

Strategic Partnerships & Collaboration



4ST PLAYBOOK

A self-help guide with concrete steps, examples and ideas to explore and achieve desired 4ST outcomes

Updated 10/11/2022



OUTCOMES:

Thrust 3



Strategic and sustainable partnerships are fostered between different sectors and stakeholders for greater impact

Thrust 2



SPEs collaborate across the sector and beyond to optimise resources and enhance effectiveness

Thrust 1



The ecosystem leverages the assets of individuals, families, and communities to solve social challenges

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Thrust 3 Outcome:



Strategic and sustainable partnerships are fostered between different sectors and stakeholders for greater impact

Thrust 2 Outcome:



SPEs collaborate across the sector and beyond to optimise resources and enhance effectiveness

Thrust 1 Outcome:



The ecosystem leverages the assets of individuals, families, and communities to solve social challenges

(refer to Strategic Thrust 1 outcome for more details)

- At the ecosystem level, collaboration should be fostered across different sectors (e.g., social and health) and stakeholders (ranging from donors, government agencies, volunteer groups, SPEs, etc.) for greater impact.
- At the social purpose entity (SPE) level, to be effective and impactful, SPEs should collaborate across the sector and beyond to optimise resources and enhance their effectiveness.
- Refer to 4ST Thrust 1 on outcome “The ecosystem leverages the assets of individuals, families, and communities to solve social challenges” for more information on ways to involve individuals and families to address social issues.

Guiding questions:

- What complex problems could be solved more effectively and efficiently through partnerships with others?
- Who would be natural partners? What assets and resources could they bring to you? What could you offer them?
- How might we forge new partnerships or deepen existing partnerships? How might we enable these collaborations or partnerships to best succeed?
- How might we fund programmes, as well as set up the necessary structures and processes to share information and resources, to create a collaborative and sustainable ecosystem?



What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem refers to the broader context in which an entity operates. It is made up of all the relevant players in that space (including from People, Public and Private sectors) and the environmental conditions (e.g., demographics, regulations) that affect, or have the potential to influence, the entity's impact on others.



What is a community?

A group that shares something in common, such as experiences, interests, and values. Communities can be united across geographical or socio-economic boundaries, and are linked by networks.

Why collaborate and partner with each other?

- Better able to address complex social issues holistically, and thus bring about greater benefits to the individuals, families, and communities that we serve
- Support organisations to run more efficiently and effectively (e.g., collaborate to tap on resources one may lack, or to maximise use of existing resources)

How are collaboration and partnerships defined?

- Collaboration occurs when stakeholders pool resources and share power to achieve impact beyond each of their own means. It can mean creating joint goals.
- Collaboration can range in level of integration as outlined below, which should be chosen to fit the purpose of the partnership:



Steps you can take

For all stakeholders:

Starting
out in this
area...

1 .Establish the need and the parties to be involved

Establish the problem and the need for collaboration:

- What are the issues that would be better resolved through partnerships and collaboration?
- What is the user experience journey of the individuals facing the issue? Have we uncovered the root cause(s)?

Examine the landscape of players and identify the partners to explore for this collaboration:

- Gain a better understanding of the landscape and identify suitable partners
- Players can be of different types and sizes across the People, Public and Private sectors, and even in adjacent sectors such as health and education:
 - SSAs, social enterprises, ground-up movements and grassroots, volunteer groups, government agencies, funders, corporates, foundations, etc.
- Identify the strengths and assets that each stakeholder can bring to the table
- Identify the suitable type of relationship (e.g., short-term vs long-term) and decide how best to structure it (e.g., what new programmes, memorandums of understanding, teams and legal entities may need to be formed)

2. Invest in time, resources, and effort to make collaboration work

- Ensure there are sufficient resources and time to support the work¹
- Get internal buy-in and alignment from Board, management and staff, and work on mindset shifts
- Build capability of staff and management:
 - Send staff for training
 - Learn from other best practices in the sector (local and overseas)
- Bring in neutral and trusted third parties to help facilitate the conversation and provide technical expertise, as necessary

3. Commence the partnership journey

- Influence and co-opt other parties to come on board the partnership
- Set clear objectives and goals for the partnership
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities for each party:
 - If the partnership requires staff to support in the other organisation's operations - review internal job architecture to define and establish the roles of the different parties

¹ See the segment on "Steps you can take – For giving partners (funders and donors)" below.

Experienced
and wants
to
strengthen
this area...

4. Sustain and review the partnerships

- Invest in time and effort to grow and sustain the relationships
- Evaluate the outcomes
 - Review the partnership, and adjust the goals, parties involved, roles, and responsibilities, if needed
- Be open to cease a partnership if the objective has been reached or if it does not work out (despite best efforts to make it work)

5. Consider how the partnership can benefit other parties in the ecosystem

- Consider the impact of your partnership at the systems level (e.g., the implications on other parties and connected activities, such as service users, programmes run by another SPE, government policies and the wider community)
- Share knowledge, data, and resources with other stakeholders to strengthen the existing partnership or build future collaborations
 - Create platforms to share and network amongst sector players
 - Set up structures to facilitate data sharing and information exchange

Tips on how collaboration could meet various stakeholders' needs:

- 1 **Corporates** might wish to pursue social goals, in line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and the rise of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) reporting. SPEs could consider aligning their impact reporting to complement various corporates' reporting needs.
- 2 **Social purpose entities (SPEs)** serving users with complex needs could explore other support services that best suit the needs of their service users, and work with other SPEs that provide such services to best meet the user's needs.

Collaboration between SPEs and giving partners

To deepen collaboration between SPEs and giving partners (donors and funders), there needs to be a shift from a fundraising to a philanthropic mindset. This means that instead of engaging giving partners (such as donors and funders) in a purely transactional way, SPEs can shift their interactions to being more relational and longer-term in focus.

Steps you can take

- Establish ongoing, two-way platforms for communication and collaboration.
- Encourage giving partners to continue giving by keeping them closely involved in the work. This could be through sharing the impact of their contributions or providing them with opportunities to co-own the work through contributing their views and expertise.
- Establish trust-based relationships that will encourage giving partners to grant organisations flexibility in using funds to invest in underfunded areas.
- Develop appropriate impact evaluation indicators and infrastructure to measure success, demonstrate accountability and build trust.

Collaboration between SPEs and corporates/the wider community (skills-based volunteerism)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the desire for partners of the social service sector to give in other ways, including through contributing skilled services, has increased.

Steps you can take

In terms of skills-based volunteerism, stakeholders could consider the following:

- Align the needs of SPEs and the assets of corporates, through establishing the purpose of the programme and deciding other operational issues.
- Review these partnerships and iterate as they progress, to ensure that they are sustainable for the parties involved.
- Consider contributions from the wider community as well, such as professional associations. For instance, the Singapore Medical Association (SMA) partnered with the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)'s Singapore Cares Office to grow skills-based volunteerism in the medical sector at a national level. SMA encouraged doctors and medical students to serve the community with their medical skills, and SMA worked with SG Cares Volunteer Centres to curate diverse volunteering opportunities. Such initiatives help to target key gaps in the sector in terms of skills needed and meet needs on a sustained and large-scale basis.

Steps you can take

For giving partners (funders and donors):

Giving partners play a key role in galvanising collaborations in the sector, and they could build up the capabilities of the sector by doing the following:

- Fund and review projects based on the outcomes achieved, rather than on the inputs needed.
- Consider and fund the project based on the time horizon needed before outcomes can be achieved and impact can be reported.
- Fund projects that are run by multiple SPEs coming together to address service users' needs, which may involve multiple grantees in various sectors working together, such as on social-health or social-education issues.
- Grant more pilot funding and have a bigger appetite for failure, so that grantees can have a safe space and resources to explore innovative collaborative models.
- Provide grantees with networks and expertise to collaborate with, learn from, and share knowledge with others.
- Fund projects that develop new frameworks and knowledge to equip the sector for stronger collaboration.
- Fund projects that develop products that can be shared with other sector players for mutual benefit.
- Send staff to develop skills and take up portfolios related to collaboration. E.g., skills in convening the right stakeholders in a room, designing a process that supports meaningful conversations and collaborations, and facilitating conversations between diverse stakeholders.

Resources available

Guides/Tools

To understand how to better collaborate

Collective Impact

Collective Impact is a structured approach to collaboration. NCSS has embarked on a Collective Impact movement to equip the sector for effective collaborations leading to systemic impact. In partnership with Tamarack Institute, NCSS conducted a Collective Impact webinar series in 2020 to equip SPEs with the foundational knowledge and skills in implementing collaborative solutions with this structured approach. In 2021-2022, NCSS also organised a Collective Impact Masterclass series as a deeper dive into how to implement the approach.

The webinar series can be found here:

- <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/an-introduction-to-collective-impact>

The Masterclass series can be found here:

- <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/collective-impact-2022-resources>

NCSS is working with SSAs to conduct Collective Impact pilots on various complex issues. To find out more about Collective Impact and how you can be involved, please write to: collectiveimpact@ncss.gov.sg

Colabs Toolkit

This toolkit by NVPC is a practical guide for those convening diverse stakeholders to collaborate on complex social issues. It shares NVPC's insights from their experience through their Colabs series, which can be adapted to tackle different social issues.

<https://cityofgood.sg/colabs-sg/toolkit/>

Community Journey Journals (Developers, Members)

NVPC collated and pooled together resources that aim to nurture and bridge communities together. These insight pieces aim to inspire individuals with fresh perspective while providing examples on how others can nurture their communities.

<https://cityofgood.sg/community-matters/community-journey-journals/>

For SPEs to increase their capability to leverage volunteers to solve social issues

Volunteer Resource Hub

NCSS's Volunteer Resource Hub collates information on volunteering for volunteers, volunteer management practitioners and SSAs.

<https://go.gov.sg/ncssvolunteerresourcehub>

Volunteer Role Redesign Guide

NCSS's Volunteer Role Redesign Guide 2021 serves to provide a structured approach for organisations to create new volunteer roles or adapt existing ones to better fit the organisation's needs and strengthen volunteer engagement. This guide can help SPEs to review job architecture (i.e., how jobs are structured in an organisation) to establish how volunteers can complement their work, including through tapping on the skills of volunteers.

<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/press-room/publications/detail-page/volunteer-role-redesign-guide>

To better understand existing sector stakeholders

SupportGoWhere

SupportGoWhere, a partnership between GovTech, MSF and NCSS, is an online platform of schemes and services for individuals and families to find the necessary support with ease, ranging from mental health to financial support. Organisations can also use the platform to find which other organisations they could collaborate with to fill gaps or tap on synergies.

<https://supportgowhere.life.gov.sg>

MSF Directories

Find Social Service Offices, Family Service Centres, and other agencies providing services in the link below.

<https://www.msf.gov.sg/dfcs>

To enable collaboration in research and evaluation

Volunteer Researcher Matching Service

NCSS provides a service to match SSAs who need assistance with research projects with volunteer researchers from Institutes of Higher Learning and the public sector, who can provide advice on research design, methodology or assistance with data analysis.

<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-work/translational-social-research>

Sector Evaluation Framework

NCSS developed the Sector Evaluation Framework, which aims to provide a common language to consider progress and impact across NCSS-funded programmes, while allowing for flexibility at the programme level. The Framework is one which all stakeholders can use as a consistent set of measures for evaluation.

<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-work/translational-social-research>

For corporates to increase their capabilities to support and be involved in the sector

Corporate Volunteerism Guide

NCSS's Corporate Volunteerism Guide 2020 was developed to provide guidance for corporates who are interested in developing and implementing service-based volunteering programmes with their organisation. The guide provides steps on getting ready for their volunteering journey, engaging their corporate staff and measuring success of their volunteering actions.

<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/press-room/publications/detail-page/CorporateVolunteerismGuide>

Mental Health Toolkit for Employers

NCSS launched this toolkit in 2019 to guide employers to hire and support employees with mental health conditions in the workplace.

<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/press-room/publications/detail-page/MentalHealthToolkitforEmployers>

Resources for Employers to Pursue Disability-Inclusive Employment

SG Enable features resources for employers pursuing disability-inclusive employment, such as best practices, an app to improve awareness for inclusive employment, and relevant self-assessment tools.

<https://www.sgenable.sg/your-first-stop/training-consultancy/enabling-academy/training/employers/resources-for-employers>

Training to explore

Group Excellence

Visit Capelle Consulting for more info at
<https://www.capelleconsulting.com>

Funding available

Community Capability Trust (CCT)

The CCT is a Charitable Trust set up by MSF and NCSS and is dedicated to developing stronger SSAs. It will build upon existing efforts to further support SSAs to advance and improve their capabilities and capacities holistically, to make use of resources more sustainably and deliver better service outcomes. The CCT also includes a CCT Open Grant that supports innovative, collaborative and grounds-up projects that scale impact at the sector level.

[https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-initiatives/community-capability-trust-\(cct\)](https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-initiatives/community-capability-trust-(cct))

The Majurity Trust's Lam Soon New Horizon Grant

The Majurity Trust has launched an incubation grant in 2022 to support newer non-profits or volunteer-run groups from start-up to maturity. This includes unrestricted funding that will enable grantees to focus on organisational development, and to create space for innovation and creativity. Grantees will also receive support in community building and capacity building (e.g., networks and contacts, expertise, and guidance).

<https://www.majurity.sg/funds-and-grants/newhorizon/>

Volunteer Management Network

A series of networking sessions organised by NCSS to provide Volunteer Management Practitioners (VMPs), corporates and public sector participants with opportunities to learn from subject-matter experts, share best practices and ignite collaborations within the social service ecosystem.

Sign up to find out more through the NCSS Volunteer Management Community Mailing List here: <https://go.gov.sg/ncssvro-vmcommunity>

Social Service Summit

NCSS organises the Social Service Summit annually to gather key stakeholders in the sector to learn from and dialogue with one another.

[https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-initiatives/social-service-sector-strategic-thrusts-\(4st\)/social-service-summit](https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-initiatives/social-service-sector-strategic-thrusts-(4st)/social-service-summit)

Design Challenges

NCSS has organised the Sector Design Challenge and Design4Impact to bring together participants from the People, Private and Public sectors to understand user needs and develop innovative solutions to address the needs of service users. After pitching to a panel of judges, selected teams with the most potential to create impact in the sector are awarded seed grants to pilot and bring their solutions to fruition.

<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-work/innovation-and-productivity>

Colabs Series

Since 2017, NVPC has conducted 5 Colabs series to encourage cross-sector collaborations for greater social impact. The series is conducted with NVPC facilitating a process of appreciating complex ecosystems in their entirety, and of developing emergent insights which lead to collective action.

<https://cityofgood.sg/colabs-sg/>

Singapore Together Alliances for Action

Since 2020, the Singapore Government created multiple Singapore Together Alliances for Action (AfAs) to bring together cross-sector stakeholders to collaborate on significant issues impacting Singapore's future. Various AfAs include the Youth Mental Well-being Network to connect those who want to strengthen youth mental well-being and the Alliance for Action on Corporate Purpose (AfA-CP) to develop a National Framework and Blueprint on Corporate Purpose. Refer to link below to find out ways to get involved.

<https://www.mccy.gov.sg/about-us/news-and-resources/press-statements/2021/feb/singaporeans-aspirations-to-co-create-a-caring-and-resilient-singapore>

Case examples

Engineering Good

Working with partners and the community to increase digital inclusion

Engineering Good creates a more inclusive society through engaging others to share engineering and technology solutions. Under their Computers Against COVID programme, they take in and refurbish devices donated by the public, and work with close to 200 SPEs to reach those who need these device. They also work with SPEs who serve persons with disabilities to customise assistive technology to meet the needs of service users. In addition, their annual festival, Tech For Good, brings in the community to innovate solutions to address real-life problems faced by persons with disabilities.

Community Link (ComLink) Alliance

Working with multiple agencies at the town level to better support families with children living in rental housing

MSF launched ComLink in April 2019 to provide “Comprehensive, Convenient and Coordinated (3C) support” to improve the lives of families with children living in rental housing and support them to pursue home ownership where possible. This was done through proactive outreach, closer case support, and galvanising the community to offer customised programmes and services to the families.

At each ComLink town, MSF’s Social Service Office (SSO) leads a ComLink Alliance, comprising government agencies, corporates, and community partners, to pool resources and steer this effort. When ComLink was first launched in 2019, it was launched at 4 sites to provide greater support to around 1,000 families. Support programmes ranged from reading and tuition classes for kids to employment coaching for adults.

In March 2021, it was announced that MSF would be scaling ComLink nation-wide, to 21 towns over the next two years. The scale-up was expected to benefit 14,000 families with children living in rental housing across Singapore.

Case examples

KK Women's and Children's Hospital and Lien Foundation's DayOne project

Working together to pilot cross-sector initiatives

KK Women's and Children's Hospital and Lien Foundation have co-funded and launched a two-year pilot to provide holistic support to caregivers of children with developmental needs from the time of the child's diagnosis. This includes having a multidisciplinary team comprising medical social workers, psychologists and paediatricians; and redesigning processes to frequently connect with and support caregivers. The programme will be assessed based on data collected, with a view to work with more community partners to scale up.

Ray of Hope

Platform to allow community members to donate directly to meet needs, fundraise or access support

Ray of Hope galvanises the community to donate to a variety of needs. They encourage the community to do so by absorbing transaction costs such that 100% of donations through their website go to service users, and by verifying service users and their needs. They also work with their networks including Family Service Centres, to refer service users who need crowdfunding support. Beyond funding support, they support service users in other ways, such as providing them assistance to be employment ready.

Ideas for exploration

Large-scale collaboration to achieve greater impact at systems level

Australia: Industry Employment Initiative (IEI)

What is it?

Various Australian organisations collaborate to holistically address long-term unemployment in Australia amongst those aged 18-24 years on a large scale.

Potential benefits

Meet the needs of job seekers, companies seeking employees, government and social SPEs who want to help jobseekers become more financially independent.

How does it work?

The Industry Employment Initiative (IEI) engages companies to design employment pathways that lead to various jobs. IEI then trains jobseekers looking for jobs in hospitality, retail, and early childhood learning industries accordingly.

Various organisations bring different strengths to this partnership, with a government initiative Jobs Victoria funding the programme, Jesuit Social Services providing training and wrap-around support, and large employment partners providing feedback and hiring. Social Ventures Australia had served as an intermediary to fundraise, network with relevant partners, and increase evaluation capacity to improve the programme.

IEI encourages companies to use data on the outcomes of the programme to further develop companies' internal policies and the IEI model.

Food for thought

How might collaboration help organisations to broker and match assets and needs on a large scale to sustainably solve complex social issues? How might we facilitate more of such collaborations to bring together various assets to solve complex social issues?

Intermediaries can help to negotiate and manage skills-based volunteerism partnerships between corporates and SPEs

United States: Common Impact

What is it?

Common Impact helps to align business and social purpose by linking up and managing partnerships between corporates and SPEs.

Potential benefits

Able to provide a neutral third-party perspective and dedicated resources to manage partnerships, including helping to find suitable partners, scope projects, and manage relationships and project adjustments needed along the way.

How does it work?

Common Impact works to understand the goals of stakeholders involved and link them up to deliver each party's goals.

For example, Common Impact worked to identify technology projects that would make SPEs more efficient. At the same time, corporates could use their existing skills on these projects, while further developing the skills, network, and experience of the corporate employees.

Food for thought

How might intermediaries help to match and manage skills-based volunteerism partnerships across the sector? Who might play the role of such intermediaries?

Pursue collaborative philanthropy to encourage funders to resource addressing complex issues together

United States: The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Blue Meridian Partners

What is it?

Blue Meridian Partners ("Blue Meridian") aggregates capital and directs it towards advancing economic mobility among Americans who need such help.

Potential benefits

- Allow funders to share the costs of funding solutions, and the risks and successes of making such investments.
- Provide funds to scale up impactful solutions and ensure that such solutions are funded sustainably over the long-term.

How does it work?

- The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation incubated and launched Blue Meridian in 2016, leveraging off the Foundation's experience in and approach to performance-based investing.
- Blue Meridian finds solutions that show potential for impact, and sources funders to scale up such solutions through long-term investments. Blue Meridian also holds SPEs accountable for such investments through measuring their performance.
- Blue Meridian follows rigorous sourcing against selection criteria, does due diligence on the organisations they seek to fund, invests initial 1 to 2-year grants to help organisations prepare to scale, gives longer term investments of 10-12 years (approved in 2-5-year phases on meeting performance milestones), and pairs each grantee with a resource person to provide strategic counsel to the CEO and Board.
- Blue Meridian shares all its research on sourcing and due diligence with funding partners. It also shares with funding partners regular reports on investees' performance and opportunities for deeper engagement.
- As of 2022, Blue Meridian Partners garnered a capital base of over US\$3 billion.

Food for thought

How might trust and accountability be built to foster collaborations amongst funders of such scale that can bring about greater impact?

Annex - References:

Facilitating various types of collaboration & examples

- <https://doi.org/10.1606%2F1044-3894.634>
- https://www.bridgespan.org/bridgespan/Images/articles/making-sense-of-nonprofit-collaborations/MakingSenseOfNonprofitCollaborations_1.pdf
- <https://cityofgood.sg/colabs-sg/toolkit/>
- https://ssir.org/articles/entry/building_capacity_for_sustained_collaboration
- <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/community/migrant-workers-in-spore-better-poised-to-seek-help-with-launch-of-new-coalition>
- <https://www.uobgroup.com/web-resources/uobgroup/pdf/newsroom/2019/UOB-Unlimited-EEA.pdf>
- <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/4-welfare-arts-groups-moving-to-kallang-mall>
- <https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Guidelines/Circulars/dc20-01>

Collaboration between SPEs and giving partners

- <https://www.un.org/en/sustainable-development-goals>
- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>
- <https://www.pwc.com/sk/en/environmental-social-and-corporate-governance-esg/esg-reporting.html>
- <https://www.rogare.net/relationship-fundraising>
- <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/nonprofit-management-tools-and-trends/donor-relationship-management>
- <https://www.thinknpc.org/blog/rethinking-grant-making/>
- <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/nonprofit-management-tools-and-trends/performance-measurement-and-improvement>

Collaboration between SPEs and corporates/the wider community (skills-based volunteerism)

- <https://www.straitstimes.com/business/the-rise-of-virtual-and-skills-based-volunteering-amid-pandemic>
- <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/about-us/news-and-resources/press-statements/2021/aug/skills-based-volunteerism-partnerships-singapore-medical-association/>
- https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_promise_of_skills_based_volunteering

Engineering Good

- <https://engineeringgood.org/digital-inclusion/cac/>
- <https://engineeringgood.org/assistive-tech/bespoke/>
- <https://engineeringgood.org/assistive-tech/t4g-home/>

ComLink Alliance

- <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Community-Link-Expanded-To-Reach-21-Towns-And-14000-Families-Over-Next-Two-Years.aspx>

Annex - References:

KK Women's and Children's Hospital and Lien Foundation's DayOne project

- <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/parenting-education/more-mental-health-support-for-caregivers-of-children-with-developmental-needs>

Ray of Hope

- <https://rayofhope.sg/about-us>

Industry Employment Initiative

- <https://www.socialventures.com.au/work/iei/>

Common Impact

- <https://commonimpact.org/about/>
- <https://commonimpact.org/success-stories/skills-based-volunteering-in-action-team-consulting/>

Blue Meridian Partners

- <https://www.emcf.org/our-strategies/blue-meridian-partners/>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/luisakroll/2016/12/07/billionaires-sergey-brin-david-tepper-join-steve-ballmer-stanley-druckenmiller-in-850-million-philanthropic-bet-to-help-nations-kids/?sh=3636b2d553e4>
- <https://www.blumeridian.org/>