

Addressing public health problems through interorganizational collaboration

Cameron Willis and Barbara Riley
Working together moving forward: A forum for healthy children, youth and families
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Founded by:



Public Health Problems are Serious....

In 2012 an estimated 186,400 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in Canada... **200 Canadians die of cancer every day**
...40% considered avoidable

500 Canadians are diagnosed with cancer every day

In 2007, cancer surpassed heart disease as the leading cause of death for Canadians

Children may, for the first time, have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

Deaths that could have potentially been avoided, accounted for **72%** of all premature deaths in Canada in 2008.

Chronic disease accounts for 89% of Canadian deaths.

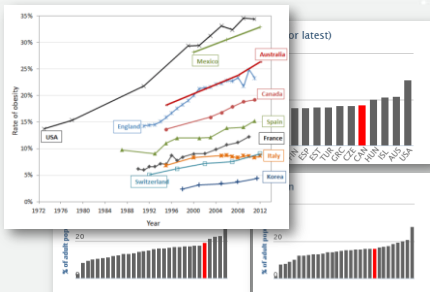
Of the estimated 4.7 million current smokers in Canada, up to half will become ill or die from continued tobacco use.

2012: 75,700 deaths from cancer in Canada

Globally, chronic disease will cost US\$ 30 trillion over the next 20 years

Cancer cost the world US\$290 billion in 2010, this is expected to rise to US\$430 billion by 2030.

Obesity Rates in Canada

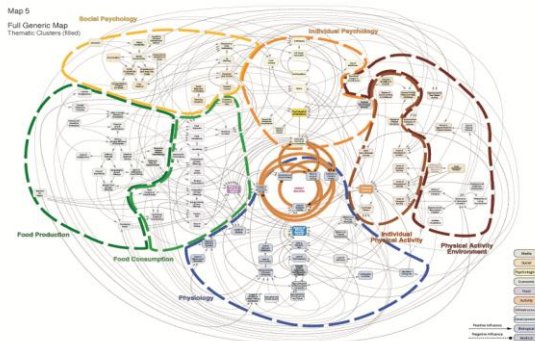


Obesity Update © OECD 2014

Public Health Problems are Complex....

"...difficult to define, usually have no clear solutions, are interdependent and multi-causal, are socially complex, and rarely sit within the boundaries or responsibilities of a single organization" - Hunter & Perkins, 2012

Obesity system map



Complicated and complex approaches

Complicated

Command and control
Make it happen
Well-defined roles
Organized structures
Discrete evaluations
Siloed action

Complex

Facilitation and empowerment
Let it happen
Agent-based participatory action
Self-organizing patterns
Continuous evaluation
Coalition alignment



Best & Holmes, Evidence & Policy, 2010; Snowden DJ & Boone ME, Harvard Business Review 2001; Trachim W et al. How do we organize: Purposeful adaptive systems. NIH Monograph, 2007.

Public health infrastructure

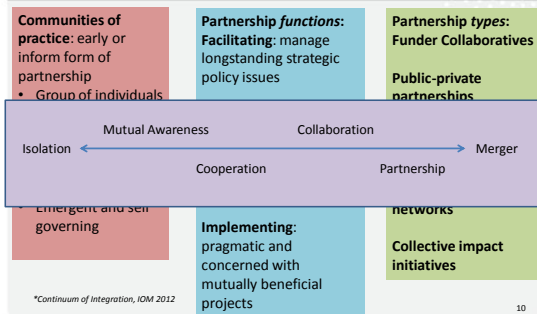


Goals for this Talk

- Highlight contemporary thinking around what interorganizational partnerships and networks are, and the facilitators and barriers to their success;
- Outline the major challenges facing the field of interorganizational partnerships and networks;
- Provide insights into potentially useful ways of thinking about your partnerships and networks;
- Contribute to ideas, conversation and collaboration.

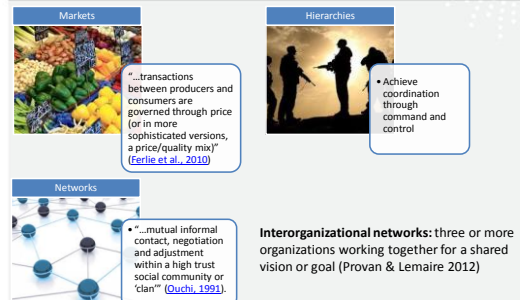
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What do we mean by partnership?



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Networks as an organizing form



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Types of networks

- **Learning and informational networks:** sharing information and developing guidelines.
- **Coordinated networks:** aim to establish new ways of integrating and connecting professionals and organizations.
- **Procurement networks:** attempt to integrate organizations in ways that enable provision of all elements of the care continuum.
- **Managed care networks:** fully integrate network participants into long term, stable and often contractually driven relationships.

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Do all problems require a partnership or a network?

- Tendency for collaboration to be seen as the solution to all problems
- Utility largely depends on:
 - How routine and predictable the problem is
 - If the problem can be addressed sufficiently by a single organization
- Even for non-routine tasks, its not clear when to use a network or not
- Wicked problems (as we've seen) tend to present difficult to identify problems, and the resources, knowledge, skills and solutions are spread across many organizations

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What is it that partnerships create?



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But there is something else...

Partnership synergy

"...the extent to which the perspectives, resources, and skills of its participating individuals and organizations **contribute to and strengthen** the work of the group."



Lasker, Weiss & Miller 2001

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Partnership Synergy

The extent to which the involvement of different partners improves the ability of the partnership to:

- Think about its **work in creative, holistic and practical ways**
- Develop **realistic goals that are widely understood and supported**
- Plan and carry out **comprehensive interventions** that connect multiple programs, services and sectors
- Understand and document the **impact** of its actions
- Incorporate the **perspectives and priorities** of community stakeholders
- Communicate how its **actions** will address community problems
- Obtain community **support**

Lasker, Weiss & Miller 2001

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Determinants of Partnership Synergy

- **Resources:** financial and non-financial, skills, expertise, information, connections to people and organizations, endorsements, convening power
- **Partner characteristics:** heterogeneity, level of involvement
- **Partnership characteristics:** leadership, administration and management, governance, efficiency
- **External environment:** community characteristics, public and organizational policies
- **Relationships among partners:** Trust, respect, conflict, power differentials

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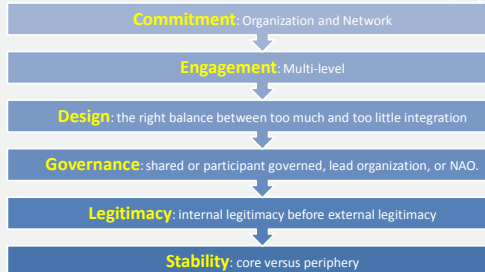
Partnership success factors



Hunter et al.; Best et al.

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Network success factors



Provan et al.; Millward et al.; Turrini et al.; Ferlie et al.

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Barriers to effective partnerships and networks

Loss of autonomy

Focus on process rather than outcomes

Culture clash

Poor, inadequate or absent information sharing practices

Blurry accountability

Varied commitment to partnership goals

Coordination fatigue and costs

Too many initiatives and too many targets

Over engineered partnership structures

Striving for permanence rather than relevance

Immovable leadership

Management complexity

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A key obstacle

"...partnerships are increasingly popular strategies for addressing problems that are difficult to solve alone, and yet **not enough empirical evidence exists to demonstrate their effectiveness**"

Varda 2013

"...the indefinable in pursuit of the unachievable".

Powell & Dowling

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Understanding value, impact, outcomes, effectiveness, performance

Two frameworks:

- Collective Impact
- Systems Change

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Collective Impact

"...the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem"

"...involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants."

(Kania 2012)

Five "conditions"



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Systems Change Framework

- Problem definition
- Identification of the levels, niches, organizations, and actors relevant to the problem

Bounding the system



- System norms
- System resources
- System regulations
- System operations

Understanding system parts



- Reinforcing and balancing interdependencies
- System feedback and self-regulation
- Interaction delays

Assessing interactions



Identifying Parts to Leverage for Change

- Exerts or could exert cross-level influences
- Directs system behavior
- Feasible to change

Identifying Interactions and Patterns to Leverage for Change

- System differences that create niches compatible with systems change goals
- Long standing patterns that support or hinder change goal
- Gaps in system feedback mechanisms
- Cross-level/sector connections that are needed

Identifying levers for change



Foster Fishman et al. 2007

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Propel activity

Two examples:

- Understanding interorganizational network outcomes
- Building a learning and improvement system for multisectoral partnerships

Stakeholder perspectives of network outcomes

Study aims:

- To identify meaningful categories of interorganizational network outcomes

Methods:

- Concept Mapping: structured idea generating, sorting and rating process
- 100 participants, multiple CDP networks, multiple perspectives (research, policy and practice)

Focus Prompt:

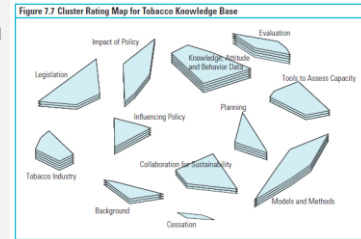
A meaningful outcome to measure for chronic disease prevention networks is....

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Concept Mapping Example

Focus Prompt:

Specific information I would need to plan, implement and evaluate a tobacco prevention and control program or to conduct tobacco control research is....



Building a learning and improvement system for multisectoral partnerships

Public Health Agency of Canada's

Multisectoral Partnerships to Promote Healthy Living and Prevent Chronic Disease

Components

- **Consultations**
- **Literature Review:** (1) models and frameworks for understanding multisectoral partnerships; (2) case examples of learning systems in action
- **System design:** informed by phases 1 & 2 and focused on measured and experiential data, real-time feedback, and improvement

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Summary

- Collaborative enterprise is a necessary component of addressing complex problems facing population health
- We know much about structure and process- comparatively little about outcomes or impact
- **The challenges:** To see partnerships, networks and collaborative efforts within the broader context of social change; to move beyond accepting partnerships or networks as outcomes in themselves; to seek to apply better approaches for understanding collaborative outcomes and impact.

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The Propel Centre for Population Health Impact was founded by the Canadian Cancer Society and the University of Waterloo.

