This Collaboration and Partnering workbook has been compiled to accompany an online PowerPoint presentation developed and delivered by Marcia Dwonczyk, Director of Creativma.

Creativma was established as a basis to work independently across agencies, sectors and communities with a focus on co-creating innovative strategies for transformational change around complex issues.

Creativma specialises in partnering, collaboration and community engagement as the key means to making a difference in complex issues. Services and supports include professional development in partnering skills and complexity (tailored and formal programs); independent facilitation and partnership brokering; support to teams, partnerships and individuals in establishing, developing, maintaining and reviewing partnerships and their impact.

If you'd like to know more about the information provided or Creativma and the assistance that can be provided:

Contact Marcia via email: marcia@creativma.com or 0408602222
The Presentation slides:

Why do things differently
Changing context
Room to improve & innovate
What we know about collaboration
This means change

Top tips:

• The level of change and complexity of issues requires increased collaboration and partnering.
• There is always room to improve and innovate, this includes the need to build on what is working now and not keep reinventing the ‘wheel’.
• Collaboration and partnering when done well achieves great gains.
• Don’t underestimate the change required to move to a culture of collaboration- the majority of systems and processes support a fragmented and competitive approach.

Useful resources:
A Case for Change- Centre for Social Impact 2012 (www.sci.edu.au)

See information Sheet:
1. Concentric Circles of Collaboration
Your collaboration story so far

You are at a party and meet someone new who asks what you do. They don’t really know about the area you work in. Consider what stories you might tell them from your experience or someone else’s about what is working - 3 stories to excite them about what is working well, and 3 stories that are about challenges and difficulties. What kinds of things come to mind?

Based on the ideas that come to mind as a starting point, consider this from the perspective of level of change needed:

• Where do you think various key stakeholders understanding of the issues are?
• How do you know?
• What other information might be useful to help you assess the ‘readiness for change’?
The Presentation Slides:
A collaboration continuum
Another Continuum
Collaborative Stages
Do Better/ Do Different/ New
A definition of Transformational Partnering

Top Tips:
• It is critical to establish a common language to describe what kind of relationship (collaboration/ partnership) you are meaning.
• All points along the continuum are useful, its important to choose the collaboration or partnering approach that best suits the purpose or goals to be achieved.
• If innovation and transformational change is being sought then a transformational partnership at that end of the continuum requiring high levels of trust, engagement, risk sharing, etc... is required.

Useful Resources:

See Information Sheets:
2. VicHealth Collaboration Continuum
3. Innovation Triangles
Exercise: What have we got to build on?

- What is your organisation’s partnering experience so far?
- Where on the continuum do you think most partnerships/ collaborations sit now?
- What is working well?
- What would it take to move them along the continuum if needed?
- What are some of the key things that might be getting in the way?
How to Collaborate & Partner well

The Presentation Slides:
Key Success Factors
Essential Elements
3 Core Principles of Partnering
How to Build a Collaborative Relationship
Diversity Trumps Ability
Collaborative Mindset

Top Tips:
• Every partnership or collaboration will be different but there are some key success factors, essential elements and core principles that apply to all.
• It is essential to fan out and gather all information, people and ideas to understand an issue from different perspectives before deciding on what to do collaboratively.
• Diversity, including dissent or disagreement is essential to collaboration/partnerships focused on innovation and transformational change.
• There is a cultural change required to work collaboratively - a different mindset and approach.

Useful Resources:
Dixon Partnering Solutions: www.iandixon.com.au
The Partnering Initiative: www.thepartneringinitiative.org
The Partnership Brokers Association: wwwpartnershipbrokers.org

See Information Sheet:
4. The Diamond of Participatory Decision Making
An Exercise:
• Review the Collaborative Mindset table.
• If there was a sliding scale between the weak as 0 and the Strong as 10, what score would you give for your organisation? Yourself? Key stakeholders?
• What would it take to improve those scores?
• If you picked 3 areas from the list as a place to start strengthening or consolidating- which 3 would you pick?
The Presentation Slides:
The Partnering Cycle
Building Capacity to Collaborate “We-Q”
Examples of Useful Tools
Mutual Benefit
Asking the Right Questions
The Power of Story Telling

Top Tips:
• It is important to recognize that ‘old tools’ or ways of doing things will undermine or not support new ways of working collaboratively.
• Choose tools, processes and approaches that are inclusive, respectful, promote exploration, discovery and new insights.
• Push beyond the obvious solutions or compromises to really dig for a ‘win-win’ to find the breakthroughs and innovation and build the partnership.
• Supporting and working in collaboration or partnership requires specific skills and knowledge, it isn’t just going to a lot of meetings.

Useful Resources:
Project Catalyst- Coca Cola, WWF, Sugar Cane Farmer Partnership youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3Hqsg9FjRw

See Information Sheets:
5. Appreciative Enquiry
6. Strategic Questioning
An Exercise
• Tell a new story
• It is 2019, you are talking to an old friend who lives in another State. They tell you Queensland has continued to grow its amazing reputation for collaboration and partnering. What stories might you tell them about what has been achieved and how since 2014? What stories would you tell them about the hurdles that needed to be overcome?
• Jot your ideas down - they should give you some good clues about where to start.
Every collaboration or partnership consists of people who will have different levels of engagement and understanding over time. There is usually a core group of people who are highly committed to the partnership and the common goal—often with strong alignment to their own work. There is also a group (in the second ring) who may take a lead role in part of what the group does, but is unable to fully commit time or resources. The third ring represents a group who are keen to stay connected, share information and feed in ideas but aren’t interested, ready, are able to take the next step. In the outer ring are interested others who basically keep a ‘watching brief’ and may contribute to strategic planning sessions or forums.

It is important to recognize that each has a different role and different needs and interests. Their level of knowledge and understanding as well as their need for communication and engagement will vary. This is important when considering change strategies, communication, governance, as well as the level of commitment to the partnership and shared actions.

It is also useful to remember that people will move in, and out, of the rings over time as opportunities arise, new information or skills gained, or other things change.

This model was co-created with partnership groups and reflects the reality of how people engage with collaboration across the continuum, not always being at the same point at the same time.
What do we mean by “partnering”? A continuum approach

While some people talk about virtually any group of people getting together, or any meeting they attend as a partnership, there are significant differences.

One useful way to think about “partnering” is across a continuum moving from low to high levels of commitment, change required, risk involved, interdependence, power sharing, trust and blurring of silos or ‘turf’ boundaries:

Adapted from Victorian Health Promotion Foundation
Where there is a clear basis of understanding what works, and outcomes can be consistently achieved, then the best strategy to make a difference is to do more of what we know works. In this model, the triangle on the left says in this situation we just need to get on with it and “do” it. There is less need to create new approaches since we know what works, we are improving on it. Our learning is basically a quality improvement cycle with regular review. Here, networks, coordination, cooperation, sponsorships (philanthropy), transactional arrangements are sufficient.

However, if we don’t have the answers, the issues are complex and we are looking for innovation and transformational change, then we don’t have the right thing to “do” worked out. We “do” small ‘safe to fail’ experiments, trials, have a go to see what works. We create different approaches with the benefit of diverse perspectives to try new things. We constantly review and reflect—learning what is working and how to do it better/differently/new. This is the approach required for innovation and this is where transformational partnerships operate.
Sam Kaner’s diamond of participatory decision-making is a useful tool for partnerships in two ways. It helps in the early stages for participants to think widely- not only about the issue for consideration, but also the people who should/ could be involved to ensure diversity of perspectives. In these early stages the group needs to expand and explore thinking about the complex issue if it is going to benefit from a partnering approach (establishing a shared understanding and ownership as well as benefiting from the knowledge, skills, experience and perspectives). New and diverse perspectives as well as various sources of data and information are gathered.

However, it’s not practical to continue to keep scanning widely and at some point the group needs to start focusing in to identify what small ‘safe to fail’ experiments or projects might be tried in order to identify patterns and learn more about what will work. The point of focusing back in may happen too early and the group realise that they haven’t really pushed the boundaries for diverse perspectives (people) or there is more to understand (information, studies, data, stories). This mid point which Sam Kaner calls the groan zone (I prefer to call it the “Have a go” zone) may mean focusing in and going out several times before there is an agreement its time to converge and move on a particular strategy or approach that is truly new and innovative.
APRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Is a form of action research intended for discovering, understanding, and fostering positive change and innovation. It is a technique that involves the art and practice of asking questions in ways that search for and discover what gives ‘life’ to a system- such as an organisation or community when it’s effective and constructive. This, in turn provides a basis to strengthen a system’s capacity to understand and heighten its potential.

An appreciative inquiry approach:

• Focuses on what works rather than what does not
• Is based on a premise that asking a question acts not only as a query but also an intervention
• Supports trust building because it acknowledges individual contributions and overall achievements
• Shifts contributors into co-creators of a positive solution/future rather than victims or complainers about something they have no say over
• Strengthens a system’s (organisation, community) capacity to build its capacity

Underpinning assumptions:

• In every society, organisation or group, something works. What we focus on becomes our reality – communities grow from what they personally ask questions about. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
• If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
• It is important to value differences.
• How we talk about things frames both perceptions and reality. The language we use creates our reality.
• If we focus on weaknesses, negatives and challenges we amplify them, if we focus on what works, strengths and assets- we amplify them.

Typical Appreciative Inquiry Questions

• What are the strengths and assets of our community/ organisation/ project?
• Share a time when you felt our community/ organisation was at its best?
• What do you value most about our community/ organisation?
• What is the essence of our community/ organisation that makes it unique and strong?
• What gives you most hope for the future of our community/organisation?

• What has happened in our community/organisation that gives our children a great start in life?

• ‘If you had 3 wishes for the future of our community/organisation, what would they be?’

**Key Appreciative Practice Principles**

• Always work in the affirmative.

• Ask provocative questions. Probe for excitement and possibility.

• Focus on the positive. Look for the budding flower amid the gray backdrop!

• Generate interactive dialogue. Provide space for dialogue and questions.

• Respect the past, live the present and look to the future.

• Seek the root cause of success, not the root cause of failure.
Information Sheet 6. Strategic Questioning

**Strategic Questioning**  
(from Fran Peavey Strategic Questioning for personal and social change)

Strategic Questioning is a way of talking with people with whom you have differences without abandoning your own beliefs and yet looking for common ground which may enable both parties to co-create a new path from the present situation.

A strategic question is a question that brings forth new information. It actually creates new information through synthesis of old information. There are of course many different kinds of questions. You can ask questions for information purposes, and that doesn’t create new information.

A Strategic Question:

- **Creates motion**- enables the conversation to move from static to dynamic
- **Creates options**- looks for alternatives (while avoiding questions which suggest a specific alternative, eg. ‘have you considered…’) instead inviting exploration of what else is possible
- **Avoids ‘why’* questions**- such questions tend to see people defend or justify their position, or talk about the present in terms of the past instead of moving forward
- **Avoids ‘yes/no’ answers**- instead moves beyond black/white, right/wrong by getting people to think, moving from passive into creative
- **Is empowering**- enabling someone to take what they know and develop it further, rather then putting ideas in their head
- **Asks the ‘unaskable’**- there is tremendous power in asking ‘the emperor has no clothes’ or ‘taboo’ questions that challenge the values and assumptions on which something is based
- **Is a simple, not compound question**- addresses one thing at a time and minimises the need for analysis

*“Why” questions are sometimes useful but they are often less dynamic because they ask for a rationalization of the present or the past rather than envisioning the future. Usually strategic questions are ‘how can’, “what shall”, or “what would it take” questions.

A feature of strategic questioning that is little explored is how often a very powerful question, also known as a ‘long lever’ question, may not have an answer at the moment it is asked, but will remain in the brain for a time-niggling away on an answer. Fran used the metaphor of the piece of grit or sand placed in the oyster shell that grows into a pearl to describe this.

Strategic Questioning is really part of a broader ‘family’ of questions, the first series of which are not strategic questions, but set the context for strategic questions to follow.
Information Sheet 6. Strategic Questionning (page 2.)

Context Questions

- **Focus Questions:** gather information that is already known, identifying the situation and the key facts necessary to understand the situation. Example: ‘What are you most concerned about in your community?’
- **Observation Questions:** concerned with what someone has seen and the information someone has heard regarding the situation. Examples: ‘What do you see?’, ‘Which sources do you trust and why?’, ‘What do you know for certain and what are you not sure about?’
- **Feeling Questions:** concerned with body sensations, emotions, health. Examples: ‘How do you feel about the situation?’, ‘How has the situation affected your own physical or emotional health?’

Strategic Questions

Once context-setting questions have been asked, then a group can be moved into Strategic Questions, which may include:

- **Visioning Questions:** concerned with identifying ideals, dreams and values. Examples: ‘How would you like it to be?’, ‘What about this situation do you care so much about?’, ‘What could it look like for the next generations?’
- **Change Questions:** move from the static to the dynamic, how to get from the present to a more ideal situation. Examples: ‘Who can make a difference?’, ‘How did those changes come about?’, ‘What will it take to bring the current situation towards the ideal?’, ‘What exactly needs to change here?’
- **Considering Alternatives:** questions which enable someone to imagine or identify (preferably more than two) alternatives. Examples: ‘What other ways could you meet your goal?’, ‘What else might achieve the goal?’
- **Considering the Consequences Questions:** help to explore the consequences of alternatives. Examples: ‘What are the consequences of each alternative you see?’, ‘How might this impact on ….?’
- **Considering the obstacles Questions:** identifying those things in the way of achieving the alternative or goals. Examples: ‘What would need to change in order for this to be done?’, ‘What is standing in the way of..?’
- **Personal Inventory & Support Questions:** identifying someone’s interests, potential contributions and the support required for them to act. Examples: ‘What would it take for you to participate in the change?’, ‘What support would you need to work for this change?’
- **Personal Action Questions:** designed to get to the specifics of what to do, when to do it, and how. Examples: ‘Who do you need to talk to?’, ‘How can you get others to work on this?’