Collaborative Practice Framework

Working collaboratively with children, young people and families

Prepared for the City of Port Phillip Family, Youth and Children Department by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

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Collaborative Practice Framework

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About this Framework

A shared approach to improving outcomes for children, youth and families

The purpose of the Collaborative Practice Framework (the Framework) is to support the City of Port Phillip (the Council) to improve outcomes for children, youth and families through more collaborative ways of working. This document provides a conceptual framework and practical guidance to improve collaborative practice. It should be read in conjunction with the Council’s Collaborative Practice Policy.

The Framework is based on a review of the literature and input from internal and external stakeholders. It was developed after the Council identified opportunities to improve service provision for children, youth and families.

The Framework intends to guide Council management and staff in their interactions with partner service providers. Although it has been developed for the Family Youth and Children Department in the Council, the Framework has broader application and relevance across all Council Departments. It is also relevant to external stakeholders delivering child, youth and family services who can benefit from increased opportunities to interact collaboratively with each other and with Council to provide streamlined, accessible, targeted and well-resourced services.

Figure 1 shows the cyclical nature of collaborative practice in child, youth and family services. The cycle involves identification of client needs and the most appropriate way of responding to these needs. In some cases the response will involve the Council or organisations working autonomously. A more integrated approach is required for clients with multiple and complex needs. For service delivery to be effective the needs of clients, objectives, outcomes and partnerships need to be continually assessed and refined.

Figure 1: A cycle of continuous improvement in collaborative practice

- Identify the needs of the child, young person or family
- Identify how best to meet these needs - working alone or together
- If working together, decide the most appropriate type of collaboration and how it will work in practice
- Once established, continually monitor and evaluate whether objectives are being met
- Implement changes to improve collaboration and service outcomes
Figure 2 provides the structure for the collaborative model. It is adapted from A Toolkit for Working with Families\(^1\) to reflect an approach suitable for the City of Port Phillip.

The Framework includes the components depicted below. The Implementation component is contained in a separate but related document.

**Figure 2**: Conceptual representation of the Collaborative Practice Framework

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\(^1\) A Toolkit for Working with Families was developed as part of the *Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story*, which is a Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood Development project. The project supports the reform priority under the National Early Childhood Development Strategy, *Investing in the Early Years*, to assist parents and the community in understanding the importance of early childhood.
Overview
Meaning, types, rationale, benefits and challenges of collaborative practice

Meaning of collaborative practice
Collaborative practice involves individuals and organisations working together to address problems and deliver outcomes that are not easily achieved by working alone. It can take different forms, ranging from loose, informal connections through to fully integrated services. The nature of the collaboration will depend on the issue or gap it is intended to address.

Common terms used to describe collaboration include partnerships, ‘joined-up’ services, multi-disciplinary centres, inter-agency working and inter-professional working.

Working collaboratively can be challenging and requires effort. Relationships are built on trust and this takes time to develop. The Framework is intended to assist the Council and its various partners in the practice of working collaboratively.

Types of collaboration
Not all interactions will require formal and regular contact, and full integration is not required for, or indeed the best response to, every issue. Developing a shared understanding of what the partnership should look like and involve, and what outcomes are sought, is critical to effective collaboration.

Collaboration is often conceptualised as a continuum, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Co-existing: parties work independently of each other
- Networking: parties share information and ideas
- Co-locating: parties share a physical space and may also share some information and resources
- Cooperating: parties participate in cooperative activities while still meeting individual organisational goals
- Coordinating: one party coordinates cooperative activities for an alliance of parties
- Integrating: parties merge to work as one entity rather than as a collection of individual parties.

Relationships can be one-off, irregular or only loosely connected with other organisations. For example, a local retailer may contribute goods several times over a year to enable service providers to feed families in need.

Rationale for working collaboratively
Parties enter collaborative relationships, regardless of type, for a range of reasons. Key drivers of collaborative practice include:

- Responding to identified needs – such as an increased demand for mental health services
- Improving and integrating services – such as reducing waiting lists
- Improving professional capacity and development – such as information sharing regarding best practice and emerging trends
- Addressing complex problems with multiple or inter-related causes – such as family violence.

Another rationale for working collaboratively includes building strong and mutually beneficial relationships between Council and the community. The Council has a unique role in the community as both provider and funder of services. Its size and role as a funder can be particularly complex, and lead to
an imbalance of power in some relationships. It is important that Council staff value and build mutually respectful and reciprocal relationships with community providers to address the need for more equalised relationships. Strong, accountable and responsive relationships strengthen the Council’s capacity to promote health and wellbeing, provide high quality resources and services, and support vulnerable people in the community.

Collaborative practice can assist service providers and the users of child, youth and family services in these ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits for service users can include:</th>
<th>Benefits for service delivery can include:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Better outcomes for individuals and families</td>
<td>- Improved efficiency: e.g. by reducing duplication and fragmentation of services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seamless and convenient access to and transition through services</td>
<td>- Improved economic viability and sustainability: e.g. by sharing resources and knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Improved quality of services</td>
<td>- Improved effectiveness: e.g. by having consistency of purpose and common goals, protocols and processes</td>
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<td>- Better user experiences</td>
<td>- Improved workforce capability</td>
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<td>- Holistic and individualised support</td>
<td>- Increased uptake of services</td>
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<td>- Less duplication in reporting</td>
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<td>- Faster response times</td>
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<td>- Tailoring of services for local needs</td>
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Enablers of effective collaborative practice

To be effective, collaborative arrangements need to embody a number of key principles or ‘enablers’. These include:

- Strong leadership
- Shared goals and purpose
- Clear communication processes
- Agreed processes and systems
- Staff capacity and capability
- Sound evidence base.

The above ‘enablers’ form the basis for the Framework and are described in more detail below.

Barriers to collaborative practice

Many of the barriers to collaborative working reflect failure to implement the enablers outlined above. In addition, there are other challenges that can affect the ability of parties to work collaboratively.

Understanding the complexities of collaboration and applying the key elements involved in collaboration increases the likelihood of achieving shared goals.

Key barriers to effective collaboration include:

- Lack of trust
- Lack of senior management commitment
- Communication breakdown
- Imbalance of power
- Inadequate or inappropriate funding and resource allocation
- Time and cost involved
- Resistance to cultural and organisational change.
Identifying strategies to address these and other barriers involves understanding key risks, thorough planning, a supportive environment and culture, good communication processes, and policies and procedures for managing issues.

**Key elements of collaborative practice**

**What does effective collaboration involve?**

Studies highlight the importance of the following principles or ‘enablers’ of effective collaborative practice. These may be present to a greater or lesser extent in different situations and arrangements.

**Strong leadership**

Strong leadership in the context of collaborative practice is important to maintain the linkages and coordination of the partnership, drive consistency in approaches, facilitate knowledge building and sharing, build and maintain trust, create a positive culture towards collaborative practice, drive strategic direction and overcome disputes.

Strong leadership in the context of collaborative practice involves:

**Actively championing collaborative practice within the organisation:**

The CEO, Board members and senior management are united and explicit about the value of collaborative practice and their expectations. Communications have consistent messages to staff, regardless of roles or responsibilities, about the values of the organisation and the importance of working collaboratively. Effective leadership is distributed and shared but collaborative practice is also enhanced by having ‘champions’ who drive and encourage its development. Progress is monitored and managers and staff are held accountable for their performance in working collaboratively.

**Demonstrating public commitment to collaborative practice:**

The organisation’s policies, priorities, publications, and public statements explicitly state the benefits and principles of collaborative practice. Its website makes clear the nature, purpose, benefits and activities of the collaborative practice in which it engages.

**Supporting staff:**

Senior managers recognise that building trust in relationships takes time. Staff are supported to attend meetings and communicate regularly with stakeholders. Collaborative activities are appropriately resourced.

**Supporting a learning culture:**

Senior management actively encourage staff professional development in collaborative practice and invest time and money in staff to improve their ability to engage effectively with colleagues, external stakeholders and clients. A learning culture encourages individuals to increase their knowledge and skills to enable the
organisation to achieve its mission and objectives.

**Shared goals and purpose**

Having shared goals and a commonly understood purpose provides a foundation on which activities, processes and governance can be developed and can improve impact through collective strength. It includes:

**Having shared goals/purpose:**
There is a shared understanding of the nature of the problem or issue that the collaboration is intended to address. Partnering organisations and individuals demonstrate commitment to a common and agreed agenda. Partners engage in mutually reinforcing activities that support the work of other partner organisations and reduce duplication.

**Identifying intended outcomes and actions to achieve these:**
Partnering organisations decide on the aims and intended outcomes of the process, and the best approach to achieve and measure those. The aims and intended outcomes are clear and concise and are included in the (formal or informal) partnership agreements.

**Using a common language and understanding of key concepts and how things are going to work:**
Organisations involved clarify the terms and language that will be used throughout the partnership. This is important as the language used by services can differ across providers and sectors. Participants determine and clarify the language they will use and its meaning, and this is then reflected in key policies. These agreed concepts can be revised during review processes as understanding evolves.

**Using a strengths-based approach:**
Effective collaborative practice recognises and harnesses the unique and particular contributions or strengths that each party brings to the collaboration. It draws on the knowledge, skills and experiences of the partners for the collective good and the interests of children and families.

**Clear communication processes**
Clear communication between worker and client, worker and organisation and between organisations helps facilitate shared understanding, build trust, consolidate relationships, facilitate information sharing and engage the community.

Effective communication in the context of collaborative practice includes:

**Regular meetings:**
Partner organisations attend regular meetings to share progress and provide a forum for identifying emerging
issues and solutions. Such meetings also enable sensitive sharing of information about children and families to improve their access to services and enable a more integrated response by partnering organisations.

Regular updates and communication - newsletters, emails:
There is regular communication via email or newsletters to encourage commitment to and motivation for the partnership. Communication consistently highlights the importance of collaborative practice within child, youth and family services. Having a nominated person to coordinate communication and information sharing can help build reliability, timeliness and consistency in responses.

Up-to-date and clear contact information:
Organisations provide up-to-date and clear positions and contact details for partners to access. The work of partnering organisations is made considerably easier when they have access to up-to-date contact lists, particularly in situations where staff turnover in projects and departments is high.

Timely responses and follow ups:
Partners respond in a timely fashion to internal and external communications, including phone and email. Confirming follow up actions and processes during meetings can encourage more timely responses.

Respectful feedback:
Partners provide constructive practical feedback to other partners about their performance as team members, responding in respectful ways that recognise the importance of maintaining positive working relationships.

### Agreed processes & systems

**Agreed policies and processes**
Having agreed processes and systems supports consistency of practice and approach. In the context of collaborative practice this involves:

**Setting up a governance body to oversee cultural change:**
A governance body made up of representatives from key partner organisations provides a backbone structure, enabling practice to be embedded, clear accountability structures, clear roles and responsibilities, and a mechanism for managing disputes.

**Embedding collaborative practice in all policies:**
Policies articulate the principles and values associated with collaborative practice, including the rationale for engaging in this way with stakeholders. Collaborative practice is embedded in these policies, not an ‘add on’. Processes enable all partners to contribute on an equal footing, working as a team to make key decisions.

**Providing guidelines for information sharing:**
Partners develop guidelines for sharing information about clients that may be sensitive. It is important to clarify what can be shared under what circumstances. Asking for written consent from parents to speak to other service providers in the interests of the child (particularly regarding healthcare or education) is a useful way of making information sharing easier. Co-developed consent forms can facilitate smooth information sharing.

**Shared measurement:**
Partners identify common forms of data and data collection methods to measure actions, outputs and impact.

**Compatible data systems:**
Partner organisations develop data systems that enable appropriate levels of access to information in the interests of children, youth and families. Protocols for sharing confidential information need to be clear and consistent with legal requirements.

**Having clear roles and responsibilities:**
A governance body determines and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all participants and organisations involved. Clear roles and responsibilities enable everyone involved to know precisely what is expected of them. These roles and responsibilities should be included in the partnership agreements and key governance policies.

**Having accountability structures:**
Governance arrangements include clear structures to measure accountability, including action plans, protocols and agreement of responsibilities.

**Establishing clear processes for managing tensions or disagreements:**
There are mechanisms for airing grievances, for example during governance meetings, and agreed processes for managing conflict. Power hierarchies are recognised and balanced. There are processes in place to efficiently manage the movement of partners in and out of collaborative arrangements as need and circumstances change.

**Process improvement strategies:**
Process improvement strategies are put in place to improve the effectiveness of collaborative practice.

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**Staff capability**

**Strengthened staff capacity and capability**

In the context of collaborative practice, a critical enabler is the professional skills and knowledge of staff to be able to work collaboratively in the interests of children, youth and families:

**Including collaboration in induction and performance monitoring:**
The importance of collaborative practice is emphasised during inductions and specified as a value of the organisation. Staff are expected to work collaboratively and build relationships as a core component of their role, regardless of what their role is in the organisation. Staff are encouraged and supported to return calls, attend meetings, and be reliable and responsive to the partnership.

**Cultural sensitivity and awareness:**
Staff are trained to work with other organisations and individuals in a manner that is sensitive to and respectful of cultural diversity. Staff and management support an organisational culture that is inclusive and culturally diverse. Organisations recognise and respond to cultural knowledge in the community. Processes and policies make sure that diverse populations are genuinely included in consultation processes. Staff are trained to respect the dignity and privacy of clients while maintaining confidentiality in collaborative service delivery. There are clearly stated ethics and values for working collaboratively.

**Strengthening collaborative ‘competencies’:**
Strengthening staff capacity to work collaboratively within an organisation requires role clarification, encouragement of team working, focus on the importance of communication and trust in building relationships, and collaborative leadership. Staff are encouraged to strengthen existing partnerships and explore new possibilities – for example, at their regular performance reviews.

**Professional development:**
Continual professional development for staff strengthens their capacity and capability to work collaboratively.

**Recruitment practices and position descriptions:**
Recruitment practices make it clear to applicants that working in a collaborative way is expected and supported. Position descriptions reflect a commitment to collaborative practice and require demonstration of this. High value is placed in collaborative competencies such as team work and strong communication.

**Training, including cross disciplinary:**
Cross-disciplinary training is provided and valued as a means of strengthening understanding of professional roles and responsibilities. Staff are trained in dispute resolution strategies and the critical importance of well-developed interpersonal skills when working with others.

**Mentoring:**
Staff are given opportunities to be mentored by colleagues and managers with experience in successful collaboration from within the Council or from external organisations. Good practice examples from across the sector are captured and shared to improve worker capability.

**Building trust:**
Mutual respect and trust are at the heart of collaborative practice. Building trust comes when staff follow through on agreed actions or inquiries in a timely manner, while respecting confidentiality and privacy.

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**Evidence base**

Collaborative practice is based on evidence of need and improved through analysis of data collected through regular review and stakeholder feedback:

**Undertaking a needs analysis:**
Collaborative practice should be based on identified need and partners need to assess whether working collaboratively or autonomously is the best way to address this need. There may be a gap in service delivery to children and families or an opportunity that has been identified. Partners use available feedback mechanisms from clients to determine where the gaps and opportunities might be for improvement by working more closely together.

**Sustainable:**
For collaborative practice to be sustained there needs to be a culture of continuous improvement. Regular monitoring and review means issues are identified and addressed early. Evaluation enables the Council and partner organisations to assess the health of the various relationships, how these can be improved and whether outcomes are being met.

The next section on the Framework examines the stages of developing a partnership. As shown in Figure 1, the process is continuous not linear. While it starts from an identified need – in this case the needs of children, youth and families in the City of Port Phillip – the needs of clients should be continually assessed to determine whether the type of collaboration that has been adopted is the most appropriate response.
Building and supporting collaborative practice

Collaborative practice can occur at any point when working with service users. The form it takes will depend largely on the identified need it is intended to address.

While some parties may come together for a particular purpose and then dissolve the relationship once this purpose has been achieved, the growing complexity of family need and high demand for services means the impetus for sustained and robust collaborative arrangements is becoming stronger.

This section of the Framework examines the phases of a partnership, incorporating the elements of good practice outlined above. Regardless of type, collaborative arrangements follow a similar pattern of building and supporting, consolidating and strengthening, reviewing, further building and supporting and so on. These phases are not mutually exclusive or necessarily linear. Collaboration involves a ‘circular’ continuous loop engagement. For example, reviewing practice can occur at any stage of a relationship, including the planning phase. Where alliances already exist, parties may review arrangements to determine whether new partners should be incorporated or a different kind of collaborative approach is needed. In some cases, the collaborative relationship might have run its course and partnering organisations might make the decision to work more autonomously.

Building and supporting collaborative practice internally in an organisation or externally with service providers and other groups in the community involves:

- Identifying the need for, and purpose of, collaborative practice
- Planning for collaboration
- Establishing relationships and commitment to the partnership.

Identifying need and purpose

Stakeholder feedback gathered as part of the Framework development shows that many organisations working in the City of Port Phillip, including the Council, are already in multiple relationships. Some of these relationships are in their early stages and some have existed for many years. The relationships cross a wide range of services for children and families, including child care, drug and alcohol services, preschool and school, Maternal & Child Health, family violence, mental health, community health, child protection, Aboriginal services and housing.

For collaborative arrangements to succeed, and for new parties to be successfully incorporated, the collaboration should meet an **identified need and have a clear purpose**. Collaborative arrangements could better address:
• changes in government policy with implications for service providers and users
• specific community needs, such as responding to an unexpected influx of refugees
• the needs of service users, such as providing facilities to the homeless
• the needs of organisations, such as meeting new legislative requirements
• particular service gaps, such as a need for culturally appropriate and sensitive services for Aboriginal or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families or elderly family members
• a deeply entrenched and complex community problem that is difficult to solve alone, such as family violence
• service capacity to meet demand
• service inefficiencies, such as families being sent to multiple providers in different geographical areas
• service duplication, such as multiple assessments of the same family by different organisations.

When a need arises, or once the need is identified, it is important to consider the most appropriate organisations to contribute to achieving the intended aims. **Identifying potential partners** also involves reviewing existing collaborative arrangements to determine whether the current arrangements are still relevant and appropriate, and whether new organisations need to be involved.

A decision needs to be made about which **type of collaborative arrangement** is best suited to addressing this need or whether it is better dealt with by working independently. Full collaboration is not necessarily required, or the most appropriate response, for every problem or issue facing a community. In general, collaborative practice is best suited to complex situations where clients have multiple needs and require a range of skills, information and experience. This is better achieved through pooling resources and creating a ‘one stop shop’ than working in isolation or requiring the client to go to a number of different services.

Partners need to be able to see **clear mutual benefits** and why more can be achieved working together than in isolation. Benefits may be identified for organisations and clients, and stakeholders need to understand ‘What’s in it for me?’

**Planning for collaboration**

Studies show the importance of **developing clear intended goals and outcomes and a planned approach.** Identifying goals and intended outcomes provides a clear purpose and agenda for the collaboration. Objectives need to be practical, achievable and measurable. These should be a trigger for preliminary thinking about the indicators that will tell Council and organisations if objectives have been achieved. In this early planning phase parties need to identify what information might need to be collected, when and by whom. They also need to be thinking about the data that will need to be collected to form a baseline against which progress can be measured.

There needs to be a ‘good fit’ between Council and organisations, with aligned values and priorities. All parties need to be involved in the planning of activities. This can be done by:

- Holding planning meetings involving all partners to identify common goals and intended outcomes
- Deciding on the language and concepts relating to collaboration that will be used by all partners to establish a common understanding of what these mean
- Identifying and prioritising specific actions that will contribute to the common and agreed goals, including how these will be coordinated
- Identifying the level and type of resourcing that are likely to be needed and how these will be sourced
- Identifying planning, decision making, governance and administrative structures and processes
Identifying how ‘success’ will be measured and what baseline data will need to be collected

Developing protocols and agreements that outline goals, actions and responsibilities. These could include Partnership Agreements or a Memoranda of Understanding.

During the planning phase partnering organisations need to define and agree on the different roles and responsibilities that each will have. The role of the Council is likely to include facilitation, technology support, communications and administrative support, including data collection, analysis and reporting. The collaboration would also benefit from a dedicated project role to coordinate collaborative efforts and activities. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly described in planning documents and partnership agreements.

The Council may create formal or informal partnership arrangements with organisations. Not all collaboration requires formalised arrangements. A useful compromise is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that can capture the spirit of the collaboration while describing the purpose of collaboration and its intended outcomes and making clear the roles and responsibilities of the partners.

Collaborative arrangements need to include clear processes and procedures, including regarding communications and dispute management. Issues and challenges need to be addressed in a timely way, preferably by raising them at meetings that occur regularly. If issues escalate and tensions increase it will be more difficult to work consistently in the best interests of clients. In a competitive environment where parties may need to vie with each other for a finite pool of funding, it can be difficult to put the common good above the good of individual organisations.

Establishing relationships and commitment to the partnership

Collaborative practice is necessarily based on trust and involves reciprocal support across partners. During the early stages of a collaborative arrangement, partners need to clarify not only roles and responsibilities but establish the level and kind of support they are able to provide for the collective good. For example:

- What in-kind support can each organisation provide? e.g. physical space, staff, equipment, technology, data, documentation, training, facilitation
- What funding and resources will each organisation commit to enable the collaboration to thrive?
- How much time is each organisation willing to commit to collaborative practice?

Working collaboratively requires excellent interpersonal skills and the capacity to build and maintain trust. Having clear processes and demonstrating a commitment to follow up requests and concerns promptly can help build trust among partners.

Governance arrangements should make clear which actions the Council and individual partner organisations are responsible for. Assigning actions with an agreed timeframe means people can be held accountable. Trust is built when actions are consistently followed through in a timely way.

Key steps in building collaborative practice involve:

- Identify the need for and benefits of a collaborative arrangement
- Identify potential partners, the type of collaboration needed, key goals and objectives to be measured, and baseline data collection
- Defining roles and responsibilities/actions
- Creating formal or informal partnership arrangements, processes and policies
- Providing reciprocal support
- Building trust and following through on agreed actions
- Setting and meeting targets for timeliness of responses.
Strengthening collaborative practice

This section of the Framework describes how to strengthen and sustain collaborative arrangements. Strengthening and sustaining collaborative practice in an organisation or with external organisations and individuals involves:

- Building an organisational culture supportive of collaboration
- Strengthening cultural awareness and knowledge
- Adapting the partnership/collaboration as needs and circumstances change.

Building an organisational culture supportive of collaboration

**Recruitment practices** need to make clear to applicants that working in a collaborative way is expected and supported. Position descriptions need to reflect a commitment to collaborative practice and require demonstration of this. Collaborative practice needs to be specified as a value of the organisation and emphasised during induction.

It is important that senior management commits to building and strengthening the **collaborative competencies** of their staff, such as valuing strong communication and reliability, working in teams, and mentoring roles that encourage collaborative working. Regardless of their role in the organisation, staff should be expected to build relationships as a core component of this role. Senior management needs to encourage and support staff to return calls, attend meetings, and be reliable and responsive to partnerships. It is important to provide staff with formal and informal opportunities to strengthen these competencies.

Continual professional development for staff strengthens their capacity and capability to work collaboratively. Staff may encounter resistance to changing workplace culture or practice internally and externally. In consultation with the People and Culture Department in the Council, and through leadership and management support staff may require assistance with developing constructive strategies for dealing with resistance. Staff may also need to be given support and training in integrated service delivery. Where possible, this is best conducted on an interdisciplinary basis.

**Interdisciplinary training** reduces professional biases and increases respect for the value of different roles in supporting families, youth and children. For example, the Maternal and Child Health Outreach Nurse at the City of Port Phillip attributes improvements in her practice and in outcomes for children to the good relationships with early childhood educators based on knowledge of and respect for each other’s particular experience and expertise.
Interdisciplinary training is also useful to make sure there is a shared understanding of key terminology, practice, or reform. For example, recent changes to legislation in relation to child safety standards affect all organisations working with children. It would make sense to run interdisciplinary training sessions to make sure there is a shared understanding of the purpose, implications and requirements of the new legislation.

**Strengthening cultural awareness and knowledge**

The Council has a diverse community, made up of many cultural, language and faith groups. The Council is committed to responding to the needs of its multicultural community, addressing issues of social inequity, discrimination and disadvantage, and strengthening culturally appropriate and sensitive services. **Strengthening cultural awareness, sensitivity and safety** within the Council assists in building the capacity of staff to foster relationships with families from diverse backgrounds and cultural organisations which are built on mutual trust and respect. There are a number of programs and training available for improving cultural awareness. The City of Port Phillip’s Aboriginal Reconciliation Plan (RAP) and Multicultural Strategic Framework provide guidelines for respecting cultural values and sensitivities.

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children requires a commitment to building genuine relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations, and communities. Through the RAP the Council has committed to build capacity and support opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and to embed training in Aboriginal cultural awareness for all new and existing Council staff. However participation in training sessions is not proof in and of itself that staff will be culturally sensitive. Effective collaboration means:

- Regularly revisiting the nature and adequacy of this training to continually build understanding of the impact of historical factors on contemporary issues and experiences
- Reinforcing the adoption of a strengths-based approach that identifies and builds on the cultural supports and expertise that already exist in Aboriginal families and communities
- Making sure that Aboriginal families and organisations are engaged early in decision making that affects service users or service provision
- Making sure self-reflective practice (in relation to cultural awareness) is maintained through each and every interaction involving Aboriginal children, youth and families and the organisations working with them
- Making sure that Council and partner organisation workers create environments that are culturally safe, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel their knowledge, expertise and experience are valued and respected.

The Council’s strong social justice focus, as outline in the Social Justice Charter, also sets goals for the community to work together to promote and protect the inalienable rights afforded to all members of the community. This is demonstrated through Access and Inclusion programs such as Metro Access and the Multifaith Network.

**Adapting the partnership/collaboration as circumstances change**

Collaboration needs to be flexible to respond to changing needs and circumstances, including turnover of staff, changes in the external policy environment, emerging risks and issues, changing demographic patterns and changes to organisations that lead to more or less commitment to the concept of collaborative practice.

For example, a collection of organisations working autonomously with some networking and occasional forums to discuss issues might need to work differently in the face of changing state or Commonwealth funding priorities or eligibility requirements. Rate capping is a good example of change in policy that
means Councils need to review the services they can offer and identify where costs might be reduced without adversely affecting already disadvantaged communities. The Council may find it needs to provide targeted support to particular cohorts or to encourage less reliance on Council support from some services.

**Key steps in building strong collaborative culture involve:**

- Providing interdisciplinary training and professional development opportunities
- Building collaborative competencies
- Improving cultural awareness and creating culturally safe and inclusive environments
- Being flexible and responsive to changing circumstances.

**Reviewing collaborative practice**

Without review processes it is difficult to know whether a service, partnership or program is producing the intended outcomes. It is also difficult to address gaps and issues if these have not been identified in a timely way or to build on existing good practice if this is not being identified and shared. Reviewing partnerships and collaborative arrangements involves monitoring and evaluation.

Reviewing collaborative practice within an organisation or with external organisations and individuals involves:

- Reviewing need and commitment
- A commitment to continuous improvement
- Regular monitoring
- Formal and informal evaluation.

**Note:** There is a reason for the lack of definitive research linking collaborative practice directly with improved outcomes for clients. This is because partnering is only one of a range of variables affecting service delivery and outcomes. The indicators and data sources below may be useful in showing that collaborative practice has contributed to better outcomes, but will not be the only factor at work. This needs to be kept in mind when assessing outcomes as opposed to the health of the partnership.

**Reviewing need and commitment**

Collaborative arrangements should be reviewed periodically to determine whether client, partner organisation, Council or community needs have changed, existing relationships are still relevant and
appropriate, or new partners need to be included. A governance group can be a useful mechanism for this kind of review.

**A commitment to continuous improvement**

**Ongoing monitoring of the partnership** and assessing whether objectives are being met for clients is critical to continuous improvement and delivering better outcomes for families, youth, children and communities. Policies, processes and communication all need to reflect a commitment to work together and use data in the interests of improving outcomes for clients.

Continuous improvement involves a cyclical process of:

- Regular monitoring and review of processes and progress
- Collecting and analysing information
- Using the information gathered to inform practice and decision making
- Making changes based on the evidence gathered
- Continuing this process to enable intended outcomes to be met.

Collecting information involves being clear about what is being measured (indicators) to determine impact. It means identifying the data and information that already exists and the additional data that may need to be collected. It also means developing protocols, systems and documentation to facilitate data sharing.

For example, key obstacles to information sharing in child, youth and family services are incompatible data systems and issues to do with confidentiality and protecting the privacy of clients. What can the Council do to support better information sharing to support the work of service providers? A significant issue raised by stakeholders is the centralised waiting system. The Council could investigate how it can streamline this process so the information needed is transparent, timely and easily accessible to organisations to inform their decision making.

**Regular monitoring**

Continuous improvement of collaborative practice requires regular monitoring and ongoing or regular review of processes and progress against goals. It enables issues and concerns to be identified and addressed early. Partners – through a governance group – need to gather information relevant to the agreed goals, type of collaborative arrangement, purpose of the review, and the time and resources that are available. Monitoring does not need to be arduous. It can be as simple as providing opportunities in meetings for review, such as:

- How are we tracking against our goals and objectives? How do we know?
- What other information needs to be collected and analysed to be able to determine impact?
- What obstacles are likely to prevent these goals and objectives from being reached and how can these be addressed?
- Are there examples of good practice or successful outcomes that can be shared across the partnership to assist other organisations?

Reviewing collaboration also requires regular monitoring of the effectiveness of collaborative arrangements and the health of the partnership. Meetings offer opportunities for reflection on the collaborative practice itself, such as whether decision making, communication, and information sharing processes are working well and whether the collaboration is inclusive of all parties. Monitoring the health of the collaboration means asking at regular intervals:

- What is working well and why?
What is not working well and why?
What needs to change and how?

Evaluation

Evaluation involves outcomes and impact measurement. It can be formal or informal. It can involve qualitative, quantitative or multi-method approaches. It can be undertaken at a point in time during collaboration or at the end of a project or phase. It can measure short, medium and long term outcomes. It can measure outputs and/or outcomes. The Council may choose to use a variety of assessment models and tools to provide the most up-to-date, comprehensive and accurate picture of collaborative practice in the City of Port Phillip.

Evaluation can assist partners to:

- Determine if and how effectively goals are being achieved
- Identify the impact of collaborative activities on service provision for children and families
- Provide the evidence base to support decision making about future steps and activities
- Assess whether or not the outcomes have justified the collaborative effort
- Identify opportunities to expand or strengthen the collaboration
- Report progress to internal and external stakeholders or funding bodies
- Attract other organisations and potentially additional funding and resources.

Evaluation methods

Outcomes and the health of the partnership can be evaluated using a variety of approaches, depending on the nature and purpose of the collaboration. Information can be collected throughout the collaboration from a range of different sources, including client feedback. This can be done verbally or through written questionnaires or online feedback.

Regardless of the type of evaluation undertaken, there needs to be a key or central question that the evaluation will be able to answer. The key question needs to relate to the agreed goals and intended outcomes. For example, is collaborative practice leading to improved outcomes for children and families in the City of Port Phillip? The key question can then be broken down into manageable and more focused questions.

Baseline data should be identified in the planning stages of the collaboration. For example, the proportion of families being supported within a specified timeframe by a specific service could form the basis for comparison over time. However, numbers of people accessing services is not necessarily a good indicator of effective collaboration as there may be other reasons for increased access that may have nothing to do with collaborative practice. As much as possible, indicators need to be directly linked to the key objectives sought. If it is too difficult to measure or achieve the objectives, these may need to be reviewed and modified to be more practical, achievable and measureable.

Qualitative data: will help capture the experience of stakeholders. For example, focus groups, responses to questionnaires, website customer feedback, interviews in organisations, street interviews, organisation observations, and other means of gaining client input will indicate if services are accessible, timely, streamlined and meeting the needs of particular groups.

Quantitative data: will generally help capture outputs, such as number of children going to three year old kinder, length of waiting lists, ratio of staff to child or family, how long clients wait for assistance to be
given, recidivism rate for family violence offenders, and reduction in the number of young people dropping out of school.

**Key steps in reviewing collaborative practice:**

- Reviewing need and commitment
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Regular monitoring of progress against goals and outcomes and of the effectiveness of collaborative arrangement
- Formal and informal evaluation.
Collaborative Practice Framework Toolkit

This Toolkit contains templates, tables and checklists to support implementation of collaborative practice.

**Practice Tool 1**: Mapping child, youth and family services in the City of Port Phillip

**Practice Tool 2**: Assessing the nature of existing partnerships

**Practice Tool 3**: Determining roles and responsibilities

**Practice Tool 4**: Reviewing relationships

**Practice Tool 5**: Measuring outcomes

**Practice Tool 6**: Reflective practice

**Practice Tool 7**: Further resources
Practice Tool 1: Mapping child, youth and family services in the City of Port Phillip

**Purpose**: To enable the Council to identify the full range of services provided to children, youth and families in the City of Port Phillip. This exercise will assist with identifying gaps – particularly in the context of the municipality’s changing demographics – overlap or duplication of services, and potential service pathways for clients.

**How to use this tool**: List all relevant organisations that provide services to children, youth and families in the City of Port Phillip. Identify which services they offer. This tool should be adapted as needed, and could include other organisations or providers such as partnerships like ChildFIRST that offer referrals. Once this mapping exercise is completed, use Practice Tool 2 to determine the nature of the relationship with the Council and how this could be strengthened or revised based on client need and available resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of organisation/service</th>
<th>Homelessness or housing services</th>
<th>Family violence specialist services</th>
<th>Drug and alcohol services</th>
<th>Mental health services</th>
<th>Culturally specific services, including Aboriginal services</th>
<th>Disability services</th>
<th>LGBTQI specific services</th>
<th>Primary health care services</th>
<th>Maternal and Child Health services</th>
<th>Education (e.g. preschool, kinder, schools, TAFE)</th>
<th>Children’s services (e.g. child care, play groups, toy libraries)</th>
<th>Youth support services</th>
<th>Family support services (includes parenting information and/or services)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bubup Nairm Family and Children’s Centre</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Council managed centres**

**Community managed centres**

**Partnerships**

EEP
**Practice Tool 2: Assessing the nature of existing partnerships**

**Purpose:** To assist the Council to assess the nature of the relationship with each service provider and determine its appropriateness.

**How to use this tool:** For each organisation identified as part of the mapping exercise (see Practice Tool 1), identify the type of collaborative relationship that exists with the Council and other organisations to assess if and how these might need to change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of collaboration</th>
<th>Nature of existing relationship with Council</th>
<th>Assessment of current relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong></td>
<td>Which organisations work autonomously with children, youth or families in the City of Port Phillip? What relationships does the Council currently have with these organisations?</td>
<td>Is the existing arrangement of some service providers working in isolation from each other meeting client needs? Would clients benefit from a more collaborative relationship with the Council and/or other service providers? If yes, what needs to be put in place to facilitate this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Networking</strong></td>
<td>With which organisations does the Council share information in a networking arrangement? Which child, youth and family services or organisations network with each other without any Council involvement?</td>
<td>Is the existing networking arrangement meeting client needs? Is the information-sharing efficient, reciprocal and used to inform practice? Are these networking arrangements fit for purpose or have client needs changed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperation</strong></td>
<td>With which organisations does the Council have a cooperative relationship? In which cooperative activities does the Council engage?</td>
<td>Are the existing cooperative arrangements meeting client needs? Are organisations sufficiently resourced to be able to undertake cooperative activities? How could the Council encourage greater cooperation among organisations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination</strong></td>
<td>Which partnership activities does the council coordinate? Which partnership activities are coordinated by other organisations?</td>
<td>Are the existing coordinated arrangements meeting client needs? How well is the Council managing its coordinating responsibilities? Are there coordinating responsibilities that the Council could support other organisations to take on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration</strong></td>
<td>Which organisations provide fully integrated services to clients? What role does the Council play in this kind of collaboration?</td>
<td>Is the existing integrated arrangement meeting client needs? Are there other organisations that could be incorporated into existing arrangements? How can the Council better support integrated service delivery?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Fine, Pancharatnam & Thomson (2000)
## Practice Tool 3: Determining roles and responsibilities

**Purpose:** To assist the Council to work with partner organisations to identify and document respective roles and responsibilities, including responsibilities within the Council.

**How to use this tool:** In discussion with partner organisations, agree on roles and responsibilities. (It is assumed that the Council has clearly defined its internal roles and responsibilities.) The responsibilities below can be adapted according to the needs and nature of the collaborative arrangement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Name of organisation</th>
<th>Name of organisation</th>
<th>Name of organisation</th>
<th>Name of organisation</th>
<th>Name of organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review gaps and opportunities in existing service provision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify level and nature of organisation’s contribution to collaborative arrangement(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to development of appropriate governance arrangements, including accountability structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide/undertake cultural awareness training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share ideas and information at partner meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform Council and partners of issues affecting service delivery, such as inadequate infrastructure, unclear processes, onerous administrative requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capture, analyse and report on data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor and evaluate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement identified improvements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practice Tool 4: Terms of Reference Guide

**Purpose**: To assist the Council and partners to identify the purpose, parameters and processes of the collaboration at the outset.

**How to use this tool**: This template provides an opportunity for the Council to support good practice more broadly by assisting organisations that wish to establish and review the effectiveness of their collaborative relationships.

### Terms of Reference Guide

Together with the relevant partner organisations, identify:

1. **Purpose** (Identified need or opportunity)
   - What has brought the partners together?
2. **Aims**
   - What do you hope to achieve from the relationship? (i.e. your goals)
3. **Partnership**
   - Who is in the partnership (i.e. which organisations)?
4. **Roles and responsibilities**
   - What will each organisation, including yours, contribute to the relationship? (e.g. physical space, staff, information and resources, training)
   - Who will coordinate any joint activities? (e.g. will one organisation take the lead on some things and other organisations take the lead on others or will there be a consistent coordinator)
5. **Processes**
   - What information will be collected, managed and shared?
   - How will communication be managed?
   - How will grievances or disagreements be managed?
6. **Evaluation**
   - How will you know if the relationship has been effective? (e.g. staff surveys, client feedback, self-assessment, numbers of clients and waiting times).
Practice Tool 5: Measuring outcomes

**Purpose:** To provide the Council and partner organisations with key indicators to assess how well the Collaborative Practice Framework is meeting Council objectives.

**How to use this tool:** Review and refine the key objectives the Council wishes to achieve through collaborative practice. Some examples are listed below. Collect appropriate qualitative and quantitative data to enable outcomes to be measured.

**Note:** There is a lack of definitive research linking collaborative practice directly with improved outcomes for clients. This is because partnering is only one of a range of variables affecting service delivery and outcomes. The indicators and data sources below may be useful in showing that collaborative practice has contributed to better outcomes but will not be the only factor at work.

**Sample objectives**

- The Collaborative Practice Framework (the Framework) is understood and used by all staff and management in the CYF department
- The Framework is taken up more broadly across Council departments
- Service providers show commitment to collaborative practice
- The Framework contributes to stronger collaborative arrangements
- The Framework has contributed to improved efficiency in service delivery for children, youth and families
- The Framework has contributed to more effective service delivery for children, youth and families.

**Short-term to medium term**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample objectives</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Data source/evidence</th>
<th>Proposed timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The Framework is understood and used by all staff and management in the Family Youth & Children (FYC) Department | - Council senior management endorses collaborative practice in the CYF Department | - Internal communications in the CYF Department reinforce the importance of working collaboratively  
- A dedicated worker is assigned to coordinate implementation of the Framework | This timeframe will depend to a large extent on the resources available to implement the Framework and on how effectively the benefits of collaborative practice are promoted within the FYC Department. |
| - The Framework has been well communicated and is accessible to all staff members in the Child Youth and Family (CYF) | - The Framework is available in hard copy and on the website/intranet  
- Information about its development, purpose and implementation is provided in internal CYF Department communications | |
| - Cultural change is managed well with minimal or no staff resistance | - An internal governance group is established with clear Terms of Reference and protocols to manage cultural change | |
| - Management and staff members in the CYF Department have been trained in the purpose and use of the Framework | - Staff training and attendance records show when training has been undertaken and by whom  
- Collaborative practice training is specifically included as part of the performance review process | |
<p>| - Position descriptions | - Newly appointed staff have met | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Framework contributes to stronger collaborative arrangements</th>
<th>The Framework is taken up more broadly across Council departments</th>
<th>Service providers show commitment to collaborative practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- All management and staff members in the CYF Department have undertaken cultural awareness training, including refresher training</td>
<td>- The Council has formal partnership agreements in place with key partners</td>
<td>- Partner organisations can identify clear benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Staff training and attendance records show when training has been undertaken and by whom</td>
<td>- There are clear referral pathways among partnering organisations</td>
<td>- Partner organisations attend partnership meetings regularly and invest resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Staff complete assessment forms post training session to indicate what they have learned and how they will apply what they have learned in practice</td>
<td>- Organisations increase their understanding of the work done by partner organisations</td>
<td>- Partner organisations commit to the work collaboratively through MOUs, Terms of Reference or partnership agreements appropriate to the nature and purpose of the relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cultural competency training is specifically included as part of the performance review process</td>
<td>- Feedback from self-assessment tool</td>
<td>- Partner organisations promote collaborative practice through external communications and staff training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Ongoing | This timeframe will depend on how effectively the benefits of collaborative practice are promoted to other Departments in the Council. | This timeframe will depend on how effectively the benefits of collaborative practice are promoted to other organisations and external stakeholders. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Framework contributes to stronger collaborative arrangements</th>
<th>The Framework is taken up more broadly across Council departments</th>
<th>Service providers show commitment to collaborative practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The Council has formal partnership agreements in place with key partners</td>
<td>- Other Council Departments participate in training on collaborative practice</td>
<td>- Partner organisations can identify clear benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- There are clear referral pathways among partnering organisations</td>
<td>- Other Council Departments work closely with the CYF Department to streamline processes and support whole-of-Council cultural change</td>
<td>- Partner organisations attend partnership meetings regularly and invest resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organisations increase their understanding of the work done by partner organisations</td>
<td>- Council commitment to collaborative practice is embedded in strategic and operational plans, communications, training and external publications</td>
<td>- Partner organisations commit to the work collaboratively through MOUs, Terms of Reference or partnership agreements appropriate to the nature and purpose of the relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Feedback from self-assessment tool</td>
<td>- Records of partner meetings show shared decision-making, regular attendance by partners and timely resolution of issues</td>
<td>- Partner organisations promote collaborative practice through external communications and staff training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Meetings and forums provide opportunities for information about partnering organisations to be shared regularly</td>
<td>- Partner organisations promote collaborative practice through external communications and staff training</td>
<td>- Partner organisations can identify clear benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Ongoing | This timeframe will depend on how effectively the benefits of collaborative practice are promoted to other Departments in the Council. | This timeframe will depend on how effectively the benefits of collaborative practice are promoted to other organisations and external stakeholders. |
### Longer term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The Framework has contributed to improved efficiency in service delivery  | Children and families are able to gain access to the services they need when and as needed | - Individual service provider records show reduced waiting times for children, youth and families accessing services  
- Client satisfaction surveys with service providers  
- Client interviews with service providers | Some quantitative results could be identified within 1-2 years after implementation although other outcomes are likely to take longer. |
| The Framework has contributed to more effective service delivery           | Organisations can demonstrate improved outcomes for children, young people and/or families in line with organisational objectives | - Individual service providers can show that their strategic and operational objectives for child, youth and family services have been met.  
- Client satisfaction surveys with service providers  
- Client interviews with service providers | As above                                                                                          |
| The Framework has contributed to social value                             | To be developed based on work currently being done by the Council         |                                                                                              |                                                                                                      |
**Practice Tool 6: Reflective practice**

**Purpose:** To assist the Council to build and develop effective collaborative arrangements and encourage continual monitoring and review.

**How to use this tool:** This checklist can be used in two ways: as the basis for internal quality assurance purposes by the Council and as the basis for discussions with stakeholders to identify what is working well and what needs to be improved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building collaborative practice</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifying the need for, and purpose of, collaborative practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What gaps, needs and/or opportunities exist in the current children youth and family services system operating in the City of Port Phillip?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Which are best addressed through collaboration? If collaborating, which type of collaboration is suited to which particular client need?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Of the Council’s existing collaborative arrangements, which are working well and what are the features that make them effective?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Of those collaborative arrangements that are not working so well, what are the issues and how could these be addressed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifying clear mutual benefits</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What will each party gain from working in a collaborative arrangement with the Council?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are the benefits likely to outweigh the costs involved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing clear goals and intended outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are goals and intended outcomes clear and agreed by all parties?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is there a common understanding of the language relating to collaboration and to key sector and discipline terminology?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have agreed actions been prioritised?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will collaborative practice be funded and resourced?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will progress against goals be measured?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defining roles and responsibilities/actions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are roles and responsibilities clearly articulated and well understood within and across the Council and each partner organisation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is there a dedicated worker to coordinate the collaboration?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What accountability structures are in place to make sure roles and responsibilities are adhered to?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating formal or informal partnership arrangements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does there need to be a formal document that holds partners accountable? (e.g. an MOU or partnership agreement)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If it is to be an informal relationship how will accountability and outcomes be monitored, measured and reported?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing policies, processes and procedures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are all policies that affect children, youth and families easily located and accessible on the City of Port Phillip website?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are policies developed with the input of all partners?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are policies regularly reviewed and partner feedback incorporated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is there a standard process across partnering organisations and the Council for measuring process, outcomes and impact?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will a standard data measurement system be implemented and reviewed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are roles and contact details of Council staff working in child, youth and family services readily available to organisations and up-to-date?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are partners made aware of the process for managing inquiries and requests?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are there structures and processes for resolving disputes promptly?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing relationships and commitment to the partnership</td>
<td>• Are there opportunities for expressing alternative views?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do Council staff respond to all inquiries and requests from partners within a specified timeframe?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are communications sufficiently regular and consistent to build reliability and trust?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is there reciprocal support for and by partners?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strengthening collaborative practice**

| Building a supportive organisational culture | • Do organisational leadership and senior management structures actively support collaborative practice? |
|  | • Have all managers and staff received training in collaborative practice? |
|  | • Do recruitment practices reflect the need for demonstrated skills and experienced in collaborative practice (e.g. in position descriptions, candidate interviews, referee checks)? |
|  | • Have all staff and senior management undertaken cultural awareness training, including refresher training? |
|  | • Does management specifically foster opportunities (formal and informal) for staff to strengthen their capacity to work collaboratively? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff capability and capacity</th>
<th>• Are the partnership arrangements sufficiently flexible to respond to changing client needs and external circumstances?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have all managers and staff received training in collaborative practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are roles and responsibilities clear and adhered to by all parties?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are processes and procedures clear and being followed by all parties?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are all partners involved in planning and setting priorities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are services responsive to the needs of Aboriginal families and refugee, asylum seeker and migrant families?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adapting the partnership/collaboration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewing collaborative practice</th>
<th>• Are agreed goals and intended outcomes being met? If not, why not and how can this situation be addressed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What evidence is there to show how and whether each service is improving outcomes for children, youth and families?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What, if any, additional data needs to be collected or shared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are children, youth and families able to gain access to the services they need when and as needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are services responsive to the needs of Aboriginal families and refugee, asylum seeker and migrant families?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Review the health of the collaborative arrangement**

|  | • What is / is not working well in the partnership(s) and why? |
|  | • Is there a shared understanding of and commitment to the partnership? |
|  | • Are roles and responsibilities clear and adhered to by all parties? |
|  | • Are processes and procedures clear and being followed by all parties? |
|  | • Are all partners involved in planning and setting priorities? |
|  | • Is there buy-in from all levels of management in partner organisations? |
|  | • Are partners investing adequate resources and time to the partnership? |
|  | • Are there regular opportunities for formal or informal contact between partners and organisation staff? |
|  | • Have differences in priorities, goals and tasks been addressed? |
|  | • How effective are collaborative processes (e.g. decision making, communication, information sharing) in achieving intended aims? |

**Refine the collaborative arrangement in light of the review**

|  | • What changes are needed to address identified issues? |
|  | • Who in each organisation is responsible for these changes and what will be the timeframe for change? |
|  | • How will the success of these changes be monitored and reported? |
### Practice Tool 7: Further resources

Tools and strategies to facilitate collaborative practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation tool</th>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Key review mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VicHealth Partnerships Analysis Tool</strong></td>
<td>This tool is useful for planning, implementing and reviewing partnerships. It is focused mainly on reviewing the partnerships and processes of collaborative practice.</td>
<td>• <strong>Changing organisational culture</strong>: how to embed partnerships as an ongoing way of working  &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Exploring the nature of partnerships</strong>: involves mapping the nature of the relationships between organisations  &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Analysing existing or potential partnerships</strong>: completing a checklist of the key features of successful partnerships</td>
<td>Guide and checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toronto First Duty Indicators of Change</strong></td>
<td>This tool is purpose-developed for monitoring and reviewing integrated early childhood services. It includes key elements and specific defined steps for measuring the core indicators of those elements of a program.</td>
<td>• <strong>Local governance structure</strong> – Indicators: policies and practices, planning and monitoring, financial and human resources  &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Seamless access for families</strong> – Indicators: capacity; service provision and affordability; intake, enrolment and attendance  &lt;br&gt; • <strong>High quality learning environment</strong> – Indicators: education framework, monitoring children’s development, program quality  &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Effective early childhood staff team</strong> – Indicators: program planning and implementation, behaviour management, roles and responsibilities, professional development  &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Increased parent/carer participation</strong> – Indicators: input and participation in programs, parental capacity, relationships with families</td>
<td>Matrices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Queensland Government’s Reflective Tool</strong></td>
<td>This tool supports organisations to analyse how they work in collaboration and how to improve their collaborative practice. Its focus is on building reflective thinking into collaborative practice and it can be used by staff, management</td>
<td>• <strong>Reflecting on leadership and culture</strong>: shared vision, leadership and culture supporting collaborative practice, management structures facilitating innovative practice  &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Reflecting on planning and evaluation</strong>: review, evaluation and planning processes to support continuous improvement  &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Reflecting on organisational structures</strong>: resources, systems and</td>
<td>Workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story – A toolkit for working with families</strong></td>
<td>This framework was developed to develop, sustain, monitor and review parenting programs; however its applicability extends to all services working with families. It outlines a framework for planning, implementing and reporting on a program, its processes and outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SNAICC Partnership Audit Tool</strong></td>
<td>This tool specifically supports inter-agency partnerships in child and family service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflective questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VCOSS Partnership Practice Guides 1-3</strong></td>
<td>This guide provides information, tools and resources for the community sector to build, strengthen and sustain partnerships.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Tools to support inter-agency work**  
(CAAB guidance for Irish children’s services)  
https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Childrens%20Acts%20Advisory%20Board.pdf | This document provides thorough, evidence-based guidance to support effective inter-agency working across children’s services. |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Local Government Association of NSW Sustainability learning guide: Successful partnerships**  
http://www.lgnsw.org.au/files/imce-uploads/35/SGL_successful_partnerships.pdf | This guide assists councils to develop and manage partnership projects. It provides tangible actions and examples of how to build the key elements of effective collaboration into partnerships. |  |  |

| **Guide 3 - Sustaining the partnership**: partnership lifecycles, support strategies, evaluation  
**Guide 4 - Partnership governance, models and leadership**: partnership governance, leadership roles and responsibilities, sustainability, exit strategy |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Definition of inter-agency cooperation** for children’s services and discusses different levels of cooperation  
**The rationale** for undertaking inter-agency cooperation  
**The impacts** and the **benefits** that can arise from effective inter-agency cooperation  
**Tools** that can be used to support inter-agency cooperation  
**Factors** that can facilitate or inhibit effective cooperation  
**Tips** for good practice |  |  |  |
| **The stages of group development** (forming, storming, norming, performing) and how knowing this can assist collaboration  
**The ten elements of a successful partnership** project. These include: recognition of the need for a partnership; clear and agreed purpose and objectives; commitment and ownership; trust between partners; create clear and robust partnership arrangements; good communication with all partners; mutual benefits for all partners; conflict resolution and mediation; systems to monitor, measure and learn; outcomes that live on beyond the life of the partnership. |  |  |  |

**Collaborative Practice Framework City of Port Phillip 2016**