

EXPLORING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN
NONPROFIT ORGANISATIONS
IN NEW ZEALAND

by

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Abstract

Nonprofit partnership with government and with business is well documented in the literature. However partnership between nonprofit organisations has largely been ignored. This research focuses on such New Zealand partnerships. It investigates three aspects of partnership: the reasons why organisations partner, the resources they allocate to those partnerships, and the competencies used by the people managing the partnerships. How these three partnership aspects influence each other and the effect of that on the partnerships is also explored.

The study focuses on the 'partnership' rather than the 'co-existence' end of Craig and Courtney's (2004) continuum where elements such as working from agreed values, sharing resources and decision making, and developing systems to support the partnership will be evident. Two partnerships were selected as case studies. Data came from semi-structured interviews with seven participants from five partner organisations.

The literature provided a framework for analysing the interview data in relation to the three aspects of partnership. This framework led to the identification of four new motivational factors, two new resource allocations and two new competencies. The literature also provided six theories that help explain partnership motivations.

In addition to the three aspects (motivation, resources, and competencies) of partnership, it became clear that these things made a difference:

- the term used to describe what they were doing – *collaboration* or *partnership*,
- the context,
- the presence of trust and goodwill,
- voluntary participation in partnership, and
- the level of formality.

The findings demonstrated that the motivation to partner at all was the most important of the three aspects of partnership. It influenced resource allocations and the competencies used by partnership managers. Resource allocations did not influence the motivation to partner but influenced the competencies used by the partnership managers. And the competencies used by the partnership managers influenced the resources allocated by organisations but generally did not influence the motivation to partner.

The findings add to our knowledge about nonprofit-nonprofit partnership and will help people to plan partnerships. I also propose five areas

- factors that influence formality,
- factors that prevent nonprofit partnership,
- role of competencies in motivating partnership,
- quantity of resources and the impact on outcomes, and
- ownership of intellectual property

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The New Zealand nonprofit sector is significant:

- it contributes \$7 billion to the GDP,
- \$3.3 billion of that represents the value added by the volunteer workforce, and
- it employs one in ten people (Sanders et al., 2008).

Given the size of the sector and the volume of services it delivers (social services, education, health, justice, sports, arts and entertainment) today's increased emphasis by nonprofit organisations and their funders on partnership as a mechanism for efficiently delivering services requires investigation (Cairns & Harris 2011; Eschenfelder, 2011).

Nonprofit organisations increasingly use collaboration and partnership as a means for achieving their mission and in some cases, meeting the expectations of funders (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Gazely, 2010). Collaboration between the government and nonprofit organisations for the delivery of services has not only provided funding for the nonprofit sector but has also required increased accountability (Sanders et al., 2008). For some nonprofit organisations the funding relationship has more recently included requirements about how they deliver their services and their administration (Eschenfelder, 2011). An example of this is the requirement for some nonprofit organisations to work in partnership with other organisations in order to receive government funding (Cairns & Harris, 2011).

Nonprofit organisations in New Zealand work in partnership with government, business, and other nonprofits; this research focuses on nonprofit to nonprofit partnerships. I set out firstly to understand more about these three aspects of partnership (1) what motivates organisations to partner, (2) what resources do organisations allocate to partnership, and (3) what competencies are used by the people who manage partnerships. My second aim is to understand how these three aspects of partnership interact and to find the effect of that interaction.

My own experience in the nonprofit sector sparked my interest. Two years ago I became the CEO of a large New Zealand nonprofit organisation. Within five weeks of my starting the role four other nonprofits and one public service department had approached me to discuss possible partnerships. I was surprised to find that my view of partnership as a relatively formal activity that allowed the partners to achieve something that could not be achieved alone and that resulted in tangible benefits all round was not shared by everyone. People seeking partnership appeared to have only two motives. The first was their need to be seen to be working in partnership. The organisation I led enjoyed a good reputation in several sectors. Apparently a partnership with us offered organisational legitimacy for them. The second sprang from our national coverage. People perceived our size and funding to mean that we would be able to finance them to deliver services that were only vaguely relevant to us.

While being seen to participate (Cairns & Harris, 2011), gaining access to organisational legitimacy by linking with reputable partners (Chen & Graddy, 2010), and gaining access to funds (Graddy & Chen, 2006) are all legitimate reasons for partnership it was the apparent lack of consideration of the need for equitable benefits (Craig & Courtney, 2004) for both partners that intrigued me. I developed a slightly cynical view of partnership and this view prompted my research.

Understanding the three aspects of partnership given above pays off at both a practical and theoretical level. The reason for partnering, one assumes, is that both partners should benefit. The resources each organisation would allocate, one assumes, are proportional to the benefit (Craig & Courtney, 2004). Competent management is essential (Getha-Taylor, 2008). Therefore, one assumes, we should know what competencies are necessary for managing partnership.

In addition to understanding the three aspects of partnership I was also interested in understanding how these aspects interacted and how that interaction affected the partnership. For example, would the motivation behind

the partnership change the resources allocated to it or the competencies used to manage it?

The literature on nonprofit sector partnerships has a significant gap on nonprofit to nonprofit partnership. Not many studies exist of the New Zealand nonprofit sector (Battisti, 2009; Craig & Courtney, 2004; Eweje & Palakshappa, 2009). Some of the partnership literature focused on aspects relevant to my research questions, for example, on the motivation for partnership (Sowa, 2008), and on partnership competencies (Getha-Taylor, 2008). Other literature provided useful insights into nonprofit partnership in general. For example:

- the partnerships between nonprofits and government (Alexander & Nank, 2009; Gazely, 2010a; Chen & Graddy, 2010) and between nonprofits and business (Battisti, 2009),
- partnership structures (Arya & Lin, 2007) or mechanisms (Sowa, 2009),
- the characteristics of partners (Arya & Lin, 2007; Foster & Meinhard, 2002), and
- the evaluation of partnership (Gadja, 2004).

This literature informed the methodology I chose to use for my research, that is, it provided a framework for the collection and analysis of the data.

Gadja (2004) suggests that usage of the term 'collaboration' to describe practically every manner of inter-organisational or inter-personal relationships makes it hard for organisations to participate in collaboration because it is unclear what organisations mean by 'collaboration'. My experience in the New Zealand nonprofit sector makes me agree.

Collaboration as a name, definition, form or theory is difficult to pin down. There is no one definition, although they share similarities, and various names are used interchangeably. Collaboration can be a process, a structure or an activity and its many forms can be placed on a continuum showing degrees of relationship (e.g. co-existence, co-operation, partnership) and levels of formality in relationship. Because of these difficulties multiple theories help with understanding.

Although much of the literature uses the term 'collaboration', I felt the term 'partnership' was better suited to my research. It best described my perception of the relationships involved, and was also the term most preferred by the participants in the case studies. I continue to use the term 'collaboration' when discussing the literature, thereby reducing the risk of misrepresenting others' research. I use the term 'partnership' in the literature review when referring to my own research, and throughout the rest of the thesis unless I am discussing another author who uses 'collaboration'.

The literature reveals that there is not a single theory of partnership (Gadja, 2004) but that multiple theories are required to understand it. I identified six theories:

- resource dependence theory,
- transaction cost theory,
- resource based view,
- exchange theory,
- social network theory, and
- institutional theories.

All but the transaction cost theory explained the findings of my research in relation to the motivation to partner.

The methodological orientation for the research was based on a constructionist ontology which led to the development of a qualitative case study using semi-structured interviews for collecting the data and thematic analysis for analysing it. This approach answers the research questions and advances knowledge of partnership in the nonprofit sector. Two case studies focus on partnerships between social service sector organisations. Case Study One (CS1) centred on a programme which involved three partners (two nonprofits and one local government) and addressed the need of isolated clients. It gave clients information about activities in the community and then recognised and rewarded the participation of clients in those activities. Case Study Two (CS2) examined a formal partnership between two nonprofit organisations. They shared or supported funding applications, placed staff in each others' offices and made

client referrals. Research within real nonprofit to nonprofit partnerships let me gather a rich and holistic account of partnership from multiple viewpoints. The limitations (which are discussed more fully in Chapter 3) are five, none crucial:

- the limited number of case studies,
- the need to maintain confidentiality,
- the difficulty the partnership managers had in describing the competencies they used to manage the partnerships,
- deciding whether to call it 'collaboration' or 'partnership', and lastly,
- my position in relation to the research.

I found that the most important aspect of partnership was the motivation for partnering. The motivation for partnership affected the resources the organisations allocated to the partnership and the competencies used by the partnership managers. To a lesser extent, the resources allocated to partnership affected the competencies used and vice versa, while there was only one instance where the competencies used had an effect on the motivation to partner, and resource allocation did not affect on the motivation to partner at all.

My findings also revealed new factors, listed in Chapter 6, for each of the three aspects of partnership, in addition to the factors already identified in the literature. Mentioned earlier, five things deserve attention:

- the terms participants used – *partnership* or *collaboration*,
- context of the partnership,
- presence of trust and goodwill,
- voluntary participation in partnership, and
- the level of formality.

After this introductory chapter I review the literature on nonprofit partnerships. In Chapter Three I describe the methodology of the research, and give the findings of the two case studies in Chapters Four and Five. I discuss the findings in Chapter Six and conclude the discussion in Chapter Seven with the research implications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

What is collaboration and partnership?

According to Gadja (2004, p.66) the definition for collaboration is 'somewhat elusive, inconsistent and theoretical' and there is confusion about terms used for this concept in the literature (Armistead, Pettigrew & Aves, 2007). Sowa (2008, p.300) states that it is challenging to find a 'common conceptual and operating definition'.

Given that the word collaboration covers all these areas

- processes or ways of working (Armistead, Pettigrew & Aves, 2007; Gray & Wood, 1991; Thomson & Perry, 2006),
- structures (Armistead, Pettigrew & Aves, 2007; Gray & Wood, 1991; Sowa, 2008), and
- activities (Bardach, 1998)

it is hardly surprising that there is confusion about its meaning.

The way collaboration is defined reflects whether the term refers to a process, structure or activity. For example, Thomson & Perry (2006) define collaboration as a process:

'in which autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions' (p.23).

In contrast to this is another definition whereby collaboration is referred to as a structure:

'collaboration can also be an institution, a concrete arrangement between two or more sets of actors that creates something new outside of each organisation's existing boundaries' (Sowa, 2008, p.301).

Further, Bardach (1998) defines collaboration as an activity which is intended to increase public value through the combined work of two or more organisations. Despite the variations some ideas are common to the definitions, for example, that collaboration involves at least two actors and results in something new.

Not only is it difficult to define collaboration, it is also difficult to name it. Organisations in all sectors, nonprofit, public and private, use the word excessively (Gadja, 2004) and interchangeably (Nissan & Burlingame, 2003). I found the following terms to name collaboration processes, structures or activities:

- partnerships (Craig & Courtney, 2004),
- cooperative partnerships (Provan, Veazie, & Staten, 2005),
- strategic partnerships (Eweje, 2007),
- social partnerships (Eweje & Palakshappa, 2009),
- intersectoral collaboration (Gazely, 2010),
- alliances (Armistead, Pettigrew & Aves, 2007; Inkpen, 2002),
- social alliances (Berger et al, 2004),
- networks (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010),
- cooperation (Armistead, Pettigrew & Aves),
- collaborative alliances, joint ventures, and public-private partnerships (Gray & Wood, 1991),
- co-labor (Gazely, 2010),
- co-production (Bergh, 2010), and
- mergers and integrations (Eschenfelder, 2011).

In Chapter 1 I said I would use *collaboration* in this literature review because it was the term more commonly used in the literature and to change it risked changing the intent of the original authors. I use the term *partnership* when referring to my research and elsewhere because the case study participants prefer it. Also it better reflects my perception of the relationships between organisations in each partnership.

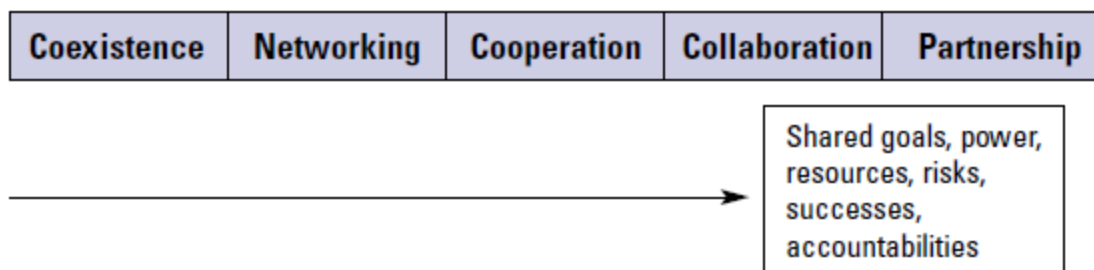
Collaboration Continuums

The challenge of defining collaboration could be related to the many forms it takes and the levels of formality in the relationships between the partners. Scholars have developed collaboration continuums that take into account forms of collaboration and levels of formality. For example:

- Peterson (1991) used a three point continuum using the terms cooperation, coordination and collaboration, while
- Kagan (1991) used a four point continuum as did
- Himmelman (1994).
- New Zealand researchers, Craig and Courtney (2004, p. 38-39), used a five point continuum (below) ranging from coexistence to partnership in their research into community collaborations in Waitakere City.

I chose to use that same continuum because the language and concepts used by them fit comfortably within the New Zealand nonprofit context. The collaborations included government, local government and nonprofits.

Figure 1: Craig and Courtney's (2004) partnering continuum



Collaboration

- has trust implicit;
- is based on negotiation and agreed actions;
- may not share same values but will have an agreed set of operating principles and shared decision making;
- means giving up some things (e.g. power and control);
- may involve documentation;
- provides opportunity to add value to one's own and to others' organisation.

Partnership

- works from agreed shared values (e.g. trust, honesty);
- shares risks, rewards, resources, accountability, vision and ideas and decision making;

- has a degree of formality and two-way or multi-way contractual and relationship obligations;
- develops processes, systems and mechanisms to support partnership;
- shares power, process and resources equitably - not necessarily equally.

My criteria for selecting participants for the research included the requirement that the partnerships functioned at the collaboration and partnership end of the continuum (p.39).

Nonprofit to nonprofit collaboration

Although there was a wealth of collaboration literature, there were several noticeable gaps. The first gap was that of nonprofit to nonprofit partnership (even more so in the New Zealand context). Studies abounded of government-nonprofit collaboration (Acar & Robertson, 2004; Alexander & Nank, 2009; Gazely, 2010a; Gazely & Brudney, 2007; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Bergh, 2010) or business-nonprofit collaboration (Battisti, 2009; Eweje & Palakshappa, 2009; Iyer, 2003). However, studies on nonprofit-nonprofit partnerships were more limited (Sowa, 2008).

The second gap in the literature was around the resources used in nonprofit collaboration. While it was possible to infer from some studies the type of resources applied to nonprofit collaboration (Chen & Graddy, 2010; Gazely & Brudney, 2007) there were few studies where resources were explicitly considered (Arya & Lin, 2007). Many of the nonprofit collaboration studies focused on other aspects of collaboration such as

- network size (Graddy & Chen, 2006),
- collaboration processes (Sowa, 2008),
- collaborative governance (Hill & Lynn, 2003),
- the role of tradition in collaboration (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010),
- capacity for collaboration (Gazely, 2010b),

- organisational factors that predispose towards collaboration (Foster & Meinhard, 2002),
- partner attributes (Arya & Lin, 2007),
- evaluation of collaboration (Gadja, 2004), and
- competencies of collaboration managers (Getha-Taylor, 2008)

among others. Later in this chapter I discuss the literature that shaped my theoretical perspective in relation to motivation, resources, and competencies.

Theories that inform collaboration

Despite use of the expression 'collaboration theory' by Gadja, (2004) and Gazley & Brudney, (2007), in 2009 Sowa maintains that there is no single theory to explain collaboration. Instead, multiple theories are needed in order to understand collaboration. In this section I discuss six theories

- resource dependence theory,
- transaction cost theory,
- resource based view,
- exchange theory
- social network theory, and
- institutional theories

that inform our understanding of collaboration.

Traditionally, two main theories, resource dependence theory and transaction cost theory, predominate (Foster & Meinhard, 2002; Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Guo & Acar, 2005).

Resource dependence theory proposes that organisations reduce uncertainty in the external environment by the way they acquire resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Collaboration is a useful strategy for managing external dependencies and the uncertain resource environment (Guo & Acar, 2005; Iyer, 2003) by pooling resources (Gajda, 2004). It is also a way of supplementing the strengths of collaborating organisations so that their capability is enhanced (Iyer, 2003).

Transaction cost theory focuses on maximising organisational benefits by reducing costs. Guo and Acar (2005) suggest that collaboration, when used as a mechanism for reducing costs, can maximise economic or psychological benefits. Funders' requirements to collaborate (Sowa, 2009) or to be more efficient (Eschenfelder, 2011) put nonprofit organisations under increasing pressure to work together to manage the uncertain environment. By collaborating in order to share resources, organisations reduce their dependency on external sources and become more efficient.

The resource based view, a variation on resource dependence theory, explains how the competitive advantage of an organisation is obtained through resources from the external environment which are valuable, unique or un-substitutable (Hillman, Withers & Collins, 2009). These organisational resources can be material, that is, financial; or non-material, for example reputation, status, and access to human resources (Arya & Lin, 2007). The reasons why organisations participate in partnerships and the resources they allocate to them are two aspects of my research into partnership that are illuminated by the resource based view. Gaining access to resources, such as reputation or expertise, could provide a competitive advantage which motivates partnership.

Exchange theory also contributes to our understanding of collaboration. According to this theory, unique resources such as specialised expertise or funds could be held by different partners and exchanged for the benefit of both. An example of this theory in action is the exchange of nonprofit expertise with government funding (Arya & Lin, 2007; Gazley & Brudney, 2007). Craig and Courtney (2004) describe equitable sharing of resources as an element of partnership. Equitable, "fair", does not necessarily mean "equal"; this suggests that the exchange of resources between partner organisations may vary dependent on the motivation to collaborate. Later in this chapter I discuss in more detail the factors that motivate organisations to partner. The exchange of resources is included in that discussion.

According to Arya & Lin (2007) the social network theory, which considers individuals in networks alongside the relationships between the individuals,

complements the resource based view to illustrate how access to greater relational resources can increase an organisation's competitive advantage. This implies that the more networks an organisation's personnel are engaged in the more likely it is for links to exist (via those networks) with potential partner organisations. Gazley (2010a) cites the work of others who, like Ayra and Lin (2007), also present social networks as ways to increase social or work related networks and create opportunities for building trust and shared norms. The presence of trust is implicit when organisations function at the collaboration and partnership end of Craig & Courtney's (2004) continuum.

A number of institutional theories identify motivations for collaboration (Sowa, 2009). Theories concerned with organisational culture can explain why factors such as achieving organisational legitimacy by enhancing reputation or image, fitting in with norms, and developing shared responses to problems could motivate partnership. Organisations may consider it necessary to fit in with the prevailing norms in order to survive (Chen & Graddy, 2010; Cairns & Harris, 2011). In addition to this, formality, an element Craig and Courtney (2004) suggested would be present in collaborations operating at the partnership end of the continuum, is influenced by culture (Guo & Acar, 2005).

Summing up, there is no one theory of collaboration. Six general theories offer useful insight into the reasons why organisations collaborate. Theories such as resource dependence, transaction cost and a resource based view explain why organisations seek ways to minimise environmental uncertainties by reducing their dependencies on that environment and creating new opportunities to access resources. Exchange theory demonstrates how organisations can use resources unique to them for a competitive advantage. Collaboration becomes a way to exchange resources for the benefit of those involved. Social network theory works on the premise that organisations gain a competitive advantage through the networks held by the individuals working in the organisations. These networks create opportunities for collaboration through the relationships of individuals. And, because these relationships already exist, trust, an important element of collaboration, is also more likely to exist. Finally, institutional theories where organisational culture is a feature add further to our

understanding. The intent to gain organisational legitimacy through collaboration is one example of how this theory relates to collaboration.

Theoretical perspective for the research

So far in this chapter I have discussed the challenges of naming and defining collaboration, presented a continuum that positions the partnerships in my research, and explored six theories that provide insight into collaboration and in particular the reasons organisations collaborate.

The next step is to explain my theoretical perspective for the research into motivation, resources, and competencies. I will then consider how these three aspects interact and the effects of that interaction.

Aspect 1: What factors motivate collaboration?

The literature about what motivates organisations to collaborate is extensive. Although there is a noticeable focus on funder requirement (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Snaveley & Tracey, 2000) there is also a significant body of literature that explores other reasons for collaboration. By analysing the motivations identified in a number of studies on nonprofit partnerships, I have clustered motivational factors around six key themes:

- response to external environment,
- response to complex issues,
- to gain access to ...,
- to improve ...,
- to enhance service delivery, and
- tradition.

I group the factors according to these key themes.

Funders provide powerful motivation for nonprofit organisations to collaborate (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Eschenfelder, 2011; Sowa, 2009). In some instances funding is dependent on collaboration (Graddy & Chen, 2010; Gajda, 2004). Currently in New Zealand, where the government is a significant source of funding for many nonprofit organisations, government agencies have made

explicit their expectations of funding fewer, and larger, organisations. In addition to this they express a positive view towards inter-organisational collaboration. Messages such as these become a powerful motivating factor for organisations (Cairns & Harris, 2011). Collaborations in response to the current political context are likely to be motivated by access to resources (Gazley & Brudney, 2007) and legitimacy through reputable partners (Graddy & Chen, 2010). However, government funding is not the only reason why organisations get together. Gazley and Brudney (2007) state that where funding is not expected from government, collaboration that benefits organisational outcomes such as mission fulfilment, promoting shared goals and improving relationships with communities appear to be more prominent.

Aside from pressures in the external environment and the need to respond to complex societal issues which cannot be addressed by any one organisation (Gadja, 2004) many organisations choose to collaborate in order to gain access to resources that they cannot obtain on their own (Sowa, 2009). Resources can be financial such as funds, goods and services, and non-financial such as knowledge (Gazley & Brudney, 2007), information about what is happening in the wider sector (Cairns & Harris, 2011), and access to paid and voluntary personnel (Ayra & Lin, 2007). Chen and Graddy (2010) found in their research on the lead organisations who manage networks of service providers (including nonprofits) that gaining organisational legitimacy by linking with other reputable organisations motivates collaboration.

Wanting to improve their organisation or their services can also motivate organisations. For example, Gazley and Brudney (2007) identified in their study on government-nonprofit collaborations that improving cost effectiveness, service quality, community relationships, mission fulfilment and relationships for future dealings are all factors that motivate partnership. In addition to this Chen and Graddy (2010) suggest that improving the organisation's reputation is an important motivator, as is increasing the perception of funders that the organisation is a 'participator' (Cairns & Harris, 2011). Improving overall performance through superior programmes, increased benefits and enhanced projects are factors identified in a study on the use of collaboration as a

management strategy among federal employees in the United States (O’Leary, Gerard, & Choi, 2011). Sowa (2009) identified motivation for collaboration based on the desire of organisations to save funds so they have more resources for service delivery.

Many of the motives relate to strengthening of organisations. Better outcomes for clients through enhanced services also motivate collaboration. For example, Graddy and Chen (2006) identify a range of service enhancing motivations including access to clients, geographic coverage, and an enhanced ability to meet the cultural or linguistic needs of clients, in their research on community-based networks that had been set up to deliver publicly funded social services in Los Angeles County. Sowa (2009) states that being able to deliver enhanced services through the leveraging of new ideas or expertise motivated collaboration.

Hibbert and Huxham (2010) identify tradition as a factor. Gazley and Brudney (2007) add another factor: positive experiences of working together in the past, which could also motivate collaboration.

The following table lists the factors already discussed. These 27 factors that motivate collaboration were used in my research design and played a principal role in the development of the interview schedule and in subsequent data analysis.

Table 1: Factors that motivate collaboration

| Key themes | Factors that motivate collaboration |
|--|--|
| Response to external environment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. funder requirement for collaboration (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Gadjia, 2004; Sowa, 2009) 2. funder requirement for administrative efficiency (Eschenfelder, 2011) 3. competition from others (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Graddy & Chen, 2006) |
| Response to complex issues | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. complex issues that can't be addressed by a single organisation (Craig & Courtney, 2004; Gadjia, 2004) 5. promotion of shared goals (Gazley & Brudney, 2007) |
| To gain access to ... | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. funds (Graddy & Chen, 2006) 7. needed or new resources such as clients, facilities, networks and relationships (Ayra & Lin, 2007; Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Sowa, 2009; Thomson & Perry, 2006) 8. personnel: paid and voluntary (Ayra & Lin, 2007) 9. expertise and knowledge (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Graddy & Chen, 2006) 10. intelligence about what's happening in the wider sector (Cairns & Harris, 2011) 11. organisational legitimacy through linkages with reputable partners (Chen & Graddy, 2010) |
| To improve ... | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. cost effectiveness (Gazley & Brudney, 2007) 13. relationships for future dealings (Graddy & Chen, 2006; Gazley & Brudney, 2007) 14. the organisation's reputation (Chen & Graddy, 2010) 15. perception of the organisation as a participator (Cairns & Harris, 2011) 16. service quality (Gazley & Brudney, 2007) 17. overall performance – i.e. increased benefits, superior programmes, enhanced projects (O'Leary, Gerard, & Choi, 2011) 18. maximising use of funds for service delivery (Sowa, 2009) 19. mission fulfilment (Gazley & Brudney, 2007) 20. community relationships (Gazley & Brudney, 2007) |
| To enhance service delivery by better | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. access to clients (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Graddy & Chen, 2006) 22. geographic coverage (Graddy & Chen, 2006) 23. ability to meet cultural or linguistic needs of the clients (Graddy & Chen, 2006) 24. services (Sowa, 2009) 25. leverage of new ideas or expertise (Sowa, 2009). |
| Tradition | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 26. this is the way we work (Hibbert and Huxham, 2010) 27. positive past experiences (Gazley & Brudney, 2007) |

Aspect 2: What resources do organisations allocate to collaboration?

Craig and Courtney (2004) identify resource sharing as an essential element of collaboration and partnership. However, little has been written specifically about the resources (financial and non-financial) allocated by organisations to collaboration.

Reference to resources is generally by implication rather than explicit in the literature. The details come from the same studies as those discussed in the previous section. However one significant new source of information about collaboration resources is a study by Arya and Lin (2007). They identify financial resources – funds and goods – and non-financial resources – clients and personnel, facilities and equipment, knowledge, reputation, and relationships. They studied 52 nonprofit organisations to see how characteristics of organisations, the attributes of partners, and the structures of collaborative networks affected the monetary and non-monetary outcomes of the organisations. Their study drew on the resource based view which considers how the competitive advantage of an organisation is obtained through access to external resources (Hillman, Withers & Collins, 2009).

Thompson and Perry (2006) in their research on collaboration processes used by public managers in the United States, suggested that organisations may overlook less obvious resources:

‘The most costly resources of collaboration are not money but time and energy, neither of which can be induced’ (p.28).

Investigating the impact of resource allocations on collaboration was proposed by Sowa (2008) who said:

‘Scholars must examine what is shared between organisations involved in a collaborative relationship if they are to determine the impact of these collaborations’ (p.318).

Her research, focused on interagency collaborations in the United States early care and child education sector, suggested that the more organisations shared, the greater the intensity of their relationships and the value of the collaboration.

While I do not measure the impact of sharing on the partnerships in my research, I do investigate resource allocation, for two reasons. (1) there is a gap in the literature about this aspect of partnership, and (2) I want to understand how the allocation of resources affects the motivation to partner and the competencies used by managers.

The following table shows financial and non-financial resources identified in the literature. The 13 resources on this table informed the development of the interview questions and data analysis in my research.

Table 2: Resources allocated to collaboration

| | Resource type |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Financial resources | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. funds (Ayra & Lin, 2007; Cairns & Harris, 2011) 2. goods (Ayra & Lin, 2007; Sowa, 2009) 3. services (Sowa, 2009) |
| Non-financial resources | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. client access (Ayra & Lin, 2007; Graddy & Chen, 2006) 5. personnel: paid and voluntary (Ayra & Lin, 2007; Thomson & Perry, 2006) 6. time and energy (Gazely, 2010b; Thomson & Perry, 2006) 7. expertise (Gazely & Brudney, 2007; Sowa, 2009) 8. knowledge (Ayra & Lin, 2007; Gazely, 2010a; Cairns & Harris; 2011) 9. reputation (Ayra & Lin, 2007; Chen & Graddy, 2010) 10. network access and relationships (Ayra & Lin, 2007; Graddy & Chen, 2006) 11. use of equipment (Ayra & Lin, 2007) 12. use of facilities (Ayra & Lin, 2007) 13. use of intellectual property e.g. systems, procedures (Sowa, 2009) |

Aspect 3: What competencies did the partnership managers use?

Competency can be defined as

‘an underlying characteristic of an individual which is causally related to effective or superior performance in a job’ (Boyatzis, 1982, p.21).

Boyatzis’ definition provides a useful starting point for the discussion on the competencies relevant to managing collaboration. My interest in investigating the competencies used by the partnership managers in the case studies was because competent management of collaboration is considered an essential

component of effective collaboration (Getha-Taylor, 2008; O'Leary, Gerard & Choi, 2011). The research on this aspect of partnership examines the competencies the managers used and how these interact with the motivation to partner and the resources allocated to partnership.

The body of literature about competencies, some of which focused on collaboration competencies, is extensive (du Chatenier et al., 2010; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Williams, 2002). I briefly explore the literature on collaboration competencies before presenting a collaboration competency model (Getha-Taylor, 2008) which I modify and use.

Getha-Taylor (2008) drew on the work of Boyatzis (1982) and Spencer and Spencer (1993) to research the collaboration competencies of United States federal employees. She compared the competencies used by superior collaborators with the competencies used by average collaborators to develop a collaboration competency model. There were three competencies

- interpersonal understanding,
- teamwork and cooperation, and
- team leadership

that she identified as key to collaboration. These three competencies mirror Williams' (2002) findings on collaborations that addressed complex societal issues. He researched the competencies used by people he calls 'boundary spanners' as they are frequently the people engaged in managing collaboration. He found that managers depend on relational and inter-personal competencies rather than knowledge-based or professional competencies when managing collaboration.

Goldsmith and Eggers (2004) also investigated collaboration competencies. They investigated the changes by the United States government from a service provision to a service contracting model. This necessitated collaborations with networks of organisations and required competencies that were uncommon in public service managers at that time. The research showed that in order to deal with this new collaborative way of working managers needed both relationship

competencies (coaching, mediation, teambuilding) and professional competencies (risk analysis, strategic thinking).

Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen (2001) reviewed 80 documents on collaboration. They identified four capacities needed for collaboration (member, relational, organisational, and programmatic). Contained within these capacities were communication-based competencies (e.g. conflict resolution) and competencies related to technical knowledge (e.g. expertise in a problem area).

Chrislip and Larson's (1994) research in fifty American communities identified team work and team leadership competencies that were similar to Getha-Taylor (2008).

Getha-Taylor's model provided a comprehensive tool which I applied to my research on partnership. I removed the competencies demonstrated by average collaboration managers and focused on the competencies used by superior collaboration managers. This allowed me to reduce Getha-Taylor's 97 competencies down to a more manageable 49. The following table shows them under her twelve headings. These are competencies that we expect a superior manager to demonstrate.

Table 3: Getha-Taylor's (2008) collaboration competencies

| Key theme | Competencies |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Initiative | 1. Works independently 2. Does more than required 3. Involves others in the effort |
| Information seeking | 4. Asks questions 5. Personally investigates 6. Digs deep to find root causes (contacts others, does research, involves others) |
| Interpersonal understanding | 7. Understands emotion, content, meanings, and underlying issues |
| Organisational awareness | 8. Understands the formal/informal structure of the organisation 9. Understands the climate, culture, organisational politics 10. Understands underlying organisational issues |

| Key theme | Competencies |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Relationship building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Accepts invitations 12. Makes work related contacts 13. Builds rapport 14. Makes social contact |
| Teamwork and cooperation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Cooperates 16. Shares information 17. Expresses positive expectations 18. Solicits input 19. Empowers others 20. Team builds 21. Resolves conflict |
| Team leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Manages meetings 23. Informs people 24. Uses authority fairly 25. Promotes team effectiveness 26. Takes care of the group 27. Positions self as a leader 28. Communicates a compelling vision |
| Analytical thinking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 29. Breaks down problems 30. See basic/multiple relationships 31. Makes complex plans/analyses |
| Conceptual thinking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Uses basic rules 33. Recognises patterns 34. Applies complex concepts 35. Simplifies complexity 36. Creates new concepts and models |
| Organisational commitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37. Makes active effort to fit in 38. Models good citizenship behaviours 39. Shows a sense of purpose and states commitment 40. Makes personal and professional sacrifices 41. Makes unpopular decisions 42. Sacrifices own unit's good for organisation |
| Self confidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 43. Presents self confidently and expresses confidence in own ability 44. Justifies self-confident claims 45. Volunteers for challenges and accepts challenging situations |
| Flexibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 46. Sees situations objectively 47. Applies rules and procedures flexibly 48. Adapts tactics, strategies, goals and projects to situations 49. Makes organisational adaptations to suit long-term strategy |

Conclusion

Collaboration provides nonprofit organisations with opportunities to achieve goals which cannot be achieved by working alone. However, collaboration is challenging. The various names, definitions, forms and theories used to describe collaboration, along with excessive use of the term, makes it hard for organisations to participate in collaboration.

While the literature on collaboration was extensive much of it related to government-nonprofit collaborations or particular aspects of collaboration such as collaboration structures, organisational or partner characteristics, and collaboration evaluation. There were gaps in the literature on nonprofit-nonprofit collaboration and on collaboration resources.

Six general theories (p.18) motivate collaboration and the resources that might be shared as a result. In addition to discussing the six theories I present a partnering continuum (Craig & Courtney, 2004) and position the partnerships in my research at the collaboration and partnership end of the continuum. And finally, I extract from the literature key ideas relevant to three aspects of partnership: motivation factors, resource types and collaboration competencies.

My research fills two gaps in the nonprofit partnership literature: nonprofit-nonprofit partnership and type of resources allocated to partnership.

The literature reviewed in this chapter provided the information for deductive analysis of the data in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The methodology allows the research to answer these questions of

1. what motivated the organisations to partner,
2. what resources did the organisations allocate to the partnership, and
3. what competencies did the partnership managers use.

In the light of this knowledge I examine how those three aspects of partnership interact and the effect of that interaction on each partnership.

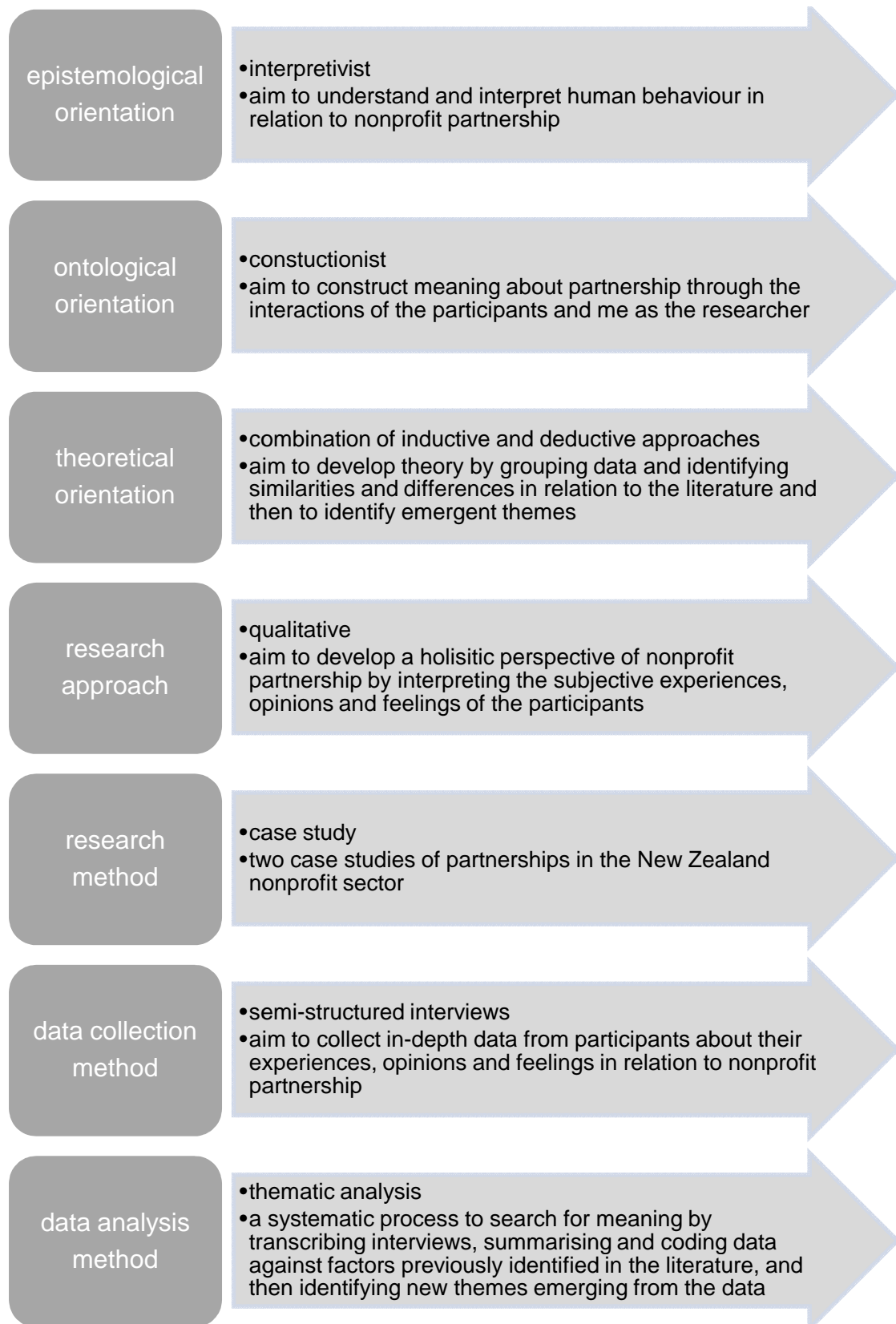
My experiences as the CEO of a New Zealand nonprofit organisation led to my interest in nonprofit partnership and influenced the research methodology I outline in this chapter. My interpretation of the data and construction of knowledge is shaped by these experiences. These points are explored more fully in the strengths and limitations section later in this chapter.

The chapter begins with an overview and then more detailed discussion of the methodological orientations and approaches used for this research. Following this is an explanation of participant recruitment along with information about the participants, their organisations and the interview process. The chapter then moves on to a description of the data analysis before closing with a brief conclusion.

Overview of the methodological orientation

The methodology used to answer the research questions is based on my assumption that social phenomena, such as partnerships, are achieved through the people involved. The meaning of partnership is constructed by these people in relation to their subjective experiences and feelings - and by how I, as the researcher, interpret that meaning (Bryman, 2008). The following diagram provides an overview of the methodological approach used in this research. Each of these ideas is then described in more detail.

Figure 2: Overview of methodological orientation



Epistemology and Ontology

Epistemology is about what acceptable knowledge is and the rules for knowing (Bryman, 2008; O’Leary, 2010). Historically, social science research was dominated by the positivist approach which asserts that the social world can be understood in the same ways as the natural world where reality can be studied and understood (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Under a positivist model, knowledge can be tested, measured and replicated and is therefore considered more objective and superior to other kinds of knowledge. In contrast to the positivist epistemology, interpretivism assumes that the social world is different from the natural world and that a different approach to knowledge is required in the social world. Bryman (2008) states:

‘The fundamental difference resides in the fact that social reality has a meaning for human beings and therefore human action is meaningful – that is, it has a meaning for them and they act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and to the acts of others’ (p.16).

My research question and beliefs about knowledge mean that an interpretivist orientation, where the researcher seeks to understand and interpret human behaviour, is best suited to this study on nonprofit partnership. With an interpretivist orientation the research approach requires participants to describe subjective experiences, opinions and feelings about a subject that is time and context bound (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). It is my role as researcher to seek understanding of the social reality of each partner and each partnership and the meaning that they and I attribute to their own and to others’ actions in relation to the partnerships.

Supporting the epistemological orientation of interpretivism is the ontological orientation of constructionism. While epistemology focuses on the nature and scope of knowledge, ontology concerns itself with what we know and how we understand what we know (Bryman, 2008). I believe that there are multiple realities and that an individual’s ontological assumption is based on personal belief and therefore highly subjective. My ontological position for this research is constructionist; I agree that:

‘social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors’ (Bryman, 2008, p.19).

This suggests that meaning is continually being constructed through interaction between people and that researchers are involved in the construction of knowledge. The credibility of research coming from a constructionist paradigm requires that this subjective approach be acknowledged (O’Leary, 2010).

I acknowledge that the context of each partnership and each partner organisation differs and that my contribution to knowledge about partnership is based on data drawn from the subjective individual experiences, opinions and feelings of the interview participants. In addition to this, research categories such as partnership motivations and competencies are social products themselves which could be interpreted in different ways by the participants. The implication is that the construction of knowledge occurs at an individual participant level and at the research level as well.

The interview data relates to the opinions, values and behaviours of those particular individuals within the social phenomena of partnership. While my version of partnership as a social phenomena cannot be regarded as definitive I believe it can be beneficial to partners and to theories of partnership.

Research approach and theoretical orientation

The epistemological and ontological considerations require a qualitative approach to research into the social phenomena of organisational partnership. Bryman (2008) suggests that although some studies may have characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative research strategies, the distinction between the two approaches is useful for social scientists. For instance, in qualitative research,

‘words are emphasized over quantification in the collection and analysis of data.

Qualitative research:

- predominantly emphasises an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research in which the emphasis is placed on the generation of theories;

- rejects the practices and norms of the natural scientific model and of positivism in particular in preference for an emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world; and
- embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals' creation' (Bryman, 2008, p.22).

My data analysis uses an inductive approach to understand the relationship between partnership theory and the research results and to identify emergent themes. Despite this, I draw extensively on others' work to aid with grouping data, identifying similarities and differences, and highlighting emergent themes. While exploiting the work of others in this way is a deductive approach the insights and theories gathered from the literature were not used for typically deductive practices i.e. to quantify data, predict outcomes, or test existing theories.

Case study as a research method

My research required a qualitative approach that fitted with an interpretivist and constructionist orientation. In addition to this, the research questions required a method that supported the collection of in-depth data from people working within the social phenomena of a partnership. Therefore, I needed to interview all the partners within a partnership rather than interview lots of people involved in partnership but not necessarily within the same partnerships. Given that I planned to investigate two partnerships with each partnership being distinct and separate from the other, the case study approach warranted consideration.

In his introduction to case study research, Yin (2008) says

'In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context' (p.8).

These criteria for case studies fitted my research proposal. The research questions sought to understand how the three aspects of partnership interacted and how this interaction affected them. They also asked 'what' questions like 'what motivates partnership?' and the partnerships were a contemporary

phenomenon within a real-life context. As the investigator, I had no control over the events.

In addition to the reasons above, case studies seemed the most sensible approach given my time limitations as a full time employee conducting my Master's research part time.

I made the case studies confidential because I believed that potential research participants could be nervous about participating if it was possible that the partnership could reflect negatively on them or their organisations. While it was possible to maintain confidentiality about the partnerships to those outside it, it was more difficult to maintain confidentiality between the partners within a partnership because it was possible they could recognise their partners' input. Participants were informed of this possibility in their information sheet and acknowledged it when they signed the consent form. I used pseudonyms for the organisations and participants, keeping the locations secret, and describing the partnerships in deliberately vague terms. I also selected participant's comments carefully and aggregated data where necessary to maintain confidentiality for each participant within a partnership.

Interviews as a data collection method

I considered the data collection methods appropriate to qualitative case studies. Among these methods are observations, open ended questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and the review of archival records. I chose to use semi-structured interviews because my research called on participants to reflect on their experiences and opinions of partnership. Observations were not appropriate; observing the partnerships would have been difficult within the time constraints of the research and may not have provided relevant data. Questionnaires, even open-ended questionnaires, were also not useful for gathering the depth of data needed to answer the research questions. This left focus groups as the other alternative to interviews, but in focus groups it would have been easy for the participants to agree on a collective viewpoint rather than to put forward alternate and individual opinions. I was interested in individual responses rather than the experiences of the participants in relation to

each other. One aspect of partnership (the competencies used by partnership managers) may have benefited from a focus group discussion. The competency question was the most difficult for participants to answer. It is possible that a focus group discussion could have drawn out more useful data by allowing the participants to share ideas or talk about the competencies they saw in each other.

Yin (2008) proposes that interviews, a targeted form of data collection, can provide an important source of rich data. They can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. I wanted the participants to reflect on their experiences of partnership which meant that clarifying questions were likely. In order to collect enough relevant data to answer the research questions the interviews needed some structure. Semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate option because the responses were not predetermined and the order of the questions could change as the conversation flowed (O'Leary, 2010). I decided that I would interview the partnership manager in each organisation because one aspect of the interview was about the competencies that partnership managers used for managing the partnerships. In both case studies it became obvious during the interviews that key information about the partnerships was held by someone else, whom I also arranged to interview in addition to the partnership managers.

One other data collection method suitable for case studies is a review of archival documents. I initially intended to review the partnership agreements for each partnership however in one case there was no partnership agreement and in the other case the participants, who did not know me prior to the interviews, were unwilling to make this document available for analysis.

The interview schedule

As well as seeking to understand three specific aspects of nonprofit partnership (motivation to partner, resources allocated to partnership, and competencies used by partnership managers) I also strive to understand the interaction of these aspects and the effect of that interaction on partnership. When designing the research I drew on the literature to create lists of factors related to

partnership motivations, resources and competencies. These lists informed the development of the interview schedule and aided the data analysis and identification of emergent themes.

I developed an interview schedule (see Appendix 1) containing fourteen interview questions. The schedule not only created a logical flow to the interview, it also allowed me to maintain consistent key questions across the seven interviews and two case studies, and to prepare for each interview.

The interviews started with general questions and then became more focused. The first two questions asked about the organisation and its operating context and about the partnership. These questions also made time for the participant to become comfortable with me and the interview process.

The next ten questions focused on the three aspects of partnership. These questions arose from the literature where I had developed three tables containing key ideas about each aspect of partnership. One table listed the factors that motivated partnership and the other tables included resources and collaboration competencies. I chose not to show these tables to the research participants because the interviews were collecting data on their experiences and opinions rather than on which factors on my tables were present in their partnership. However, the tables did influence the development of the questions. For example one of the questions asked why the organisation joined the partnership. The question was to establish the motivation for the partnership. I had prepared prompts for each question to assist me if the participants struggled to answer the question and to remind me of the data I needed to collect. The prompts for the question on motivation included further questions about what the organisation gained from the partnership, what they thought their partners gained from it and a reminder of the six overarching motivation themes (e.g. response to external factors, to gain access to ..., and so forth). The questions and prompts are attached as Appendix 1.

Finally the participants were asked to consider how the three factors interacted in their partnership. The interview closed after an invitation to participants to add anything else they thought relevant.

Criteria for selecting case studies

My nonprofit experience suggests that there is a wide variety of views about partnership and that not all partnerships are equal. It was important that the partnerships chosen for the research were significant enough to provide the data needed to answer the research questions. Therefore, I created the following criteria for determining whether a partnership was suitable for the research:

1. At least one partner was a nonprofit organisation in New Zealand
2. The partnership was either currently underway or had existed in the past six months
3. The partnership operated at the collaboration and partnership end of Craig and Courtney's (2004) partnership continuum (p.16)
4. Ideally all of the partners would be willing to participate in the research
5. The partnership was documented with some form of agreement
6. There was some kind of partnership activity
7. The partners do not work closely with the organisation that employs me

Criterion 5 was modified because I realised that formality, rather than documentation, was an indicator of a significant partnership. While a partnership agreement would indicate formality it is not the only indicator. Criterion 6 was added during the recruitment phase when I decided that an active partnership was important i.e. the partnership was 'doing' something rather than just being an agreement to work together.

In addition to the criteria above I also had some preferences for partnerships. While these preferences would not exclude potential partnerships, they provided additional features to help identify partnerships of most interest. The first preference was that the organisations were located in the same city as me (easier to set up interviews) and because of personal interest the second preference was that the organisations operated in the social services or health

sectors (rather than the arts or sports sectors). However, criterion 7 which required that the organisations were not connected with my workplace was also important in order to maintain a distance between my work and theirs.

I am unable to say whether my position as Chief Executive of a nonprofit organisation influenced anybody's decision to participate in the research. Both partnerships were in the social services sector and one partnership was local while the other was located in another part of the country.

Recruiting organisations and participants

I initially planned to recruit organisations in two ways. The first was through convenience sampling from a list of partnerships recorded by community organisations at a workshop on partnership and the second was utilising my professional networks and applying the snowball method to identify potential partnerships. The proviso to the snowball method was that I would not recruit organisations connected with my nonprofit workplace.

In the end I used neither recruitment method. The partnerships list was not at all useful. None of the sixteen partnerships listed functioned at the collaboration and partnership end of Craig and Courtney's (2004) continuum.

I also decided not to utilise personal networks to source partnerships. This choice resulted from a discussion with a colleague, who offered a partnership from his organisation as a case study. I became concerned that knowing the participants may create a sense of obligation for people to participate because of our existing relationship. I was also concerned that it could be difficult to include data that did not show the partnership in a positive light if I knew the participants well. For this reason I chose another approach.

Many formal nonprofit organisations publish an annual report which describes their organisation's activities. Given that partnerships are viewed positively by others, including funders, it seemed likely that organisations would report partnerships in their annual reports. An internet search for New Zealand nonprofit annual reports resulted in eleven annual reports in organisations of interest (local, operating in the social service sector). Several reports described

partnerships with other nonprofits. One partnership stood out because it had resulted in a new client service. While I knew about the three organisations in the partnership I did not have relationships with them.

I phoned the manager from the organisation who published the annual report. After determining that the partnership met my criteria I sought permission to undertake a case study. Once permission was granted I contacted the managers of the other two partner organisations. As all three verbally agreed to participate in the interviews this partnership became CS1. I provided an information sheet and consent form (refer Appendices 2-5) that had gained ethics approval from the Victoria University Pipitea Human Ethics Committee. When arranging the interviews I realised that I was acquainted with two of the partnership managers. After two interviews I realised that a fourth interview was required, with a person who had been actively involved in the establishment of the partnership but no longer worked there. I knew this person, but as I had already completed two interviews I decided to continue with the case study. From my perspective the interview was not affected by my knowing this person. The first two interviews had already established that the partnership and the partners were viewed by the participants as successful therefore it was less likely that negative findings (that required thoughtful reporting) would be revealed.

Participants for CS2 were recruited in a similar manner. A further annual report detailed a partnership between two nonprofit organisations working in the social services sector; the result of the partnership appeared to be a combined service. The larger of the two organisations was known to me but I had no connection with it while the smaller of the organisations was completely unknown. Because the smaller organisation was the author of the annual report I visited their website where I learned more about the partnership. I then emailed the manager about my research and followed-up with a phone call. These discussions determined that the partnership met my criteria and that the manager was willing to participate in the research if the partner organisation was also agreeable. I phoned the partnership manager in the second organisation and she too was willing to participate in an interview. Permission

for her participation was then granted by the organisation's Chief Executive. This became CS2.

About the partner organisations and the interview participants

There were five partner organisations between the two partnerships. In CS1 the three partner organisations are known as A, B, and C. These organisations are all over a decade old, operate in the social service sector, and have annual budgets of under \$350,000. They all deliver services that provide clients with information and linkages to other providers. More details about each organisation appear in Chapter Four.

Organisations Y and Z are the partners in CS2. These organisations also operate in the social service sector. Y is over twenty years old, has an annual budget of \$2.3 million and delivers services to clients in a high risk situation. Z is considerably older than Y, has an annual budget of almost \$26 million and delivers multiple services to a wide range of New Zealanders. More details about these two organisations appear in Chapter Five.

There were seven interview participants; four from CS1 and three from CS2. I initially arranged interviews with the three partnership managers in CS1, Ann from A, Beatrice from B, and Carol from C. However, after several interviews it became obvious that I also needed to interview Alice, a recent employee of A, who was instrumental in the partnership's establishment.

There were two partnerships managers in CS2, Yvette from Y, and Zoe from Z. During the data analysis phase it became obvious that I was missing key data on the factors that motivated Z to partner. Zane, the CEO of Z, was instrumental in this phase and held this information. He agreed to participate in a phone interview so I could ask the questions relevant to motivation factors. This interview took place several months after the other interviews.

The interviews

I initially expected the interviews to take up to two and a half hours. Because this is a significant time commitment I decided to spread the interview over two

meetings. I intended that the first interview would focus on understanding the organisation and the partnership then the second interview would focus on the three aspects of partnership being researched. However, nearly everyone wanted one interview session rather than two. Therefore, interviews were arranged according to the participant's preference. The interviews were all digitally recorded and apart from Zane (Z)'s phone interview they all took place in a private meeting room at either the workplace of the participant or nearby.

The four face to face interviews carried out for CS1 varied in length from 50 to 90 minutes. Alice (A)'s was the shortest interview because Ann (A), her manager, had already answered questions about the organisation's operating environment and Alice was also no longer employed by A. The other three interviews with Ann (A), Beatrice (B) and Carol (C) in CS1 and the two face to face interviews with Yvette (Y) and Zoe (Z) in CS2 ranged in length from 75 to 90 minutes. Zane (Z) participated in a 20 minute phone interview that only focused on the questions relevant to the factors that motivated Z to participate in the partnership.

The interviews were shorter than the anticipated two and half hours for several reasons, the first being that with the interview confined to one meeting, less time was spent on starting and finishing. As well, responses to the competency questions came more quickly than I expected.

Data analysis

Hatch (2002) said,

'Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others' (p.148).

I chose to process the data from this qualitative study by using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998).

Thematic analysis requires a specific code for items such as themes or factors that will appear in the data. The codes might be created deductively from other

research or theory or inductively from the raw data (Boyatzis, 1998). Data from the interviews was initially analysed against three lists of factors (codes) that I had created deductively from the literature. Each list related to one of the three aspects of partnership included in this study. There were 27 factors that motivated partnership; these factors were grouped around six key themes (refer Table 1). There were 13 resource types that could be allocated to partnership and these were grouped around two themes (refer to Table 2). And, there were 49 competencies used by partnership managers which were grouped around twelve themes (refer to Table 3).

The digital recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. I then listened to the recordings several times in order to code the data and document it on one of three tables. Where participants described factors that were different to those on the table these were recorded on that table in a section labelled 'other'. Any quotes of interest or questions that arose in relation to the data were also recorded on the table. This data was analysed more closely at a later stage and either included in the findings or discounted as not useful to the research.

Several opportunities arose from coding the data against lists containing a large number of factors. The first opportunity was to be able to compare and contrast the experiences of the different participants, partners and partnerships. This allowed the induction of new themes. The second opportunity was created by the opportunity to look across the data and to see what participants did *not* talk about and to also see significant themes appear which were *not* related to the three partnership aspects being researched. This inductive process resulted in the development of five additional themes. These themes are discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

Strengths and limitations of the research

The chosen research method allowed for the collection and analysis of in-depth data from two case studies on New Zealand nonprofit partnerships. Because the case studies were founded in real life situations I was able to gain a rich and holistic account of the social phenomenon called partnership. By speaking to

participants from all of the partners in both partnerships I collected a wealth of data, some related to the partner organisation and participant's experiences and some related to the partnership. These multiple perspectives on partnership allowed me to compare the viewpoints and understandings of the participants. The ability to conduct further interviews if needed was also a strength of the method. In both case studies additional interviews were carried out when it became obvious that someone other than the partnership managers held key data.

My chosen research method offers a limited number of cases, and these challenges:

- discussing competencies,
- confidentiality,
- what to call it – collaboration or partnership, and
- my position in relation to the research.

I will now discuss these limitations starting with the number of cases.

Just two case studies were selected for the research. While the cases were distinct from each other and therefore provided scope for comparison between the partnerships the knowledge created cannot be generalised. However, I argue that the broader nonprofit context of the research meant that the knowledge is relevant and valuable to others interested in nonprofit partnership.

The data collected on competencies used by the partnership managers was less significant and rich than that collected on the motivations for partnering and the resources allocated to it. The competencies section of the interview was consistently the most challenging aspect for all the participants. It is possible that the participants had difficulty articulating the competencies they used for three reasons. The first reason is that the language and concepts associated with competencies may not have been well understood. This supposition is based on my experience of nonprofit organisations with smaller (and often part-time) workforces. The second reason is the potential for competencies to be so ingrained in how the participants functioned that they could not discern the competencies they applied in their partnership work. The third reason could be

that the participants were modest and did not like to talk about their competencies. I was able to minimise the impact of this limitation by combining the explicit competencies data with data implied in other parts of the interview; for example, a participant describing conceptual thinking competencies while discussing motivation for the partnership.

Maintaining confidentiality for the organisations, participants and partnerships meant that some rich detail adding interest to the research is excluded. I used pseudonyms for the organisations and participants in each partnership and I report the partnerships in general terms.

In the literature review and in the introduction to this chapter I described the problem of deciding what term to use: *partnership* or *collaboration*. Much of the literature on partnership uses the term collaboration. I believe the term partnership is more appropriate for my research. The reason for this is twofold. The first is that both partnerships operate at the partnership end of Craig and Courtney's continuum (2004). This was one of the criteria I applied when selecting partnerships for the case studies. In addition to this, partnership was also the term used by most of the participants. I was concerned that it could be confusing if I used both terms without explaining my choice each time. I addressed this limitation by using the term collaboration in the literature review when it related to the collaboration literature and by using the term partnership when talking about my research. Throughout the rest of the thesis I used the term partnership unless I was specifically referring to literature where the term 'collaboration' was used.

The final limitation included in this discussion related to my position within the research. In the introduction to this chapter I briefly explained that I was the CEO of a large nonprofit organisation in New Zealand. I have worked in the nonprofit sector for over three decades in paid and voluntary service delivery, in management and in governance roles. My frustration at the clamour for partnership by nonprofit organisations in response to pressure from funders shaped the research questions. My constructionist ontology anticipated that as the researcher I would co-create knowledge around the social phenomena of

partnership with, and through, the participants in the research. The knowledge I presented was informed by my experiences in the sector. This experience could be viewed as a limitation that potentially constrained my interpretation of the data. My response to this limitation has been to acknowledge that the research questions were applicable to an audience other than myself and that this required strict integrity in the data analysis, in the reporting of the findings, and in the subsequent discussion.

Conclusion

In this chapter I describe my methodological orientation and show how it influenced the design and implementation of my research into nonprofit partnership. In brief, my research is a qualitative case study that uses semi-structured interviews to collect the data. Thematic analysis analyses the data and a combination of inductive and deductive approaches make sense of the data and construct new knowledge.

I developed criteria for selecting the partnerships for the two case studies and I looked for suitable partnerships in the annual reports of nonprofit organisations. Seven people gave me interviews; four in CS1 and three in CS2. The interview questions Appendix 1 and data analysis (Tables 1, 2, and 3) covered topics I drew from the literature.

Chapter 4: Findings from Case Study One

Introduction

In CS1, the partners are three organisations, two nonprofits and one local government department, all involved in providing information services and linking people with other organisations or other services. A new programme, which recognised and rewarded clients for participating in community activities and learning opportunities, was the outcome of the partnership. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the partners in this case I call the three partner organisations A, B, and C.

This informal partnership, unlike the partnership discussed in CS2, developed organically over time. The primary motivation was the need to serve a particular client group. Their clients shared a vulnerability to exclusion from New Zealand society. This group lacked the knowledge, networks or confidence to get involved in social and civic activities or even to become employed.

The partnership has run for several years and the partnership managers believe that the benefit to clients makes the programme worthwhile continuing. The cost of establishing the programme and of running it is primarily staff time. No money changes hands.

The views of four partnership managers, two from A, and one each from B and C are captured in my data. Five competencies

- interpersonal understanding
- team leadership,
- team work and cooperation,
- organisational awareness, and
- relationship building

were used by all the partnership managers in this case study.

For a discussion of CS1 and how it contrasts with CS2 see Chapter 6.

About the partners and the participants

This case study is based on data from four interviews. Ann (manager) and Alice (former partnership manager) came from A. Beatrice, a co-manager, came from B, and Carol, the manager, came from C. Pseudonyms maintain confidentiality.

A staff member from a fourth organisation, a central government department, was also involved in the early stages of the partnership; however, that department's involvement ended when they resigned their job. I chose not to interview them since their government department did not become a partner, and the other participants gave me all the data I needed.

Organisation A

Two people from A were interviewed; Ann is the manager of A. Ann played a minimal role in the set up and ongoing running of the partnership. Alice, a former employee of A, played the pivotal role in the establishment and early stages. Alice managed one of the branch offices of A.

Established over 40 years ago, A exists to provide information services to the public; their customers represent the full spectrum of society. They have seven paid staff, mostly part-time, and about 170 volunteers, operating from five locations in their region. Organisation A is an incorporated society with annual income of around \$350,000.

Organisation A's role in the partnership changed over time. They became a supporting organisation once the programme got underway. The shift to a supportive rather than active role in the partnership came because the partnership activity itself more closely matched the core work of B and C than it did of A, and because Alice left. Ann acknowledges that Alice's personal interest in partnership drove the organisation's involvement in the partnership. Ann believes that both the partnership and A receive ongoing benefits from their involvement. Beatrice of B, and Carol of C, agree.

Ann has been the area manager of A for three years; her involvement with the organisation started in the 1980s when she helped establish a branch in

another region of New Zealand. Ann's role is to form relationships at a city-wide level, funding and reporting, managing branch managers and organising training.

Alice, the prime mover in the relationship, managed a branch of A for four years, while also on B's governing board. Alice believes that her being a governor of B did not influence her employer A's decision to participate; once they made the decision, her having knowledge of B was useful in establishing the partnership. Alice has almost exclusively worked in the community and voluntary sector. Although not formally trained in partnership relationships Alice repeatedly becomes involved in establishing and managing partnerships.

Organisation B

Organisation B, a nonprofit, was established 20 years ago as a charitable trust. Their primary purpose is to link people with groups so they, the individuals, can contribute to that group. B also supports the groups by providing training, information, and networking. They, like A, reach a broad cross-section of New Zealand society either face to face or via the internet. Their annual income of about \$325,000 came from seventeen different funding sources in 2012 including several government departments. Three branches employ around 50 volunteers and seven paid staff, mostly part-time. The major operating challenges for the organisation are societal issues, such as unemployment, which put pressure on their services, and the lack of funding to increase services.

Beatrice manages this partnership for B, and co-manages the organisation itself with one other person. Beatrice works full-time and has participated in the partnership from the beginning. Originally employed in the communications industry, she moved to B a decade ago.

Organisation C

Organisation C is a local government department delivering a government service. Established about a decade ago, the department provides information and referral services for its client group. Some information is provided through

seminars and workshops; the manager organises and runs these. In addition to direct contact with clients, C also links service delivery organisations with each other and provides information to employers of the clients. C's two paid staff, one full-time and one part-time, helped 600 clients in 2011.

Organisation C administers the partnership programme. This means keeping a database of clients, monitoring their progress while involved in the programme, keeping the Facebook page updated and keeping the other partners up-to-date on clients' progress to completion.

Carol, the only full time staff member of C, co-ordinates it. She did not see the establishment phase of the partnership but joined the organisation over a year ago and administers the partnership programme. Carol's personal experience gives her empathy and insight into the challenges faced by the clients.

I did not interview the person who was employed in Carol's role when the partnership was being established as they no longer work for the organisation. I find Carol's understanding of the motivation for partnering to be reliable; information from other participants confirms what she says.

About the partnership

This partnership could be described as organic and informal. Neither the partnership nor the programme was envisaged when the partners accepted an open invitation to a meeting to discuss a government strategy towards the client group. The only thing linking the participants at that stage was an interest in helping the client group. Some early responders dropped away. Alice (A) describes how the idea for a programme to address the isolation of clients developed over time. She said:

The first couple of meetings of this collaborative group were us sitting down at a café and going, right, so – let's talk about this, and throwing around random ideas and – it was evolving them over the course of about 4 or 5 meetings that we finally got to the coffee card idea.

The partnership is still not formally documented although a level of formality requires clients to register for the programme and makes client records necessary to track their progress. Clients get many services already from A, B, and C. The partnership makes possible complementary activities.

The partnership managers believe that the partnership started in response to a community need. Alice (A) said:

Ok, so the group of us that started working together on the [partnership] came together through the [government] strategy, and part of that strategy was to look at ways [clients] could connect with the community through [activities].

Clients who access the partnership programme are particularly prone to isolation from society. They lack personal networks, and sometimes have limited knowledge about what services are available in the community and limited confidence to access them. This makes it difficult for them to participate in social and community activities and to gain employment. A strategy to support this group was developed by the government in the late 2000s and has since been implemented in several parts of New Zealand.

Initial approaches brought together government and community organisations. Alice, Beatrice, and also Carol's predecessor attended a series of meetings with a government department charged with developing a regional action plan to address the broad needs of the client group. Although the meetings drew a large number of participants it was the interest of a particular staff member in a government department that led to ongoing discussions with a smaller group and the subsequent development of this partnership, CS1.

Unemployment was an issue. Carol (C) said *"one of the main issues with [clients] is employment and the barriers that [clients] have when looking for a job"*. She spoke about how the partnership recognised what clients were doing already, provided opportunities for them to do more, and encouraged other clients by telling their success stories. Alice (A) spoke about the non-working partners of clients who shared the same distress as the clients except that they weren't seeking employment:

... a critical factor in [certain people] will be the dissatisfaction of the non-working partner, and so we really want to speak into that person's world and see what are some practical things that, that person could do to become more engaged in society.

The partnership enabled clients to receive recognition for their participation in society. Beatrice (B) described the concept:

... we wanted to get the people sitting around at home who might be bored and lonely and isolated and – developing skills, learning about the networks and so on... On the little coffee card, everyone gets points, and we're not too rigid about it. There's all sorts of things, like visiting a marae, going to the local museum... You've been to something, you've got involved, you get your points.

Beatrice means by “coffee card” that clients earn points for attending forums and workshops or participating in community activities. Attending a workshop or going on a visit might earn five points. A longer term activity such as helping a group might earn twenty points. Once clients earn the requisite number of points they gain a certificate. Participation in the programme could result in referees whom potential employers could contact; for some people the activities themselves led to employment.

The partnership was not formally documented. According to Ann (A) formally documenting the partnership was not considered; she thought this might be because the partnership managers already knew each other and the use of informal work processes was common practice. Alice (A) added to these thoughts when she commented “*We didn't even think about it (laughs) you know, with people that work together all the time, it would have added a layer of formality that wasn't necessary*”.

Beatrice (B) thought that the existing relationships and high trust between the managers meant that formalising the partnership was unnecessary. She said:

I think because we knew each other very well, there was an automatic trust. I can't stand templates, I mean, they're valuable at times – but we did have the plan of action so when we met we'd think, mmmm, when are we going to make it happen, so we did have something, but not an MoU.

From meetings to develop a government strategy sprang this partnership of three community groups to address the needs of their clients in common. Despite its formal antecedents the partnership itself was informal and not documented.

The factors that motivated the partnership

In Chapter Two I identified 27 motivating factors under six headings. In this CS1 the primary motivations for all three partners were just two: client need and opportunity. Organisation A had a third primary motivating factor, Alice's personal interest in partnership. A range of secondary factors also motivated the partnership.

The following table displays those factors. They are arranged under the six themes with the depth of colour indicating the level of importance participants appeared to place on the various factors during their interview. The darkest colour indicates the primary motivating factors while the lighter colours indicate decreasing levels of emphasis. Beside the four new factors, not identified in the literature, is an asterisk (*). The participants did not talk about all of the factors identified in the literature. These factors are also included on the table (with no shading) to provide a full understanding about what did, and did not, motivate the partnerships.

Table 4: Factors that motivated partnership in CS1

| Motivating Factors | A | B | C |
|---|----------|----------|----------|
| <i>Theme: response to external factors</i> | | | |
| the funding environment | | | |
| * opportunity - a moment in time | | | |
| * not wanting to duplicate services | | | |
| * others' interest in the partnership | | | |
| competition from other providers | | | |
| <i>Theme: response to complex issues</i> | | | |
| the need of the clients | | | |
| promotion of shared goals | | | |
| <i>Theme: to gain access to ...</i> | | | |
| funds | | | |
| resources - new clients | | | |
| resources - office space | | | |
| resources - networks & relationships | | | |
| expertise and specialist input | | | |

| Motivating Factors | A | B | C |
|--|---|---|---|
| personnel (paid and voluntary) | | | |
| intelligence about wider sector | | | |
| organisational legitimacy through partners | | | |
| Theme: to improve ... | | | |
| reflects well on the organisation | | | |
| fulfilment of the organisation's mission | | | |
| cost effectiveness | | | |
| relationships for future dealings | | | |
| service quality | | | |
| overall performance e.g. enhanced projects | | | |
| ability to maximise use of funds | | | |
| community relationships | | | |
| Theme: to enhance service delivery | | | |
| client access - creates a referral pathway | | | |
| geographic coverage | | | |
| ability to meet linguistic or cultural need of clients | | | |
| enhanced services | | | |
| leverage new ideas or expertise | | | |
| Theme: tradition | | | |
| this is the way we work | | | |
| past experience of working together | | | |
| * personal interest in partnership | | | |

Key for Table 4

| | |
|--------------|--|
| * (asterisk) | New factor not identified in the literature |
| | Primary motivating factor |
| | Secondary motivating factor emphasised during an interview |
| | Secondary motivating factor mentioned during an interview |

Client need

Multiple different reasons for establishing the partnership share one common characteristic: the need of clients to connect more effectively with the wider community and incidentally improve their access to employment.

The common concern is client need. Carol (C), who had personally experienced the situation the clients are in, says:

Let's give opportunities to these [people] to go out, meet other people, do something and – yeah – feel integrated. It makes a big difference when someone knows your name, or recognises you on the street – definitely – and in a small community if you just go somewhere, do something, then you start building your networks.

Beatrice (B) and Alice (A) were also concerned about the clients and questioned why they were in this situation. Beatrice (B) said “How can we reach people that

aren't being reached, why are people getting lonely?" Alice (A) described how they looked for a solution to the problem so people could become more engaged in society.

Carol (C) knows that people sometimes express negative views about the value of her clients to society. She wants to raise awareness of the contribution these people make. She said *"... it means a lot to see some things that these people are doing"*. By telling their stories and making them more visible, their worth could be shown.

Opportunity

The other primary motivating factor common to the three organisations was the opportunity to partner. In a way the organisations were accidental partners; through being at the same meeting and showing an interest in a particular issue.

The conjunction of opportunity (the government strategy) and willingness (of community organisations to support the strategy) created a moment in time which led to the establishment of this partnership. Alice (A) said *"They called for anyone who was interested in being part of the development of the strategy to come to a meeting ... one of those cross-sectoral working thingies"*.

The development of a regional action plan brought together community sector organisations. Beatrice (B) says *"The partnership came into being because B was part of the regional plan... the department that set it up had a lot of would-be partners, and therefore I had a real interest in it"*.

Personal interest in partnership

Only A was primarily motivated by this factor, which I had not identified in the literature. Ann (A) said *"... this collaborative thing happened through one person's passion rather than an organisational decision"*. Ann (A) was referring to Alice (A) who provided leadership during the partnership establishment phase. Alice was known to work collaboratively. Alice's personal capabilities triggered Ann's decision to support the partnership.

Access to new clients

While all organisations are motivated by a general desire to meet the needs of clients, they also want new clients. Carol (C) says “... *sharing clients, that was one of the motivations at the start, getting more clients and sharing clients*”.

Beatrice (B) expressed her views about what each organisation wanted from the partnership when she said “*They [C] wanted to give information, we [B] want people to come our way, and A wanted to let the world know*”.

Reflects well on the organisation

Improving the organisation’s reputation and improving the perception of the organisation as a participator were two factors which for A seemed to be the same thing. Ann (A) said “*[the partnership] was great for our profile, because it showed that we were doing creative things. We couldn’t have sustained them on our own*”.

Both Ann (A) and Carol (C) acknowledged the reputational benefits gained from the partnership. Ann (A) spoke about how the partnership demonstrated her organisation’s community leadership role and showed their creativity. She said “*We give her [Alice] time on this project because it reflects well on us as an organisation*”.

Links with reputable partners and being seen to participate are valued by organisations in the current funding environment where expectations about working in partnership are strongly promoted. Ann (A) said “*It’s good for us to be involved because it showed that we were broader ...*” and Carol (C) says “*Other organisations look at whatever we are doing and they think, wow, that’s really good. ... it looks good in the reports when you are doing things in collaboration*”.

Past experience of working together

The literature states that improving relationships for future dealings motivates some partnerships. While several participants in this case study say the partnership is good for their relationships with others, good relationships already existed. Working together is normal practice for the organisations. Past

experiences result in positive and trusted relationships between the partners. Alice (A) said “*There was a strong triangular partnership already, so the community arm I guess were all working closely together*”.

When asked how important these relationships are to the partnership, Alice (A) says :

Really important because we could cruise straight into working without going through the nervousness of getting to know each other. We already knew so well how each other worked, that we could trust each other, and be comfortable in each other’s company, so I think it makes a huge difference – not to the final result but to our ability to get into things quicker, and get going.

Beatrice (B) alludes to past positive experiences that create trust between the organisations. “*I think because we knew each other very well there was an automatic trust*”.

For Alice (A) the relationships existed at both a professional and a personal level with B. She was the partnership manager of A but outside work time was also a member of B’s board. Alice (A) felt her knowledge of both organisations made it easier to establish the programme.

Not wanting to duplicate services

Prevalent among community organisations nowadays is the fear of duplicating, or appearing to duplicate, services, and incurring governmental disapproval. Carol (C) says one reason they joined the partnership was to “... *find the gaps and find the duplications as well – we don’t want to duplicate services*”. Carol sees the partnership as a way to ensure that services were not duplicated; this thinking might reflect the culture of the C which is part of local government or it could motivate other participants without being identified by them.

Others’ interest in the partnership

One factor that was not a motivation for beginning the partnership but soon became a motivation was described by Alice (A). The partnership programme idea was ‘talked up’ before it even began. When others got excited about the idea it stimulated the start of the programme. Alice (A) said:

People said well, that's something new, we like that idea. I remember sitting at employment meetings that C held, and I remember us talking it up before it was really existing. People said we'd definitely be into that if you did it, so I think we did a pilot before we put any money in, and once we knew that people were getting excited, that was the catalyst.

The positive feedback of others towards the idea or the loss of face if the partnership did not occur motivated the start of the partnership programme.

Enhanced services through referrals

As well as gaining new clients the partnership also allowed the organisations to support each other by referring clients. Carol (C) says “*we are not experts ... we can refer clients to B*”. The partnership created referral pathways, not only to the partner organisations but also to other services.

Fulfil the organisation's mission

Beatrice (B) said “*We all recognised that in [service] we were the lead agency.*” She believed that B's involvement in the partnership was pivotal to the programme whilst also achieving their organisational mission.

Continuing the partnership

In this case positive feedback from clients and from other organisations certainly motivates the partners to keep going. Beatrice (B) says a client told her “*This made me feel I belong.*” and Carol (C) says “*... there are other organisations looking at whatever we are doing and they are thinking, wow, that's really good*”. Being seen to partner and the difference it made to clients was worth the time required. Carol saw the benefits for the organisation in continuing. She says:

Positive feedback from external organisations about this kind of project motivates us to collaborate, especially in these times when everyone is looking at saving money... If, yeah, if the workload is heavy, then let's share it.

The resources allocated to the partnership

This section details the financial and non-financial resources allocated by the three organisations to the partnership. The primary input of the three organisations is time and personnel. The design and printing of promotional

materials and event hosting represent goods and services. Many other forms of non-financial resource, including two that I did not identify in the literature (marked with and asterisk), appear in the table below.

Table 5: Resources allocated by the organisations in CS1

| Resources organisations allocated to the partnership | A | B | C |
|---|----------|----------|----------|
| <i>Financial resources</i> | | | |
| design and print promotional material | | | |
| events e.g. launch, certificate ceremony | | | |
| *personal resources | | | |
| <i>Non-financial resources</i> | | | |
| staff time (paid and voluntary) | | | |
| skills (e.g. set up database, FB page) | | | |
| specific knowledge and expertise | | | |
| client referrals to programme | | | |
| *programme promotion | | | |
| access to networks, relationships | | | |
| organisational reputation | | | |
| intellectual property, idea creation | | | |

Financial resources

None of the organisations made a direct financial contribution to the partnership although a small quantity of goods and services were provided by them. Despite this the programme could function without either significant or ongoing funding because the partner organisations contributed their own resources to it.

Design and printing of promotional materials

Organisation C, part of local government provides design and printing services for the partnership’s promotional flyers, client cards and certificates. This significant contribution to the partnership is not formally funded. Carol (C) said:

... C is a big organisation and we have access to a lot of resources so printing, flyers, brochures, all sorts of details like that is much easier for us, yeah, it’s definitely easier for us to do that work.

Events

The next most expensive cost, after designing and printing, is events such as the programme launch and the certificate presentation ceremonies. Event costs are effectively managed by piggy-backing onto events held for other purposes by the partners or other organisations. The partners had arranged to hold their

launch and first certificate ceremony at a local government event. Beatrice (B) said “*that’s the collaborative way and it’s also a way of them [local government] actually seeing the result of something*”. Carol (C) explained further:

It was a coincidence that we set the ceremony on the same day that that celebration was happening, so – because we share most of the providers and we were inviting the same people then – we just went to their party, pretty much we crashed their party! We asked, can we please have this small ceremony during your event ... and it was a great thing because they were talking about very high profile stuff – and then we have the [clients], the real people whose lives are affected by these big decisions. People love it, just to see the clients and hear their stories. So it was great, we didn’t have to pay for the venue or the food.

Aside from the obvious financial benefits of having someone else pay the cost of the events, the programme’s profile was increased from the wider and more prominent audience and credibility was gained through the public presentation of certificates.

Staff’s personal resources

Using cafes as meeting venues, where participants paid for their own coffee, meant that the participants were effectively using personal resources to pay for a meeting venue. The use of personal funds for work purposes was not identified in the literature.

Non-financial resources

Both the establishment and ongoing running of the partnership were largely dependent on the non-financial resources contributed by each of the three organisations.

Staff time

Time and personnel were by far the most significant non-financial resources allocated by all three organisations to this partnership. Beatrice (B) said that it was “*understood that we would devote a certain amount of our week to the programme*”.

In the establishment phase frequent planning meetings and tasks were assigned to the partnership managers. In addition to paid staff, volunteers also donated their time and expertise to setting up the programme's Facebook page, designing the certificates and establishing the database used for recording client information. Alice (A) talks about time spent during the establishment of the partnership. She says *"At the quieter times I guess maybe 4½, 5 hours a month, but heading up to the launch we were meeting more like 5 or 6 hours a fortnight"*.

Ongoing running of the programme still involves time and personnel; the partnership managers meet periodically to monitor progress and plan certificate ceremonies.

Organisation C manages the ongoing running of the programme. Carol (C) said:

... we coordinate things and we do the administration – we keep a record of who is in the programme, how many points they have, who is going to get a certificate at the next ceremony, and we keep the communication going.

She estimates that she devotes one to two hours per month to ongoing programme administration, monitoring of client progress towards their certificates, and communication with clients. Certificate ceremonies take about four hours to plan. The programme depends on the partners finding time to do tasks such as updating the Facebook page. Carol (C) said *"We launched the Facebook page late last year. When I have some free time then I go to the Facebook page and put something up"*.

Skills, knowledge and expertise

Initial skills, required for setting up the client database and the Facebook page, were acquired through the partners. In addition to this specific knowledge and expertise were also contributed by the partners. Alice (A) says *"I guess we tentatively piloted things as we went along, so we drew on other peoples' knowledge and expertise"*.

Beatrice (B) spoke about her organisation's core business being a non-financial resource for the partnership. The organisation facilitated community

engagement by providing a linking service between individuals and hundreds of community organisations. This linking service was a key component of the partnership programme and provided clients with opportunities to earn points towards their certificates.

Client referrals to the programme

Access to clients was another form of non-financial resource that all the partner organisations contributed to the partnership. As the success of the programme depended on client referrals this contribution was essential.

The organisations understood both the importance of contributing clients to the programme as well as the benefits to be gained for their organisations through the increased profile gained from referrals. Beatrice (B) speaks about her hands-on approach:

If they're interested we take their registration down – I mean we deliver the clients as well as the paperwork – down to C so it's another piece of promotion for us and for C. The clients get to hear about all the seminars and workshops. There's one more person connected. It's all about connecting.

Organisation C was involved in providing activities as well as signing clients up. Carol (C) says “so many people come from B, some people come under C – we definitely provide lots of [client] activities. People get points for attending our workshops”.

Ann (A) talked about how the partnership showed A's creativity and demonstrated their community leadership role. This suggested the organisation was aware of enjoying a certain reputation which the partnership allowed them to demonstrate was valid. Carol (C) said “... *it looks good in the reports when you are doing things in collaboration with other organisations ... it looks good that we are collaborating and we are not trying to do everything ourselves*”.

Programme promotion and access to networks and relationships

Less tangible, but important to the success of the partnership, was the contribution of encouragement and goodwill of organisations outside of the partnership. The enthusiasm of others towards the programme was important.

Therefore the attitude of the partners towards promoting the programme plus the access to networks and relationships for promotion were important resources for the partnership. Beatrice (B) said *“B and A did a lot of that promotion personally – really making sure that people have got it ...”* Carol (C) described promoting the programme to a network of employment focused organisations. Alice (A) spoke of gathering feedback and support from a wider range of organisations and ‘talking up’ the programme before it began. Alice (A) said:

Beatrice, Carol and I had a policy that at any community forum we went to we would be telling people about the progress and what was happening, and so they knew, as we went along, what we were doing, and when they were going to be able to start telling their clients in communities about us.

Organisational reputation

“I think credibility’s quite a big thing because that’s how word of mouth promotion happens” said Beatrice (B). Reputation, credibility, and trust are words used throughout the interviews to describe a resource the organisations bring to the partnership. It was clear that participants think that the reputation of the organisations involved brings credibility to the partnership programme. Alice (A) expresses it like this:

A, B, and C were all highly reputable organisations. We rely on people seeing us as good places, trustworthy places, and people potentially buy into the idea because they know of our good reputation.

Intellectual property and idea creation

Beatrice (B) identifies the processes and systems used in their core business as intellectual property that enables the clients to participate.

Alice (A) thinks that the idea of the client reward card – similar to a coffee card where you get a stamp each time you purchase a coffee - belongs to the partnership. The question of who owns the intellectual property created through a partnership is an interesting issue outside the scope of this research. Several participants spoke about the development of that particular idea, over time, into a workable concept. Alice (A) refers to it as *“throwing around random ideas”* until they evolved.

The competencies used by the partnership managers

In 2008, Getha-Taylor completed a study on the competencies of high performing partnership managers. Her competencies list is the framework I use for understanding and analysing the competencies used here. My interview participants found talking about the competencies used for management more challenging than discussing the motivation or resources. Possibly the managers could not distil the competencies from their daily practice, felt uncomfortable talking about their own talents or did not understand the question. The following table shows the competencies identified by the respondents. I did not include Ann (A) because she is not significantly involved in the partnership.

Table 6: Competencies used by partnership managers in CS1

| Competencies used by partnership managers | A Alice | B Beatrice | C Carol |
|--|------------|---------------|------------|
| <i>Getha-Taylor's Competency Headings</i> | | | |
| Initiative | | | |
| information seeking | | | |
| interpersonal understanding | | | |
| team leadership | | | |
| teamwork and cooperation | | | |
| relationship building | | | |
| organisational awareness | | | |
| conceptual thinking | | | |
| analytical thinking | | | |
| organisational commitment | | | |
| self confidence | | | |
| Flexibility | | | |
| <i>Additional competencies described during the interviews</i> | | | |
| personal interest | | | |
| seeking opportunities to partner | | | |

All of the partnership managers identified competencies related to

- interpersonal understanding,
- team leadership,
- teamwork and cooperation,
- relationship building, and
- organisational awareness.

In addition to these, three other partnership competencies, conceptual thinking, initiative and flexibility, were also identified. Two competencies that were not

part of Getha-Taylor's (2008) framework were detected (1) personal interest, and (2) partner-seeking behaviours.

Interpersonal understanding

Previously I discuss the concern for clients that motivates all the partners (p.55). Carol (C) has personally experienced the situation clients face while Beatrice (B) and Alice (A) question why people are isolated. Understanding underlying issues and emotion are examples of interpersonal competencies.

Team leadership

The participants had the most to say about team leadership, either their own or that of others in the partnership. It appears that Alice (A)'s personality naturally drove her to position herself as a team leader and to use other team leadership competencies such as managing meetings, keeping people informed, promoting team effectiveness, and communicating a vision. Alice (A) demonstrated these competencies in action when she said:

... we need oversight, we need task lists, we need to know that we're all pedalling on the same bike. After a meeting, I'd go away with the notes and create a running task sheet like, this is what we've done, and this is what we still need to do by x time, and I'd check to make sure that everyone got the circulated information ... If you establish the vision at the start and keep evaluating progress against that vision, it keeps everybody in the frame.

When Alice left A, Carol (C) picked up team leadership tasks such as calling meetings and promoting team effectiveness. She said *"I'm the one calling for meetings now, I'm saying, oh, we have more clients so it's time for a new ceremony"*.

Teamwork and cooperation

All the participants spoke positively about the contribution of the other partnership managers and used strongly positive words and phrases during the interviews. These attitudes towards each other could be why teamwork and cooperation competencies were evident throughout the interviews although the partnership managers did not explicitly include them when discussing competencies. For example, Carol (C) described how she liked to solicit the

input of others. Beatrice (B) said *“I used to think certificates were a bit stupid ... but I recall getting the odd certificate by chance and thinking oh, I’m quite proud of that ... [it] might not be such a bad idea”*. Her changing attitude to the idea of awarding certificates demonstrated cooperation competencies.

Relationship building

Although not explicitly named, relationship building competencies were evident among the partnership managers in their ability to work together, to use existing contacts and to trust each other. To accept an invitation to a forum and then to work with others on actions to support a government strategy, even when it brought no financial benefit to their organisations, shows relationship competencies. Knowledge and trust about each other’s organisations, gained from existing work and social relationships, established the partnership more quickly.

Organisational awareness

To understand the formal and informal structure, culture, climate and politics and underlying organisational issues – what Alice (A) called ‘knowing your space’ – encompassed the difference spaces that each of the partnership managers operated in. Alice (A) continued:

... there’s all these component parts, and you need to know the space that you’re operating in, and what that can offer, so Carol knew immediately what C was able to do, and would go off and source that and bring it back. Beatrice knew the dynamics of [clients] and she knew what was going to appeal, if it wasn’t going to appeal, and how things were going to work.

Like Alice (A), Carol (C) also demonstrated organisational awareness competencies. Her understanding of her organisation’s structure and the protocols and guidelines around work processes enabled access to resources for the partnership. She said previously *“We have access to a lot of resources so – for example printing flyers, brochures, all sorts of details like that, is much easier for us”*. She adds a caveat: *“... at the same time we have to follow C protocols and guidelines”*. Carol (C) also spoke about how the partners would like some of the clients to run the programme but that this would require office space and resources. C’s structure meant that providing these things would not

be a simple process. Beatrice (B) demonstrated organisational awareness competencies when she spoke about using her organisation's core business and processes to support the partnership. Organisation B found people with the skills to set up the database and Facebook page.

Conceptual thinking

Alice (A) and Beatrice (B) demonstrated conceptual thinking competencies when they created the programme idea together. Carol (C) came into the partnership after it started. As discussed previously the partners sought ways to address a client need and used their knowledge and creativity to develop a new approach by, as Alice (A) put it, *"throwing random ideas around"* until over about four or five meetings the programme evolved into a rewards system that led to a certificate.

Initiative

The ability to do more than is required and to involve others both show competencies associated with initiative. Beatrice (B) demonstrates her approach when she says *"I'm an opportunist – so I know how to make the most of opportunities that come around and how to work with people by building rapport"*.

Alice (A)'s willingness to take on additional work is another example of this competency. Her manager Ann (A) had this to say:

Alice is a very good organiser and planner, you know, and she's a hard worker, cos when you take on something like that, which is over and above your job you've got to be prepared to put in the extra hours. Inspiration, passion and grunt really – and skills.

Managers ensured that other staff in their organisations were educated about the programme so they could tell clients about it.

Flexibility

Behaviours such as bending rules and procedures, and adapting tactics, goals and projects to strategies, are examples of flexibility competencies. Beatrice (B)

explains how the partnership programme's rules and procedures could be adapted to suit individual client circumstances:

We wanted to get to the people sitting around at home who might be bored and lonely and isolated, and developing skills, learning about the networks of [place], and so on the little coffee card everyone gets points and we're not too ... we're not rigid about it.

And, Carol (C) speaks about being flexible because "people give whatever they can and they need to do what could be done in the available time".

Carol (C) goes on to say:

We have to be flexible, especially these days – I mean, everyone is having cuts and downsizing and so on, and even us here in C, so it's just to be a bit more patient and flexible.

Personal interest and seeking opportunities to partner

Alice (A) gets the support of her organisation to work on the partnership. She demonstrated a strong inclination for seeking out partnership while working at A. Her manager, Ann (A), describes other partnerships that Alice involved herself in:

She had the idea and the passion and good relationship skills – well, she had good relations with these people but they were built out of her wanting to work more widely with other organisations.

Ann (A) said that the organisation's involvement in the partnership was partly motivated by Alice's personal interests. Ann said "That was really Alice's passion – this collaboration thing happened through one person's passion rather than an organisational decision".

The reference to passion and wanting to work with others are competencies that are not in Getha-Taylor's (2008) study on high performing partnership managers. I have heard staff from nonprofits talk about passion for a cause being a reason for accepting lower pay or working conditions than their peers in other sectors.

Conclusion

CS1 details an informal and organic partnership between three organisations, two nonprofits and one local government department. The partnership began in

response to opportunities arising from the development of a regional action plan for a government strategy. It resulted in a new programme aimed at addressing the needs of a specific client group – primarily isolation and a lack of personal networks. Now they connect with the wider community and find opportunities for employment.

A range of factors motivate this partnership but two primary motivating factors - client need and the opportunity to partner - are common to the three organisations. A range of secondary motivating factors exists.

The most significant resource allocation was staff time. Two resources not identified in the literature were evident:

- staff's personal resources, and
- promotion of the programme.

Five competencies were demonstrated by all three partnership managers.

Three of these competencies:

- interpersonal understanding,
- team leadership, and
- teamwork and cooperation

are considered to be key competencies for partnership (Getha-Taylor, 2008). A further three competencies (conceptual thinking, initiative and flexibility) were demonstrated by two of the managers and one manager demonstrated two competencies (personal interest and seeking opportunities to partner) that were not on Getha-Taylor's (2008) framework.

Chapter 5: Findings from Case Study Two

Introduction

In this partnership, two nonprofit organisations set out to

- streamline service delivery to clients,
- locate staff in each other's offices, and
- apply for joint funding or to support each other's funding applications.

A formal, organised, and intentional partnership, this case CS2 is a fascinating contrast to the relatively informal and organic partnership described in CS1.

Different pressures impelled the two partners. The growing expectation of funders, especially government, for organisations to be larger in size and to demonstrate partnership and connection with others motivated one partner. The other partner sought specialist input to enhance their existing services.

Independent of the significant differences between the two organisations in the size of their finances, staffing, clients and number of offices, their services are complementary rather than competitive. Y helps clients during a crisis. Z provides medium term counselling and support. Z does not deliver crisis services.

Launched in recent years at a significant event attended by a prominent politician, the partnership used each organisation's name and logo in a new brand to visibly link the two organisations and increase their public profile. The use of media to publicise the launch and the development of an attractive information sheet shows politicians, officials, the wider sector and the public that this partnership is professional and worthwhile. The information sheet boldly states that the partnership gives funders better value for money.

Staff time is the most significant resource allocated by the organisations to the partnership. However, the success of the partners in acquiring new contracts is changing the resource type which now involves office space, organisational relationships, intellectual property, several new staff, and funds to cover overheads.

About the partners and the participants

Data from three interviews informed this case study. Yvette, CEO and partnership manager for Y, Zoe, partnership manager and a unit manager from Z, and Zane the CEO of Z. Pseudonyms maintain confidentiality.

About Organisation Y

Originally part of another well-known New Zealand nonprofit, Y was established in 1990 to run a regional service. Over time it became independent from the founding organisation and increased the scope of its services. Nowadays it is a national organisation providing a specialised range of integrated preventative and support services. Its head office is in the same city as that of Z. Registered as a charitable trust Y employs around 35 full time paid staff, 15 contractors and 80 volunteers. Their annual income of about \$2.3 million in the 2011-2012 financial year comes primarily through government contracts. Y delivers national services and training. When asked about the operating challenges for the organisation Yvette responded, “...*not having enough money and the uncertainty of funding and the uncertainty over what the [government] priorities are going to be and how we’re going to fit into those ...*”

Yvette, now CEO, became involved with Y eighteen years ago as a volunteer board member. She has been on the staff for fifteen years, the last nine as CEO. Although not formally trained in partnership competencies Yvette gained experience in recent years through the merger of Y with another organisation. She also spent time researching partnerships in general.

Organisation Z

In existence for many decades, Z is one of New Zealand’s largest nonprofits. It operates across a large region including the city where its head office is located. Almost 150 full-time staff, just over 500 part-time staff and around 200 volunteers work out of around ten offices across the region. Z’s annual expenditure in the 2010-2011 financial year was just short of \$26 million. Services cover a number of different social issues for a varied client group representing all ages and stages in life. The unit in partnership with Y focuses

on children and families through a range of services including medium term counselling and support.

Zoe, Z's unit manager and partnership manager, has been involved with the partnership from its establishment. Zoe worked for six years as the General Manager of the business unit. Her background is in the health sector as a practitioner. This partnership was Zoe's first experience of formally partnering with another organisation.

When analysing the interviews it became obvious that in order to fully understand the factors that motivated Z to partner I needed to speak with the CEO, Zane. He was involved in the very early discussions with Yvette, the CEO of Y. Zane also contributed to initial work on the partnership agreement, and attended regular meetings. He has been the CEO of Z for six years, having much previous experience in health, disability and social services. He established many collaboration and partnership type arrangements at Z. I carried out a twenty minute phone interview that focused on their motivation for partnering.

About the partnership

This partnership was organised, planned and formal. What started as an agreement to work together serves both organisations well with funders, resulting in new staff whom the organisations co-locate in each other's offices. This allows clients easily to transition from a crisis service (delivered by Y) to medium term support (delivered by Z). Yvette (Y) is experienced in merging organisations and so for her this type of partnership is different:

It's quite an interesting kind of partnership in that it's not merging back office functions, they haven't taken us over, and we're more or less equal in how we're relating, except that we're hugely different in size.

The organisations responded to external pressure with a strategy which expanded the influence and scope of both. Eliminating possible competition between the two organisations, the partnership increased their attractiveness to funders and their joint effectiveness in the wider sector.

Discussions between the CEOs over a period of time led to the decision to initiate a partnership. Yvette (Y) and Zane (Z) simultaneously concluded that partnering was a possible response to certain challenges. For Y, the smaller organisation in the partnership, the main issue was that the government had repeatedly expressed their intent to contract with fewer organisations and that those organisations they did contract with would be larger. For Z the challenge was clients needing crisis services which Z could not provide. Zane (Z) said *“I thought we should bring in recognised and specific expertise”*. The partnership addressed the needs of both organisations.

Yvette (Y) believed that Y needed to appear bigger in order to survive. Based on experience gained from an earlier merger with another smaller organisation, Yvette (Y) felt that it was better to choose partners while she had time rather than wait until choices were forced upon her. She says *“we either had to get a number of those smaller organisations and form some sort of cluster group of some description, or we had to find a big friend”*. She discounted the idea of forming a cluster group of smaller organisations:

... we'd just had a formal merger. There were some really good things about that, but some difficulties too, because there's huge financial disadvantages in doing those mergers. Even though the government keeps saying, that merging back office functions is great, it's hugely expensive and there's no rational reason to do it.

Briefly, a smaller organisation sought the merger in order to address their lack of capacity. They approached Yvette (Y) and over a six month period the merger was planned and executed. Despite being successful, the merger cost Y both money and credibility. Yvette (Y) continues:

They approached us and at the time it was a good idea, and it was a good idea, but in terms of cost, it's cost us a huge amount of money, and that all occurred at the same time as the recession. We took on more mouths to feed, in a sense, at the same time as it also cost us a whole lot of money the whole convergence was pretty terrible.

Some community backlash at what was perceived to be a take-over of a local community group surprised Yvette (Y):

It turned into a big drama. Yeah, the community was sort of taken aback as if we had rowed across the harbour in the middle of the

night and highjacked their business ... I thought it was a strange reaction.

The second reason for discounting the idea of merging with other small organisations was the number of organisations it would take to become substantial enough in size and scope to satisfy funders. The financial costs of the previous merger meant multiple mergers were not an affordable option. The compromises needed and the drama of merging also put Yvette (Y) off this idea.

Partnership with a larger organisation was a more sensible option and so she set out to find one. She sought information from the government department funding work in the sector. She said *“First of all I got my list and then I started to try and find out more about each organisation, more about what the people were like”*.

Although the formal relationship between the two CEOs began as a result of the partnership discussions, staff already knew each other. Zoe (Z) had worked with staff from Y several times over the years and Yvette (Y) had previously had several positive encounters with Z. These interactions gave Yvette (Y) the confidence to consider Z as a partner. It appeared that Zane (Z) was also happy with Y as a potential partner. Zane said:

So because we had, over the last number of years, encounters with Y we saw them as a potential agency, acknowledged as a specialist in the field ... so we thought, why don't we explore working really closely with them as the specialist input for us?

Over time several conversations between the CEO's of both organisations laid the groundwork for the partnership.

The partnership was launched at an event held to celebrate a different milestone. During the launch the formal partnership agreement was signed by the chairs of both organisations and a new logo visibly committed the organisations to the partnership.

The two organisations offered complementary services, increasing the capacity and expertise of both organisations and the geographic coverage of the services. Therefore, it made sense that the first partnership activity was a joint funding application to employ more staff. Zoe (Z) said:

*... we tendered for a staff member, 0.8 [FTE] who sits in the Y office
... we tendered for another position with them and this time they are the employer and the person sits in our office.*

The new role enabled the clients of Y to more easily to transition from their specialist crisis service into the longer term support service of Z.

The two organisations then tendered separately for another contract, making clear their intent to work with each other should the tenders be successful. Both tenders were successful and secured enough funding between them for Y to employ another staff member. This person works from an office belonging to Z. Zoe (Z) described how the organisations put in two proposals for funds:

... it was not one proposal that time it was two with very clear intent on both parts that it would be joint should it be successful and how that would be managed.

A formal and legally binding partnership agreement was drafted during a series of meetings. This document includes the intent of the partners, what each organisation does, what they agree to, how often they will meet and how they will report on the partnership. The agreement was signed by the Board chairpersons of both organisations at the partnership launch. The organisations declined my request to read the partnership agreement so I am unable to draw on this data source for this case study.

The factors that motivated the partnership

Yvette (Y) and Zane (Z) succinctly summed up the primary motivation for each of their organisations' involvement in this partnership. Yvette (Y) said:

I had a sense of impending change and that we had to be well positioned and so even though we were big in this field, this field's made up of tiny organisations, and so as I said, we either had to get a number of those smaller organisations and form some sort of cluster group of some description, or we had to find a big friend.

Zane (Z) spoke about an increased involvement with clients that stretched their services beyond their area of expertise. He was uncertain that he wanted to risk moving away from their generic service delivery and this caused them to think about alternatives. Zane (Z) explained that the risk was:

Our generic service does a lot of work in the medium term. To be moving towards becoming a crisis service didn't feel right. We started to ask, well, what are the alternatives?

For Y the primary motivation was to get bigger. This motivation arose from changes and uncertainty in the government funding environment. For Z the motivation was access to specialist input. This motivation was created from increased demand for services that were more specialised than that already provided. A range of other secondary motivations included the opportunity to access funds, new resources such as office space, and clients. The partnership also allowed the organisations to provide a better service to clients.

I have previously identified from the literature 27 factors that motivate partnerships (p.24). Table 7 provides an overview of factors that Yvette (Y) and Zane (Z) describe as motivational. As in CS1 the factors are arranged under the six themes with the depth of colour indicating the level of importance. The darkest colour indicates primary motivating factors while lighter colours indicate decreasing levels of emphasis participants placed on them. Factors that were not discussed are not shaded.

Table 7: Factors that motivated partnership in CS2

| Motivating Factors | Y | Z |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Theme: response to external factors</i> | | |
| the funding environment | | |
| competition from other providers | | |
| <i>Theme: response to complex issues</i> | | |
| the need of the clients | | |
| promotion of shared goals | | |
| <i>Theme: to gain access to ...</i> | | |
| Funds | | |
| Clients | | |
| office space | | |
| networks & relationships | | |
| expertise and specialist input | | |

| Motivating Factors | Y | Z |
|--|----------|----------|
| personnel (paid and voluntary) | | |
| intelligence about wider sector | | |
| organisational legitimacy through partners | | |
| Theme: to improve... | | |
| reflects well on the organisation | | |
| fulfilment of the organisation's mission | | |
| cost effectiveness | | |
| relationships for future dealings | | |
| service quality | | |
| overall performance e.g. enhanced projects | | |
| ability to maximise use of funds | | |
| community relationships | | |
| Theme: to enhance service delivery | | |
| client access - creates a referral pathway | | |
| geographic coverage | | |
| ability to meet linguistic or cultural need of clients | | |
| enhanced services | | |
| leverage new ideas or expertise | | |
| Theme: tradition | | |
| this is the way we work | | |
| past experience of working together | | |

Key for Table 7

| | |
|--|---|
| | Primary motivating factor |
| | Secondary motivating factor emphasised during the interview |
| | Secondary motivating factor mentioned during the interview |

Funding environment

In recent times government has repeatedly stated their intent to contract with fewer organisations and to undertake a more competitive contracting process. The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) was discussed by both Zoe (Z) and Yvette (Y) when describing their operating context and the motivation for partnership. This was unsurprising given that the MSD was an important funder for both organisations. Zoe (Z) said:

It's certainly part of the Ministry of Social Development's plan to reduce the number of people that they're contracting with, and I think there's been some change as they have rolled these positions out. Instead of a million providers they now have two or three main providers.

While reducing the number of organisations they contract with, government departments also expect that organisations work in partnership with others. There is little clarity or consistency around how these expectations are to be

met. For Y this uncertainty was frustrating. The previous loss of about a third of their operating budget had sharpened Yvette (Y)'s focus. In the following quote she talks about the different messages coming from the MSD and the uncertainty this created:

Not having enough money, and the uncertainty of funding and the uncertainty over what the priorities are going to be and how we're going to fit into those, it's really hard to know how to move, and within MSD we're getting different messages God, I don't know. I just find it really frustrating. I just wish they'd get on with it.

This sense of impending change and the need to be positioned well occupied Yvette (Y)'s thinking. Zoe understood. Although Z has many more resources the government was driving organisational thinking and behaviour towards partnership. Zoe (Z) says *"What do we get out of it? We get an opportunity to work with another agency. That makes us look good when the government makes collaboration their buzz word"*.

Responding to client need through specialist expertise

As indicated above the primary motivating factor for Z was access to specialist expertise in order to address the needs of their clients. All three interview participants spoke about the differing roles of the two organisations. Zoe (Z) made it clear: *"We're not crisis. Y do the crisis stuff and then refer appropriate clients on to us"*.

Access to office space and relationships

Gaining access to resources such as office space and relationships were secondary motivating factors for Y. Yvette (Y) talked about how the partnership gives them a way to grow by positioning them for contracts and by allowing them access to locations where Z has an office and they do not. She said:

We almost work as one organisation where we are based together, and so we've got one of our staff members now based out in their office, and we've got another one based in another office. And so it's given us a way to grow that we wouldn't have had easily, to be in those areas, because we can use their offices, their facilities, we don't have to set up shop, we can use their introductions and their existing relationships.

The ability to access new relationships through the contacts of others was not a motivating factor in the initial stages of the partnership but potentially motivates continuing to work together.

Gaining access to funds

Yvette (Y) hoped the partnership activities would change over time and that the effort they made to formalise the partnership was a “*platform for more [funding] contracts*”. While the partnership has not yet led to significant new contracts it has led to modest increases in staff numbers. The partners made explicit in funding applications their intent to combine resources. The approach succeeds (see p 76). A successful tender by each organisation recently provided enough money, when combined, to employ a fulltime staff member.

Reflects well on the organisation

While only a secondary motivation for partnering, both Yvette (Y) and Zoe (Z) acknowledged that the partnership reflected well on the organisation. Yvette (Y) says: “*I hope this alliance will be seen as a favourable kind of alliance ... it will position us for contracts and will look interesting*”.

Client access and referral pathways

One factor that motivated Yvette (Y) was the ability to access clients more easily:

... it [the partnership] would provide opportunities for mutual clients to go right through, from a crisis, through to medium term support, continual service, so our services would be complementary to theirs.

The partnership created a referral pathway for clients between the organisations. Zoe (Z) described how the service level managers in both organisations worked out the process for referring clients. She said:

We had to work that out as to when the clients were handed over so when they very clearly become our clients we had to work through whose database, whose documentation, all that stuff.

Zane (Z) is also focused on improving the service for clients. Zane and Yvette (Y) discussed the need to take small steps initially so that the partnership was achievable:

What do we need to make partnership doable for clients in terms of better service? And then we talked about aspects of what it could be, which included service delivery, shared back office functions. Zane (Z).

Past experience of working together

Zoe (Z) remembered that “We had worked with Y when I first started working for Z”. The organisations had worked together at a service delivery level, but the two CEOs, Zane and Yvette, did not know each other prior to the partnership. The positive past experiences motivated Zoe (Z)’s interest in the partnership.

The resources allocated to the partnership

The partners contributed financial and non-financial resources to the partnership. As in CS1, staff time was the most significant resource allocation. Table 8 shows the resources that participants spoke about during the interviews.

Table 8: Resources allocated by the organisations in CS2

| Resources allocated to the partnership | Y | Z |
|---|----------|----------|
| <i>Financial resources</i> | | |
| design and print promotional material | | |
| contribute to overheads | | |
| launch event | | |
| pay legal fees for partnership agreement | | |
| <i>Non-financial resources</i> | | |
| staff time (paid and voluntary) | | |
| client referrals | | |
| specific knowledge and expertise | | |
| organisational reputation | | |
| access to networks, relationships | | |
| shared physical resources e.g. office | | |
| intellectual property | | |

One off costs: launch event, legal fees and promotional materials

Some costs like those associated with the launch event were managed in-house. The partnership was launched at an event that organisation was already holding. While both organisations contributed ideas to the design of promotional materials the design and printing work was done in-house by Z. Legal fees associated with the partnership agreement were shared. Yvette (Y) says “We both paid equally for legal fees and all those sorts of costs”.

Contribution to overheads

The organisations both contribute to the overhead costs associated with the placement of staff in each others' offices. For example Yvette (Y) says "*we help to provide desk costs which help to underwrite some of the costs associated with them operating an office there*". Zoe (Z) explains in more detail how costs are determined:

We work out between us when there's been a need to share: a building, a desk, a chair, a computer, internet access ..., so we work out who's going to pay for it. Covering costs, that's all.

Staff time

Staff time was the most significant resource allocated to the partnership. During the set-up of the partnership three staff from each organisation – the CEO and two others - met to work on the details of the partnership. Yvette (Y) says "*I played a really active role in the meetings, pulling it along and you know, contributed quite a lot to the document before it finally went to the lawyer*".

Time from management and other staff continues to be a significant resource allocation. Zoe (Z) describes several regular meetings with different staff to manage the partnership:

We contribute our time for all of the meetings. We have service outcome meetings, at which the site managers, our practice leader and I meet every quarter to ask, is everything fine on a practice level, is everything working on the front line. Then we have the management partnership meetings as well. It's the same for them, Y, they're putting just as much into that.

Shared physical resources – office, referrals, and access to relationships

The partnership gives the organisations a way to expand their services because it offers access to office space in other locations.

Yvette (Y) sees the benefits from growing their presence by placing staff in locations belonging to Z. Not only does it provide a physical location, it also opens up access to new networks and provides a level of oversight for the staff member located there. She says "*we've got one of their Z staff members working here with our advocates and so the staff member gets referrals from our team ...*".

The motivation to partner affects the resources used in the partnership. I discuss two resources - client referrals and specialist expertise - in the motivation section on pp.79-80.

The competencies used by the partnership managers

As in CS1, the participants had less to say about the competencies than motivation and resources. Participants did not have Getha-Taylor's (2008) competencies framework to refer to during the interviews; the findings are their opinion of competencies they used to manage the partnership. The findings represent the views of only Yvette (Y) and Zoe (Z) because Zane (Z)'s interview focused only on the motivation for partnering.

Table 9: Competencies used by partnership managers in CS2

| Competencies used by partnership managers | Case Study 2 | |
|---|--------------|----------|
| | Y Yvette | Z Zoe |
| <i>Getha-Taylor's Competency Headings</i> | | |
| initiative | | |
| information seeking | | |
| interpersonal understanding | | |
| organisational awareness | | |
| relationship building | | |
| teamwork and cooperation | | |
| team leadership | | |
| analytical thinking | | |
| conceptual thinking | | |
| organisational commitment | | |
| self confidence | | |
| flexibility | | |

Five partnership competencies

- information seeking
- interpersonal understanding
- organisational awareness
- teamwork and cooperation
- team leadership

were discussed or implied by both of the partnership managers. Other competencies were raised by only one participant or not mentioned at all.

Information seeking

Zoe (Z) had no previous experience of partnerships. She sought information from colleagues about other partnerships at Z. Yvette (Y) had previously sought information from a government department to help with the merger between her organisation and another. She was surprised to discover there were no resources and that officials were not “*beavering away with the whole resource sort of area*”. Yvette (Y) expected government to provide information because they promote partnership. She explained how she learnt about partnership:

I went on the internet and just spent ages finding stuff, downloading it, reading it, to try and work out what to do and so I found some stuff and started to work through all the things.

Interpersonal understanding and relationship building

Understanding the emotions and underlying issues were indicative of competencies related to interpersonal understanding. Zoe (Z) spoke about developing this competency as a health professional, she says “*as a [health professional] you have to develop a relationship very quickly in order to do something to people that you wouldn’t normally do ... so relationship management and how I work with people is something that I do ...*”. Yvette (Y) understood the emotions of her staff towards the partnership changes. She says “*It’s all scary – any change can be scary and who knows what might they do next?*”

Organisational awareness

Zoe (Z) spoke several times about her knowledge of the organisation and the operating environment. She said:

I know the service, know the geographical area, know what’s there that we can provide or what gaps are in those areas and what would work and what wouldn’t work.

Later she added “*I bring the organisational knowledge of what our workforce is, what the capability is and what standards we have*”.

Yvette (Y) also demonstrates organisational awareness competencies when she considers solutions to the growing pressure by funders and the impact of those solutions for her staff and herself.

I had been thinking about mergers and I thought about what that might mean for me, what that would mean for Y, the whole thing about organisational culture when another organisation takes over.

As part of her due diligence process on potential partners Yvette (Y) gave thought to the values of other organisations, their fit with her organisation, and their reputation with the government agency that funds this sector. She says “there’s no point in choosing a partner and then finding out they’re not popular with the funder”.

Team work and cooperation

Team work and cooperation was evident in the partnership. The partners worked cooperatively on the partnership agreement, supported each other’s funding applications, combined funds to employ a staff member, and developed protocols for client referrals. These demonstrated information sharing, soliciting input and team building competencies.

Team leadership

Leading meetings, positioning self as leader, and communicating a compelling vision are team leadership competencies. Yvette (Y) revealed more about her approach to leading Y’s role in the partnership when she said:

I felt really strongly that it was important for our organisation to be taking a lead in many aspects of the work, and so I jumped in and offered. I chaired meetings, I set agendas. I’m not saying I did it all by myself, but I didn’t say, you’re much bigger so you take the lead.

... we decided not to talk about it [the partnership] until we got to a point where we felt reasonably confident that it was actually going to proceed and then we had a confidential meeting with the staff and said, this is what we’re going to be doing, these are all the reasons why. This is how it will look different and this is how it will look the same. What do you all think about it?

Yvette (Y) and Zane (Z) shared leadership at times. Yvette explained how Zane initially worked on the partnership agreement and then she developed it further. Questions were resolved at multiple meetings before the agreement was sent to the lawyers for checking.

Analytical thinking

Analytical thinking was a competency demonstrated by Yvette (Y). Her due diligence approach to identifying potential partners involved checking their reputation with funders. She also considered her own knowledge and experience gained from dealings with them.

Organisational commitment

Yvette (Y) said she was *“trying really hard not to think what’s the best thing for me and my friends. What’s important is the rest of the management team”*.

Willingness to make personal sacrifices and model organisational citizenship behaviours shows organisational commitment competencies.

Self confidence

Although Y was significantly smaller than Z, Yvette (Y) was confident about her organisation’s value. This confidence underpinned her expectation of being treated as an equal in the partnership. She describes partnership as being like marriage and says *“Go in as equals, maintain it as equals”*.

Conclusion

Y and Z were the nonprofit partners in CS2, a formal, intentional and organised partnership. For Y the motivation to partner was the need for a larger friend and for Z the motivation was the need for specialist expertise to better support their clients. Other secondary motivations were also described. The partnership resulted in streamlined service delivery, support for funding applications, and the placement of staff in each others’ offices.

As in CS1, the main resource allocated to the partnership was staff time. Other resource allocations included (1) financial resources such as overheads, promotional materials, legal fees, and an event to launch the partnership, and (2) non-financial resources such as client referrals, knowledge and expertise, relationships, and shared resources.

Five partnership competencies

- organisational awareness,

- interpersonal understanding,
- information seeking,
- team leadership, and
- teamwork and cooperation

were used by both the partnership managers. Other partnership competencies were either raised by only one of the participants or not mentioned at all.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction

Two case studies on New Zealand nonprofit-nonprofit partnerships address gaps in the literature on partnership and on resources used in nonprofit partnerships. The research also provides insight into three aspects of partnership:

- motivation for partnering,
- resources that organisations allocate to partnership, and
- competencies used by partnership managers.

This chapter brings together the findings from case studies one and two (CS1, CS2).

The partnerships are successful. All the participants say so. For example, Zoe (Z) shows personal pleasure in the partnership: *“It’s been a completely wholeheartedly successful pleasant thing to be involved in”*. Carol (C)’s comment focuses on the role of the partners. *“It’s a successful story and every agency put something into the project”*. There were also positive outcomes for all clients such as increased participation in society in CS1 and improved services from additional staff in CS2.

During my analysis, I found that along with the three aspects of partnership there were also five themes that required discussion. These themes help us understand the partnerships:

1. the terms the participants used to describe partnership,
2. the context,
3. the presence of trust and goodwill,
4. voluntary participation of the partners, and
5. the level of formality.

I discuss them first, then the three aspects of partnership, and lastly the interaction between the three aspects, and the effect of that interaction.

1 What shall we call it: collaboration or partnership?

The terms *collaboration* and *partnership* were used by the participants in different ways throughout the interviews. I came to feel that *partnership* most appropriately describes both relationships.

- Alice (A) used the terms interchangeably. She spoke about the people as the ‘collaborative group’, the programme as a ‘collaborative activity’, and the ‘three-way partnership’.
- Ann (A) primarily used the term collaboration. She used partnership only when speaking about formally documented relationships A has with other organisations.
- Beatrice (B) almost exclusively used the terms partnership and partners.
- Carol (C) spoke only of collaboration, possibly because it was a familiar term in Carol’s work context. Her government department promotes working *collaboratively* as an ideal. One of Carol (C)’s motivations acknowledged that she responded to outside expectations.
- Yvette (Y) firmly rejected the term collaboration. She questioned my interchangeable use of the terms. *“I see them as two different things, depending on what you want. If you’re talking formal structures it’s really different to collaboration”*. From her perspective the formality of their relationship meant that they were partnering rather than collaborating.
- Zoe (Z) also uses the term partnership except when she speaks about the government. Official references to working in collaboration did influence her personal use of the term partnership.
- Zane (Z) exclusively used the term partnership.

This difficulty in naming collaboration and partnership is not new. Sowa (2008, p.300) states that it was difficult to find a ‘common conceptual and operating definition’ for collaboration. Others agree (Gadja, 2004; Armistead, Pettigrew & Aves, 2007). While Gazley and Brudney, (2007) speak of “collaboration theory” (p.18) there is actually a range of theories (Gadja, 2004); collaboration can be a process, a structure or an activity.

As I said in the literature review, p.16, continuums measure levels of collaboration. I use Craig and Courtney's (2004) continuum which has five points: coexistence, networking, cooperation, collaboration and partnership. Note that the words used by participants separately mark the last two points of the continuum. Craig and Courtney list key elements of partnerships, one step above collaboration:

- working from shared values such as trust and openness
- sharing of risks, rewards, resources, accountability, vision and ideas, and decision making
- a degree of formality and two-way or multi-way contractual and relationship obligations
- processes, systems, and mechanisms developed to support partnership
- equity in power, processes, and resource sharing (equitable does not necessarily mean equal) Craig and Courtney (2004, pp.38-39).

I chose case studies at the partnership end of the continuum. Beatrice (B) speaks of trust between the partners in CS1 and other (CS1, CS2) participants agree. Zoe (Z) trusted their partner "*because they knew them*". The other key elements of partnership were also evident.

As I say above, *partnership* describes my case studies best; in citations I use a writer's original terminology if necessary.

2 The context

It became clear that context such as external pressures (funding) and internal (operational) exigencies affect the partnerships. In CS1 the lack of external funding influenced the chosen type of programme. In CS2 the CEOs both set out deliberately to search for a partner to address their need.

The external context played a significant role in the type of programme the partners in CS1 developed. There was no funding for the partnership. This impelled the partners to create a programme that functioned within existing organisational resources. Because funder outcomes did not need to be

achieved, the partners could focus on client need. The external and organisational context influenced the type of activity the partners developed. Different external contexts (funding pressures and changing client need) drove the partnership in CS2. As discussed in Chapter 5, Y needed a large 'friend' and Z needed specialist input for their clients. While the organisations' contexts were different the partnership creates an opportunity to address their specific situations.

Foster and Meinhard (2002) discuss the role of external pressures in relation to collaboration. They note that in some cases government funding depends on working with others. I support their proposition that organisations respond to pressures in the external environment by partnering. I discuss later in this chapter the factors that motivate partnership.

3 The presence of trust and goodwill

According to Thomson and Perry (2006) trust, an essential component of partnership, is defined as meeting commitments (explicit and implicit), negotiating honestly, and not taking advantage of the other if there is the opportunity to do so.

Trust and goodwill between the participants are evident in both case studies. In CS1 the participants already knew and trusted each other as a result of previously working together. In CS2 the participants involved in developing the partnership were relatively unknown to each other. However people within the organisations had worked together.

In CS1 the trust, established through a shared history of working together, allowed the partners quickly to implement the partnership. Alice (A) sums it up: *"We know that we can trust each other, and that what each other does is worthwhile"*. A little later in this chapter I discuss the formality of the partnerships. It appears that the trust between the partners in CS1 reduced the level of formality required.

In the early stages of CS2 the CEOs talked about their concerns and the need for trust. Organisation Y worried about being taken over. Organisation Z feared influence from a different organisation. Zane (Z) says:

We talked about mergers and takeovers and you know, our worry was being strongly influenced by quite a different organisation, and I think their worry was being merged or taken over by a larger organisation, and we quite clearly conveyed to one another, we're each respectful of each other's organisation. So it was a value based conversation that you can trust, we can trust each other because we're going to be respectful of each, and value each organisation, and look at focusing on what we need to do to deliver a better joined up service, whilst providing opportunities to one another for growth and development.

Yvette (Y) expressed her trust in Z during the interviews. She felt that the personality and behaviour of organisational leaders demonstrate their trustworthiness. She acknowledged the importance of Z's reputation when she sought a partner.

These cases support the proposal that trust is necessary for successful partnership (Chen & Graddy, 2010; Gazley, 2010a). In CS1 trust existed beforehand; in CS2 trust was built.

4 The voluntary participation of organisations in partnerships

Funders' demands for partnerships, and in some instances mergers, means that voluntary participation cannot be taken for granted. However, in both of my case studies a lack of compulsion allowed the organisations to develop partnerships within parameters they set themselves.

The three partners in CS1 were not compelled to attend the meetings or to work together. Nor were they obliged to develop the programme they created. In addition to this, like the partners in CS2 they freely allocated organisational resources to the partnership. In CS2, although the changing external funding environment drove Y to look for a partner, the partnership was still completely voluntary. The two organisations independently considered the need for a partner, identified each other as possible candidates, and then set out to achieve the outcomes they wanted in the timeframe they chose.

Gazley (2010a, p.52) states 'Those with collaborative experience quickly come to realise that a successful outcome requires more than statutory authority and depends on more than passive compliance.' Her research on the nonprofit-local government partnership finds a link between voluntary participation and the success of the partnership's outcomes.

5 The formality of the partnerships

One significant difference between the two partnerships was the level of formality in development, management, and documentation. Both partnerships were formally launched at public events attended by officials from government and other organisations and both partnerships designed professional promotional material. However, CS1 developed organically over time and the people involved see it as relaxed, while CS2 required careful research, and a legal framework. The subsequent partnership activities of Y and Z were also more formal. The style of each partnership reflects existing relationships, context, and the outcomes sought.

CS1 has informal and formal elements. The informal style reflects the attitude of participants. For example, Alice (A) suggests that this partnership used 'the number eight wire' approach of just making things happen. She said, *"That's one of the things I think is cool about the [nonprofit] sector is that you can translate an idea into an action with relative ease, you don't have to write papers and get approval and sign off"*. The partnership programme was formal; it requires clients to register and report the points they earn. However the partnership was not formally documented, Beatrice (B) says, *"No, we didn't do that. Too much time wasting! (laughs)... I think because we know each other very well, there's automatic trust"*. The participants spoke about moving in similar circles so they regularly saw each other formally and informally. These interactions built trust which helped the partnership to develop naturally. From Alice (A)'s perspective this meant that officially documenting the partnership would add an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy. The lack of formality does not bother Carol (C) either, despite her more formal experience within local government. Only emailed notes of meetings, the promotional material, and the client database which C maintains provide written evidence that the partnership

exists. Carol did feel that informal partnerships rely on the managers' knowledge and the organisation's commitment.

In contrast, CS2 progressed with intention and formality. Yvette (Y) and Zane (Z) deliberately sought each other. Yvette checked the reputation of potential partners with the funders while Zane looked for expertise. The partnership agreement, a legal document, was officially signed at a public event attended by high profile people. The partnership activities, support for funding applications and conjoint funding and co-location of staff, are also more formal than CS1.

According to Craig and Courtney (2004) a key ingredient of partnership is a certain degree of formality. Both partnerships had formal elements at either a programme level or a relationship level. In CS1 the programme was formal with clients registered, monitored and rewarded for completion. CS2's partnership document details exactly how the organisations relate to each other and their activities remain more formal. The limited relationships between the two CEOs prior to the partnership may have contributed to the level of formality.

Guo and Acar (2005) looked at formality in collaboration between nonprofit organisations. They combined institutional, resource dependence and network theories in order to understand what influences the level of formality. They found that collaborative activities were more likely to be formal in older, well resourced organisations with government funding and board links to other nonprofits, except in the education and social service sector. In my study of five organisations, Guo and Acar's (2005) factors do influence formality to a certain extent. All receive some government funding. Alice (A) is on the board of B. Unlike Guo and Acar's study all five organisations operate in the social service sector.

- A, over 40 years old, \$350,000 income
- B, over 20 years old, \$325,000 income
- C, over 10 years old, income unknown
- Y, over 20 years old, \$2.3 million income
- Z, over 50 years old, \$26m income

Foster and Meinhard (2002) observe characteristics of formal collaborative activity such as larger organisations forming more partnerships. They say that operating budgets indicate organisational size. Guo and Acar (2005) discussed above, do not go this far. My research suggests that organisational size could influence the level of formality used in forming and documenting the partnerships. The more formal CS2 supports this theory in that the two organisations were larger with large incomes by New Zealand standards (Cordery, 2012) whereas CS1 was less formal with smaller organisations and incomes.

Linking the five themes with the three aspects under investigation (motivation, resources and competencies)

The five new themes provide a foundation for understanding the partnerships. They shed light on some of the decisions the partners made in relation to the three aspects of my research (motivation, resources and competencies).

The first theme, the language used when discussing partnerships, indicated that for most of the participants the chosen term (collaboration or partnership) was related to personal preference or familiarity with it rather than because the term held a particular meaning. Only one participant intentionally chose to use *partnership*. Her choice of term reflected her motivation for partnering.

The second theme focused on how organisational context, such as age and size, impacted the decision to partner and the style of partnership. The third and fourth themes considered the presence of trust and goodwill and of voluntary participation by the partner organisations.

The fifth theme related to the level of formality in each partnership. The level of formality affected the motivation to partner and the resources allocated to the partnership.

What factors motivated the partnerships?

All respondents agreed that without compelling motivating factors a partnership was unlikely to succeed. Alice (A) argues that a nonprofit organisation will work

around resource and competency issues if there are strong reasons for partnering. She does not believe the converse is true.

The participants in CS2's more formal and intentional partnership also acknowledged the importance of motivation, with a stronger sense that resources and management competencies were necessary too.

It is possible that motivation remains the most important factor for partnership in the nonprofit sector but not others. Willingness to make things happen, if there is a good enough reason, sums up the archetypical nonprofit attitude, I believe.

CS1 and CS2 reveal fifteen different motivation factors. There are six or seven factors for each organisation. Some play a significant role in motivating partnership while others appear to be secondary or supporting motivations. The fifteen factors matched the six motivation themes presented in the literature review in Chapter 2. These motivations come from the literature (p.24).

- **response to external factors** such as funder requirement for partnership or administrative efficiency, and competition from other providers
- **response to complex issues** that any one organisation could not solve on their own, and the promotion of shared goals around an issue
- **to gain access to** funds or other resources, personnel (paid and voluntary), expertise and knowledge, information about what is happening in the wider sector, and organisational legitimacy through links with reputable partners
- **to improve** cost effectiveness, relationships, reputation, perception of the organisation as a participator, service quality, overall performance such as superior programmes or enhanced projects, ability to maximise the use of funds for service delivery, mission fulfilment, and community relationships
- **to enhance service delivery** through access to clients, geographic coverage, ability to meet the linguistic or cultural needs of clients, enhanced services, and leverage new ideas or expertise

- **tradition** as in, this is the way we work, and past positive experiences of partnership.

I find four more factors, not found in the literature, that motivate partnership:

1. a 'moment in time' opportunity to partner,
2. the interest of others in the partnership,
3. the desire to not duplicate services, and
4. the personal interest of a staff member.

The first three factors fit with the theme 'response to external factors' and the fourth with the theme 'tradition'. The four new factors all appeared in CS1, an informal (and highly effective) partnership.

The following table displays the 27 motivation factors identified in the literature and the four new factors from my research. The depth of colour indicates importance. The darkest colour indicates primary motivating factors and lighter colours indicate decreasing levels of emphasis participants placed on the factors. The four new factors are marked with an asterisk (*). The factors participants did not talk about are included on the table (with no shading) to provide a full understanding about what did, and did not, motivate the partnerships.

Table 10: Factors that motivated partnerships in CS1 and CS2

| Motivating Factors | Case Study 1 | | | Case Study 2 | |
|---|--------------|---|---|--------------|---|
| | A | B | C | Y | Z |
| <i>Theme: response to external factors</i> | | | | | |
| the funding environment | | | | ■ | ■ |
| * opportunity – a moment in time | ■ | ■ | ■ | | |
| * not wanting to duplicate services | | | ■ | | |
| * others' interest in the partnership | ■ | | | | |
| competition from other providers | | | | | |
| <i>Theme: response to complex issues</i> | | | | | |
| the need of the clients | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ |
| promotion of shared goals | | | | | |
| <i>Theme: to gain access to ...</i> | | | | | |
| funds | | | | ■ | ■ |
| new clients | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| office space | | | | ■ | |
| networks & relationships | | | | ■ | |
| expertise and specialist input | | | | | ■ |
| personnel (paid and voluntary) | | | | | |

| Motivating Factors | Case Study 1 | | | Case Study 2 | |
|--|--------------|---|---|--------------|---|
| | A | B | C | Y | Z |
| intelligence about wider sector | | | | | |
| organisational legitimacy through partners | | | | | |
| Theme: to improve ... | | | | | |
| reflects well on the organisation | | | | | |
| fulfilment of the organisation's mission | | | | | |
| cost effectiveness | | | | | |
| relationships for future dealings | | | | | |
| service quality | | | | | |
| overall performance e.g. enhanced projects | | | | | |
| ability to maximise use of funds | | | | | |
| community relationships | | | | | |
| Theme: to enhance service delivery | | | | | |
| client access - creates a referral pathway | | | | | |
| geographic coverage | | | | | |
| ability to meet linguistic or cultural need of clients | | | | | |
| enhanced services | | | | | |
| leverage new ideas or expertise | | | | | |
| Theme: tradition | | | | | |
| this is the way we work | | | | | |
| past experience of working together | | | | | |
| * personal interest in partnership | | | | | |

Key for Table 10

| | |
|--------------|---|
| * (asterisk) | New factor not identified in the literature |
| | Primary motivating factor |
| | Secondary motivating factor emphasised during the interview |
| | Secondary motivating factor mentioned during the interview |

Four new factors

Responding to external factors was a key theme in the literature on partnership motivation. Three of the new factors could fit with this theme; the first was the opportunity to partner which came about because of work on a government strategy, the second was the interest of others in the partnership before it even started which drove the participants to make sure it happened, and the third was the focus of C on not duplicating services. The one remaining factor, personal interest of staff, fits within the tradition theme. Ann, the manager of A, supported her organisation's participation in the partnership because working collaboratively was a personal interest of Alice, her staff member. While the literature talks about tradition from an organisational perspective, Alice's personal tradition (rather than A's tradition) was a primary motivating factor for participating in the partnership.

Five different factors play the primary role in motivating the two partnerships I studied:

- external funding pressure,
- the need for expertise, and
- personal interest

are common to all, and

- client need is a primary motivator for four organisations,
- a 'moment in time' opportunity to partner for three.

Primary factors

Four of the five participating organisations were primarily motivated to partner because of client need. In CS1 organisations A, B and C partnered to address the issue of isolation and exclusion experienced by a particular client group. In CS2 the need for specialist expertise led Zane (Z) to seek a partner with this expertise. In contrast to the others, Yvette (Y) sought a larger friend due to funding pressure. The last primary factor, personal interest, marks Alice (A) (p.56).

Reflects well on the organisation

One factor shared by all five organisations was not a primary motivating factor for any of them but was nonetheless important: the desire to be seen to be a participator and to work in partnership with other organisations. Y, gains organisational legitimacy through linking with a reputable partner although this was not discussed as a motivating factor.

Access to new clients and past experience of working together

Two secondary factors influenced four organisations: access to clients (A, B, C and Y) and past experience of working together (A, B and C, and Y irregularly with Z). A, B, and C worked together regularly and trust pre-existed the partnership. Zane (Z) and Zoe (Z) put forward positive past experience of working with Y, although Yvette (Y) did not mention it as a key feature. The work took place at a practice rather than leadership level.

Client access: referral pathways

Creating a referral pathway for clients' benefits C, Y and Z. Organisation Z's formal partnership allows clients to seamlessly transition from Y's crisis services into Z's longer term support services. C provides clients with a broad range of information and refers them to existing services, so this fits well with their business model.

Mission fulfilment and access to office space and networks

Organisations B and Y discussed factors not raised by others. B's desire to fulfil its mission and Y's access to office space and networks were secondary motivations. For Y, the factors did not initially motivate the partnership but they do now.

Fourteen factors, identified in the literature review, were *not* discussed by the participants as motivating the partnerships. These factors fall under five of the six motivations:

Response to external factors

- competition from other providers

Response to complex issues

- promotion of shared goals

To gain access to ...

- personnel
- intelligence about wider sector
- organisational legitimacy through partners

To improve ...

- cost effectiveness,
- relationships for future dealings,
- service quality,
- overall performance,
- ability to maximise use of funds)

To enhance service delivery ...

- geographic coverage,
- ability to meet linguistic or cultural need of clients,

- enhanced services,
- leverage new ideas or expertise

Some of the factors the participants don't talk about could be linked to other factors about which they do. For example, the changing funding environment and competition from other providers could be linked. While one of these factors (changing funding environment) motivated Y to find a partner, Yvette (Y) doesn't mention the other.

Cost effectiveness, access to personnel, and the ability to meet the linguistic or cultural needs of clients did not appear to be reasons to partner.

Finally, the participants were not shown the list of factors. It is possible that because my people recall and describe factors important to them rather than agree or disagree with items on a list, some factors may have been overlooked. For example, Y did not mention geographical coverage as a motivating factor but one outcome of their partnership was opportunities to open new service areas by locating staff in offices belonging to Z.

My research supports Sowa's (2009) assertion that no single theory can explain why organisations collaborate. I have drawn on six theories: (1) resource dependence, (2) resource based view, (3) transaction cost, (4) exchange, (5) institutional, and (6) social network) to better understand the motivations for partnership. While these are not partnership theories per se, they do illuminate different aspects of partnership.

Resource dependence and the very similar resource based view (Nos. 1 and 2) and transaction cost (No. 3) theories are the main theories used to explain partnership (Foster & Meinhard, 2002; Gazley & Brudney, 2007). Resource theories explain how organisations reduce uncertainty in their external environment by the way they obtain resources (Williamson, 1975). Partnership is one way for organisations to acquire (Guo & Acar, 2005) or pool (Gajda, 2004) resources and it can also strengthen the capability of the organisations (Iyer, 2003) involved in the partnership. Transaction cost theory explains how

reducing costs can have economic and psychological benefits for organisations (Guo & Acar, 2005).

None of these theories addresses the primary motivation for the organisations in CS1. They did not seek to reduce uncertainty in their external environment. The opportunity to reduce costs (by not duplicating services) was a minor motivation for C. However, resource dependence theory and the resource based view fits the primary motivations of both Y and Z in CS2. As we saw, Y sought a larger friend to partner with and Z sought specialist expertise. With regards to transaction cost theory both organisations reduced, in small ways, their costs, but this was not a motivation.

The fourth, exchange theory, better fits the motivation to partner in CS2. This theory explains how the exchange of unique resources between partners can be beneficial (Ayra & Lin, 2007; Gazley & Brudney, 2007). In CS2, Y's unique resource was their specialist knowledge and Z's unique resource was their size. Both benefited from this exchange. On the other hand, exchange theory does not prove useful for understanding the motivations for partnership in CS1.

The fifth, institutional theories (Gray & Wood, 1991; Nathan & Mitroff, 1991), involve problem-solving, organisational legitimacy, and being seen to fit with the norms (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Chen and Graddy, 2006). The partners in CS1 were primarily motivated by the need to address the isolation of clients by working together to develop a response. And all the participants spoke about how the partnership would reflect well on their organisations. The need to be seen to partner was a primary motivator for Y.

Sixthly, social network theory is the remaining partnership theory discussed in the literature review. Basically, partnerships increase where there are social networks because these networks build trust and shared norms (Gazley, 2010a). The theory shows how individuals in networks relate to each other and how these relationships increase competitive advantage (Ayra & Lin, 2007). Given that the partnership in CS1 was almost accidental in that they did not plan to work together, but rather responded to an opportunity when it arose, it

would seem that it was not networks that led to partnership. However, existing networks make it easier to partner when the opportunity arises because they already trust each other. In CS2 the reasons for partnering were not strongly influenced by existing relationships.

In summing up, five of the six theories proved useful for understanding the factors that motivate partnership. In CS1 institutional and social network theories offer useful insight and in CS2 resource dependence theory and the resource based view, exchange theory, and institutional theories all fit. Transaction cost theory did not appear relevant to the findings of either case study.

What organisational resources were allocated to the partnerships?

Resource sharing is an essential element of partnership according to Craig and Courtney (2004). Financial resources comprise money and, goods and services. Non-financial resources include staff time, expertise, use of facilities and equipment, and access to clients, networks and gratuitous services.

During the interviews participants were invited to reflect on the resources their organisations allocated or made available to the partnership. It was obvious that sometimes the partners' deliberately allocated resources to the partnership e.g. printing brochures and paying legal fees, and at other times resources (such as time and expertise) were available for use without anyone necessarily giving conscious thought to the allocation. For ease of reading the rest of this section I refer to 'allocation of resources' recognising that this means both the deliberate allocation and the unintentional making available of resources.

Because I didn't prompt respondents or let them compare notes, their list of resources is only indicative, not complete. It is likely that the participants would add other items from the following list which I drew from the literature (refer Chapter 2).

Table 11: Resources organisations allocated to the partnership in CS1 and CS2

| Resources organisations allocated to the partnership | Case Study 1 | | | Case Study 2 | |
|--|--------------|---|---|--------------|---|
| | A | B | C | Y | Z |
| Financial resources | | | | | |
| design and print promotional material | | | | | |
| contribute to overheads | | | | | |
| host events e.g. launch, certificate ceremony | | | | | |
| pay legal fees for partnership agreement | | | | | |
| *meet personal expenses | | | | | |
| Non-financial resources | | | | | |
| staff time (paid and voluntary) | | | | | |
| skills (e.g. set up database, FB page) | | | | | |
| client referrals to programme | | | | | |
| *programme promotion | | | | | |
| specific knowledge and expertise | | | | | |
| organisational reputation | | | | | |
| access to networks, relationships | | | | | |
| intellectual property, idea creation | | | | | |
| shared physical resources (e.g. office) | | | | | |

My experience suggests that nonprofits, particularly smaller nonprofits are unlikely to have significant financial resources for partnership unless they secure funding for it. Therefore I was not surprised to see that the resources allocated to partnership by the organisations in this study were generally non-financial. In addition to this the financial resources that were allocated tended to be in the form of goods and services rather than cash. In CS2, Y and Z apportion legal fees for the partnership agreement and overheads for staff located in each other's offices.

In both case studies goods and services, such as designing and printing promotional material and running events, were covered by existing resources. For example, C and Z used in-house capability to design and print the promotional material. In CS1 the partnership was launched at an event hosted by local government and in CS2 an anniversary celebration for Z doubled as the launch event. Both events profiled the partnership to officials. Organisation B also hosted a certificate ceremony at an event organised for another purpose.

Another example (p.61) is café meetings at staff's own expense. While low value this use of personal resources for organisational purposes reflects the under resourced operating context of some nonprofits.

All the participants share one non-financial resource: staff time. Staff time represents the most significant resource allocation to the partnerships. In both case studies the development of the partnership programme involved considerable time in meetings and follow up activities. In CS1 the meetings focused on creating an idea to address the needs of the client group whereas in CS2 the meetings appeared to focus on how the partnership would work and the content of the partnership agreement. The two different approaches reflect the context and level of formality of each partnership. Staff time is not limited to paid staff in CS1; skilled volunteers set up the client database and Facebook page.

Another notable resource allocation in four of the five organisations was client referrals. This resource was necessary in order for the programme in CS1 to succeed. All three organisations referred clients to the programme. In CS2, Yvette (Y) also mentioned client referral as a resource. They offer a crisis service and then refer clients on to longer term interventions offered by their partner. The placement of staff in each others' offices also allows easy referrals.

Alice (A) notes that the reputation of the partner organisations matters to CS1:

A, B and C were all highly reputable organisations We rely on people seeing us as good places, trustworthy places, and people potentially buy into the idea because they know of our good reputation.

Other non-financial resource contributions were spread across all five organisations. This included the promotion of the partnership and programme (A and C), specific knowledge and expertise (B and Y), and access to networks and relationships (Y) and office facilities and equipment (Y and Z).

In CS1 intellectual property was an interesting non-financial resource in that some intellectual property belonged to an organisation and some to the

partnership. Beatrice (B) feels their core business is intellectual property used in the partnership while the concept of a coffee-type loyalty card is a co-creation of the partners (p.51). Clients earn points by participating in workshops and activities. This intellectual property is a resource of the partnership rather an organisation and may be marketable.

There is little research in relation to organisational resources allocated or used in partnerships. Sowa (2008) shows that the more organisations share things – anything – the stronger the relationships and the greater the value. Sowa felt that the influence of a partnership is understood only in the light of what the partners share.

That for both partnerships staff time was by far the greatest resource contribution supports the findings of Thomson and Perry (2006) who said that the costliest resources in partnerships are time and energy and these must be given voluntarily.

What competencies did the partnership managers use?

As described above (p.28) I use Getha-Taylor's (2008) competency framework for high performance partnership managers. Alice (A) exhibited two additional competencies not on Getha-Taylor's framework: personal passion for the cause and partnership seeking.

Partnership managers had difficulty identifying specific competencies used to manage the partnership. They speak of relationship building, leadership, trust, working together, initiating work, using flexible approaches, thinking through issues to arrive at a solution, and so on but when asked questions about specific competencies they had difficulty distilling this information. It is possible that the behaviours are so ingrained in everyday practice they were not recognised as competencies or that participants are uncomfortable talking about their own behaviour. Based on my experience of the nonprofit sector it is also possible that the term *competencies* is not commonly used or understood. Whatever the reason the questions about competencies were the most challenging part of the interview.

The following table presents data from questions about competencies or from my interpretation of responses to other questions. The participants did not see this list. If they had, I'm sure it would have prompted additional responses. Ann (A) and Zane (Z) are not included in the competencies table because they did not actively manage the partnerships.

Table 12: Competencies used by partnership managers in CS1 and CS2

| Competencies used by partnership managers | Case Study 1 | | | Case Study 2 | |
|--|--------------|---------------|------------|--------------|----------|
| | A Alice | B Beatrice | C Carol | Y Yvette | Z Zoe |
| <i>Getha-Taylor's Competency Headings</i> | | | | | |
| initiative | | | | | |
| information seeking | | | | | |
| interpersonal understanding | | | | | |
| organisational awareness | | | | | |
| relationship building | | | | | |
| teamwork and cooperation | | | | | |
| team leadership | | | | | |
| analytical thinking | | | | | |
| conceptual thinking | | | | | |
| organisational commitment | | | | | |
| self confidence | | | | | |
| flexibility | | | | | |
| <i>Additional competencies described during the interviews</i> | | | | | |
| personal interest | | | | | |
| seeking opportunities to partner | | | | | |

All the partnership managers manifest four competencies: interpersonal understanding, team leadership, teamwork and cooperation, and organisational awareness. The first three of these competencies are identified as key competencies (p.27) by Getha-Taylor (2008).

Interpersonal understanding

The partnership managers in CS1 demonstrate interpersonal understanding competencies when they discuss the underlying issues of client isolation (p.55). They use this understanding to create a response to the problem. In CS2 Yvette (Y) spoke of the emotional responses of staff to change and Zoe (Z) talks of building this competency as a health professional (p.84).

Team leadership

Team leadership, for managers demonstrating high level partnership competencies, encompasses the ability to manage meetings, keep people informed, use authority fairly, take care of the team, promote team effectiveness, position themselves as a leader, and communicate a compelling vision. In CS1 Alice (A) positions herself as a leader and demonstrates team leadership (p.64) Carol (C) demonstrates similar team leadership competencies after Alice (A) leaves the partnership. In CS2 Yvette (Y) needs to share the leadership of the partnership and takes steps to do so (p.85).

Teamwork and cooperation

Teamwork and cooperation includes competencies such as cooperating, sharing information, expressing positive expectations, soliciting input, empowering others, team-building and conflict resolution. All the partnership managers demonstrate nearly all of these competencies, even in the short time of the interview. For example in CS1 Carol (C) explains how she found opportunities for partners to contribute, and Beatrice (B) over time deliberately changes her negative view of certificates (p.66). In CS2 Yvette (Y) and Zoe (Z) do not claim the teamwork and cooperation label but those qualities shine through (p.85).

Organisational awareness

All the managers showed organisational awareness. This competency is about how things work in the organisation: formal and informal structures, culture, environment, politics and underlying issues. Alice (A) refers to this as 'knowing your space' and spoke about the spaces each partnership manager in CS1 occupied. In CS2 organisational awareness helped Yvette (Y) find a partner and Zoe (Z) to develop protocols for transitioning clients (p.84).

Conceptual thinking, initiative, and flexibility

Three of the remaining competencies appear only in CS1 and not at all in CS2: conceptual thinking, initiative, and flexibility. Possibly CS1's informality requires greater flexibility and conceptual thinking in order to come up with a joint programme that operates without new funds.

Information seeking

On the other hand, in CS2 both Zoe (Z) and Yvette (Y) talk about information seeking while none of the participants in CS1 do. They actively looked for information to help them develop partnerships (p.84). Information seeking could reflect the more formal nature of the partnership in CS2.

Analytical thinking, organisational commitment and self confidence

Yvette (Y) exhibits three competencies that others do not: analytical thinking, organisational commitment and self confidence. It is possible that these competencies underlie her approach to partnership as a means of ensuring her organisation remains viable into the future. Analytical thinking encompasses behaviours such as breaking down problems, seeing basic and multiple relationships, and making and analysing complex plans. Organisational commitment means putting the organisation ahead of self and, modelling good citizenship behaviours (p.86). Self confidence includes justifiable confidence in one's own ability, the willingness to accept challenges (p.86).

Personal interest and partner seeking

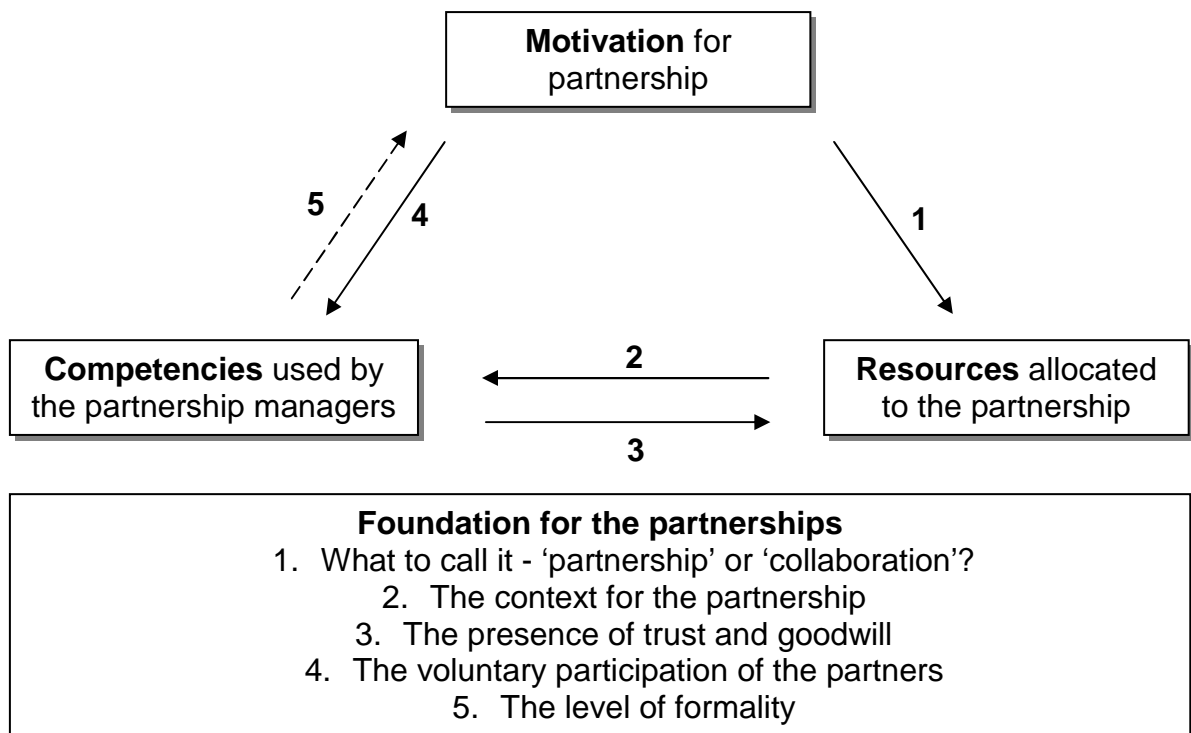
Alice (A) demonstrates two additional competencies not included by Getha-Taylor (2008) in her framework: personal interest and partner seeking. Alice (A)'s natural inclination to seek partners as a way of achieving organisational outcomes Yvette (Y) and Zane (Z), too, value an open attitude towards partnership. Zane frequently develops partnerships in Z. And Yvette says a willingness to partner is important.

Going back to the personal interest or passion that Ann (A) noticed in Alice (A), Ann felt that Alice's personal interest in the partnership programme drove her (Ann) to persist with efforts to get the partnership off the ground. Alice's personal belief in the value of the partnership and its benefits underpins all of A's commitment. No doubt such insights would be shared by other participants had I prompted them. My reasons for not doing so appear above on p.38.

The interaction between the three aspects of partnership and the effect on the partnership

The following diagram shows the interaction between the three aspects of partnership investigated in the research. During the data analysis five themes, present in both case studies, appear to underpin the partnerships. The discussion that follows expands on each interaction and then explores the relevance of the themes.

Figure 3: The interaction between three aspects of partnership



The three aspects of partnership

1. The motivation for partnership affects the type of organisational resources allocated to the partnership.

For example, in CS1 client isolation motivated a new programme which required the partners to allocate staff time and other resources.

2. The resources allocated to the partnership affect the competencies used.

In CS1 considerable staff time was spent discussing programme ideas before the concept of the coffee-card evolved (conceptual thinking by the

managers of A, B, and C). In CS2 the development of protocols and systems for client referrals required the partnership manager to use organisational awareness competencies.

3. The competencies used affect the resources allocated to the partnership.

In CS2 team leadership competencies led to a partnership agreement which required financial resources for legal fees.

4. The motivation for partnership affects the competencies used.

In CS2, external pressure in the funding environment required Yvette (Y) to use analytical thinking competencies to identify a partner. Zane (Z) used organisational awareness competencies to determine what organisation could provide specialist help.

5. The competencies do not generally affect the motivation to partner.

Ann, the manager of A, agreed to the partnership in CS1 because of Alice's interest in partnership. Competencies influencing the motivation to partner did not appear in any other interviews. Therefore a dotted line is used to show a tentative interaction between these aspects.

- **The resources allocated by the organisations do *not* affect the motivation for partnership.**

The staff that created the partnerships were generally the same staff responsible for resource allocations and partnership management. This could explain why resources (particularly financial) did not appear to affect motivation. Alice (A), in CS1, suggested that if the motivation for partnership was strong enough then organisations would find a way to raise the resources needed for the partnership.

The foundations of partnership: five themes

Earlier in this chapter I discussed five new themes

1. terms participants used to describe partnership: *collaboration vs partnership*,

2. context of the partnerships,
3. presence of trust and goodwill,
4. voluntary participation, and
5. level of formality

which provide a foundation for the partnerships in the two case studies.

The themes underpin the way participants understood and participated in the partnership. Some themes interacted with the three aspects of partnership:

- context and the presence of trust and goodwill influenced the motivation for partnership.

The external context (funding pressure and client need) and organisational context (organisation size) influenced the factors that motivated the partnerships. While not a motivational factor in itself it is hard to imagine the partnerships moving beyond a concept if trust was not present. Thomson and Perry (2006) claim that trust is central to partnership (p.91).

- the level of formality affected the competencies used (analytical thinking, team leadership) and the resource allocations (legal fees, shared office space).
- the terms used to name the partnership were reflected in the level of formality in the partnership.

For some participants the choice of term held no particular meaning while for others the choice of term was deliberate and intended to convey meaning. Partnership was the preferred term in CS2 which was formal and intentional; their formal approach to the partnership reflected their choice of term. In CS1 both *partnership* and *collaboration* were used.

- it is difficult to determine if voluntary participation by the participants affected the partnership. The literature links partnership success with voluntary participation (Gazley, 2010a).

Conclusion

This chapter examined the findings from two case studies on nonprofit-nonprofit partnerships that involved five partner organisations and seven interview participants. The discussion covered eight factors that affected the partnerships.

The first five themes

- the terms participants used to describe the partnerships,
- the context,
- the presence of trust and goodwill,
- the voluntary participation of the partners, and
- the formality of the partnerships

did not form part of the original research plan. However, it became obvious when writing up the research that the themes underpin the partnerships.

I then discussed the data in relation to 27 factors motivating partnership, 13 resource types, 49 partnership management competencies, and the 6 theories which were identified in the literature. For each aspect of partnership new factors emerged that differed from the literature on partnership. There were four additional motivation factors, two additional resource types and two additional competencies.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

Introduction

Near the close of our interview, Zoe, partnership manager of Z said the partnership *“has been a completely whole-heartedly successful pleasant thing to be involved in”*. Her comment sums up my own transformed view of nonprofit partnerships. In Chapter 1 I introduced my negative experience: I felt that partnership in general was misunderstood and largely self-serving. My research on two New Zealand nonprofit partnerships CS1 and CS2 has changed my view.

The two partnerships are successful. The partners expressed positive views of the partnerships and the people involved. The activities are genuine with shared risks and rewards (Craig & Courtney, 2004). The partnerships were originally shaped by the organisations' motivations and past experiences. Trust and goodwill are evident by the way the partners speak about each other. The partnerships themselves reach the individual and collective goals of the partners.

I previously identified two gaps in the literature (Chapter 2) namely partnerships between two nonprofit bodies – as distinct from nonprofit-government (Alexander & Nank, 2009; Gazely & Brudney, 2007) or nonprofit-business (Battisti, 2009; Iyer, 2003) partnerships – and the resources used in nonprofit partnerships, studies of which resources are almost non-existent (Sowa, 2008). Much of what is known about resources is only inferred from studies on other elements of nonprofit partnership.

Many aspects of nonprofit partnership are contained within the literature. I chose to focus on three: motivation, resources, and competencies. These contribute to our understanding of partnership and fill a gap in the literature. My research questions focus separately on the aspects, the interactions between them and the effect of those interactions on partnership. The questions are:

1. What factors motivate organisations to partner?
2. What resources do organisations allocate to partnership?

3. What competencies do partnership managers use to manage partnerships?
4. How do these three aspects of partnership interact?
5. How does that interaction affect the partnership?

The literature suggests that a range of theories must be used to understand partnership (Gadja, 2004). Given that there is no single partnership theory I draw on six general theories. In CS1 the theories that explain the motivation for partnership are institutional and social network theories and in CS2 they are the resource dependence theory, the resource based view, exchange theory, and institutional theories. One theory, transaction cost theory, is not useful because neither partnership is motivated by gains in organisational efficiency.

This literature informs my methodology and provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. I use a qualitative research approach to undertake two case studies of nonprofit partnerships. Data is collected from seven semi-structured interviews with participants from five organisations. I analyse the data against three frameworks; one for each aspect of partnership. The motivation factors and resource types are identified from a range of partnership literature. The competencies are based on Getha-Taylor's (2008) collaboration competencies framework.

Motivation factors, resource types, and competencies

Motivation factors

During the data analysis we note the presence or absence of the factors that motivated partnership. Four new motivation factors

1. opportunity to partner,
2. avoidance of service duplication,
3. interest of others in the partnership, and
4. personal interest

not identified in the literature, become evident during the data analysis.

The first factor, the opportunity to partner, is created when individuals and organisations are invited to work together on developing actions for a

government strategy to address the needs of a particular client group. The three future partners in CS1 respond to this moment in time. Another new factor is the desire to avoid duplicating services. Organisation C, a business unit of local government, describes how this factor motivates their involvement in the partnership. The third new factor is the interest of others in the partnership. The partners in CS1 talked up the partnership at networking events and other external meetings before the partnership programme even started. Over time the level of interest rose so high that it helped ensure that the proponents moved from talk to action. The remaining new factor is the personal interest of a staff member. Alice (A) had a natural inclination towards partnership which her manager supported.

Organisations A, B, C, and Z are primarily motivated by client need; Y by external pressure. All five organisations had at least six stronger or weaker motives to join the partnership. The improvement of organisational reputation, by being seen to participate or by partnering with other reputable organisations, is a secondary motivating factor for all the organisations.

Resource types

Two new resource types are added to those already identified in the literature: (1) personal resources, and (2) promotion of the programme. Both occurred in CS1.

All participants allocated staff time to the partnerships. Along with staff time each partner describes between five and seven other resource types. Two notable financial resources, in the form of goods and services, are evident in both partnerships. Firstly, the piggy-backing of events; both partnerships are launched during events organised for other purposes, and high profile politicians and other people are present. Secondly, producing promotional materials in-house by the larger partners saved costs for both partnerships.

Competencies

Two new competencies

1. personal interest in partnership, and

2. partner seeking behaviours

are revealed in the data analysis. Both competencies relate to Alice (A)'s strong personal inclination to seek partners for any new organisational activities.

Four competencies are used by all the partnership managers; (1) interpersonal understanding, (2) team leadership, (3) teamwork and cooperation, and (4) organisation awareness. The first three are considered key competencies by Getha-Taylor (2008). Organisation awareness links to the organisational leadership roles of the partnership managers. It shows that the person understands the formal and informal structures, culture, politics and issues of the organisation.

Foundation for partnership

During the data analysis it became evident that five things

1. what to call it - 'partnership' or 'collaboration',
2. context for the partnership,
3. presence of trust and goodwill,
4. voluntary participation of the partners, and
5. level of formality

formed a foundation for the partnerships.

The term used to describe the partnership could indicate the reaction of the partner to elements such as formality. The external and organisational contexts shaped the style of partnership. In CS1 these led to an informal and organic style, and in CS2 to a formal and intentional style. The presence of trust and the voluntary participation of partners are considered key elements for successful partnership (Gazely, 2010a; Thomson & Perry, 2006). And the level of formality, an essential ingredient according to Craig and Courtney (2004), depends on the partners' motivation and the competencies used by the managers.

The interaction between the three aspects of partnership

The interactions between the three aspects of partnership are as follows:

1. motivations to partner influence both the resources allocated to the partnership and the competencies used by the partnership managers,

2. resources influence the competencies used but did not influence the motivation to partner
3. competencies influence the resources allocated to the partnership and occasionally, the motivation.

Motivation is the most important of the three partnership aspects. It influenced the type and amount of resources allocated by the partners and the competencies needed by the partnership managers. Furthermore, the motivation influenced the level of formality for the partnerships and the type of activities undertaken by the partners in the two case studies.

Participants agree. Alice (A) suggests that if the reason for partnering is strong enough the resources and management follows. Yvette (Y) feels that resources are important. There is general agreement that competencies for managing are easily acquired so for this reason are considered less important.

Implications

The research fills two gaps in the knowledge: nonprofit-nonprofit partnership and resources allocated to partnership. It confirms the presence of factors for each of the aspects, identifies new factors and themes, and suggests areas for further research. The research also has practical implications for organisations considering a nonprofit-nonprofit partnership.

Theoretical implications

The research contributes something to the knowledge about partnerships between nonprofit organisations in New Zealand. The findings

- confirm many of the motivation factors, resource types and competencies found in the literature
- identify four new motivational factors, two new resource types, and two new competencies
- show how three aspects of partnership interact and affect the partnership
- identify five themes that provide a foundation for partnership

- confirm that a range of theories are required to explain the motivation to partner.

I would like to suggest four facets of nonprofit partnerships that warrant further investigation.

Firstly, during the data analysis the formality within the partnerships appears as one of the five underlying themes that are significant in how the partnerships are organised. My findings support Craig and Courtney (2004)'s proposal that formality is an essential element of partnership. It appears that a range of dynamics governs the level of formality in partnerships. For example,

- the pre-existence of relationships between the partners,
- the external and organisational context for the partnership,
- the outcomes sought by the partners,
- the factors motivating the partnership, and
- availability of resources.

It would be useful to examine these factors further along with the impact that formality has in non-profit partnerships.

Secondly, my research only considered the motivation for partnering. It did *not* consider why nonprofits choose not to partner. While limited, the literature did identify a small number of factors that inhibit partnership (Gazley & Brudney, 2007). Given the current funder pressure to partner and the benefits that can be gained through partnership the question of what factors prevent nonprofits from partnering seems germane. Related to this is the inclination to partner. All the participants showed openness to partnering however Alice (A) appeared to have a strong inclination towards partnership. What are the differences between organisations that do and do not partner in terms of organisational and personal characteristics? Answering these questions could help nonprofits acquire or develop the characteristics that make partnership more likely.

Thirdly, the findings show that motivation affects the competencies used by partnership managers whereas the competencies did not appear to affect, in

any significant way, the motivation to partner. My research modified Getha-Taylor's (2008) competency framework to include the competencies of only superior partnership managers. I chose to discard the competencies used by average partnership managers on Getha-Taylor's framework so that it is more manageable. However, if partnership managers have poor competencies does this de-motivate partnership? What competencies are essential for partnership and why? How important are competencies to partnerships starting? It would be useful to know what effect partnership incompetencies have on the motivation to partner.

Fourthly, Craig and Courtney (2004) suggest that the equitable input of resources by partners is an essential element of partnership. My research filled a gap in the literature on resource types but I did not quantify the resource inputs or examine the relationship between resources and partnership outcomes. If nonprofits are going to partner it is important that they and their funders understand the cost of partnering and the effect these costs will have on outcomes.

Lastly, in CS1 intellectual property is jointly created by the partners. This raises the question of who owns the intellectual property developed through partnership and how that property is managed.

For the practitioner

The following questions are useful for people preparing for partnership.

- What does the potential partner mean when they talk about partnership? Continuums are useful for understanding where to position the partnership and what to expect in terms of resource sharing, decision making, and so forth. A partnership can be a process, a structure, or an activity.
- What is the motivation for partnering? It is likely there will be multiple reasons for partnering. Answering this question helps with identifying partners, needed resources and competencies, and the approach to partnership.

- What staff resources can the organisation allocate to the partnership? Staff time is likely to be the most significant resource allocated to the partnership. If there are no staff with time for the partnership then do not start it.
- Will the benefits come at a fair cost?. Resource allocations should be relative to the partnership outcomes for each partner.
- Do they, and we, know what to do? Team leadership, teamwork and cooperation, and interpersonal understanding competencies are key for partnership managers.
- Who really wants to be involved in partnership? Harness the natural inclination towards partnership in those staff that demonstrate an openness to working with others and cooperating for a common purpose.
- Does it have to be in writing? Formality in partnership does not necessarily mean having a legal partnership agreement. Partnership may not be documented formally but may still have other formal components.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Interview Schedule

Questions (short form)

1. Tell me about your organisation.
2. Tell me about the partnership and your role in it.
3. Why did your organisation join/start this partnership?
4. How important is/are these original reason/s for partnering to the continuation of the partnership?
5. What resources has your organisation allocated to the partnership?
6. Has the allocation remained the same throughout the partnership?
7. What resources has the partner organisation/s allocated to the partnership?
8. How was the resource allocation determined?
9. What would happen to the partnership if the resources were no longer able to be allocated?
10. Tell me about your role as the manager of this partnership?
11. What competencies have you needed to use for this partnership?
12. In your opinion what impact has your work as partnership manager had on the partnership?
13. What interaction do you think happens between these three partnership factors in your organisation's partnership? (motivation to partner, organisational resources allocated for the partnership or the partnership manager)
14. Is there anything you would like to tell me about partnership that has not already been covered?

Questions table with supporting prompts

| Reason for question | Question | Prompts |
|--|--|--|
| Establish organisational history and operating context | Tell me about your organisation. | purpose – why needed, sector, services, age of organisation, where located – local/national, funding – level and mix, # full time staff, mix of staff and volunteers, operating challenges |
| Understand the partnership | Tell me about the partnership and your role in it. | What is it? What are you trying to achieve? When did it begin? Who was involved in its establishment? How did you decide |

| Reason for question | Question | Prompts |
|--|---|---|
| | | on your partnership partner/s? How long did it take to establish? How is it documented/monitored/reported? What is your role in it? |
| Establish motivation to partner | Why did your organisation join/start this partnership? | What's in it for you? For your partner/s? <i>Motivations</i> - response to external factors, response to issues, to gain, to improve, to enhance service delivery, tradition |
| | How important is/are these original reason/s for partnering to the continuation of the partnership? | Has the motivation changed over time? Are there different/additional/fewer reasons for continuing the partnership? |
| Type and amount of organisational resources allocated to the partnership | What resources has your organisation allocated to the partnership? | <i>Financial</i> - \$\$, goods, services <i>Non-financial</i> – client access, personnel (paid and voluntary), expertise, knowledge, time, reputation, equipment, facilities, intellectual property, network/relationship access |
| | Has the allocation remained the same throughout the partnership? | Resource level (more/less) and mix of resources Why the change? How did the change impact the partnership? |
| | What resources has the partner organisation/s allocated to the partnership? | |
| | How was the resource allocation determined? | Is it recorded in the partnership agreement? How are changes to resource allocations negotiated? |
| Ascertain the impact of resource/s removal | What would happen to the partnership if the resources were no longer able to be allocated? | Run through the resources they have talked about – which ones are keys to the partnership being able to continue? Does the removal of resource/s change the motivation to partner? |
| Understand the partnership manager's perspective on their role | Tell me about your role as the manager of this partnership? | How were you appointed to this role? Had you managed partnerships before? If not was training/support provided? Are you the only person in your organisation with responsibility for this partnership? Have you been involved since the partnership began? How much of your time is spent on managing the partnership? Does the partnership agreement describe the role of the partnership manager? |

| Reason for question | Question | Prompts |
|---|---|--|
| | <p>What competencies have you needed to use for this partnership?</p> | <p>Which competencies do you think are most important for a partnership manager? What impact do you think these competencies have on partnership? <i>Competencies:</i> Initiative, information seeking, interpersonal understanding, organisational awareness, relationship building, teamwork and cooperation, team leadership, analytical thinking, conceptual thinking, organisational commitment, self confidence, flexibility</p> |
| | <p>In your opinion what impact has your work as partnership manager had on the partnership?</p> | <p>How important is the partnership manager to the partnership? What role do you play in educating others about the partnership? Maintaining the motivation to partner? What role have you played in the allocation of resources to the partnership?</p> |
| <p>Understand the partnership manager's perspectives on the interaction of partnership factors.</p> | <p>What interaction do you think happens between these three partnership factors in your organisation's partnership? (motivation to partner, organisational resources allocated for the partnership or the partnership manager)</p> | <p>Is any one factor more than another? Which do you think is more important? Why?</p> |
| <p>Wrap-up and opportunity for them to talk about things that they have not yet had the opportunity to do so.</p> | <p>Is there anything you would like to tell me about partnership that has not already been covered?</p> | |

APPENDIX 2: Research Participant Information Sheet



Overview of the Project

I would welcome your participation as an interviewee for my research on collaboration in the New Zealand nonprofit sector. My research focuses in particular on three factors: what motivates organisations to collaborate, the organisational resources needed for the collaboration and the competencies staff use to manage collaboration. The research considers how these factors interact and the impact of this interaction.

I am Nicola Sutton, the principal researcher. I have worked in the nonprofit sector for almost 20 years and am currently Chief Executive of English Language Partners New Zealand. This research is not connected with my work and is undertaken to fulfil the research requirement for my Masters degree in Commerce and Administration at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). This research has the approval of the Ethics Committee of VUW.

What will this involve?

I would like to interview you about the collaboration that is taking place in your organisation. The interview will not be longer than 2 hours in total. I will ask you questions about the organisation and the broad nature of the collaboration in order to understand the context and then focus more specifically on the collaboration. The interview will be arranged for a time and place convenient to you. I also plan to interview the partner organisation/s involved in the collaboration.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and notes will also be made. At any stage you can ask for the recording/note taking to be stopped. You will also be able to check and comment on the interview transcript once completed. I have obtained permission from your CEO to include the organisation in my research, however your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time up to 31 December 2012 without giving a reason and any data you have provided will be destroyed.

What will the data be used for?

All information provided will be accessed only by me and my supervisors, stored securely in locked/password protected files and destroyed by May 2015. The results of this research will be included in my Thesis which will be kept at VUW library and it may also be published in the form of an article or conference presentation. Findings may be disseminated via written articles, conference presentations and through relevant websites. A summary of findings will be emailed to you upon request.

Who will be identified in the research?

Any information you provide will be kept confidential to me and my supervisors. Pseudonyms for you and your organisation, along with generic details about the collaboration, will be reported in the findings. You may be directly quoted in the report findings. It is possible that your partner organisation/s may recognise information and comments about the collaboration.

Thank you for participating.

Researcher Contact Information
Principal Supervisor Contact Information

APPENDIX 3: Research Participant Consent Form



The purpose of this agreement is to indicate you consent to participate in this research project based on the conditions laid out in the *Information Sheet for Interviewees*.

Please confirm your consent to participate in this research by placing a tick in the relevant boxes below:

- I have read and understood the information sheet containing details about this research project and the conditions under which I agree to participate, and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I agree to be interviewed for the purpose of the research.

- I wish to receive a summary of the findings.

PARTICIPANT

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

RESEARCHER

Name: Nicola Sutton

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 4: Research Organisation Consent Form



Overview of the Project

I would welcome the participation of your organisation in my research on collaboration in the New Zealand nonprofit sector. My research focuses in particular on three factors: what motivates organisations to collaborate, the organisational resources needed for the collaboration and the competencies staff use to manage collaboration. The research considers how these factors interact and the impact of this interaction.

I am Nicola Sutton, the principal researcher. I have worked in the nonprofit sector for almost 20 years and am currently Chief Executive of English Language Partners New Zealand. This research is not connected with my work and is undertaken to fulfil the research requirement for my Masters degree in Commerce and Administration at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). This research has the approval of the Ethics Committee of VUW.

What will this involve?

I would like to interview (a) the person responsible for day-to-day management of your organisation's collaboration/s; and (b) any other person who had primary responsibility for the development of the collaboration (if they are different from the day-to-day collaboration manager). Interviews will not exceed 2 hours in total. Participation in the interviews is voluntary and written consent will be obtained from all individual participants. I also plan to interview the partner organisation/s involved in the collaboration.

I would also like to read the organisation's collaboration agreement/Memorandum of Understanding (if one exists) in order to understand the context of the collaboration at the time it was established.

The organisation may withdraw from the research at any time up to 31 December 2013 without giving a reason and any data that has been provided will be destroyed.

What will the data be used for?

All information provided will be accessed only by me and my supervisors, stored securely in locked/password protected files and destroyed by May 2015. The results of this research will be included in my Thesis which will be kept at VUW library and it may also be published in the form of an article and/or conference paper. Findings may be disseminated via written articles, conference presentations and through relevant websites. A summary of findings will be emailed to you upon request.

Who will be identified in the research?

Any information provided by the organisation and its participants will be kept confidential to me and my supervisors. Pseudonyms for the organisation and those being interviewed, along with generic details about the collaboration, will be reported in the findings. It is possible that your partner organisation/s may recognise information and comments about the collaboration.

Thank you for participating.

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Supervisor Contact Information

APPENDIX 5: Research Organisation Consent Form



The purpose of this agreement is to indicate the organisation's consent to participate in this research project based on the conditions explained in the *Information Sheet for Organisations*.

Please confirm the organisation's consent to participate in this research by placing a tick in the relevant boxes below:

- I have the authority to give the organisation's consent to participate in this research.
- I have read and understood the information sheet containing details about this research project and the conditions under which our organisation agrees to participate, and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
- I give permission for the organisation to be involved in the research and for staff to be interviewed.
- I give permission for the researcher to read the collaboration agreement / Memorandum of Understanding.
- I understand that the organisation may withdraw from the research at any time up to the 31 December 2012 without giving a reason and that any data that has been provided will be destroyed.
- I wish to receive a summary of the findings.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Job Title: _____

Date: _____

RESEARCHER

Name: Nicola Sutton

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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