, can explore their differences and search for constructive and mutually beneficial solutions that might not otherwise have been found. Better-quality outcomes may result from this more comprehensive analysis of issues and opportunities.

Melaville et al. (1993) look at collaboration as a series of interrelated activities undertaken by partners to address shared problems and achieve common goals. They present a five-stage process of collaboration involving getting together, building trust, developing a strategic plan, taking action and “going to scale” (i.e. implementing service delivery strategies).

Several writers have expressed similar views about the basic features of collaboration. According to Gray (1989), it is characterised by interdependence and participative decision making. Sussman (2000) regards mutually agreed outcomes and a willingness to share resources such as ideas, time and technical support as critical to successful collaboration. In the 1970s, the Department of Health and Social Security in Britain (DHSS 1973) saw joint planning as a method of improving collaboration. O’Looney (1997) and Wilson (2000) agree on the ultimate objective of collaboration: In the words of O’Looney, “collaboration refers to partnership formation that is believed to bring about change” (O’Looney 1997:32), while Wilson considers collaboration to be the most effective tool to “create something entirely new” (Wilson 2000:3).

Prefontaine et al. (2000) look at collaboration from a structural perspective. They state that collaboration can be “public–public”, i.e. between two or more government agencies, or “public–private”, i.e. between government agencies and private firms/non-profit organisations. They suggest that collaboration between government agencies may be “horizontal”, which refers to agreements between two or more government agencies at the same level of government, or “vertical”, which denotes intergovernmental alliances between local, state and national administrations. Finally, they believe that one of the salient features of collaboration is the existence of a formal written agreement for a definite term. This contrasts with Gray (2002), who sees collaboration as voluntary and rarely based on contractual agreements.

Collaboration is a broad concept in scope. The literature also suggests that it is a mixed bag of pluses and minuses. Some (McLaughlin and Covert 1984, Gray 2002) assert that, as a delivery mechanism, collaboration is able to enhance the quantity, quality, accessibility and cost effectiveness of services, and reduce gaps and overlaps in the provision of outputs. Others (Whetten 1981, Mattessich et al. 2001) argue that collaboration may decrease the adaptive capacity of the network as a whole unless there is a high degree of trust between partners, and could sometimes result in greater costs than independent efforts. Bardach believes that collaboration can be appreciated only “if it produces better organisational performance or lower costs” (1998:17).

It appears from the literature that an important factor in collaboration is the interdependence among participating organisations that choose to combine their efforts to achieve better outcomes. Initially, the extent of this interdependence may not be fully appreciated by participating organisations. Heightening awareness about their interdependence (in terms of common outcomes or clients) from the start has the potential to kindle a willingness to search for mutually involving and beneficial solutions. It seems that, where participating organisations realise the value of interdependence and recognise the potential advantages of working together, there is limited need for formalised agreement.

There is also consensus in the literature that a commitment on the part of participating organisations to mutual understanding, respect and trust is the key element of effective collaboration. Participating organisations with people who spend the time needed to understand and respect the values, priorities, policies and working constraints of one another will build a climate of trust, particularly in relation to being honest and open about their agendas, service needs and resources.

Conditions for the Success of Collaboration

There is no clearly observable pattern to the descriptions of collaboration in the literature. However, it is possible to discern a range of conditions that improve the likelihood of successful collaboration.

Mattessich et al. (2001) specify a list of 20 factors necessary for successful collaboration. Of these, mutual understanding and respect, informal and personal relationships, open and frequent communication, shared vision, concrete and attainable goals, flexibility and adaptability, and a favourable political and social climate are of particular importance.

According to Gray (1989), certain specific measures need to be undertaken if successful collaboration is to be achieved. These include organising a set of stakeholders to address common problems, accommodating differing organisational interests, enabling participating organisations to collectively negotiate agreements, and acting as a vehicle of action learning that helps to tackle changes in environments.

In the opinion of Prefontaine et al. (2000), successful collaboration presupposes the existence of two crucial factors: compliance with government interests, and complementarity of parties in terms of resources and expertise. Gray (2002) identifies a set of principles that underpin successful collaboration, including: understanding the roles and responsibilities, and appreciating the values and skills, of each other; sharing a common language; recognising legal obligations and financial constraints; and acknowledging the policy implications of relevant issues.

Bardach (1998), who has developed the “craftsmanship theory” to explain how the collaborative process works, recommends a couple of “smart practices” that have the potential to contribute to successful collaboration. These are “platforming”, which involves devising steps to be taken to enhance collaboration itself (like building consensus and developing trust), and building “momentum” by choosing the right targets, planning and implementing activities, circumventing blocks, progressing in the right direction, producing high-quality results and rewarding performance.

The literature refers to a multiplicity of conditions for the success of collaboration. However, it is clear that collaboration depends on the capacity of participating

organisations to work together in joint endeavour, and share responsibility for achieving mutually determined and desired ends. By mobilising joint action among participating organisations, collaboration facilitates the generation of “social energy”, i.e. active willingness that brings about change.

In order to work collegially, participating organisations need to mitigate the consequences associated with real or imaginary disparity in power, resources and skills that influence the nature of their relationships and the form and extent of their involvement. There is every chance for participating organisations with fewer resources and skills to feel that a larger collaborating partner would dominate or even swallow them up. Personnel in participating organisations with greater resources and skills may also act – perhaps inadvertently – in ways perceived by their counterparts in smaller agencies as intimidating. Significant differences in the resources and skills of participating organisations could thus stand in the way of their choosing a collective course of action.

However, despite the inequality in power, resources and skills, participating organisations might nonetheless collaborate effectively on a project if they discuss any such real or imaginary imbalances at the outset, assess their relative strengths and weaknesses in terms of the initiative’s requirements, and work closely to determine what each of them is best able to contribute. Respecting one another’s values and cultures and sharing power and responsibility are therefore essential.

Barriers to Collaboration

To quote Gray, “[d]espite the compelling incentives to collaborate ... there are many reasons why collaborative attempts fall short of the ideal or are never even initiated” (Gray 1989:247). Gray argues that collaboration is not an appropriate approach under certain circumstances. This includes when stakeholders are unwilling to work together, when there is little consensus on action steps or solutions, when substantial power differentials exist, when maintenance of inter-organisational relationships represents significant costs to partners, or when a legitimate facilitator or mediator cannot be found.

McLaughlin and Covert (1984) itemise a number of undesirable characteristics of participating organisations that have the potential to impede collaboration. These include competitive spirit, parochial interest, personal resistance to change, inadequate orientation and negative staff attitudes. Gray (2002) lists several risks she believes collaboration to be susceptible to, including: differing protocols, structures, systems, cultures and values of individual agencies; lack of shared agendas; exclusion of any important stakeholder from the collaborative process; overload resulting from a continuing stream of new initiatives; and tight timeframes. Gibbs (1999) considers the “common problems” that characterise interagency arrangements, including

collaboration. These include the existence of ideological differences; absence of a clear vision, sense of purpose and clarified responsibilities; lack of communication; and dominance by one or more participating organisations.

Bardach (1998) refers to two “conditions” that have the ability to disrupt what he calls “inter-organisational collaborative capacity”. Branded by him as serious obstacles to collaboration are slow pace in developing collaborative capacity because of complex issues and scarce resources and emerging vulnerabilities such as hazards in maintaining a new infrastructure or problems emanating from changes in the political and fiscal environment.

Numerous potential impediments to collaboration are identified in the literature, but it is clear that the absence of genuine willingness on the part of persons in agencies to work closely with each other is a major factor. Where public servants perceive that collaboration among government agencies is a waste of time and money or results in loss of organisational identity, it is foreseeable that they will resist it. In this regard, historical tensions or ideological differences can result in adversarial relationships that preclude collaboration.

Finally, it is worth noting that well-established practices do not change overnight and collaboration may be perceived as a new way of working. Opposition to change is a well-recognised organisational response and those leading collaborative endeavours should prepare accordingly to address the reasons why persons in government (or, for that matter, all) agencies may decline to engage in collaboration, e.g. because they feel anxious or uncertain about the outcomes of change.

Mechanisms to Facilitate Collaboration

Collaboration is essentially a temporary and emergent process rather than a prescribed state of organisation. It is necessary to *set the stage* for collaboration to progress to an organised system of relationships characterised “by concerted decision making among the stakeholders” (Gray 1989:15). Once this has been done, the mechanisms for achieving, preserving and improving collaboration come into play.

In the opinion of Gray (1989), the success of collaboration depends on the existence of a number of mechanisms, including ground rules concerning power sharing and communication, policies ensuring mutual empowerment and collective action, provisions for resolving unanticipated conflicts and managing organisational risks, and signals indicating possible or perceived breaches of faith. According to a paper by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (1999), in order for collaboration to be a success, certain mechanisms have to be in place: sufficient management information, quality assurance procedures, and staff training and care.

Many scholars (Halpert 1982, Alaszewski and Harrison 1988, Bardach 1998, Gibbs 1999, Sussman 2000, Behl 2003) have referred to several other mechanisms that may contribute to the success of collaboration. These include: efficient, accountable and transparent organisational structures; standardised procedures; sufficient funds, staff, materials and time; participative decision making; competent leadership; realistic time frames; and a safe, non-threatening work environment.

The literature identifies mechanisms for facilitating collaboration among participating organisations with diverse obligations. There need to be clear, credible and creative arrangements to facilitate processes for decision making and communication. Key personnel in participating organisations must be given opportunities to be involved in decision making about how the tasks and goals are to be jointly accomplished. Also, communication needs to be encouraged in developing and maintaining productive, ongoing working relationships among participating organisations. Participative decision making and open and clear communication can buffer the problems that invariably emerge when cultures clash, or when conflicts arise from differences in values, approaches and problem-solving strategies.

Strong leaders who will champion effective collaboration are required in each participating organisation. Such leaders must have the skills to plan strategically, develop relationships with manifold stakeholders, and engender in others a vision of what collaboration can accomplish. In keeping with one of the key concepts of collaboration – power sharing – leaders need to facilitate joint endeavour and ownership across agencies to achieve mutually desired and determined outcomes.

COLLABORATION IN NEW ZEALAND

Impact of Collaboration as a Service Delivery Strategy in New Zealand

Over the last five years or so, a number of government departments in New Zealand have published reports on intersectoral and interagency collaboration as a means of enhancing outcomes (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs 1999, Ministry of Social Policy 2000, State Services Commission 2001, Ministry of Justice 2002, Ministry of Economic Development 2002, Ministry of Health 2003, Ministry of Social Development 2003, State Services Commission and Ministry of Social Development 2003).

Walker (2004) points out that collaboration is high on the recent agendas of the Ministry of Social Development. In late 2003, the Cabinet approved a three-year Funding for Outcomes (FfO) pilot project to be managed by the Ministry of Social Development. The aim is for government agencies to work closely together to jointly identify and address the needs common to social sector clients, be they individuals, families, or communities, through “joined-up” funding of providers for outputs and outcomes among other

things. Early findings from the evaluation of FfO (Ministry of Social Development 2004a, 2004b) suggest that collaborating in this way has the potential to simplify and improve the funding of providers, reduce transaction and compliance costs for funders as well as producers, and facilitate the delivery of holistic and wraparound services.

The New Zealand literature indicates that collaboration among government agencies has a variety of benefits. The *Report of the Advisory Group on the Review of the Centre* (State Services Commission 2001) maintains that collaboration is capable of addressing complex social problems more effectively than ever before, achieving more and better outputs and outcomes for individuals and their families, empowering communities to be more self-reliant, and creating a more inclusive and co-ordinated public sector.

Mosaics: Whakaāhua Papariki (Ministry of Social Development 2003) lists the anticipated merits of collaboration referred to in various government reports in New Zealand. It states that collaboration: offers advantages for participating organisations, including better processes, improved relationships, a greater ability to respond to local needs and a more efficient use of resources; contributes to the provision of integrated services; and facilitates community development.

Strengthening Families, a strategy to enhance life outcomes for children and families at risk of poor outcomes in New Zealand, involves joint policy work and collaborative service delivery among the health, education and welfare sectors of government. Evaluations by Christchurch City Council (1999), Angus (1999), Visser (2000), Bennett (2002), Parsons (2002) and Nuthall and Richardson (2003) present evidence that the Strengthening Families case management process improved collaboration, which, in turn, helped to better clarify roles and strategies, design and manage ways of working together, build consensus over basic goals, and solve problems in a pragmatic way.

In the opinion of Dovey (2003), collaboration may be achieving better social policy outcomes for New Zealand. She asserts that currently there are collaborative initiatives under way in this country “to link outputs to outcome planning to achieve better results for government services” (Dovey 2003:3).

At the same time, however, two New Zealand Government reports, *Mosaics: Whakaāhua Papariki* (Ministry of Social Development 2003) and *Review of the Centre Integrated Service Delivery* (State Services Commission and Ministry of Social Development 2003), point out that there is scant evidence to demonstrate conclusively that collaboration per se enhances outcomes for individuals or families/whānau. This is because many of the anticipated benefits of collaboration (like achievement of positive social outcomes or improvement in inter-organisational relationships) are difficult to measure, and evaluation is often limited, focused on process, and conducted over too short a time to pick up the long-term changes that would demonstrate the benefits of collaboration.

Both reports maintain that collaboration is not a panacea. For example, collaboration cannot make up for a lack of adequate resources and solve funding problems, legislative limitations or a shortage of skilled practitioners. The reports also argue that collaboration is time and resource intensive, and so decisions are needed about when collaboration is required. In other words, collaboration is not appropriate for all situations.

Walker (2004) points out that, while government is intent on creating an environment based on collaboration for better outcomes, working in partnerships adds to the complexity of accountability arrangements. She cautions that, although better collaboration may be key to improving outcomes, such policies will fail despite sincere collaborative effort if there are inherent flaws in policy design and/or implementation. She also asserts that the administrative and financial barriers to collaboration have to be addressed to make the rhetoric of collaboration a reality.

The key messages in the New Zealand literature on the conditions for, the barriers to, and the mechanisms to achieve, preserve and promote collaboration are, on the whole, similar to those highlighted in international studies. For example, the *Review of the Centre Integrated Service Delivery* (State Services Commission and Ministry of Social Development 2003) suggests that, while the existence of strong relationships among participating organisations makes collaboration a success, the lack of willingness on their part to work together inhibits it. *Mosaics: Whakaāhua Papariki* (Ministry of Social Development 2003) likewise points out that creating an open and honest organisational culture that encourages participative decision making and open and clear communication may contribute to overcoming the barriers to collaboration.

Conditions Required to Facilitate Collaboration in New Zealand

The New Zealand literature features many “conditions” that need to be in place for collaboration to occur, and several reports focus on what is required for collaboration to be a success.

On the basis of a study on enhancing social outcomes in New Zealand via collaboration, Dovey (2003) records the factors she regards as critical to the success of any collaborative venture: identifying social outcome goals, collecting and analysing data, designing a performance measurement system, building a research base of what works, sharing knowledge and information, distributing leadership, and agreeing on joint accountability.

Scanning the international literature on collaboration, Walker (2004) identifies a couple of necessary conditions for the development of collaborative working arrangements

that are arguably equally relevant in the New Zealand context. These include shared aims and objectives that can motivate participating organisations to pool resources, create synergies and develop consensual strategic directions, and high levels of trust and commitment that diminish the probability of opportunism, reduce the need for monitoring and ultimately minimise compliance costs.

Looking at collaboration from the perspective of the Strengthening Families strategy, which sought to improve social outcomes in New Zealand, Angus (1999) argues that working together makes sense under a couple of conditions: having the conviction that public value will be enhanced by collaboration, and understanding the factors that influence the achievement of the objectives.

Based on a number of case studies (Mayors' Task Force for Jobs, Heartland Services, Otago Youth Wellness Trust, Healthy Housing, Inter-sectoral Strategy for Children and Young People with High and Complex Needs, Te Rarawa Whole-of-the-Government Agreement with Iwi and Waitakere Tripartite Process) undertaken across New Zealand, the *Review of the Centre Integrated Service Delivery* sets out the multiplicity of success factors it considers to be capable of facilitating collaboration (State Services Commission and Ministry of Social Development 2003). These include formulating transparent objectives and realistic expectations, clarifying roles and responsibilities, building good working relationships, addressing problems in a holistic way, having a dedicated co-ordinator, taking account of the local context, and emphasising the need for further policy work to sustain and incentivise collaboration.

Mosaics: Whakaāhua Papariki makes a list of the success factors that have the potential to contribute to regional co-ordination and integrated service delivery in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development 2003), some of which seem to be just as relevant for achieving collaboration. These are agreeing on the lead agency or agencies (which may change over time), building on existing activities and making optimal use of resources.

The *Report of the Advisory Group on the Review of the Centre* (State Services Commission 2001) suggests a couple of concrete measures for successful implementation of the integrated service delivery in New Zealand that appear to be equally relevant for achieving collaboration. These are the introduction of the circuit-breaking approach to solve some longstanding problems caused by a failure in collaboration across sectors, and identification of good practice, with clear messages on the need for clarity of focus, purpose and mandate.

Obstacles to Collaboration in New Zealand

Joint working among government agencies in New Zealand has its challenges, and the literature highlights several obstacles to collaboration.

In her literature review, Gray (2002) identifies a set of barriers that may stand in the way of collaboration among government agencies in New Zealand, including a propensity for government agencies to shift responsibilities to other departments or withdraw from collaboration, differences between the priorities and policies of government agencies, and the Privacy Act 1993 limiting the exchange of information across government agencies.

The Report of the Advisory Group on the Review of the Centre refers to a range of deficiencies of government agencies that can hinder intersectoral collaboration in New Zealand (State Services Commission 2001): co-ordination problems, frequent structural changes, variable standards of planning, risk aversion, inappropriate specification of outputs, high compliance costs, unequal power and influence, unclear responsibilities and relationships, inadequate expertise and experience of the staff, insufficiencies in the area of performance evaluation, and reluctance to assert a strong leadership role.

On the basis of the case studies mentioned in the section “Conditions Required to Facilitate Collaboration in New Zealand”, the *Review of the Centre Integrated Service Delivery* highlights several “risk factors” that it believes have the potential to impede collaboration (State Services Commission and Ministry of Social Development 2003). It points out that government agencies may: fail to display a commitment of time and energy; lack a high level of goodwill, strong working relationships, shared understandings, clear accountabilities, ongoing communications and willingness to work together in a system-wide way; take a silo approach to service delivery; differ from each other in respect of values and priorities; and find it difficult to develop reporting and monitoring requirements.

Mosaics: Whakaāhua Papariki sets out a number of stumbling blocks to successful collaboration in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development 2003), including the culture of secrecy hampering government agencies, differing funding processes among government agencies resulting in confusion and inequities, and the diversity of regional boundaries across government agencies.

Overcoming the Barriers to Collaboration in New Zealand

The Review of the Centre Integrated Service Delivery maintains that, while there are obstacles to collaboration that must be overcome, many factors are driving government agencies in New Zealand to work more closely with each other (State Services Commission and Ministry of Social Development 2003). It puts forward the idea that current

directions from government underpin the move towards increased collaboration and provide opportunities for joint action. It refers to the two “key levers” for improving, and removing barriers to, collaboration: Managing for Outcomes and Sustainable Development Programme of Action – obliging government agencies to collaborate with each other in order to achieve social outcomes.

The *Review* also suggests that certain concrete measures can be undertaken to overcome the barriers to collaboration in New Zealand. It argues: that successful collaboration needs considerable support and sufficient resourcing; that it is useful to have “someone” with the responsibility for identifying problems relating to collaboration, contributing to communication between participating organisations, and supporting staff to work in new environments; and that there should be effective governance arrangements, clear leadership roles and transparent lines of accountability in place in order for collaboration to be a success.

Finally, the *Review* maintains that a number of “necessary changes” need to be developed and implemented by government agencies to remove the barriers to collaboration in New Zealand. It holds that government agencies should succeed in fostering an ethos of collaboration and define it as part of their core business by encouraging and rewarding collaborative activity, allowing adequate time and resources to support collaborative initiatives, and undertaking further policy work to promote a collaborative culture.

Mosaics: Whakaāhua Papariki recommends several formal arrangements that should be in place to overcome the barriers to collaboration in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development 2003), including: developing joint outcome plans to work together, synchronise funding and planning processes, and align strategies and priorities; creating an open and honest organisational culture that encourages innovation, risk taking, information sharing and relationship building; setting realistic standards and time frames; building staff capacity; avoiding frequent structural change; and facilitating intersectoral co-ordination.

Mosaics: Whakaāhua Papariki also argues that regional co-ordination in New Zealand needs to “have processes that are fit for the purpose” (Ministry of Social Development 2003:15). This condition, which seems to have the potential to contribute to removing the barriers to collaboration, means that it is necessary for participating organisations to: identify and use the “right meeting processes” (informal as well as formal); undergo the requisite training to run meetings in an effective way; and share the authority to make decisions at the meetings.

Finally, *Mosaics: Whakaāhua Papariki* advances the idea that joined-up funding can play a significant role in overcoming the barriers to collaboration in New Zealand. It maintains that joined-up funding may get government agencies to: work more closely together by

making them jointly fund a specialised service to meet a specific need; set up a single funding pool jointly managed by a collective body; and jointly develop service criteria, performance assessment frameworks, and monitoring and evaluation requirements.

CONCLUSION

This article provides an overview of collaboration across organisational boundaries on the basis of an in-depth review of international and New Zealand literature. The purpose was to identify the conditions for, the barriers to, and the mechanisms contributing to the success of collaboration here and elsewhere. It shows that there is a parity between the findings across jurisdictions on the diverse aspects of collaboration.

It is possible to identify some common principles that characterise successful collaboration. These include:

- closer working relationships, characterised by interdependence, commitment, and mutual understanding, trust and respect
- participative decision making
- open and frequent communication
- complementarity in terms of resources and skills
- strong, shared leadership.

There are, however, limitations to what the existing literature can tell us. Firstly, the literature fails to yield a definitive answer to the question of whether collaboration offers any benefits (e.g. technical efficiency, cost effectiveness) over other formal arrangements in terms of attaining service delivery goals. Secondly, the literature does not discuss in detail which of the different types of outcomes collaboration is best suited to achieving. Thirdly, there is not much in the literature about the circumstances under which collaboration could be the best strategy to adopt. Finally, the literature on collaboration does sensitise us to another important unanswered consideration: can government agencies choose not to collaborate? While the literature on collaboration offers some valuable insights, answers to these questions are of considerable importance from a policy development perspective.

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