

Partnering for IMPACT

December 6, 2017

A Simple Resource for Engaging
in Sustainable Partnerships



Sustainable
Partnerships
Award

THE
SHIFT



Partnering for IMPACT

*Prepared by i-propeller for The Shift
With the support of the Flemish government*



MAATSCHAPPELIJK
VERANTWOORD
ONDERNEMEN



Vlaanderen
is duurzaam ondernemen

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This document presents a resource for engaging in sustainable partnership. In no way do i-propeller nor The Shift accept any liability for reliance placed upon it by users.

1. Introduction

Making partnerships work between different actors is not easy. Where do you start? How do you identify the right opportunity and organize the partnership around it? How do you create interventions together and trial-test the results of your concerted efforts? How do you track progress and what are the conditions to say 'yes' to wider roll-out?

Drawing from a dozen interviews of emblematic sustainable partnerships in Belgium, we have identified the key-steps to build partnerships. Or, as we like to think of it, a cookbook for sustainable partnership.

The four steps are: Mobilize, Co-Develop, Pilot-Test and Scale. They may not sound entirely unfamiliar. But, there are important nuances to what innovative, socially- and/or environmentally-minded partnerships are doing in our country. Here, we would like to showcase some of these 'known unknowns'.

A Sustainable partnership can bring people and organizations from across sectors together, in a structured way, to create meaningful societal change.

A Sustainable partnership is not a magic formula that always works. But, there exists a framework that people and organizations involved in partnering are using, also here in Belgium, with significant results.

Why are partnerships important?

It is by now generally accepted that most of today's and tomorrow's societal (economic, social, environmental) challenges cannot be tackled in a piecemeal manner or in isolation. Rather, they cut across stakeholders, industries, geographies and politics. The opportunity – or some would say, moral imperative – to create lasting and meaningful change by engaging these issues in a collaborative manner is underscored by a growing movement of different organizations working together.

The launch of the [United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG's\)](#) buttresses the need to partner. Unlike their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals, the SDG's have been developed in consultation with many different stakeholders, including business.

Also in Belgium, we see a trend towards 'sustainable partnerships', with organizations from the non-profit, social-profit, governmental and for-profit sectors coming together to tackle specific issues. Indeed, if there was one message that stood out from the study we conducted last year, 'Partnering for a Better Belgium', it was that more than 90% of respondents agree that collaboration is key to successfully engaging societal challenges. What's more, more than three quarters of the respondents were actively collaborating 'for good', with an overwhelming majority expressing satisfaction with the results of the partnership efforts. Clearly, the shift towards 'sustainable partnerships' is also rolling over Belgium's shores.

About this study

While our 2016 study 'Partnering for a better Belgium' had a broad remit – providing a first view on the state of partnerships in Belgium – this year's investigation has a narrower focus. That is, the process of forming and implementing partnerships; the so-called 'how' question.

To study how partnerships are being conducted in Belgium, we opted for semi-open interviews with a limited number of emblematic partnerships. We explicitly wanted to tap into the reality of sustainable partnerships in Belgium, with an eye to identifying 'grounded' best practices and local recipes for collaborative success.

2. The principles underpinning sustainable partnerships

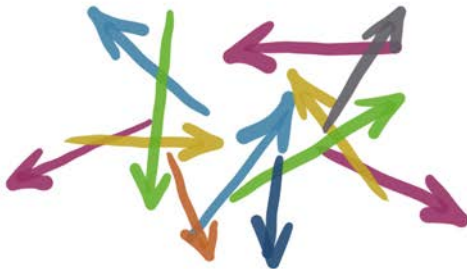
From traditional approaches:

Organizations **work separately** and **compete**. They are not capable of **solving complex societal problems**.

Corporate and government sectors are often **disconnected** from e.g. non-profits, social-profits and foundations.

Evaluation attempts to **isolate** a particular organization's impact.

Large scale change is assumed to depend on **scaling organizations**.



Actors working in isolation



Actors working in partnership

To a different approach:

multiple actors
working together to
solve complex issues

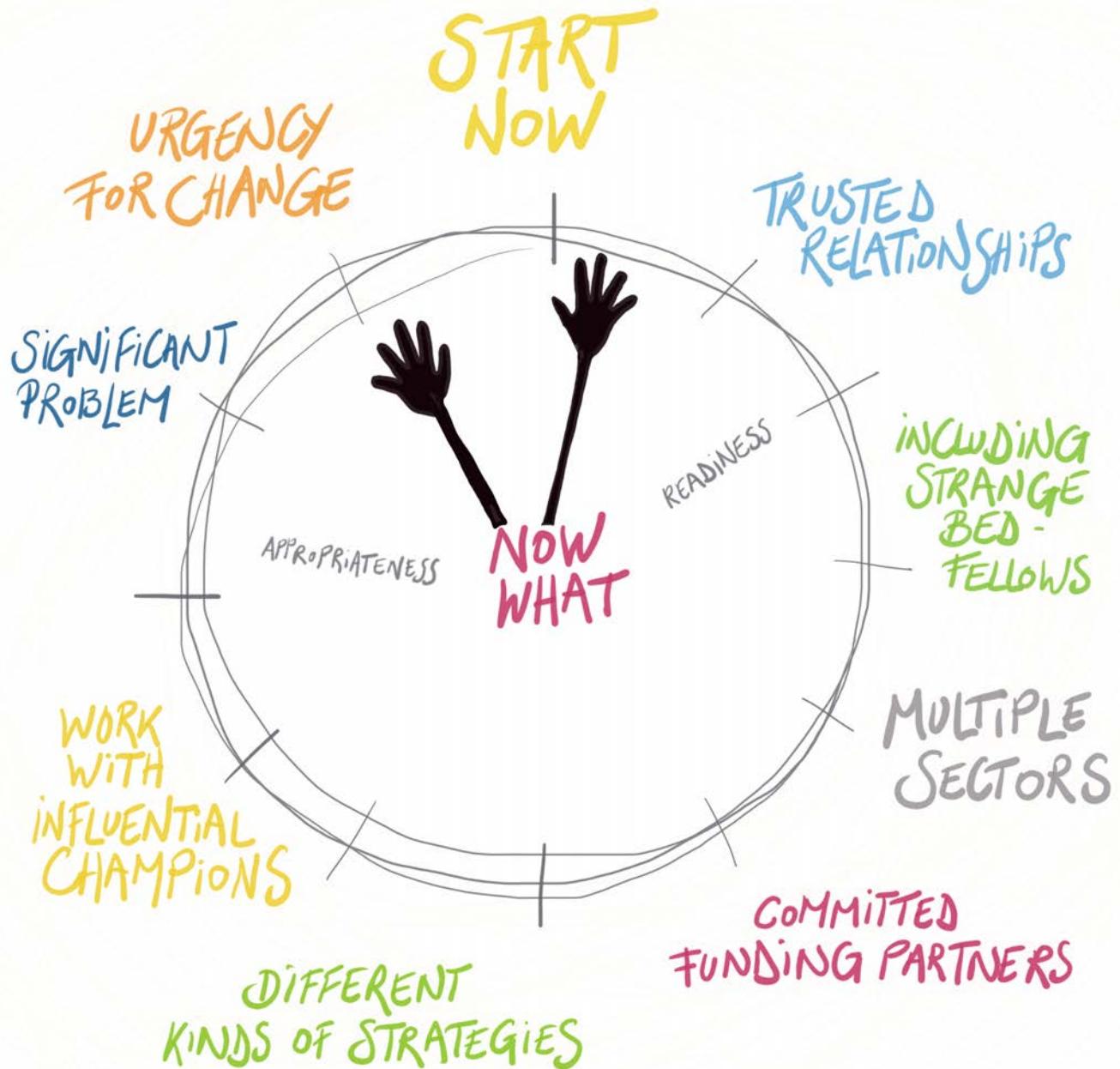
Understand that societal problems
– and their solutions – arise from the
interaction of many organizations.

Cross-sector alignment with government,
non-profits, social-profits, philanthropic
and corporate sectors as partners.

Organizations actively coordinating
their action and sharing lessons learnt.

All working toward the **same goal**
and measuring the same things.

This approach draws heavily on the principles underpinning so-called 'collective impact' initiatives. See, e.g. Collective Impact, SSIR, 2011; Collective Impact forum (www.collectiveimpactforum.org)



Sustainable partnership makes sense under **certain circumstances**

APPROPRIATENESS

Addressing the issue will require people and organizations from **multiple sectors**, including 'strange bedfellows'.

Addressing the issue will require **different kinds of interventions or strategies** (e.g. data, policy, awareness, coordination, identifying new solutions) and not just replication of programs and services.

The jointly created interventions should positively impact a **significant* problem**.

*** Defining 'significant' is more art than science**

READINESS

All partners should have legitimacy in the eyes of the affected community. Furthermore, a **strong champion** with convening power is required.

There needs to be a joint **sense of urgency** in connection with the problem. Frustration with existing approaches can feed this urgency.

Resources must be made available, particularly to sustain long-term action.

Mutual trust is the best basis for partnering, where possible, propelled by existing collaboration.

The key to success is a **SHiFT** in MiNDSETS

from

Technical solutions
to problems



to

Adaptive solutions
to problems

Focus on evidence



Focus on evidence
and relationships

Content and
process expertise



Content, process and
context expertise

Resources hoarded



Shared resources

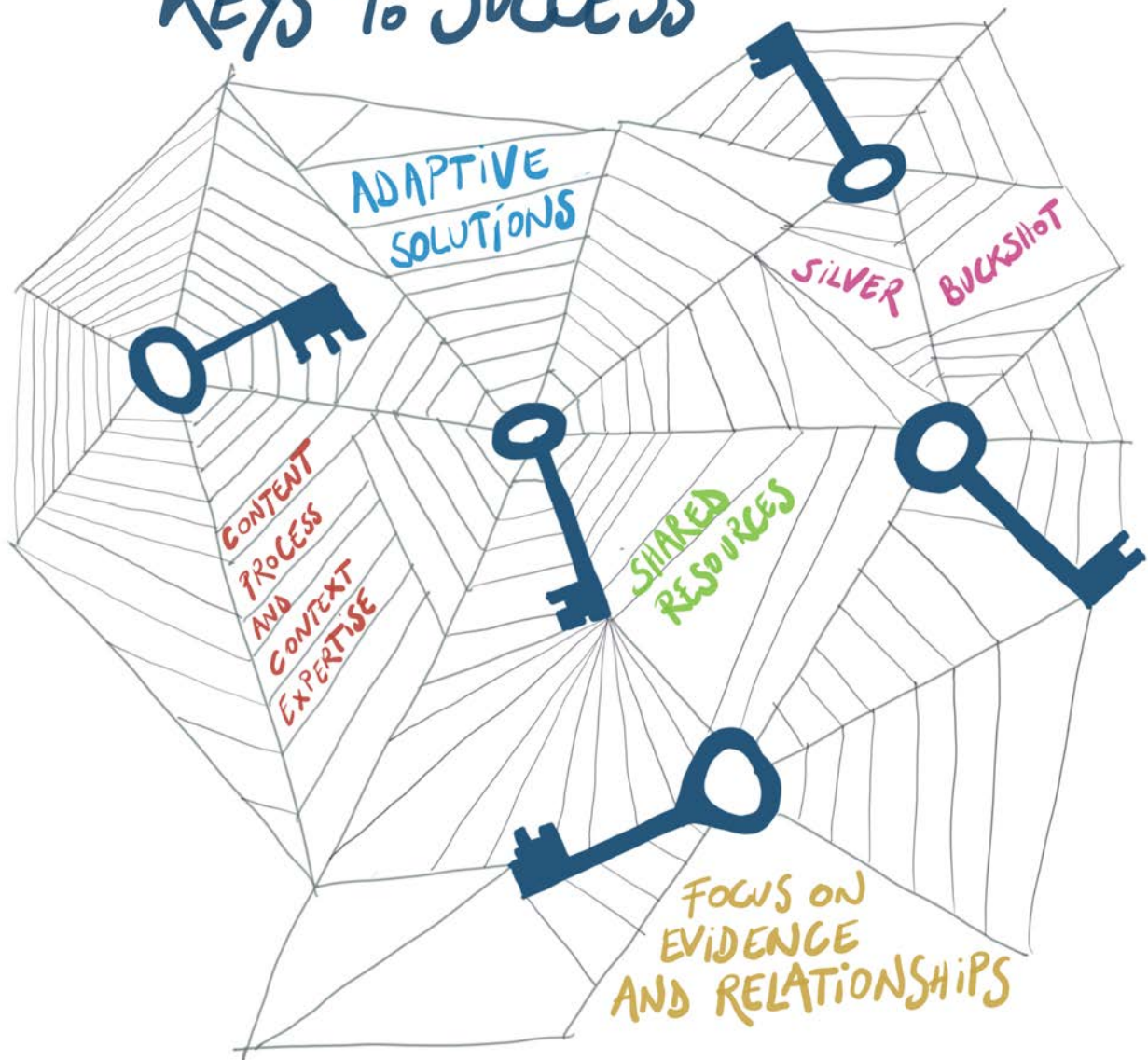
Silver bucket



Silver buckshot

*Source: Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work, SSIR, 2012;
Essential Mindset Shifts for Collective Impact, SSIR, 2014.

KEYS TO SUCCESS





ALLOW
DISPARATE
VIEWS

TAKE YOUR TIME

AT!

STRONG

YOU'RE

CELEBRATE
WINS ALONG
THE WAY !

LEAD

IN

WHAT

LEADER

Do THINGS
DIFFERENTLY

3. A framework* for engaging in sustainable partnerships in four steps

1. Mobilize

problem definition / actors map /
key-impacts definition

2. Co-Develop

project organization / strategic action
program / measurement system

3. Pilot-test

implementation plan / Pilot(s) /
communication actions

4. Scale

Pilot-test diagnostic / feasibility
assessment / implementation plan

* This framework draws on various publicly available sources, as well as i-propeller's proprietary methodologies. The framework is also informed by a dozen interviews with emblematic sustainable partnerships in Belgium.

1. Mobilize: getting the partnership together

Research the situation on the ground (the 'problem') from various angles making sure to include the point of view from those affected

Objective:

Arrive at a common understanding of the problem the partnership is trying to tackle. Often this involves establishing boundaries for what issues, actors and systems the partnership will engage with, and which are outside its scope. The problem definition is built on a shared understanding of the root causes of the issue at hand. That said, it is important not to 'omit eyes' early on and, thus, take an inclusive approach in the problem definition. Particularly those who experienced the issue (a.k.a. the beneficiaries) need to be heard. This can be done directly or indirectly by working through a partner that is close to them.

Tools: root cause analysis, materiality assessment, issue mapping.

Identify and engage key-actors across sectors to check readiness for action and impact

Objective:

Assemble a coalition of actors that collectively has the capacity to affect meaningful change. The composition of the coalition is premised on complementarity: each actor brings particular assets and capabilities; taken together, the sum (represented by the partnership) is meant to be bigger than the individual parts. Underpinning the collaboration, there should be a shared set of values among the partners. Practitioners must invest time in building strong interpersonal relationships and trust, that will act as foundation for collective visioning and learning.

Tools: actor mapping, stakeholder mapping & analysis, capabilities assessment, team (work) tools.

Articulate a joint, overarching **ambition** (the 'key-impacts')

Objective:

Agree on an ambitious yet grounded vision for the positive impacts the partnership aims to generate. The time horizon for the vision should be sufficiently long-term (minimum of 3 years). The vision should be rooted in the common understanding of the problem. The vision should also be capable of providing good sense and direction to the joint approach to solving the problem ('strategy') and the agreed upon actions; both of which are engaged in the next step.

Tools: visioning exercise.

A good start is half the battle

This first step is all about finding the right partners and getting real commitment to move forward together. The lessons here are threefold. First, look for partners beyond the well-trodden paths. Second, make sure there is trust and strong commitment among the people (and organizations) involved. Third, work from and align on the common agenda that unites the partnership; typically, the underpinning societal challenge.

Cast your net wide

People say there are only a few important choices you make in life: find good friends, decide on a career you are passionate about and choose the right partner. This last piece of advice could not be truer for sustainable partnerships. But to find the perfect match, you should not be afraid to cast your net wide. Too often, we see, for example, well-intentioned businesses being hesitant doing outreach beyond their current supplier base.

Successful partnerships, on the contrary, start with an exploration of a wider network of stakeholders, precisely to identify 'strategic opportunities' of mutual interest. Supply chain partners have a role to play, but the magic tends to happen when wider civil society actors (non-profits, social-profits, authorities, social entrepreneurs, ...) are being put on the radar and engaged. This is where modern stakeholder management can make a great contribution.

Of course, the purpose is not to create an unwieldy coalition of divergent interests. There needs to be strong alignment on mission, strategy and capacity between partners. And we should also acknowledge that partnerships composed of many different organizations tend to be harder to steer and manage. But early in the journey, organizations should not be afraid to get their boots on and go talk to different stakeholders in the field. Because that is where the collaborative innovations capable of impact typically reside.

Be engaged and committed

As one interview subject told us: "It's not organizations working together, it's people." This people dimension is multi-faceted. It starts with the obvious: there needs to be a mutual understanding and sense of trust between the individuals doing the partnering. If this common ground is not there, the organizational capacity that is brought to bear will not make a difference. Successful collaboration hinges first and foremost on empathy.

But there also needs to be commitment to the cause among the leadership of the respective organizations. If the top decision-makers do not stand firmly behind the collaborative efforts, initial enthusiasm tends to fade rather quickly. This commitment does also translate into unlocking the key-resources of the organization, principally its people. Empowering local teams at various levels of the organization unleashes tremendous capacity for action; whether they are 'intrapreneurs', 'high potentials' or junior recruits. Indeed, time and again, we hear that, when done right, sustainable partnerships are a great driver for employee engagement.

Meet somewhere between venus and mars

'Men are from Mars, women from Venus', or so the proverb goes. A somewhat similar dictum is found to complicate sustainable partnerships in Belgium. For-profit companies are often cast as cold-hearted, profit-maximizers that only engage in social activities for reputational benefits. Similarly, non-profits are regularly pitched as tree-hugging activists, cultivating a monopoly of moral indignation on the sidelines of the real world. This mindset and dichotomy are not particularly helpful.

Successful partnerships in Belgium happen across the for-profit/non-profit spectrum (and beyond) through organizations rallying around a common agenda, with an ambition to create greater economic and social value. On top of this sits a strong complementarity in assets and capabilities. In other words, it is not the origin of the partners that counts. Rather, it is the willingness to enter a new relationship guided by the principles of creating impact together. Acknowledgement of each other's differences is simply a corollary to this. As is talking about these issues in non-accusatory manner.

Testimonial - *Danone: Sustainable Milk Production*

"From the very onset, we decided to engage all relevant partners. We found it was crucial for the ultimate success of the partnership: sincere consideration for the motivations and ambitions of all organizations (and people) involved, is the only way to get real engagement and strong commitment. Looking back, this is probably the most important piece of advice to give to others.

Following from this, we also made sure to purposefully identify the skills and know-how that were required to effectively execute the project. This helped us tremendously in creating a complementary partnership, where each partner felt relevant and valued. It also made the assignment of roles and responsibilities relatively easy: each partner did what he/she did best."

Nathalie Guillaume, Corporate Affairs Director,
Danone

2. Co-Develop: designing what the partnership is going to do

Create the supporting project organization to move forward in an aligned manner

Objective: Create an effective infrastructure / project organization that allows stakeholders to work together to fix what is broken. This supporting organization must be sufficiently well-resourced and have people with specific skills – that is, dedicated team members who can plan, manage and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection & reporting and administrative details. The project organization must maintain a delicate balance between strong leadership needed to keep all partners together and the invisible ‘behind-the-scenes’ role that lets each partner ‘own’ the partnership’s successes.

Tools: Project management, organization design, facilitation techniques.

Develop the strategic action program – from the key-impacts towards strategy and the to be deployed activities

Objective: Articulate a strategic action program that guides the partnership. It typically includes a number of components: a description of the problem informed by solid research (see previously); a clear ambition for the desired change (see previously); a portfolio of key strategies to drive change; a set of principles that guide the partnership’s actions; and a high-level description of the key-activities that will be engaged. Critically, the framework should not be static; it should be flexible to allow for on-the-ground learning. Additionally, the program should identify easy but substantive short-term wins to sustain early momentum for the partnership.

Tools: Strategy formulation, action planning.

Define common indicators to measure progress and success

Objective:

Decide on a common set of measures to monitor performance, track progress toward goals, and learn what is or is not working. Effective shared measurement requires broad engagement by all partners, with clear expectations about confidentiality and transparency. Partners must gather regularly to share results and learn from each other. Application of standardized continuous improvement processes can help the partnership refine their individual and collective work.

Tools:

KPI development, impact measurement approaches*, continuous improvement methods.

*Enhancing the Impact of Cross-Sector Partnerships, J Bus Ethics, 2016

It appears that successful collaboration hinges on strong, inherent complementarity among partners. This complementarity gives sense and direction to the activities that ultimately will be deployed. It is also supported by a robust project organization and appropriate measurement system.

Do what you do best

Sustainable partnerships depend on different stakeholders working together; not by having each partner do the same thing, but by encouraging them to undertake those activities at which they excel. It also bears repeating that it is not the size of the coalition that counts. Nor is it the uniformity of actions among all partners that creates success. Rather, it is the combined efforts, put together in an overarching plan ('roadmap'), that is the real engine of successful partnerships.

This is not surprising if we consider the root challenges underpinning the collaboration. After all, the economic, social and environmental challenges are complex and profound. And, as a result, they require coordinated action among motivated organizations, each doing what it does best.

Organize for impact

Sustainable partnerships do not materialize out of thin air. Nor are they sustained over time in the absence of supporting infrastructure. They need dedicated people, time and other resources to move forward. The best way to do so is to create a dedicated separate project organization; a 'backbone organization' as it is often called. The backbone organization operates at arm's length of the partner organizations. It constitutes a purposefully-created office that is tasked with the planning, management, support and oversight of the activities. Consider it the super-duper valet, covering everything from resource planning, communications, technology deployment, data collection, reporting, and the logistical and administrative affairs.

This 'backbone' structure is not meant to limit or delay action. We are not launching a new bureaucracy. Nor is it a matter of enabling command-and-control supervision by one partner vis-à-vis the others. A good 'backbone' office, so the Belgian partnership reality suggests, is agile and focused. Or, to paraphrase the previous learning: it allows the partners to efficiently and effectively do what they do best.

Measure what you treasure

If there is one shared area of concern among Belgian partnerships, then it is the development and application of a shared measurement system. And this concern is very much two-sided.

First, it proves hard to identify meaningful indicators that capture the full range of activities and aspirations ('what to measure'). Underpinning this is the very practical and conceptual difficulty of singling out the real 'impact' that is generated (versus, for example, more easily-identifiable 'input' and 'output' measures). Similarly, questions whether it is better to opt for a more 'soft' qualitative measurement or rather a 'hard' quantitative approach that aims to express in monetary terms the benefits that are being realized, create stress among partners.

The truth is there does not yet exist an impact assessment framework that is applicable to all partnerships. And so, the way forward is to adopt a pragmatic approach that is nonetheless capable of measuring results. Because, as the saying goes: You don't treasure what you don't measure!

The second area of concern is the process of data collection and analysis ('how to measure'). Of course, in experienced hands, the good-old spreadsheet has great analytical and storage capabilities. But, there seems to be a certain hesitancy in doing so. Here, a solution may reside in recent advances in web-based technologies that have enabled new systems for measuring outcomes and reporting. A good case in point is Social Return On Investment (web-based) software, that has become available at relatively low cost.

Testimonial - Delhaize:

Food waste Project & Babylon Beer

Within our partnership, we frankly never had any discussion about the purpose of the project organization: it was there to support and help execute what we intended to do from the outset.

Measurement of results was clearly also very much on the radar. While it was challenging to identify objective and tangible ways to measure the effect of our actions, we really wanted to better understand the broader value that was being generated. Ultimately, it allowed us to monitor and report on progress. But it did also boost motivation along the way, when we started to see the 'impact' of our actions."

Linde Raport, Waste Management Project Coordinator, Delhaize

3. Pilot-test: putting boots on the ground

Draft the implementation plan, incl. budget, timeline, roles & responsibilities, communications plan, etc... and **execute the pilot(s)**

Objective:

Test innovative, outcome-focused interventions to achieve better outcomes for the beneficiaries. Pilot testing provides an opportunity to implement actions on a small scale and receive input. Any weaknesses can be addressed before full-scale implementation.



The goal is to test for a relatively short period of time (e.g. 3-4 months) or within a certain timeframe contingent on resources and scope. The implementation plan for the pilot covers several aspects: budgetary requirements, roles and responsibilities against a specific timeline, engagement of other stakeholders, mechanisms for feedback, etc. The partners involved in implementation planning and pilot-testing should be aligned on the high-level goals for what they are aiming to learn; the tools they are going to use; the actions that will be taken; and the profile and setting of the targeted beneficiaries.

If feasible, it makes sense to actively involve the beneficiaries in the design of the pilot. Finally, make sure there is absolute clarity on the pilot, from whatever angle it is looked at.

Tools: implementation planning, project management, coaching and training.

Communicate internally and externally about the efforts, making sure the communication engages the heart and mind

Objective:

Provide a platform of trust, concerns to be addressed, and ideas to be discussed between the partners through continuous communication. Communication should be engaged on the inside and outside of the partnership. Internal communication should be rather organic (i.e. not top-down) and flow freely among the various partners. Channels can be varied: online exchanges, face-to-face meetings, teleconferences. When communicating externally, it is important to ensure priority is given to the affected community (beneficiaries). More generally, communicating results to the public at large is an important component of building and sustaining the partnership as it generates acknowledgement and recognition. Finally, the content of the external communication should be emotionally appealing. Communication that only engages the mind, is not likely to positively affect the audience.

Tools: communication planning, social media strategy, public relations management.

Think big, start small. The purpose of this step is very much to perform necessary sanity checks on the co-developed activities. Additionally, this is also when communication becomes increasingly meaningful, whether it is on the inside or outside of the partnership.

Turn ideas into something you can pilot

Field testing is an essential tool to explore assumptions and hypotheses about what works in the real world. In the context of sustainable partnerships, this means working towards small, relatively low-cost pilots. Ideally, multiple pilots running at the same time. If that is not feasible, one pilot with sufficient breadth to accommodate likely variations in the contextual factors surrounding the interventions.

There is a fundamental point to this: with piloting comes credibility through evidence. Experience suggests that a great plan without a pilot typically only elicits responses such as “love it” or “don’t like it”. Armed with evidence from piloting, the conversation becomes much more profound: “what works?”, “what doesn’t work?”, “how can we make this better?”.

In other words, there is a fundamental learning opportunity that comes with executing pilots. And this learning will loop back into the development process from the outset, just as much as it will inform next steps.

Let there be a constant hum

Developing trust among organizations with different orientations and from different background is a great challenge. Not only does it require sufficient time together (through facilitated discussion). It also requires open and honest communication that allows partners to feel equally involved. The channels can vary (physical meetings, on-line, and teleconferences), although Belgian partnerships clearly put a premium on sharing perspectives face-to-face.

Communication is a great tool to keep the initial momentum of the partnership alive within the respective organizations. Large organizations in particular find it difficult to keep the ‘buzz’ of the partnership alive in the daily run-of-the-mill. This raises the fundamental risk of undermining the engagement and commitment at the heart of the partnership. Not because people stopped caring. Rather, because people with responsibility tend to have many things going on that drown out the partnership effort.

External communication poses its own difficulties. The question here is whether to communicate or not. Indeed, for-profit organizations are often wary about communicating to the outside world, out of fear of being perceived as 'green washing'. The lesson here is to engage the beneficiaries of the partnership (those people who are positively impacted by the partnership) into the communication. The partner that is closest to the beneficiaries is typically well-placed and a great conduit for doing so.

Testimonial - Nestlé: Alliance for Youth

"We feel the value of pilot-testing or experimentation cannot be over-estimated. When participating in multi-stakeholder partnerships to tackle important societal problems, we think it is important to be prudent and certainly avoid claiming victory too soon. Going step-by-step and validating what you do on a small scale before going big are crucial. It allows for trial-and-error and, more importantly, builds evidence while allowing you to make mistakes in relatively contained settings."

Odile Ledésert, Head of HR Benelux, Nestlé

4. Scale: readying the partnership for roll-out

Capture the lessons learnt from pilot-testing and **objectively analyse** the results

Objective:

Evaluate the pilot and document lessons learnt. It provides an opportunity for partners to discuss things that might have been done differently, the root causes of problems that occurred and ways to avoid those problems later. It is also the moment to highlight successes and compliment individual contributions. Make sure to assess the various components of the pilot, e.g. results, process, delivery model, use of resources.

Elements

of the shared measurement system (see Step 2) usually provide a sound basis to collectively track and evaluate. If partners struggle to do the assessment, it may be useful to rely on the services of external evaluators. Similarly, it is worthwhile to benchmark vis-à-vis comparable intervention programs. This is certainly true when 'best practices' have been documented elsewhere and can be used as gauge.

Tools: KPI measurement, lessons learnt analysis, principles of auditing, benchmarking.

Assess the feasibility for scaling the program

Develop an implementation plan for the scaling efforts and **Go scale!**

Objective:

Analyze the viability of roll-out and, if opportune, take the necessary actions to prepare the scaling. Make sure scalability is assessed broadly, taking into consideration different elements, such as organizational capacity, financial means, technical resources, etc. The long-term funding capacity requires particular attention. Always check if there is a possibility to move beyond pure philanthropic giving and work towards activation of a revenue model.

Similarly, the deployment of technology has great potential to cost effectively support the scaling. Make sure the people involved receive sufficient training and also design systems to follow-up individuals throughout implementation. Do not lose sight of communication: make sure your efforts remain on the radar within and outside the partnership.

Tools: feasibility assessment, implementation planning, project management, financial planning, coaching and training, communication planning.

No impact without scaling. This mindset is very much present among Belgian partnerships. The insights here are particularly focused on identifying the right levers (technology, talent, revenue model) for scaling. Additionally, principles of 'continuous improvement' are also being applied within the partnership.

Get busy scaling

In some ways, getting started is the easy part. Indeed, the real challenge is to translate the lessons learnt from the pilot into actionable principles that can be scaled.

This represents a key moment for the partners. Often, it is also where things may get stuck as it does require the application of an objective logic vis-à-vis something in which everyone is highly invested. The best way to do so, is to define the 'go / no go' criteria for scaling early on. Typically, this happens when the measurement system is delineated (see Step 2 – Co-Develop). Additionally, the partners may benefit from relying on external facilitators to do the assessment. This outside-in perspective will not only counteract certain internal biases. It is also a sensible way to, more generally, assess the interaction patterns between the various partners and their efforts so far.

Engage the Lever(s) for scaling

Longevity requires scaling of the work that is done. Although there does not exist a cookie-cutter approach to do so, there are important levers that can be engaged.

Firstly, technology. By using **digital technologies**, partners can expand their impact without increasing the number of boots on the ground. The benefit of this so-called 'bricks-to-clicks' model is its cost-effectiveness: by adopting 'cheap' digital means (principally the Web and social media), it is relatively straightforward to create toolkits and platforms that are easy to use for beneficiaries (or other intermediaries).

Secondly, talent. There is no substitute for a pool of readily available, highly-motivated talent that is committed to go to work on societal challenges. Providing there is a smooth team handover process, there is no reason why the composition of the backbone organization and/or the delivery teams need to be cut into stone. In fact, it is a particularly prescient perspective to take considering the intrinsic motivations of the new generations entering the workforce (the so-called Millennials). More so than their predecessors, they are looking for more meaning, purpose and entrepreneurial clout in their daily work activities.

Thirdly, revenue model. One of the best ways to **ensure scalability** is to look for a revenue model that can underpin (future) actions. The adoption of a revenue model is a particularly strong incentive structure to cement the commitment of for-profit partners. They may get involved initially out of philanthropic considerations, but that is typically no guarantee for continued engagement when the business cycle goes downward. Profitable returns should never be the one and only end-goal of sustainable partnerships. But break-even propositions should always be preferred over pure charity.

Loop around

For the sake of simplicity, the sustainable partnership process is presented as four sequential steps. The reality, however, is one where progress happens in an iterative fashion.

This typically is witnessed in the (loose) application of an improvement logic, such as the 'Plan-Do-Check-Act' cycle. Just like a circle has no real end, a strong partnership model is one where partners act based on what was learnt before. Good partnerships succeed in making steady improvements by looping around and applying earlier evidence to the challenges that sit in front.

Testimonial - *BASF: Boost ambition to a social future*

"Working towards social change with a diverse group of stakeholders has been a very enriching experience for us. Not only did it enable us to look at reality differently, we also learnt a lot from the other partner(s). Given the complexity of societal challenges, we need to combine our strengths and share expertise.

Ultimately, we could scale with the Karel de Grote University College (KdG) because there was a prior, implementation effort. It helped us to learn fast and adapt the project where necessary. The future of the project has been guaranteed through its integration into the standard operations of KdG and its talent pool."

Katrien Dingemans, HR Business Partner, BASF



Conclusion:

The opportunities for partnerships for impact and growth are plentiful and exciting. Pioneering efforts are still developing and there is much more to learn about how to make them work – for non-profits, social-profits, authorities, social entrepreneurs, for-profits and the ultimate beneficiaries.

We have tried to provide clear steps to engage in sustainable partnership. In reality, however, it remains a messy and fragile process. Many attempts may fail.

At the same time, the Belgian examples demonstrate that it can be done.

Even more importantly, those involved report a new sense of optimism that dawns early on in the process. Sustainable partnerships can produce remarkable changes in people's belief that the future can be different and better. For many who are searching for a reason to hope in these difficult times, this alone may be purpose enough to embrace and engage in sustainable partnership.



START Now!

Other useful resources

Collective Impact Forum (www.collectiveimpactforum.org). Various resources, initiatives and stories available, incl. instructive webinars and blogs.

Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship (www.schwabfound.org). See publications, e.g. 'Social Innovation: A Guide to Achieving Corporate and Societal Value' (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Social_Innovation_Guide.pdf)

Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford University (www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/faculty-research/skoll).

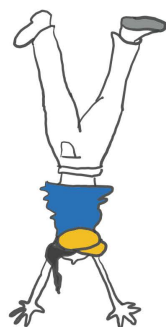
See particularly 'Beyond Dialogue: Building Sustainable and Inclusive Business Models in Partnership with Social Entrepreneurs' (https://acumen.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Acumen_BeyondDialogueReport.pdf)

Business Fights Poverty (www.businessfightspoverty.org). See particularly 'Social Enterprises and Global Corporations: Collaborating for Growth with Impact' (https://acumen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/1502_AcumenSummitReport_092115Finalv2_pgs.pdf)

Network for Business Sustainability (www.nbs.net). See particularly 'Sustainability Through Partnerships: Capitalizing on Collaboration' (https://s3.van1.auro.io/v1/AUTH_63f3dc66246c4447ad749fa1da8b5736/sophia/blox/assets/data/000/000/127/original/NBS-Systematic-Review-Partnerships.pdf?1492527925)

Corporate Citizenship (www.corporate-citizenship.com). See particularly 'Collaboration for Impact' (<https://corporate-citizenship.com/our-insights/collaboration-for-impact/>)

Stanford Social Innovation Review (www.ssir.org). Various articles and on-line discussions.



THE
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MVO
VLAANDEREN

MAATSCHAPPELIJK
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Vlaanderen
is duurzaam ondernemen