7 Essential Resources on Partnerships & Network Building

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Partnerships, networks, and Impact Alliances can be effective ways for philanthropic organizations to take on the complex challenges of our times by bringing together diverse strengths, expertise, and resources in pursuit of a common goal. However, practitioners have many questions when it comes to establishing and developing strong collaborations.

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Movement Building

Movement of Movements, The Primer
Heliotropy & Saïd Business School
2019

What's it about? Movements that are focused on mobilizing system change will go further and faster by combining their resources of relationships, talent, finances, intellectual capacities, and theories of change. A collaborative approach will avoid fragmentation, creating instead the conditions necessary to mobilize the critical mass needed for big change. But how do we foster the conditions that are critical to building actionable partnerships between movements and supporting the progress of collaborative projects? Read more

Why is it valuable? A fundamental goal of Impact Networks is to build movements for social and ecological justice. This primer lays out the underlying hypothesis for building a movement of movements. It unpacks the theory of change and provides some key tools—i.e. mapping—that can be employed to help visualize and focus on high-leverage alliance building. It also synthesizes key insights from movement building to clarify what makes them successful, how to design them, and how to anticipate and overcome their challenges.

Collaboration Processes

Brokering Better Partnerships
Partnership Brokers Association
2019

What's it about? This handbook consolidates the Partnership Brokers Association's (PBA) core insights on how to challenge and change poor partnering practices so that multi-stakeholder collaboration can become truly transformational. The goal of PBA is to ensure that those operating in partnership brokering and facilitating roles are skilled, principled, and work to the highest standards, promoting partnering process management to decision-makers in all sectors. The handbook includes basic tools, such as: 10 key attributes for effective partnering, 5 key partnering principles, 12 phases of the partnering cycle, 7 steps to reaching agreements, and 10 common partnering challenges. Read more

Why is it valuable? The Partnership Brokers Association (PBA) emerged from the pioneering partnership work undertaken by the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) and is the leading global network for both training and certifying partnership brokers. PBA also distills the diverse experiences of PBA member-practitioners to keep the best practices in the field up to date. This handbook is merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to excellent tools and educational resources for individuals aspiring to establish and sustain diverse partnerships that are capable of generative work to tackle complex social challenges.

Partnership-Enabling Ecosystems

The SDG Partnership Guidebook: A practical guide to building high impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the SDGs
The Partnering Initiative, 2020

What's it about? *The SDG Partnership Guidebook* provides tools to support the engagement of business as a partner in sustainable development and to accelerate the number and effectiveness of partnerships aimed at delivering the 2030 Agenda. The Partnering Initiative (TPI) focuses on increasing understanding and building the partnering skills and competencies of UN and government staff, as well as their counterparts in NGOs and business. They support the organizational change required to become 'fit for partnering', optimizing the way these entities work and empowering them to deliver more via more efficient and effective partnering. Read more

Why is it valuable? The Partnering Initiative (TPI) emerged out of the International Business Leaders Forum and became a professional services firm focused on supporting the development of new partnerships. Working closely with the UN systems, they have adapted partnering social technology to the rapidly growing field of collaborative initiatives tackling the SDGs. *The SDG Partnership Guidebook* frames partnership-building in the context of a systems-shifting approach, moving participants' roles to a more transformational position that recognizes the iterative and innovation-focused nature of cross-sectoral collaborative work.

Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

More than the Sum of its Parts: Making multi-stakeholder initiatives work

Global Development Incubator, 2015

What's it about? This research report draws insights from the experiences of CEO's working in and with multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs). The report starts by asking: What have we learned from the experience of conceiving, designing, launching, and running these initiatives? Although not designed to be a comprehensive examination of these entities, the research captures the wisdom of the founders and first CEOs of 17 MSI's. In analyzing the successes, trials, and failures of these MSIs to date, the report provides a useful guide for those who are considering setting up an MSI and those charged with running or participating in one. Read more

Why is it valuable? The international development community has benefited from witnessing the conception, development, and launch of some very large-scale collaborative initiatives—much larger than what's usually seen in developed societies. The Global Development Incubator (GDI) is a storied launchpad for conceptualizing and nurturing these types of collaborations, which move from pilot projects to platforms enabling scale. It leverages the deep experience of diverse MSIs to distill best practices across the field. This report breaks down the silos that often prevent practitioners in the developed world from learning from the experiences of the global south. While nomenclature can differ, the basic dynamics remain the same.

Building Deep Narratives

Transforming Narrative Waters: Growing the practice of deep narrative change in the UK

Ruth Taylor, 2021

What's it about? The National Lottery Community Fund commissioned this paper in December 2021 to explore the practice of deep narrative change in the UK. The author selected and reviewed existing literature on the subject and interviewed a number of practitioners involved in narrative change work in order to develop an overview of the ways in which deep narrative change is understood and practiced across the country. The research pays particular attention to the barriers and opportunities that exist in growing and embedding this practice in the future. Read more

Why is it valuable? The field of social change has been relatively slow to integrate the power of sophisticated communications and narrative in order to sustain and grow movement building. This succinct and accessible report places narrative building in the context of social change, teases out the differences with strategic communications, and makes the case for the development of longer term, allied efforts to build deep narratives. The report also has links to some of the best resources for taking a deeper dive into this essential arena of social change and collaborative work.

Exploring the Range of Collaboration Models

The Collaboration Spectrum Revisited

Liz Weaver, 2021

What's it about? This resource revisits the Collaboration Spectrum and provides clarity to conveners, leaders, and partners on engaging in the work of collaboration. Its intent is to support collaborative efforts to become more purposeful, intentional, and engaging. The spectrum covers the following phases: Compete → Coexist → Communicate → Cooperate → Coordinate → Collaborate → Integrate. Read more

Why is it valuable? This concise analysis of collaborative activities builds on a decade's worth of experience by the Tamarack Institute in supporting collective impact in hundreds of communities. It explains how collaboration is much more than just one action, how clarity of purpose is essential, and how understanding the spectrum of collaboration models can improve how governance and leadership can evolve to support better outcomes.

Catalysts as Essential Agents of Change

Transformation Catalysts: Weaving transformational change for a flourishing world for all

Steve Waddell & Sandra Waddock 2021

What's it about? This article describes the emerging role of new entities called "transformation catalysts" (TCs). These vital adjuncts to social change act catalytically by aggregating, cohering, and amplifying the actions of transformation initiatives and changemakers that are working towards fundamental socio-ecological systems. As catalysts, TCs connect actors synergistically together, propelling the alignment of efforts as well as system innovation and transformation. Read more

Why is it valuable? The calculus of successful and transformational social change is as much an art as a science. It is becoming clear that in order to create the collaborative and innovative synergies that can drive high impact and systemic change, we need actors who understand their servant-leadership roles as transformation catalysts. This article lays out the role of TCs as much to inform potential TCs as to educate the other actors involved in systems change.