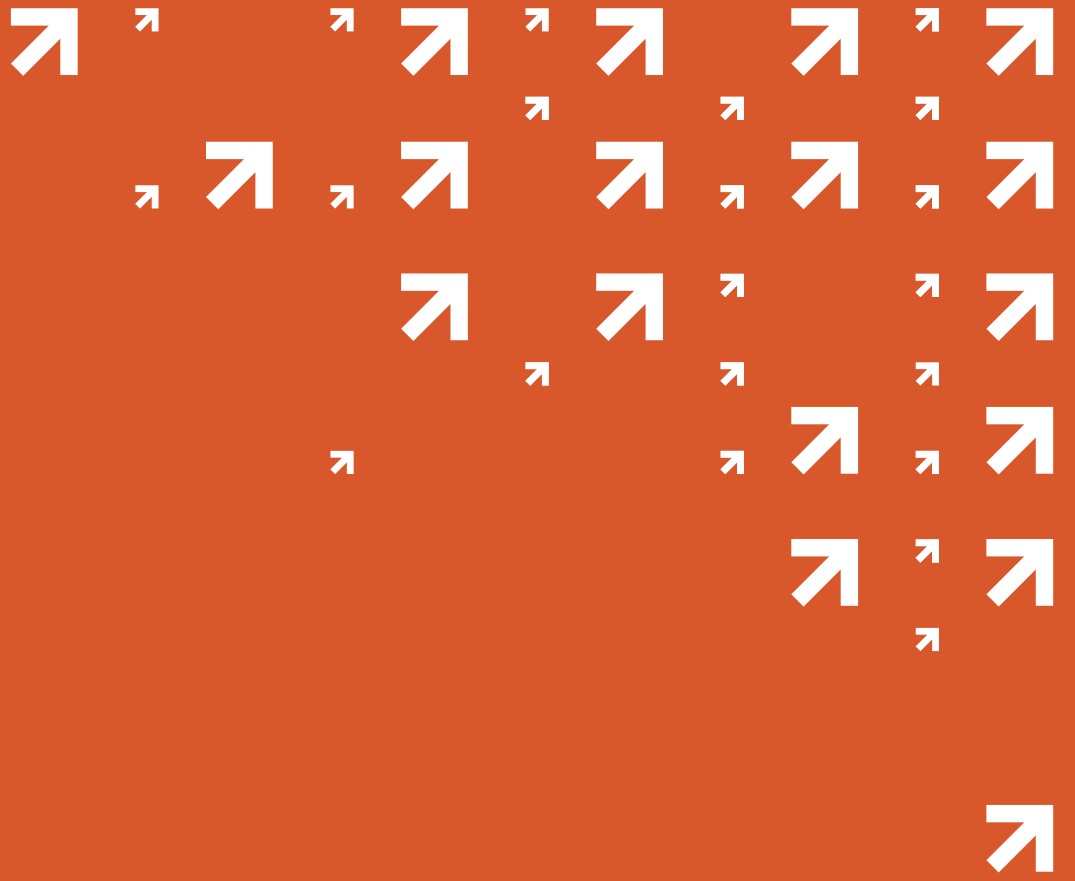# Next Tourism Generation
Collaborative Framework

Introduction

Addressing tourism skills needs requires collaboration between key stakeholders from education, training, social partners, government and industry and is a useful approach to bring knowledge and resources together from different fields of endeavour. However, successful collaboration is very difficult to achieve, especially in loose networks. This means that good governance is critical, and a governance framework must be structured enough to provide direction but fluid enough to allow for the complexity of external environments.

There is a need to emphasize the importance of the employer voice and business participation to support a dynamic level of agility in which the skills standards systems and qualification regulatory bodies can flexibly respond to ever-changing employer skills needs. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need for such agility in responding to new workplace challenges. At a national and regional level, facilitating communication through collaboration can result in more industry awareness of the appropriate channels through which they can input into skills-related policy making and more awareness of the responsibilities of different governance bodies in skills development. Communicating with social partners can also facilitate policy makers and education and training providers to keep abreast of and address skills needs as they arise.

Introduction

The Next Tourism Generation (NTG) Collaborative Governance Framework as presented in this document provides a transformative framework to facilitate tourism skills development. The framework, based on an extensive review of best practice from across the world, is adaptable to different national and regional contexts.

The collaborative framework was designed to support the work of National/Regional Skills Partnerships (N/RSPs) established by the Next Tourism Generation Alliance. Nevertheless, the elements of the framework as illustrated in Figure 1 can be applied to any collaborative efforts. Within the framework, formal processes, which are the well-defined steps to support the internal workings of a collaboration along with the less formalized practices that support relationship building, are designated Internal Processes. Also central to the framework are Internal Structures that support the collaborative efforts of the partnerships. Activities that involve engaging with others outside the collaborative alliance, are designated External Engagement.

Table 1 details each element of the framework, summarizes the evidence underpinning each and lists a set of key actions/steps related to each, as guidance for N/RSPs. As collaborative partnerships can all too easily fail, the NTG Collaborative Governance Framework is underpinned by best practice and by lessons learned from previous attempts at collaboration.
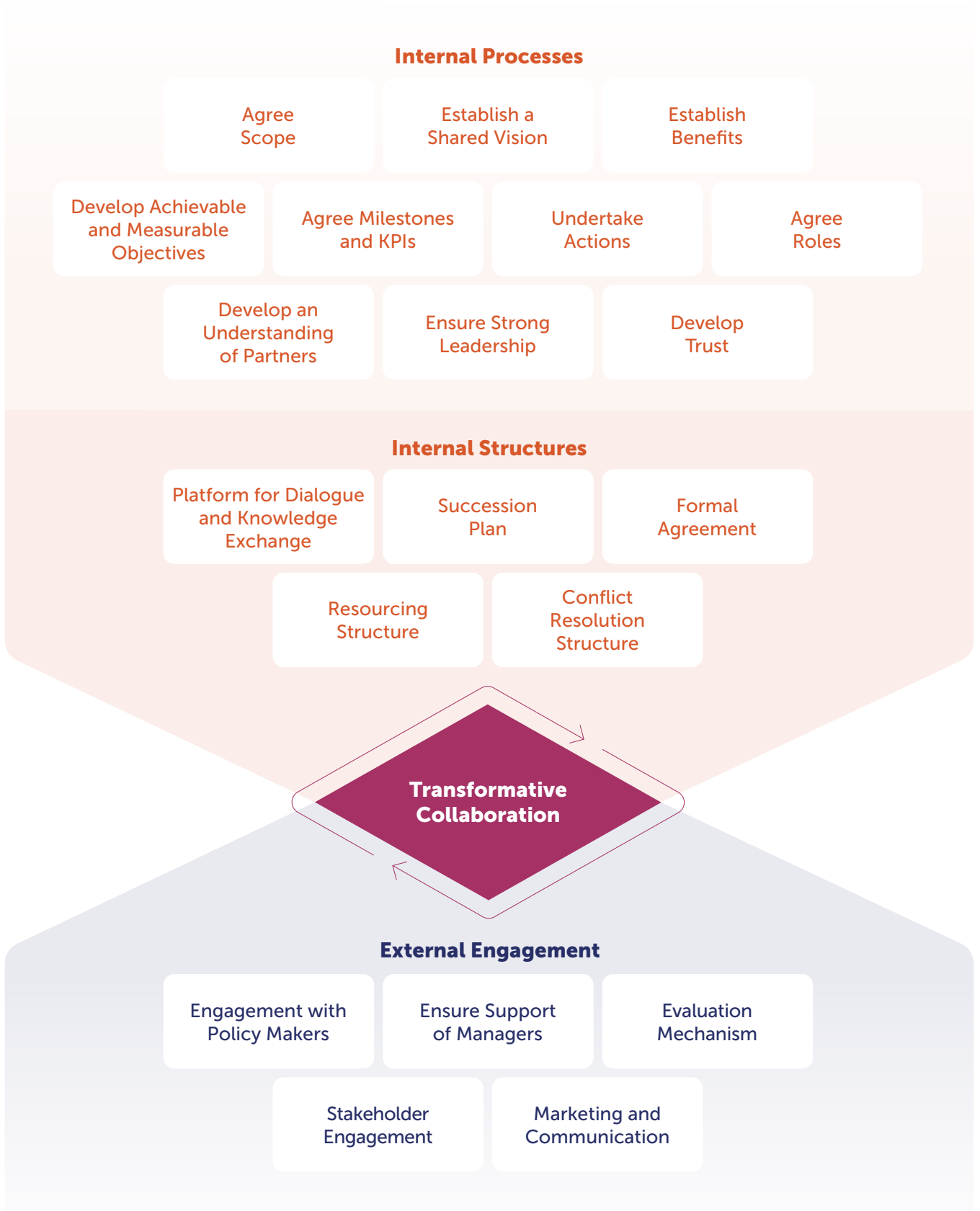
Figure 1: NTG Collaborative Governance Framework

Internal Processes

Agree Scope	Establish a Shared Vision	Establish Benefits
Develop Achievable and Measurable Objectives	Agree Milestones and KPIs	Undertake Actions	Agree Roles
Develop an Understanding of Partners	Ensure Strong Leadership	Develop Trust

Internal Structures

Platform for Dialogue and Knowledge Exchange	Succession Plan	Formal Agreement
Resourcing Structure	Conflict Resolution Structure	

Transformative Collaboration

External Engagement

Engagement with Policy Makers	Ensure Support of Managers	Evaluation Mechanism
Stakeholder Engagement	Marketing and Communication	

Table 1: Elements of the NTG Collaborative Governance Framework

Internal Processes

→ ### Agree Scope

Viewing skills needs from a regional perspective ensures that demand and supply of skills are matched more effectively, as local stakeholders have the best perspective on which skills are needed and how the needs might be met. However, involving regional and local stakeholders in policy making may be more difficult because of existing legal frameworks and may take more time. Taking a national perspective can ensure that collaborative and transformative skills development are highlighted as a policy priority and can ensure that skills policies are linked to other relevant national policies although it can be difficult to include all relevant stakeholders. Early identification and addition of missing representation is likely to increase the success of the collaboration.

Actions/steps

- Decide on the geographical scope of the *N/RSP* taking specific context into account.

- Identify the relevant stakeholders and ensure that there is representation in the *N/RSP* from across various sectors to address tourism skills needs e.g., industry and employee representative bodies, education and training providers, national or local government, public authorities, chambers of commerce, researchers, employment services etc.

- Even if a national approach is taken, discuss ways to ensure that local and regional stakeholders have some input into the initiative.

- Evaluate membership on a regular basis to determine:
  — Whether the scope should be broadened or narrowed.
  — Whether there are other potential partners that could contribute.
  — Whether all current organizations should continue as members into the future.
  — Whether and how other individuals from participating organizations can be included.

→ **Establish a Shared Vision**

Goal congruity among all partners is a key determinant of collaborative performance. Shared strategic, organizational and cultural perspectives can explain why some collaborations work while others do not. A shared vision is key to successful collaboration.

Actions/steps

- Discuss and agree a shared vision. The Pact for Skills Charter provides a useful template.

- The aim/vision should be made very clear to new members in an induction process.

- Reiterate the shared vision to all partners on an ongoing basis e.g. in documentation and in meetings to ensure that it underpins all partnership activities.

- Evaluate on a regular basis to ensure that:
  — All members are aware of the vision.
  — The vision remains current and relevant.

→ **Establish Benefits**

It is important that individual partners see tangible benefits to engaging in collaboration. In some collaborative initiatives, there is an imbalance in the benefits accrued by different partners which can cause problems. Therefore, successful collaboration must support the missions and motivations of each partner and provide benefits for all. Examples of benefits include developing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the sector, developing a stronger working relationship with other group members, being kept abreast of initiatives and developments within the sector etc.

Actions/steps

- Identify the goals and objectives of all partners at an early stage.

- Ensure that all partners benefit from being members of the partnership in a fair and equitable manner.

- Evaluate on a regular basis to:
  — Revisit the goals/objectives of each partner.
  — Ensure that all members continue to benefit from engagement in the *N/RSP*.
  — If an evaluation highlights that some members are not benefiting, then membership or *N/RSP* aims/objectives may need revisiting.

→ **Develop achievable and measurable objectives**

Different partners can have individual objectives, which are quite different from each other so key to successful collaboration is the building of common objectives and goals.

Actions/steps

- Develop and agree on a set of objectives. These can be focused anywhere within a broad range of tourism skills development activities e.g. identifying skills needs, supporting SME development, supporting employment initiatives, supporting collaboration between education and industry etc. A project management approach can be useful in this regard.

- When developing objectives, remind partners about the shared vision and the goals and needs of all partners.

- Build in some reasonably easily achievable objectives in the early stages of a collaborative project.

- Evaluate the objectives on a regular basis to:
  — Ensure relevance.
  — Identify which objectives have been achieved.
  — Develop new objectives when needed.
  — Adjust objectives where necessary.

→ **Agree milestones and KPIs**

Strong commitment and clear governance ensure that goals remain in focus. Establishing milestones/KPIs helps in that regard by ensuring that there is ongoing assessment of barriers experienced by stakeholders and that support plans are developed if needed.

Actions/steps

- Encourage partners to engage with data relating to the existing workforce.

- Encourage partners to engage with data relating to education/training provision.

- If relevant data does not exist, the N/RSP should develop a plan to collect the data.

- Discuss the most appropriate types of interventions needed to address skills needs.

- Develop Milestones and KPIs to support the strategy of the partnership. The Pact for Skills Charter provides a set of KPIs and Milestones that can be used directly or adjusted to reflect the Partnership's shared vision and national/regional context.

- Evaluate the objectives on a regular basis to:
  — Identify which Milestones/KPIs have been achieved.
  — Adjust Milestones/KPIs when necessary.
  — Create new Milestones/KPIs for any new objectives.

→ **Undertake actions**

Achieving 'quick wins' can support successful cycles of activity by helping cement a common vision and strategy, by supporting the identification of current weaknesses in the system and by building understanding of roles and responsibilities. Ongoing success also facilitates better collaboration (and vice versa).

Actions/steps

- Agree on a set of actions to address objectives, to achieve KPIs and to align with milestones.

- Consider using working groups to address individual objectives.

- Align actions with objectives and milestones.

- Use the *NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit* and *NTG Skills Lab* to facilitate education and training provision.

- Use the *NTG Quality Standards Framework* to adopt relevant skills into training and education programmes.

- Evaluate actions on a regular basis to:
  - Ensure relevance.
  - Measure success and failures.
  - Identify lessons learned.
  - Identify if working groups are not used and determine if they are required.
  - Identify risks and put contingency plans in place where necessary.

→ **Agree roles**

Clearly defined roles will highlight how partners bring the different knowledge, experiences and skills that are beneficial to meeting the objectives of the group as a whole. Clearly defined roles also ensure that each partner is aware of how their input is being used and valued.

Actions/steps

- Specify and allocate roles and responsibilities early in the process.

- In ongoing communication within and outside the partnership highlight the value of individual partner input.

- Evaluate roles and responsibilities on a regular basis to:
  - Ensure that partners are aware of their role and responsibilities.
  - Adjust roles and responsibilities when necessary.
  - Explore whether partners are aware of the roles and responsibilities of others in the partnership and if not, improve communication on this topic.
  - Ensure that partner input is highlighted in communications.

→ **Develop an understanding of partners**

The different perspectives of educational institutions, government agencies, social partners, and industry can create a significant barrier to effective collaboration as diversity in perspectives can make it difficult to achieve shared understanding. Therefore, it is important for each partner in a collaboration to develop an understanding and appreciation of the perspectives of other partners. Successful collaborations benefit from different perspectives as group members are exposed to new ideas and information, which promotes learning.

Actions/steps

- Engage in focused discussion to identify and learn about the different perspectives and knowledge that partners bring to the *N/RSP*.

- Each participating member should provide information to the partnership about their respective organization's activities on an ongoing basis. This is particularly important if membership changes.

- Identify the benefits of including multiple, different perspectives in the partnership.

- Encourage shared understanding and learning through exposure to different perspectives.

- Members should be cognizant of the fact that the terminology they use in meetings may not be comprehensible to all members and should avoid using jargon.

- Evaluate on a regular basis to ensure that:
  — Information on the relevant activities of partner organizations is being shared.
  — Partners feel that they are learning more about other organizations in the partnership.
  — Partners have identified the benefits of including multiple perspectives.
  — Partners provide explanations on an ongoing basis of any jargon they use.

→ **Ensure strong leadership**

Transformational leadership is important in building interdependence between collaborative partners and minimizing conflict. There is no single leadership model that works better than others. If one partner assumes the leadership role, commitment by this partner to leadership is important. Alternatively, facilitation by an independent agency has been shown to work.

Actions/steps

- One partner should assume the leadership role. This role could be on a rotational basis. Alternatively, an external facilitator could be engaged. The partnership should ensure that the leader role is adequately resourced.

- The leader should ensure that contributions from all partners are encouraged and valued.

- The leader should ensure that evaluation occurs on an ongoing basis on:
  — All aspects of the partnership's processes and structures.
  — Effectiveness of the leadership of the partnership.

→ **Develop trust**

Trust is an important facilitator of successful collaboration. Ongoing contact between all partners is important in building trust. Communication is a key element in the development of trusting relations. Establishing aims, agreeing scope and building leadership also are important to build trust.

Actions/steps

- Create conditions for positive interactions so that relationships are strengthened, and trust develops. This could include working towards a common goal, agreeing and working on achievable objectives, celebrating success, engaging in effective and regular communication etc.

- Evaluate on an ongoing basis to:
  — Establish that trust exists/is developing.
  — Ensure that a safe and respectful environment for open communication exists.

Internal Structures

→ **Platform for Dialogue and Knowledge Exchange**

It is important to have a platform in place which supports knowledge sharing. Knowledge exchange in collaborative efforts should not all go through the leader. Using platforms for dialogue which partners are already comfortable with, has been shown to be a successful approach.

Actions/steps

- Ensure that members are made aware that collaboration takes time. There should be an understanding from the beginning that progressive steps are needed, and that good communication and knowledge exchange is essential.

- Agree on and establish a platform for dialogue and knowledge exchange. This may, for example, be in the form of an online platform, such as Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive or Huddle. This will support knowledge exchange, improve productivity and help accelerate collaborative activities.

- Assign responsibility for setting up, updating, monitoring and sharing the platform (with new members for example).

- Agree structures and processes to facilitate communication for collaboration between individual partners, any subgroups and the entire group.

- Evaluate platforms on an ongoing basis to:
  — Measure appropriateness of current platforms.
  — Identify new or additional platforms to assist effective communication.
  — Ensure all members (particularly new members) are aware of, have access to, and are utilizing designated communication platforms.

→ **Succession Plan**

Ensuring ongoing stability of a collaborative venture when members change can be difficult, and it is important that partner organizations take responsibility for effective succession planning.

Actions/steps

- Establish a succession plan to ensure that if individuals change roles or leave, there are plans in place for their replacement.

- Examine membership terms of partners and decide on an appropriate length for their involvement. Where possible discuss and agree plans for their replacement in advance.

- Consider staggered rotation so that not all members rotate together, it is important to leave a mix of members to ensure continuity while also bringing fresh views to the collaboration.

- Ensure that there is a clear internal handover process in place if one member replaces another.

- Arrange an appropriate time for new members to be introduced to the team.

- Ensure new members are aware of their role, the role of others, and are updated on past and current activities.

- Provide new members with access to the communication platform.

- Evaluate the succession plan on an ongoing basis to:
  — Ensure all members have identified a replacement in their organization.
  — Measure the effectiveness of the handover process.
  — Ensure rotations are occurring seamlessly with an ongoing balanced pool of existing and new members in the partnership.
  — Ensure that all members are aware of their own role and the role of others.

→ **Formal Agreement**

Contracts or collaboration strategies can create a formal framework to support collaboration. A benefit of setting up a more formalized structure is that it can provide a structure to facilitate two important aspects of good governance, namely, compliance by partners with shared agreements and accountability of partners in the process. However, too formal a structure can negatively impact responsiveness.

A formal structure based on a signed agreement and established rules is critical if an aim of the collaboration is inclusion in official processes such as consultations, receipt of funding, etc.

Actions/steps

• Partners should engage in joint decision making on how formal a structure is needed and develop a formal agreement establishing clear rules for the collaboration.

• Utilize a Memorandum of Understanding such as the NTG *N/RSP MOU* or create a more formal agreement, such as a contract, to support the development of the collaboration.

• If the collaboration aims to engage in official processes such as consultations/funding applications, a legal structure may be necessary. It should be defined according to national law and be easy to set up and manage.

• The development of statutes and/or acceptance of a formal "Charta" or similar may be useful.

• Evaluate on a regular basis to evaluate:

— Whether formal agreement is appropriate for the needs of the partnership.

— All members (particularly new members) are aware of what agreement is in place.

→ **Resourcing Structure**

Collaborative effort must be adequately resourced from a financial and manpower perspective. Additionally, the collaboration process takes time. If a collaboration is not properly resourced or if results are only seen in the medium to long term, this can inhibit activities. Therefore, from the outset, partners must understand the commitment involved.

Actions/steps

- Ensure that partners understand from the outset that collaboration is a lengthy process. This is important in terms of increasing the likelihood of success, managing expectations and ensuring the continued support of partners.

- Members should agree from the outset on their commitment to the collaboration in terms of resources (time, human and financial resources).

- Seek financial resources, if needed, from partners or through external funding mechanisms (such as Government grant aid for example).

- Time spent on collaborative efforts by individuals from partner organizations should be acknowledged as part of their organizational role.

- If necessary, establish a core of dedicated staff/facilitators responsible for undertaking a significant proportion of the work.

- The need to financially resource the collaboration should be emphasized in key policy documents, to encourage government support.

- Evaluate resourcing structures on an ongoing basis to:
  — Ensure members are delivering on their resourcing commitments (time, human and financial resources).

  — Identify opportunities for financial support from government or other external sources.

  — Measure the allocation of resources across the partnership and the demands on individual members.

  — Ensure that there is an appropriately balanced distribution of workload.

  — Identify potential additional resource opportunities.

  — Ensure recognition is provided to all members for their collaborative efforts.

  — Ensure all partner organizations are appropriately acknowledged in external communication and marketing documents based on their resourcing commitments.

→ **Conflict Resolution Structure**

Conflict can be a feature of many collaborations as partners have different perspectives and objectives. The key to successful collaboration is management of these conflicts. From a legal perspective, there can be conflicts over issues such as intellectual property and individual partner organization policies and procedures.

Actions/steps

- Develop a clear and fair conflict mediation process with the agreement of all partners.

- Identify the potential for conflicts over issues such as intellectual property for example and agree solutions early in the partnership.

- The lead partner or a facilitator should take on the important role of conflict mediator.

- Create a conflict resolution mechanism, ensuring that the lead partner or a named facilitator takes on their role of conflict mediator. Steps in the process could include for example:

  1) Identify the issues, be clear of what the problem is

  2) Understand everyone's interests/perspectives (including cultural differences)

  3) List possible solutions

  4) Evaluate different options

  5) Select an option partners can support

  6) Document the agreement

  7) Agree on contingencies, monitoring and evaluation

- Communicate the conflict resolution process with all partners.

- Evaluate on an ongoing basis to:
  — Ensure all members (particularly new members) are aware of the conflict resolution mechanism.
  — Examine the appropriateness of the conflict resolution process within the partnership.
  — Monitor and measure conflict issues to aid prevention.

External Engagement

→ **Engagement with Policy Makers**

Government policy that addresses the need for collaborative approaches and encourages their formation is a key facilitator for collaborative efforts to address skills needs. Government can also provide appropriate incentives and disincentives. Additionally, collaborative initiatives at national or regional level, addressing macro issues such as skills needs, are more successful if they have direct access to policy makers or if policy makers are involved as partners.

Actions/steps

- Engage with policy makers for support and develop strong links with national and/or regional government stakeholders.

- Include national or local government representatives as part of the partnership as appropriate.

- Keep policy makers updated on partnership activities. Regular updates could occur through online meetings, newsletters, presentations or email.

- Encourage policy makers to develop policy to support collaborative efforts to address skills needs.

- Discuss policy suggestions and decisions within the partnership.

- Evaluate on a regular basis to:
  — Ascertain how well the partnership is engaging in two-way communication with policy makers and adjust the communication strategy if necessary.
  — Explore the role of policy makers in partnership activities and update if necessary.
  — Explore the effectiveness of the partnership in encouraging the development of supportive policy.
  — Ensure that information about new policy is provided to partners either in meetings or through shared written communication.

→ **Ensure Support of Managers**

Involvement in collaborative initiatives requires significant commitment, underpinned by resources, from upper management in partner organizations.

Actions/steps

- Make partners aware that their representatives within the partnership should have the support of their managers, for example, ensuring that they have time to attend meetings, that their costs are covered and that there is a clear way of reporting activities.

- Engage with upper-level management by highlighting benefits of involvement at the outset and continue to communicate positive outcomes to them once activities are underway. This may be done via a website or with regular news updates, presentations, group emails or e-zines etc.

- Evaluate on a regular basis to:
  — Ensure that individual representatives are supported by their organizations. Organizations which cannot provide support should not be involved in the partnership.
  — Explore how well the partnership is communicating its activities and successes to management in individual partner organizations and update the communication plan if necessary.

→ **Evaluation Mechanism (this can be an external engagement OR an internal process)**

When the mission and objectives have been identified, a difficulty that can arise is deviation from them. Additionally, milestones and objectives may not be achieved as planned. An evaluation mechanism can identify issues and it can be internal to a collaborative partnership or can be developed and undertaken by an external evaluator.

Actions/steps

- Put an internal or external evaluation mechanism in place to ensure that the collaborative efforts remain focused on the vision, milestones and objectives.

- Evaluate all other aspects of the partnership on a regular basis as outlined in this tool.

- Use surveys, individual interviews, group reflection or other methods of gathering data when engaging in evaluation.

- Put contingency plans in place where necessary.

- The evaluation mechanism should be evaluated routinely to ensure that:
  — It is fit for purpose.
  — It identifies areas that require attention.
  — It allows contingency plans to be developed and actioned.

→ **Stakeholder Engagement**

Engaging with a range of stakeholders from industry, education and government can ensure relevant and more robust policies and actions. The strategic, organizational and cultural 'fit' of the different stakeholders can impact the success of the collaboration, keeping them engaged in ongoing activities, and encouraging them to become involved, leads to a successful collaboration.
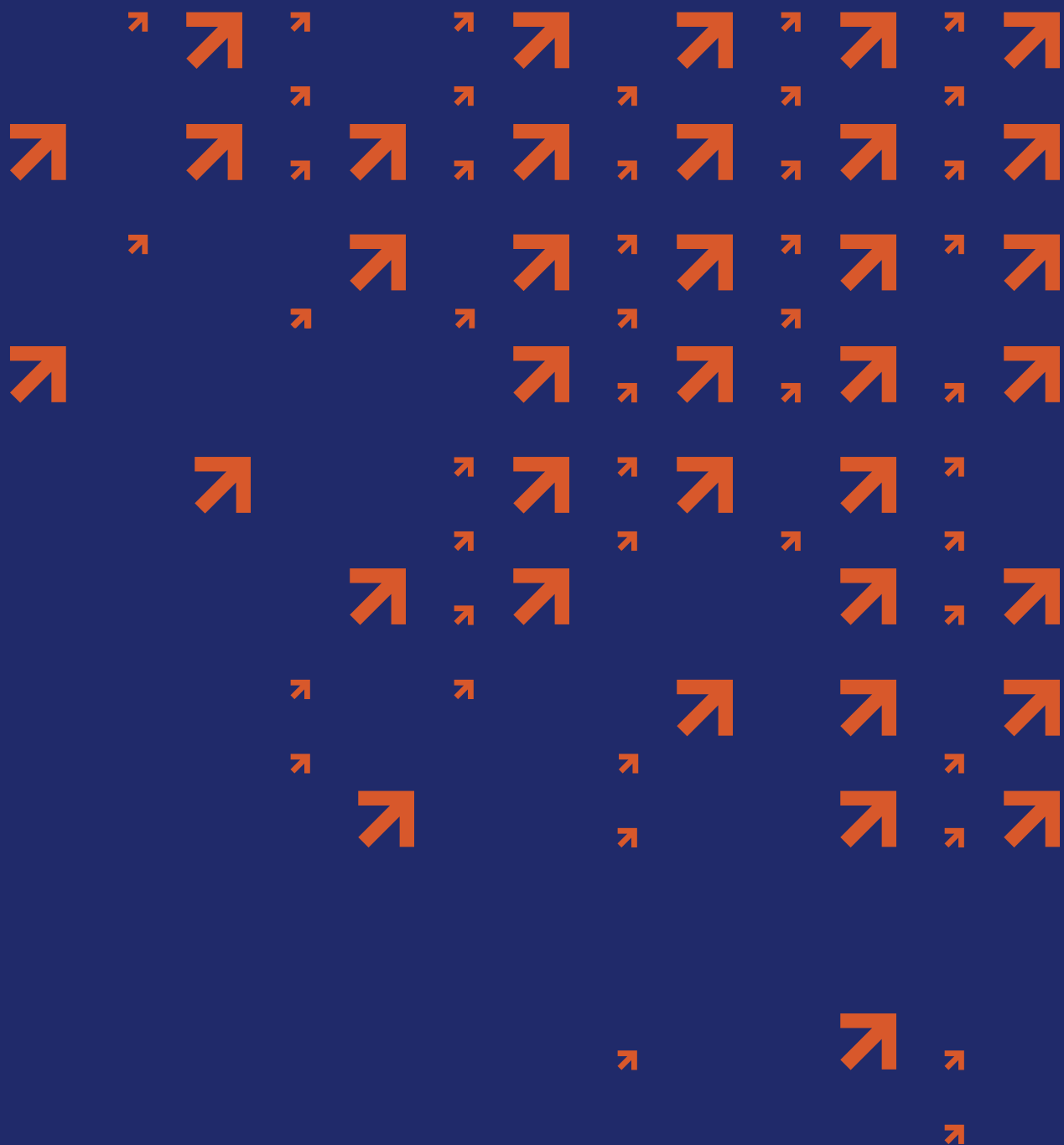
Actions/steps

- Seek out and include other stakeholders in individual actions when necessary.

- Network with other interested parties to ensure that all relevant perspectives are included.

- Evaluate on a regular basis to:
  — Ensure partners are informed of key successes to encourage engagement.
  — Actively research potential new stakeholders as the partnership evolves and the sector develops.

→ **Marketing and Communication**

Ongoing and targeted communication of activities, events, tools development, support materials, etc. can encourage others to become involved and keeps the topic of new skills and related actions alive in the minds of target audiences.

Actions/steps

- Create a detailed short-term and long-term marketing plan to ensure visibility and to highlight the work of the group to others.

- Create a working group to focus on marketing.

- Work towards long-term sustainability by developing a positive image through marketing and communications.

- Consider a website, social media, update emails, information meetings etc. as ways of engaging with all stakeholders and highlighting the work of the group.

- Evaluate marketing activities regularly to:
  — Measure the effectiveness of marketing plans and initiatives.
  — Identify specific areas of focus required by the partnership.
  — Maximize the audience reach of the partnership.
  — Examine levels of engagement with existing stakeholders and identify new stakeholders.