AFRICAN EDUCATION RESEARCH FUNDING CONSORTIUM

Background Note I Funder collaboration models

Funder collaboration models

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Key takeaways

- Consortia are generally created to address **long-term, complicated and complex challenges.**
- **Collaboration is not always simple**. On one hand, funder collaboration may enable individual players to experiment with ideas and methods that they would not ordinarily pursue alone. On the other hand, it requires major time and financial investment, as well as loss of autonomy and authority.
- Collaboration, especially consortiums, need **collaborative leadership.**
- Consortia should not over-design or rush towards a 'hard-tied' structure at the outset of operations, but rather **allow it to evolve gradually**.
- We highlight **three investment theses to help funders make a decision on allocating funding.** The investment thesis emerges from an understanding of the impact that collaborative members hope to achieve, the value they contribute to and anticipate from working together, and how they will invest together to have a greater impact than investing alone.

The 5 Recommendations to support education policy in Africa

1. Drive impact by supporting a long-term vision.
2. Respond to local needs, agendas and initiatives by funding local organisations and their missions.
3. Provide funding across the generation, communication and use of evidence.
4. Support the inclusion of women, young people, and minorities.
5. Promote dynamic learning.

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1. About the concept note

This concept note focuses on existing models and frameworks that shape funders' collaboration. We looked at different aspects of funders' collaborations that can inform collaborative design. This concept note is divided as follows: Sections 1 explores definitions of funders consortiums or collaborations and the reasons why funders collaborate. Section 2 explores types of funder collaboratives; section 3 lays out collaboration models, leadership and decision-making models, governance models, and section 4 discusses different investment theses funders can use. Finally, section 5 outlines enablers and barriers to successful collaboration.

This note is not meant to be a comprehensive literature review, nor does it cover all existing examples of funders' collaboratives. Instead, this concept note aims to lay a basis for discussing issues relevant to the success of the pilot phase of the African Education Research Funding Consortium and how the consortium may develop. Upon discussion of priorities, there is space and opportunity to dig deeper into specific models or issues.

To develop this concept note, we have reviewed a selection of resources, including literature reviews, think pieces, case studies, and institutional reports to identify models and approaches used by funders' collaboratives or consortia. We believe the concept note can help the Consortium frame its priorities and its approaches as it navigates how to incorporate the 5 principles into its activities and long-term objectives.

Limitations

Most of the papers reviewed focused on the viewpoints of funders rather than grantees or other stakeholders. Few papers discussed the various value propositions that collaboratives may have and how those value propositions impact structure and governance.

Although there is a growing amount of work reporting on collaborative activities, there is little published information on consortium management and its impact on achieving objectives. Other significant gaps in the research include lack of attention to learning from unsuccessful collaborations; lack of investigation of the grantee experience; and lack of understanding of how and whether collaboratives evolve over time.

These gaps present opportunities for further research.

Summary

Topics covered in the note	Action point for the consortium
Research gaps (effectiveness of consortia approaches, impacts, lessons from failed experiences, limited views from grantees)	This could be aligned with Recommendations 2 & 5 and can be used to inform the Consortium's research agenda, particularly in understanding grantees/local partners' view of consortia collaborations.
Types of funder collaboratives, their objectives, and the different ways they adopt to achieve their goals.	This is a general section that would hopefully contribute to the achievement of all 5 Recommendations. The note highlights the importance of clearly defining management structures and collaboration expectations early on to ensure long-term outcomes.
Models that funders can adapt to achieve consortia goals.	The information presented in this section is relevant to the achievement of Recommendation 1 and different aspects of Recommendation 3, 4, and 5.
Investment theses on ways funding strategies can align with funders' objectives and goals.	The information presented in this section is relevant to the achievement of Recommendation 3. It presents evidence and lessons on how other consortia have allocated their funding/prioritise their funding approach. The note recommends defining this early on to guide long-term funding strategies.

2. What are funders consortia?

A consortium is a form of partnership where two or more parties (in this case funders) come together to tackle a specific challenge or achieve a common objective such as share learnings, strategise on social impact efforts, or pool their financial resources to address a specific cause or challenge (Allen, James, & Gamlen, 2007). Funders consortia are formed by “like-minded funders”, but they can also include other actors such as civil society organisations, individuals (experts, researchers) (Milken Institute, 2022). Funders often come together in consortia to “align their philanthropic giving based on shared long-term goals, geographic areas of interest, beneficiary populations, or other commonality” (Milken Institute, 2022; Co-Impact, 2021).

Other sources define consortia as type of network that brings together like minded actors (individuals and organisations) and their resources (knowledge, money, expertise, access to other networks) to achieve a shared goal (i.e., share knowledge, allocate funding, implement projects or programs) (Allen, James, & Gamlen, 2007; Kogut, 2000).

Funders consortia are often referred to as high-stakes' partnerships. According to Seldon, Tierney & Fernando (2013), high-stakes partnerships place results ahead of organisational or individual recognition. In the case of a funder’s consortium, funders can do more collectively than alone with limited resources (Burns, 2019; Bond, 2021). When successfully implemented, high-stakes partnerships magnify the aggregate of each partner's efforts and generate results that exceed the reach of a single contributor (Powell, Wolf Ditkoff, & Hassey, 2018). However, cooperation is not always straightforward. On one hand, funder collaboration allows individual players to explore ideas and strategies they would not normally undertake alone. These "risky actions" offer the potential for significant rewards (Burns, 2019). On the other hand, such collaboration entails significant time and financial investment, loss of autonomous decision-making and control, and a 'risk' of shared reputational damage if something goes wrong.

Collective impact is a key aspect to understand a consortium of funders. Collective impact is a form of collaboration that can be described as “an intentional way of working together and sharing information for the purpose of solving a complex problem” (National Council of Nonprofits, 2018; Kania & Kramer, 2011). Many funders are engaging in collective impact “to leverage different forms of power and create real, sustainable community transformation.” (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Through collective impact, organisations advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population and systems-level change.

When talking about consortia formed by funders, the literature also refers to them as funders’ collaboratives. In this concept note, we use the terms collaborative and consortium interchangeably.

3. Types of funder collaboratives

A useful way to think about different forms of funders' collaboratives is by placing them across a spectrum of control and integration: on one end, there are information or knowledge exchanges, and on the other, more formal joint ventures, new collaboratives, or re-granting bodies (Figure 1) (Powell, Wolf Ditkoff, & Hassey, 2018).

Figure 1. Spectrum of funders collaboration

Source: Adapted from Powell, Wolf Ditkoff, & Hassey (2018).

Exchange knowledge: Funders partner collaborate to exchange ideas and raise awareness. An example of this are peer learning networks.

<u>Peer learning or research networks</u>: This community of funders exchange best practices and information, learn from one another, and occasionally cooperate in educating themselves about a certain topic of interest. Because each member benefits from shared knowledge while maintaining total independence in charitable decision-making, this collaboration has the lowest activation barrier. These networks are typically organised as informal groups that allow access to an online or in-person community without imposing significant expectations or obligations on any member (Powell, Wolf Ditkoff, & Hassey, 2018).

- **Pro**: This form of collaboration is relatively inexpensive to run and allows members with different models and backgrounds to join. It can be easily dismantled once the objectives have been achieved.
- **Con**: It has limited collective action capacity and depends on the members' own agency to deploy resources in a collaborative manner. Without proper knowledge management channels, it can also be limited to sharing of information.

Donors' Experience: Grantmakers for Education

Grantmakers for education is a network of 300 organisations that seeks to provide a learning and experience sharing platform to like-minded organisations across the United States. The organisation seeks to catalyse learning, foster connections, and create opportunities for members to collectively advance effective, strategic and equity-centered grantmaking in the field of education.
Source: (Grantmakers for Education, 2022)

Coordinate funding: Funders agree upon shared or complementary strategies, exchange ideas on an ongoing basis, and invest in aligned causes.

Strategic alignment networks or coordinated funding: These networks enable issue-aligned contributors to organise their activities in response to shared concerns. Funders have common interests and objectives but have autonomous decision-making processes and, in many cases, diverse beneficiaries. Members of these networks might collaborate to establish complementary methods or align their grantmaking operations to maximise their combined influence on the topic under consideration.

- **Pro**: This approach offers potential for growing membership, and it could be relatively inexpensive to run (depending on the structures in place to implement strategies.) It also allows to tackle deep-rooted problems that require long-term and extensive funding to tackle.
- **Con**: It could create a multiplication of processes and demands on grantees. It could lead to reduced plurality in the field since granting could become concentrated in a few topics and beneficiaries.

Donors' Experience: Big Bang Philanthropy

Big Bang Philanthropy is a community of like-minded funders committed to finding long-term solutions to poverty. While each member makes their own decisions, they all agree to contribute at least USD 1 million per year to poverty solutions in poor countries and to finance at least five organisations that are establishing and scaling meaningful impact. Members also exchange leads, insights, networks, and due diligence to foster effective philanthropy.

Source: (Milken Institute, 2022)

Co-invest in new or existing entities or initiatives: Funders contribute to a single pool used collectively to achieve common goals. In this partnership, funders share a common vision, objectives, and success metrics.

Pooled funding for a new initiative: Contributing to a pooled fund can help reduce investment risk by sharing it with other contributors. This collaboration demands partners to have a high degree of trust and programming agreement, which can be challenging to create. As a result, pooled funds often take a more formal approach in which participants form partnerships with specific governance and investing rules.

- **Pro**: It can strengthen agency to drive change forward, it can reduce the demands (processes and requirements) on grantees.

- **Con**: It can be inexpensive to run (especially if a new entity is created), can reduce grantee's opportunities to interact with funders directly (fewer entry points), and can reduce plurality.

Donors' Experience: Co-Impact

Co-Impact is a global organisation focused on building just and equitable systems that aim to bring together philanthropists, foundations, and private sector partners to pool funding that supports efforts to drive system change in Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the sectors of health, education, and economic opportunity. Richard Chandler, Bill and Melinda Gates, Jeff Skoll, Romesh and Kathy Wadhwani, and The Rockefeller Foundation are among the initial key partners. Co-Impact currently has two funds committed to achieving equitable system change at scale: The Foundational Fund and the Gender Fund.

Source: (Co-Impact, 2021)

Fund the funder: Philanthropic donors or major funders invest in another funder with deep experience in a certain topic to achieve long-term goals. Often donors allocate funding and let the recipient organisation (funder) use existing procedures and internal infrastructure for re-granting. Some examples of this model include Warren Buffett's pledge to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, he allocated his funds to be spent as part of the Foundation's contributions to health outcomes.

4. What models can funders adapt to achieve consortia goals?

This section presents different models to inform consortia's strategies to achieve their objectives. This section focuses on three elements that are often interconnected:

- Collaboration models
- Leadership and decision-making models
- Governance models

Collaboration models: why do funders come together?

In a mapping and analysis exercise, Seldon et al. (2013) reviewed a dozen funders' collaborations and identified three, often overlapping, approaches to achieve funders' goals: 1) accessing expertise, 2) pursuing system-level change, and 3) aggregating growth capital.

Accessing expertise: Donors can lack the knowledge required to engage in effective grantmaking in a new subject of interest. Instead of investing in creating specialised knowledge on their own, they may decide to pool resources to generate collective expertise.

Donors' Experience: The Energy Foundation

The Energy Foundation, founded in 1991, is the largest funder focusing on energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. It began as a collaborative effort between the Rockefeller Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the MacArthur Foundation. None of the foundations had an energy program at the time. Recognising their organisations' lack of expertise in the energy sector, the three foundation presidents sought the expertise of a known authority in the field to assist them in developing a strategy for optimising energy development and consumption. The three founding organisations contributed a total of USD 100 million to the initiative over a 10-year period. Investing in the Energy Foundation together enables the funders to exchange specialised experience rather than pursuing a similar route alone. A decade after the first investment, a second wave of investors, notably the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, joined the partnership, drawn in large part by the Energy Foundation's experience and platform.

Source: Seldon, Tierney, & Fernando (2013)

System-level change: Donors collaborate to create system-level rather than incremental change, leveraging their reputations, networks, knowledge, and financial resources to further their mutual objectives.

Aggregating capital: Funder partnerships frequently provide funds as a means to a shared objective, but other collaborations are formed purely to pool significant quantities of money.

Donors' Experience: Living Cities

The Rockefeller Foundation led the formation of a USD 62.5 million fund in 1991 to give grants and loans for community development initiatives across the United States. The Rockefeller Foundation attracted five foundations and a for-profit insurance firm to the partnership. The organisation directed upfront funding into high-risk initiatives like low-income housing by pooling their financial resources. The collaborative spent USD 250 million in revitalisation initiatives in over a dozen locations over its first decade. Living Cities is still an innovative high stakes donor cooperation with 22 collaborating foundations and financial institutions two decades later.

Source: Seldon, Tierney, & Fernando (2013)

Leadership and decision-making models

Any collaboration, including consortiums, needs collaborative leadership. Consortium leadership refers to any combination of leadership styles used by all consortium members, including, but not limited to, the role of the lead agency. Consortia confront the issue of combining a more "traditional" (with an appointed "lead organisation") and more collaborative, systemic approaches where leadership demands sharing responsibilities in ways that allow the most suitable solutions to emerge.

Key features of traditional and collaborative leadership models include:

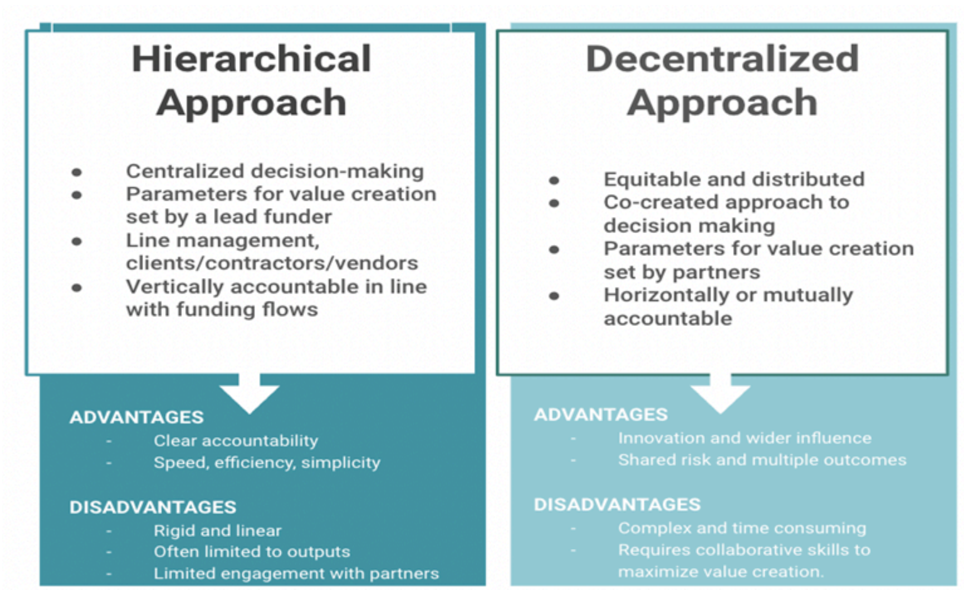
- *Traditional leadership model*: In a traditional model, an individual or team in the lead organisation oversees whether program goals are being met. In this model:
  a) significant decisions are made by one or few leaders;
  b) formal authority is used to reach strategy and goals;
  c) roles and responsibilities can be rigidly held to;
  d) a few maintain key information.

- *Collaborative leadership*: In a collaborative model, decision-making and problem-solving are shared, and members at all levels are empowered to act and adapt. A sense of collective responsibility between members can ensure that program goals are met. In this model:
  a) roles and responsibilities are allowed to evolve and fluctuate;
  b) information and knowledge are openly shared.

Traditional leadership approaches are useful to kick-start a consortium, motivate members to work together toward their shared vision and maintain momentum around time-sensitive decisions. However, managing diverse, distributed members in a consortium also requires managing relationships among members and the contributions of multiple organisations without vertical-line management accountability.

Bond (2021) proposes a balance between both models, transactional management of grants and projects and collaborative and decentralised approaches (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Features, advantages, and disadvantages of transactional and collaborative approaches.



Source: Adapted from Bond (2021)

In practice, this is an exercise of balance between both models that the consortium needs to reach as they advance toward their goals. Decision-making cannot be so time-consuming that it causes a loss of momentum, but informed decisions are essential to minimise risks to the consortium and maximise buy-in and effectiveness. The consortium should collectively decide who needs to be involved and what process should be used for different types of decisions at different levels of operation. As shared decision-making is a key aspect of collaborative leadership, the consortium leads should initiate early discussions and exploration around the variety of decision-making models and approaches and help members determine which approaches are most suitable for each area of the consortium's work.

Governance models

Every consortium is different and will require a governance structure tailored to its needs (Bond, 2021). There is no "perfect" combination of collaborative governance structures, procedures, and behaviors, nor is there a certain moment when they should be implemented. Consortia should not over-design or rush towards a 'hard-tied' structure at the outset of operations but rather allow it to evolve gradually. (Bond, 2021). It is important to remember that not all levels of governance might be necessary for all consortium types. The important consideration is that the consortium lead and members make decisions about governance and management based on their program's ambitions and core drivers.

Typical elements of a consortium governance structure include (Figure 3) (Tagoe, Sassy, Justin, & Sam, 2022; Bond, 2021):

Figure 3. Governance and management structures and designations across consortia.

	Governance and management levels	Examples of names used by consortia
01	**Advisory**: High-level strategic oversight	• Strategic Advisory Board • Independent Scientific Advisory Team • Expert Oversight Advisory Board • Consortium Advisory Board
02	**Steering**: Strategic direction and management	• Consortium Steering Committee • Board of Management • Executive Committee • Programme Management Board
03	**Executive**: Programme management and day-to-day coordination	• Executive Team • Secretariat • Executive Directorate • Executive Committee
04	**Technical**: Coordinating components of the programme/initiative	• Sub-committees • Implementation Team • Strategic Hubs • Operational Teams

Source: Adapted from Tagoe, Sassy, Justin, & Sam (2022)

- **Advisory Group:** It provides a level of strategic oversight and comprises individuals with the requisite expertise and a wealth of experience who are not members of the participating institutions and can contribute towards well-informed strategy and decision-making.

- **Consortium Steering Group:** The ultimate authority, made up of executive representatives of members, potentially including a donor representative, meeting perhaps every few months.

- **Consortium Lead:** The “accountable grantee” and fiduciary agent for the consortium, reporting to and directly engaging with the donor.

- **Management Group or Executive Team:** “Working level” partner representatives meet regularly (for a larger consortium, this might be a sub-group of “core” partners). This group is responsible for the day-to-day management of consortia activities.

- **Technical level:** This level coordinates specific components, if any. It is usually formed by sub-committees.

5. Investment theses

Funders consortia should be aware early on about how they want to achieve their goals. Powell & Dinkoff (2019) argue that investment theses should inform the effect that collaborative members aim to achieve, the value they bring to and expect from working together, and how they will invest together to create more impact than investing alone.

Consortia might have many investment hypotheses; however, effective collaboratives tend to choose one thesis as primary (Powell & Wolf Ditkoff, 2019). Powell et al. (2018, 2019) outline three investment theses:

- **Organisation funders:** Collaboratives employing this investment thesis guarantee outcomes largely by supporting high-performing individuals and organisations that fulfill the overall aims of the collaborative.

  Given that Organisation Funders' primary goal is to direct capital to high-performing grantees, it's no surprise that grantees report receiving numerous benefits, including a "funder stamp of approval, access to unrestricted capital, multi year funding, larger grant sizes, and access to more funder relationships." However, the organisation's funder investment thesis is not without challenges. The risk of creating “winners and losers" is particularly resonant for these collaboratives.

Donors' Experience: Big Bang Philanthropy's funding model

Big Bang Philanthropy is a community of like-minded funders committed to finding long-term solutions to poverty. While each member makes their own decisions, they all agree to 1) contribute at least USD 1 million per year to poverty solutions in poor countries and 2) to finance at least five organisations that are establishing and scaling meaningful impact. Members also exchange leads, insights, networks, and due diligence to foster effective philanthropy.

Source: (Powell & Wolf Ditkoff, 2019)

- **Field builders:** Collaboratives following this investment thesis aim to develop or strengthen a certain area or set of practices. They aim to improve the enabling environment and provide continuous, long-term assistance to issues and grantees. Field builders frequently go beyond grantmaking and hire or engage specialist employees to carry out activities such as identifying gaps in the field, designing strategies, and assisting with execution that individual funders or grantees cannot accomplish independently.

  Funding patterns that distinguish collaboratives with this investment thesis include funding field-building actions (e.g., developing common standards of practice and knowledge bases, generating grassroots and policy support); providing flexible and, at times, rapid-response resources for grantees for collaboration; and providing grantees with capacity-building funds. Grantees also benefit from unique advantages such as collaboration with other grantees, capacity building, and access to rapid-response awards.

  Field Builders and grantees must frequently deal with strategy ownership issues and limited operations funds. According to Powell and Wolf Ditkoff (2019), Grantees operating under this approach tend to believe that "funders overly influenced their strategy." Field Builders also have the largest operating expenditures since they often execute programs and allocate grants while receiving the lowest overall funding.

Donors' Experience: Youth Community Organising Resource Exchange (Youth CORE)

FCYO's Youth Community Organising Resource Exchange brings together a large number of youth organisers from across the US to share learnings, build relationships, and develop common strategy in areas such as police brutality, immigrant rights, and climate change. Beyond funding individual grantees, FCYO takes other steps to support practices and build capacity across the field. It brings practitioners together on its advisory board, advocates for additional funding, conducts research, works to communicate to a larger audience the impact of youth organising, and develops a shared narrative about this work.

Source: (Powell & Wolf Ditkoff, 2019)

- **Goal aligners:** Collaboratives that use this investment thesis seek results by discovering or developing pockets of strategic alignment among funders to generate coordinated goals and population-level outcomes such as disease or poverty eradication. They are more funder-driven than the other two but can involve grantee and community perspectives in strategy and implementation. As a result, funders in Goal Aligner collaboratives collectively benefit from making progress on an issue even when their philanthropic strategies differ. They can also direct resources and expertise toward complex problems much more effectively than they could alone.

  Goal aligners, unlike field builders, often do not run their programs. Instead, they may serve as catalysts for developing alignment around common aims. Once the desired change is achieved, the collaborative may close shop or pivot to a new winnable milestone.

  Goal Aligners may have to manage donors' differing assumptions, theories of change, and operational constraints. Furthermore, donors have diverse goals regarding geography, strategy, and values; finding enough alignment to allow for effective, coordinated investment can be challenging.

Donors' Experience: Co-Impact funding model

Co-Impact supports program partners to achieve the overarching goal of ensuring that systems that provide "the most fundamental services of health, education, and economic opportunity are more just, inclusive, and effective, resulting in improved lives for millions of people across the Global South."

Co-financing Impact's is distributed through two primary funds: the Foundational Fund and the Gender Fund. The Foundational Fund prioritises significant Systems Change Grants to major organisations in order to achieve improved results at scale in health, education, and economic opportunity. The Gender Fund aims to take an ecosystem approach to grantmaking, "recognising that addressing structural gender inequities necessitates the participation of a diverse range of players." This method involves three types of grants: country-level grants, global/regional grants, and practitioner-oriented cross-cutting research and learning awards.

Source: (Co-Impact, 2021)

A debate around investment theses may offer funders an objective perspective to identify possible areas of misalignment. Most donors will select all three when supporting strong organisations, building fields, or aligning with a meaningful goal. However, failure to agree on a fundamental investment thesis might result in a lack of clarity, increased friction, and reduced impact (Powell, Wolf Ditkoff, & Hassey, 2018).

6. Enablers and barriers to successful collaboration

A consortium exists to achieve complex goals by bringing together a diverse group of organisations. As a result, practitioners must shift their focus from delivering individual outcomes to generating joint advantage: achieving what they could not achieve alone.

There are several factors that enable successful collaboration between funders. Some of the most cited factors include:

- **Trust**. Trust has proven to be one of the most important elements of effective collaboration. Building trust requires creating authentic and vulnerable connections with community partners (Burns, 2019; Tavarez, Harper, & Hanleybrown, 2022).
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- **A balancing act between clear structures and processes and flexibility**. Clear grantmaking cycles provide a framework for evaluating and planning future efforts. But stay flexible! Successful collaborations share the capacity to adjust to lessons learned and shifting conditions and expectations.
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- **Productive personal relationships matter.** Members frequently have pre-existing ties, which is "one of the most compelling reasons individuals come to the table." In addition, new members join to form new ties with well-respected peers (Seldon, Tierney, & Fernando, 2013).
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- **Clear exit strategies are important.** Collaboratives can expect some donors to exit the group over time. As a result, it is critical to establish upfront timeframes donors are committing to and how they can exit with minimal friction.

However, successful collaborations need time, energy, and money (Kabel, 2016; Tavarez, Harper, & Hanleybrown, 2022; Seldon, Tierney, & Fernando, 2013). Donors should be mindful that collaboration can be challenging and could come with some unintended consequences. This is because:

- **Collaboration doesn’t come naturally:** Even when organisations agree to be part of a consortium or collaborative, the personal views of the funders and their staff are likely to continue to steer grantmaking. Seldon et al. (2013) say that ‘ego’ and ‘territoriality’ can block collaboration. Funders often struggle to let go of “the money and the decision-making,” which exacerbates the fear of not getting credit.

- **Lack of clear roles can lead to failed relationship among funders:** When a group of funders joins together, it does not mean that their expectations about how to operate are already agreed upon. Early misalignment produces frustration and demotivation within the group, making it more difficult to reach a consensus and move ahead as a group.

- **Collaboration can create gatekeepers:** When donors pool their resources to pick the strongest grantees, they generate a more defined group of "winners and losers" than individual funding decisions would (Powell, Wolf Ditkoff, & Hassey, 2018).

- **Funder collaboration can reduce the power of grantees.** For example, with fewer funders operating in a specific space, decisions and opportunities will become more centralised, affecting grantees' ability to negotiate and access funding and capacity-building opportunities.

- **Groupthink**: Funders aligned around strategies could turn away from emergent ideas and practices.

- **Power dynamics:** Another hurdle to successful collaboration is the power imbalance between donors and grantees. Foundations "live in a bubble of positivity," surrounded by grantees and prospective grantees. This interaction influences grantees' comfort level when discussing difficulties or challenges with their funders. In the worst-case scenario, grantees conceal critical information from their donors for fear of exposure. In turn, funders are shielded and disconnected from challenges and gaps.

- **Lack of acknowledgment of differing incentives:** Partners frequently agree on a strategic level that they have the same goal but do not adjust lower-level internal decision-making procedures (such as resource allocation or measurement) to achieve that goal. Ignoring or presuming these differences do not exist is a formula for misalignment and, in many cases, failure (Fowells & Ranjana Kopell, 2021).

Working principles for consortia

As a consequence, the following may offer possible principles for consortia to follow:

- **Complex problems require collaborative approaches:** Single organisations are not well suited to address complex problems, as these benefit from multidisciplinary responses and collaborative approaches that enable greater scale, innovation, risk-sharing, and systemic change. Moreover, from a donor's perspective, bringing diverse consortium members together offers the potential to generate new solutions through diversity and the ability to engage with local communities through in-country members and partners.

- **Adaptive management approaches are required to respond to complexity, uncertainty, and changing contexts**: Consortia exist in dynamically changing environments. On one hand, adaptive management is needed regarding their programs so that they can be adjusted as they try things out and learn how to work in each context. On the other hand, consortia need to be able to adjust in response to changes in their external environment, such as budget cuts, pandemics, and in-country crises like earthquakes and coups (Bond, 2021).

- **Thinking and working systemically enables a fuller understanding of how to engage with complexity, including in the national systems in which consortium programs operate:** There is a need to better understand the interconnected nature, multiple perspectives, and power relations present within complex development and humanitarian ‘problems,’ and the programs established to address them. This means working systemically and dynamically to engage with systems of interest at all levels.

- **The imperative to shift power and decolonise aid:** Shifting power, authority, and decision-making to local actors are needed to decolonise development leadership and improve program effectiveness.

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