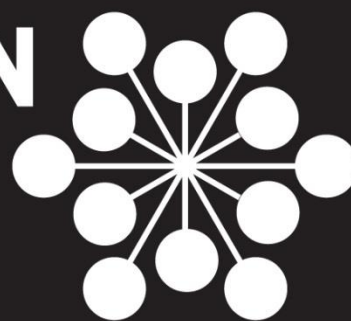


SUMMARY REPORT

COLLABORATION HEALTH *assessment tool*



July 2017

Centre for Social Impact, UNSW Sydney

Collaboration for Impact

With generous funding from:



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Centre for Social Impact

The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) is a national research and education centre dedicated to catalysing social change for a better world. CSI is built on the foundation of three of Australia's leading universities: UNSW Sydney, The University of Western Australia, and Swinburne University of Technology. Our **research** develops and brings together knowledge to understand current social challenges and opportunities; our postgraduate and undergraduate **education** develops social impact leaders; and we aim to **catalyse change** by drawing on these foundations and translating knowledge, creating leaders, developing usable resources, and reaching across traditional divides to facilitate collaborations.

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Disclaimer

The opinions in this report reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of UNSW Sydney or Macquarie Group Foundation.

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1. WHAT IS CHAT?

The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) and Collaboration for Impact (CFI) have developed an online diagnostic tool for organisations to assess the 'health' of their collaborative relationships. It is an evidence-based tool that is interactive and user-friendly and can help collaborators understand how well they work together now, and in the future as their collaboration matures.

Due to their complex nature, social problems are often referred to as 'wicked' – i.e. they have multiple roots causes and are hard to define. At CSI and CFI, we believe that solving these problems requires collaboration across organisations and sectors. Yet, organisations have no easy way of assessing the health of their collaborative practices, and consequently, don't really know if the collaboration is going well or not.

Ultimately, this tool aims to facilitate collaboration so that people can work together more effectively towards a shared goal. Over time, we hope to find out which social issues are being covered by collaborating initiatives, and which issues are missing out. Another aim is to develop benchmarks so that collaborations can assess their progress, and ultimately, achieve social impact.

2. OUR VISION

CSI and CFI want this tool to facilitate collaboration so that people can work together more effectively towards a shared goal. Healthier collaborations will mean that Australia's most wicked problems are addressed more efficiently and effectively than in the past. However, we know little about how effective our collaborations are, across different social issue groups and internationally.

We will use deidentified data from CHAT to track the health of Australia's collaborative initiatives over time. This will help us to identify the key factors that lead to successful collaboration in the social purpose sector and under which conditions. These data will also be used to identify which conditions present challenges for collaborations and provide insights into how these may be overcome.

We also want to use the CHAT data to create benchmarks. This will allow collaborations to gauge their progress against other collaborations at a similar stage. Benchmarks will help collaborators put their CHAT scores in context and help guide their future activities. Benchmarked data will be integrated into the CHAT tool over time, becoming more robust and reliable as more people use the tool.

Finally, we want to know which of our most important social issues are and are not being addressed through collaborative approaches. We will use this information to lobby for greater resourcing in areas that need it the most.

We will also be looking to enhance the usability of CHAT over time. For example, users will be redirected to relevant pages within the Collaboration for Impact website for further guidance and support and will have the opportunity to leave feedback on the functionality of CHAT and any potential content gaps. In the future, collaborations may also have the opportunity to download aggregated results for storage in other software.

3. WHY DO WE NEED CHAT?

Solving social problems often requires resources "beyond the capacity of any one agency or jurisdiction" [1], and therefore, collaboration across organisations and sectors [2, 3]. Collaboration has been recognised in both academic and practitioner circles as a way to tackle complex social problems and create systemic change [4, 5]. Although many authors have attempted to define,

and sometimes measure, collaboration [For example, 6, 7-11], much ambiguity remains around what it means to collaborate [3]. The lack of consensus around the definition of collaboration has affected the development of a comprehensive tool for organisation to 'health check' their collaboration. While there is a myriad of different collaborative assessment tools, none of them fully capture the meaning of collaboration or how it works. In fact, current contributions tend to conceptualise collaboration only taking into account organisational characteristics, thus failing to recognise that collaboration simultaneously occurs, and is affected by factors at the individual, organisational, and environmental level [12, 13]. Organisations therefore have no easy way of assessing the health of their collaborative practices, and consequently, know if the collaboration is going well or not. Without this information, it is also difficult for collaborations to grow and learn from the challenges and capitalise on their strengths. Put another way, a simple tool that can track a collaboration's health, provides both a point-in-time snapshot and guidance for the future.

If you want to read more about collaboration and working together to achieve social purpose you can also read the Travel Companion.

4. WHY USE CHAT?

CHAT provides collaborating initiatives with the applied tools they need to meet their goals. Users will receive:

- *A score for each of the eight dimensions of collaboration and an overall score¹.* Scores are based on a traffic light system and can be produced for the whole collaboration as well as for individual groups working within it².
- *Feedback tailored to your CHAT score.* CHAT will generate broad guidelines on how specific elements of the collaboration could be enhanced.
- *A printable report.* A collaboration's results and feedback can be printed as a report for easy dissemination to your stakeholders.
- *The capacity to track your progress over time.* Using the collaboration's unique key (automatically provided upon registration) will allow collaborations to use CHAT now and in the future.

5. HOW TO USE CHAT?

CHAT is a simple online tool for collaborations to measure the health of their collaboration. It requires someone from the collaboration to lead the use of the tool. The CHAT lead for a collaboration will be able to:

1. Set launch and closing dates for completing CHAT
2. Identify the groups/teams/individuals working in their collaboration
3. Identify the goals for the collaboration
4. Enter the email addresses of their collaborators
5. Compose an invitation message and send

¹ The eight scores are calculated by averaging the responses corresponding to each of the eight dimensions. The overall score is an average of the eight dimension scores.

² To protect confidentiality of collaborators, there must be at least five responses submitted before collaboration scores are provided.

Once collaborators receive the invitation they are prompted to set up an account and to take the 10 minute-survey. The survey includes 27 questions on collaboration and a number of background questions on the collaboration's history, its members and goals.

6. HOW THE TOOL WAS DEVELOPED

Our conceptualisation of collaboration was based on a review of relevant definitions in academic and other literature, as well as an in-depth review of 38 academic papers/reports to identify the different dimensions of collaboration.

Drawing on this review, we define collaboration as both a process and a structure. These two components of collaboration can also be defined as a relationship – with particular traits – operating within a given arrangement; that is, through working together, organisations construct a *structure* that governs how the *process* of joint work will progress over time.

- *Structure* refers to the 'rules' of the collaboration, i.e. what the collaboration will be doing (shared goal; systems change as a purpose); the resources contributed by the various parties involved (shared resources); and the way in which these resources will be expended (shared accountability, shared authority).
- *Process*, is about the way we *do* our work, for example how decision making occurs. In other words, process is about how the collaboration is actually implemented.

The review of collaboration identified 35 dimensions of collaboration. Through expert consultation with Collaboration for Impact (CFI), these dimensions were consolidated into eight components – four structural components and four process components – outlined in Table I. Each component comprises of sub-components covering the various aspects of each dimension.

Table 1: Components of collaboration

| COMPONENTS | | SUB-COMPONENTS |
|------------|---------------------------------|---|
| STRUCTURE | Shared goal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared aspiration • Shared understanding of challenge • Shared understanding of approach |
| | Shared resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared language • Sufficient resources for coordinating infrastructure • Shared data • Financial support • Shared capabilities • Mutually beneficial |
| | Shared authority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory decision-making • Authority to commit • Shared power |
| | Shared accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking progress and impact • Shared responsibility • Shared ownership of the final products or outcomes • Tracking collaboration’s health |
| PROCESS | Whole-system engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders/community as co-creators • Needs-based response • Diversity of stakeholders |
| | Communication flows | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of evaluation data • Adequate internal communication • Adequate external communication |
| | (Building) Adaptive capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to seeking innovative approaches • Learning culture |
| | Holding/authorising environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating support • Level of urgency • Safety • Trust |

Subsequently, a further review was conducted to find existing measures of these components. Where gaps were identified, new measures were created. This resulted in a list of 135 measures, each mapped to a sub-component, which became our draft tool.

Through an extensive period of refining the tool, including testing with collaborations, the number of measures was decreased from 135 to 27 spanning the eight dimensions of collaboration. At each stage, the measures were reviewed collectively by the research team and CFI, to assess their suitability and relevance. CHAT measures were taken from the literature [10, 11, 14, 15] and adapted where necessary. Where there were gaps, measures were developed by the research team. Where necessary, further changes to the measures were made, including simplification of language.

The development of CHAT also comprised narrative and correlational analysis. The correlation analysis identified positive relationships between responses to the tool and the participants' own self-ratings of their collaborations' strength. This suggests that our measures were performing well as indicators of a collaboration's health. The narrative component, included qualitative interviews with people who trialled the tool, which allowed us to triangulate the tool diagnostics and better understand whether the CHAT questions aligned with the data we aimed to collect.

This led us to a penultimate version of the tool which was piloted with a collaboration working to address educational attainment in NSW. The Collaborators used an early version of the CHAT to identify any technical issues and provided us with general feedback on the user experience, which was fed into the final version of the tool.

7. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY DATA?

The responses you provide for CHAT will be completely de-identified. This means that your responses will remain confidential. No-one in your collaboration will be able to identify your individual responses. Results will only be accessible to the collaboration if there are at least five responses to the survey tool. If collaboration sub-groups or teams are set up in the survey, responses for these will also only be accessible if there are at least five responses in a group. All data collected through CHAT will be stored using standard UNSW security and privacy protocols. On completion of the survey, you will also be asked to consent to your data being used by CSI and CFI for research purposes. This is entirely optional and will not impact on the CHAT diagnosis for your collaboration or your relationship with CSI and CFI. You can also withdraw your responses at any time by contacting the research team: chat@unsw.edu.au.

8. HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CHAT?

We are in the process of setting up a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section on the CHAT website. You are also welcome to send any questions to our dedicated email: chat@unsw.edu.au

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