Collaboration in Regional Economic Development: Why Should We Bother?

The Community Development Institute at UNBC
Spring Speaker Series 2011

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Collaboration:

“Interagency collaboration, as the old saying goes, is an unnatural act committed by non-consenting adults”.

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What makes collaboration difficult?

- Loss of organizational autonomy
- Loss of individual decision-making power
- Requires too much compromise
- Requires too much time
- Unequal contributions
- Unequal distribution of credit and glory
- Previous negative experience with collaboration
So, why bother?

- Most of the issues we face are complex and interconnected
  - They cannot be addressed by one organization or one sector acting independently

- Collaboration can work
The Research Focus: England’s RDAs

- Established in 1998
- Mandate: to transform England’s regional economies and create economic growth
- Structure: multi-agency / multi-sectoral from the Board to the front line
- Participating RDAs: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Yorkshire & the Humber
- Research participants: Board members (private, public and non-profit), staff and partners.
So, why bother?

**All RDAs: 2002/03 – 2006/07**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Area</th>
<th>Aggregate Target</th>
<th>Aggregate Achievement</th>
<th>Number of Times Target Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobs created / safeguarded</td>
<td>381,041</td>
<td>502,174</td>
<td>42 out of 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses created</td>
<td>39,852</td>
<td>56,785</td>
<td>42 out of 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People assisted in skills development</td>
<td>757,584</td>
<td>1,270,406</td>
<td>44 out of 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding leveraged (£m)</td>
<td>3,970</td>
<td>5,711</td>
<td>34 out of 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownfield land use (ha)</td>
<td>4,781</td>
<td>5,657</td>
<td>43 out of 45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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So, why bother?

- GNSS Research and Application Centre of Excellence (GRACE)
  - Supports the development of the next generation of applications for the Global Navigation Satellite Systems
  - Based at the University of Nottingham
  - Provide business incubation units that allow new businesses to access GRACE’s facilities and research capabilities
So, why bother?

- CREA Food Technology Centre
  - Provides commercial kitchen space for small enterprises
  - Helps small business with the transition to ‘factory’ production without overextending themselves
  - Helps promote the use of local ingredients
  - Gave birth to Saunders Chocolates
Planning: Information and Evidence

- Quantitative and qualitative data gathered
  
  - Quantitative: value of the regional economy, key economic sectors, trends in key sectors, business investment, start-ups and longevity, education levels, education related to key sectors, employment / unemployment / worklessness, social service demand, social service capacity, immigration, land use
  
  - Qualitative: community identity and characteristics, community history, individual stories and lived experience
Planning: Information and Evidence


1. No information & evidence
2. RDA collects and supplies information & evidence
3. Collaborative approaches to collecting information & evidence
Planning: Information and Evidence

- Collaborative approach:
  - Minimizes disagreements about the data
  - Provides clarity and a common starting point for discussions
  - Keeps the focus on issues rather than on interests
  - Contributes to achieving buy-in and ownership
Planning: Stakeholder Engagement

- Emphasis is on consultation with leaders from business, industry, the public sector, the community sector and higher education
- Philosophy: Be inclusive, involve people early on and bring the right people together
- Approach: Create the space, time and venues for stakeholders to have the necessary strategic conversations and think together
Planning: Stakeholder Engagement

- Also includes processes for public consultation
- Philosophy: Be inclusive, seek input from beyond the ‘leadership’ group, see the public as partners
- Approach: Create a variety of venues to invite input and feedback including open houses, website forums, surveys, blogs and email
Planning: Regional Economic Strategy

- Central strategic document, required by UK Government
- Content: high-level regional goals, objectives and strategies for economic development
- Goals (from NWDA)
  - Increase Gross Value Added (GVA)
  - Create jobs
  - Increase firm formation rate
  - Increase number of people with basic educational qualifications
  - Increase number of people with graduate qualifications
  - Increase employment rate (number of people in the workforce)
We would like to thank all those who contributed to this strategy. Your many views were invaluable. We are committed to delivering the strategy, but need the continued support of everyone in the region and in government to help us achieve the full economic potential of England’s Northwest.
Collaboration at Work in England’s RDAs

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Planning to Implementation: Regional Economic Strategy Action Plan

- Central implementation document
- Content: specific programs and projects to be delivered in support of the Regional Economic Strategy
- Goal: to obtain commitments of resources and action from stakeholders
- Strategy: leverage RDA funding to obtain necessary commitments and broker collaboration
Collaboration at Work in England’s RDAs

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Implementation: Program and Project Planning and Delivery

- Strategies and actions (RES, RES Action Plan) are translated into front line program and project delivery
- Focus of collaborative activity shifts from Board and executive staff to senior managers and operational staff
- Process must allow for and nurture the development of common understanding, collaborative capacity and trust among these new participants
Implementation: Program and Project Planning and Delivery

- Program and project action plans: formalize inputs, roles, responsibilities, relationships, deliverables and timelines
  - Inputs: funding and resource commitments from partners
  - Roles, responsibilities, relationships: delivery structure
  - Deliverables and timelines: monitoring framework

- Implementation: must consider organizational capacity and empowerment

- Monitoring: monitoring reports are published and disseminated widely and used to inform the next round of planning
Factors at Work in Collaboration

Planning

Regional Economic Strategy (RES) (Joint Goals, Objectives & Strategies)

Stakeholder Engagement & Consultation

Information & Evidence

Transition from Planning to Implementation

RES Action Plan (Joint Goals, Objectives & Strategies)

Goals & objectives that other organizations are accountable for implementing

Implementation

Delivery Partner Engagement

Action Plan

Implementation & Delivery

Monitoring & Evaluation

Legend

- Common Understanding
- Trust
- Collaborative Capacity

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Key Factors at Work in Collaboration

- Information and evidence
- Resources
- Leadership
- Structure
- Common understanding, collaborative capacity and trust
- Context
Implications for Economic Development in BC

- Context
- Geographic remit
- Governance
- Structure
Thank you!
Contact Information

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