

# Defining Collaboration

Collaboration for public service delivery refers to the reciprocal and voluntary support that two or more distinct public sector agencies, or public and private administrations, including non-profit organisations (NPOs), provide each other in order to deliver a "public" service, i.e. one that is part of the government mission.

Very often, this support translates into a formal agreement between the parties as to the purpose of their collaboration and the sharing of both tangible and intangible responsibilities, resources, risks, and benefits. As a general rule such formal written agreements are for a specific period of time and most often are presented in contract form.

Therefore, these "models of collaboration" generally present the following characteristics:

- **A minimum of two distinct administrations**, one from the public sector, the other from the private, public or non-profit sector.
- **A formal written agreement for a definite term**
- **A common objective** aimed at the delivery of a public service.
- Shared responsibility consisting of shared **risks, resources, costs and benefits**, both tangible and intangible

*Public-Public* collaboration models include agreements between public agencies and can be classified into two main categories: horizontal and vertical. The first refers to agreements between two agencies or departments at the same level of government, while the second refers to intergovernmental alliances between local, provincial (state), or national administrations.

*Public-private* collaboration models present a greater diversity. Sub-contracting and out-sourcing are two common types. In these cases, Government retains responsibility for a service that is totally or partially operated by the private sector. However, public-private partnerships (PPP or P3) are emerging as the models of collaboration that trigger the most debate. They are distinct in that they focus on a sharing of resources, risks, and benefits across sectors. And while the service is public, as a general rule [usually], the funds are private. In certain models of collaboration, reciprocal support might even include the creation of a corporation, as in the case of mixed ownership corporations or regulated private companies. In both cases, Government hands over part of its management responsibilities while retaining enough control to ensure the protection of the public interest. This control is ensured by maintaining a controlling interest or through laws and regulations governing the activities of the corporation.

The diversity of collaboration models reflects the degree to which responsibility is shared, as well as the variety of potential partners from the public, private or non profit sectors. Inter-organisational collaboration for the delivery of public services can be located conceptually on a continuum that ranges from government monopoly (no sharing) to privatisation (total transfer of responsibility) (figure 1):

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