COLLABORATIVE ACTION

Empowering 10 to 19

Foreword

In September 2015, world leaders adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that define a universal call to action to end poverty, fight inequality and protect our planet, so as to create a better future for all 7.53 billion of us. At Bank of America, we understand that these audacious goals cannot be achieved by any one individual or organization alone – they require businesses, governments and civil society to combine forces and work towards a shared vision of impact.

In doing our part, we are committed to focusing on good environmental, social and governance practices that create jobs, foster economic mobility, and provide opportunities to help families, businesses and communities thrive. In India, our support is aimed at empowering India's 250 million adolescents, including some of the most marginalized young people who confront daunting challenges – such as poor health, lack of education and stifling social norms – that entrap them in their transition from childhood to adulthood.

Bank of America is determined to aid extraordinary change makers, and encourage research that guides greater and more impactful action towards this vulnerable population. Over the last few years we have supported two research projects with Dasra – *Dignity for Her* and *Best Foot Forward* – that unlocked strategic philanthropy towards areas key to adolescent empowerment including sanitation, hygiene and employability. More recently, through *Collaborative Force: Empowering 10 to 19*, we supported the documentation of learnings of the 10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative in order to fuel collaborative action and drive transformative impact in the adolescent health and development sector and beyond.

This report is the second in a series that outlines actionable insights on how to effectively design, build and manage a large-scale multi-stakeholder collaborative. Whether you are facilitating, funding or participating in such an undertaking, we hope that the insights shared in these pages encourage greater adoption of multi-stakeholder initiatives to drive economic and social progress in India, especially for its millions of adolescents.

We invite you to read, learn and participate in our shared journey of transformative change.

Kaku Nakhate
President and Country Head
Bank of America, India

Preface

We founded Dasra 20 years ago, with the vision to transform India into a nation where a billion thrive with dignity and equity. If there is one lesson that our journey has taught us, it is that no individual stakeholder is singularly capable of creating change at the scale and pace urgently required to move India forward. The magnitude, complexity and seriousness of development challenges in our country necessitates collaborative action among multiple stakeholders – funders, non-profits, government, academics and the media – at a greater scale than ever before. With this realization, Dasra has increasingly adopted a collaborative approach, characterized by powerful partnerships, trust-based networks, and long-term investments in local, scalable solutions, all while placing the lives of communities at the forefront of our work.

In 2010, we introduced our first Giving Circle, wherein a group of philanthropists collectively contributed INR 2.8 crore to support Educate Girls, one of the 10 organizations recommended through our initial research on empowering adolescent girls. Over the next few years, we were able to nurture a community of more than 300 givers through 13 giving circles, directing INR 400+ crores towards high-impact organizations such as Magic Bus, SNEHA, Muktangan and Lend-a-Hand India. In 2013, we launched the Dasra Girl Alliance in partnership with USAID, Kiawah Trust and the Piramal Foundation. With an initial investment of $14 million, the Alliance worked to highlight adolescent girl issues through research and media partnerships, provide high-impact non-profits with consistent funding and capacity building support, and mobilize various relevant stakeholders to learn, share and collaborate. In 2015, Dasra partnered with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to facilitate collaboration among the Foundation's WSH partners in India with the aim of achieving sustainable impact and supporting policy at a national and state level. Through this work, we disseminated replicable and scalable models in the sector, strengthened institutional capabilities of organizations, and built a community of practice that was instrumental in passing India's first National policy of Faecal Sludge and Septage Management. Most recently, we launched the 10to19:Dasra Adolescents Collaborative in 2017, a platform that unites funders, technical experts, government and non-profits, by adopting an outcome-led, geography-specific and cross-sectoral approach to empowering India's adolescents.

All these experiences have not only reinforced our conviction in the collaborative action approach, but also taught us that effective design, management and facilitation is key to the success of any collaborative initiative. Arising from Dasra's strong belief in the value of sharing our learnings with the sector at large, this report documents our ongoing learnings from the journey of the 10to19 Collaborative, focusing on a collaborative's transition from strategy to action. Leveraging Dasra's 20 years of experience in conducting due diligence on over 1100 non-profit organizations across several sectors, the report shares insights on how collaboratives can effectively use due diligence as a tool for selecting implementing partners.

While this report offers insights based on Dasra's own experience and that of sector experts, in no way does it suggest a deterministic or one-size-fits-all model for every collaborative. With each collaborative having its own agenda and dynamics, the insights from this report must be contextualized to the environment and agenda among which it operates. Ultimately, we hope that the report encourages greater participation in collaborative action models and adds value to the discipline around their effective management.

We are ever so grateful to Bank of America and to the partners of the 10to19 Collaborative, all of whom have been critical in our journey of driving collaborative action to build an ecosystem for adolescents in India. Their steadfast and determined support through our challenges and successes, and their belief that together we are stronger, moves us closer every day to achieving what is foremost for us all – a world where adolescents are educated, healthy, safe and celebrated.

Neera Nundy
Founding Partner
Dasra

Table Of Contents

Introduction

Collaborative Action: The Need of the Hour

Most of the large-scale social problems that are stifling India's progress towards meeting its ambitious development agenda – poor quality education, lack of access to basic sanitation or inadequate community health services – are systemic. The issues are complex, arising from the interplay of socio-cultural norms, and governmental and business activities. Additionally, existing models have been largely ineffective, solutions are most often not known, and even if they are, no single individual or organization has the resources or authority to bring about the necessary change.

As a result, large-scale social change in any field can happen only when the problem and solution are viewed through the lens of multiple stakeholders, actors from different sectors together commit to a common agenda, and learnings are openly shared among them. With an increasing realization of the significance of such an approach, the development sector has seen a rising number of structured collaborative initiatives that seek to align key stakeholder groups around a shared vision to explore comprehensive solutions that draw on a multitude of skills and resources.

Evidence of the effectiveness of such a collaborative approach is still limited, but there are enough examples to suggest that substantially greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social problems if they are tackled through collaborative action. The Strive Partnership for education outcomes, the Freedom to Marry Movement for LGBTQ rights, the National Campaign to prevent Teen Pregnancies in the US, and the Polio Eradication Program in India are all instances of successful multi-stakeholder collaborative initiatives that achieved impact at scale.[1] Such an approach – one that brings together non-profits, governments, businesses, media, researchers and technical experts around a common agenda to improve specific outcomes on the ground – has immense potential to bring about systemic change towards India's large-scale development challenges.
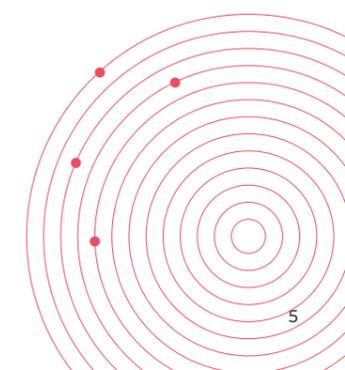
Leveraging the Approach for India's Adolescents

Empowering India's adolescents has long been one of the most significant of India's development challenges. Despite India being home to more adolescents than any other country, many of them face adverse social and economic challenges that complicate their transition from childhood to adulthood. Deep-rooted discriminatory mindsets, norms and practices leave far too many of them powerless to make basic life choices independently. This lack of agency denies adolescents, especially girls, the ability to reach their full potential, and manifests in several ways across their lifespan, including poor nutrition and health, lack of education, dearth of employment opportunities, early marriage and pregnancy, and sexual violence. These problems form a complex cause-and-effect web that entraps millions of adolescent girls in India every day, and perpetuates the vicious cycle of deprivation and poverty.

Research has consistently highlighted that for India to break this cycle and have any chance at realizing its development goals, it needs to act urgently and at scale and invest in this vulnerable population, leveraging them as essential agents of change.

However, silo-ed investments by individual stakeholders – no matter how large – will not be enough. There is little data to show what works, strategic funding directed to the sector is far from adequate, and most non-profits working with adolescents deliver interventions in issue-based siloes to meet individual goals in areas such as education. Finally, collaboration between governments and civil society to ensure prioritization of adolescents and effective implementation of schemes is rare. This complexity coupled with the fact that the basic needs of adolescents cut across multiple areas such as health, education and livelihoods, underscores the idea that large-scale multi-stakeholder collaboration that comprehensively addresses the needs of adolescents is undoubtedly the need of the hour to empower this critical demographic.

27%
of women aged 20-24 years in India are married before age 18[2]

54%
of girls and 48% of boys aged 18-19 years in India have not completed class 10[3]

16M
girls between ages 15-19 in India become mothers every year[4]

What to Expect in This Report

In March 2018, Dasra, in partnership with Bank of America, published *Collaborative Force: Empowering 10 to 19*, the first report in a series that aims to illustrate the vital role of collaboratives in advancing India's development agenda, and outline the building blocks that enable their effective functioning to multiply impact.[6] A collaborative in this context, is described by sector leaders as a collective platform that aggregates resources across various stakeholders to amplify social impact, adopts a shared vision and measurement framework, offers a cohesive structure for collaborative action, and is facilitated by a host or backbone organization.

Collaborative Force shared actionable insights on designing and facilitating the formative stages of such a multi-stakeholder collaborative, leveraging the experience of laying the foundation for 10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative. The 10to19 Collaborative is an initiative launched in 2017 that unites funders, technical experts, the government and non-profit organizations to reach five million adolescents in India, and move the needle on outcomes key to their empowerment. It outlined four key phases of work involved in setting the stage for a collaborative – **Initiation, Design, Launch** and **Start-Up** – and key considerations to take into account during each phase.

Taking off from the insights offered in *Collaborative Force*, this report aims to dive deeper into the Start-Up phase of a collaborative. This critical phase rests at the cusp of planning and implementation, and presents unique dynamics at a point where implementing organizations are being brought on board, relationships between partners are fairly new and hypotheses are still untested. With the many complexities that often accompany these aspects, it becomes ever so important for collaboratives to be mindful of managing them in a way that is thoughtful, while unwavering in its progress towards the desired mission. Leading with the experience of the 10to19 Collaborative and weaving in best practices shared by sector experts, this report therefore outlines key considerations across various stages of the Start-Up phase: translating strategy to action, selecting non-profit partners, and establishing practices for effective collaboration between members.

Leveraging Dasra's 20 years of experience in conducting due diligence on over 1100 non-profit organizations across several sectors, the report focuses heavily on how collaboratives can effectively use due diligence as a tool for selecting implementing partners.

We hope that the report will be useful to anyone responsible for facilitating, funding or participating in a large-scale multi-stakeholder collaborative, and ultimately drive collaborative action towards meeting the development goals for an equitable and prosperous India.

Things to Keep in Mind:

1.

Managing and sustaining a collaborative is a complex and iterative process. It does not usually play out in distinct phases, but rather involves several simultaneous streams of work and multiple efforts towards garnering buy-in and alignment from stakeholders. While the report presents distinct stages so as to better explain and highlight each one, it should be approached as a guide that focuses on the learnings more than the sequence.

2.

Every collaborative has its own agenda and dynamics, each manifesting uniquely towards achieving the desired mission. This report does not intend to prescribe a template for all collaboratives to rigidly follow, but rather outlines the cornerstones that must be contextualized to the environment, agenda and stakeholders among which the collaborative operates.

3.

The experience of the 10to19 Collaborative by no means reflects a best practice or declared success. The Collaborative continues to learn from achievements and failures along its journey; all insights offered in this report are based on these ongoing learnings as well as perspectives shared by sector experts.

10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative An Overview

Dasra's experience with collaborative models can be traced through the journey of 10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative.
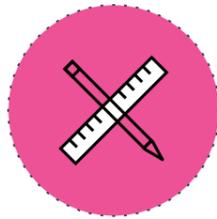
10to19
DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE

Launched in 2017, the 10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative is a pioneering national initiative that unites funders, non-profits, technical experts and government to transform the lives of over five million adolescents in India and move the needle on outcomes key to their empowerment.
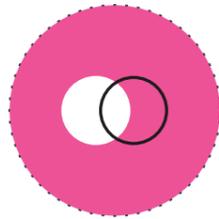
Vision: A transformed India where millions of adolescents thrive with dignity and equity

Mission: Drive collaborative action towards scalable impact to ensure that adolescents are educated, healthy and empowered to make positive life choices

Priority Outcomes:

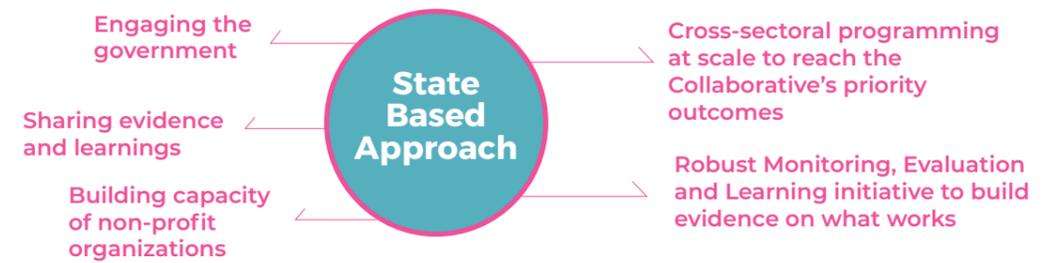Completion of secondary education

Delay age at marriage

Increased agency

Delay of first pregnancy/birth

Goals:

Scale state-level, evidence-based interventions through a state-based approach: Non-profits in the adolescent health and development space often deliver services in issue-based siloes to meet individual goals. However, truly empowering adolescents requires adopting a holistic, multi-sectoral approach that addresses their needs across aspects of health, education, employability and agency. Given that most critical government decisions in India are made at a state-level, through the 10to19 Collaborative, funders collectively support impactful and scale-ready non-profits to develop cross-sectoral programming in specific states, with the aim of ultimately creating a comprehensive and evidence-based model that is scalable at the national level.

Engaging the government

Sharing evidence and learnings

Building capacity of non-profit organizations

State Based Approach

Cross-sectoral programming at scale to reach the Collaborative's priority outcomes

Robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning initiative to build evidence on what works

Accelerating the growth of the field by a national network of stakeholders: 10to19 will foster a national network of organizations that will bring together adolescent-focused non-profits and other stakeholders from across 25 states in India, in a community of practice. The goal of this network is to encourage peer learning through sharing of knowledge, support capacity building of organizations, and build a collective voice to engage with the government for effective policy and program implementation. Additionally, through this platform, Dasra will share learnings from its state-based model amongst a wider network of non-profit partners.

Key Features:

1. **Outcome-driven, pooled, flexible funding** that moves beyond funding activities and tracking outputs, to measure instead how the Collaborative is transforming the lives of adolescents

2. **Cross-sectoral programming** for adolescent needs across health, education, employability and agency

3. **Inclusion of the government from the start** to ensure buy-in for the adoption of data and learnings and to ensure improved implementation of services

4. **Collaborative action through a Community of Practice** that fosters peer learning, knowledge, data sharing, capacity building, and collective action with the government on sector-wide issues

5. **Focus on evidence,** data and learning to define "what works", and improved peer learning to prevent repetitive attempts to reinvent the wheel when it comes to adolescent programming

6. **Focus on changing attitudes and behaviours** by, for and towards adolescents, by tackling social norms through normative change programming

7. **Capacity building of organizations' institutional and programmatic capabilities to deliver holistic programs** that address the diverse needs of adolescents through integrated solutions

8. **Amplification of learnings and building of sector-wide knowledge** not only on what works for adolescents, but also on effective collaboration for actionable change
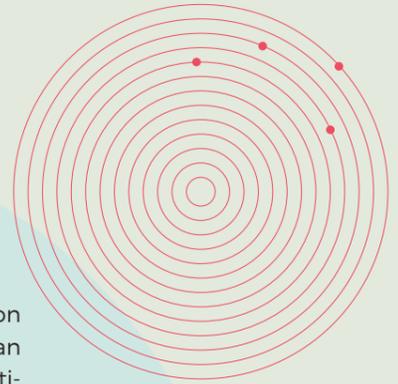
Setting the Stage for Collaborative Action

Leveraging Dasra's experience, the framework on the following page serves as a roadmap that can be used to design and develop a large-scale multi-stakeholder collaborative.[7] While *Collaborative Force: Empowering 10 to 19* introduced the four phases of this framework, this report dives deeper into the Start-Up phase – a critical one that rests at the cusp of a collaborative's move from planning to implementation.

At this stage, being aware of and thoughtfully navigating the complexities that come with bringing implementing organizations on board, nurturing relationships among partners, and working with hypotheses that are still untested, are vital for a collaborative's success. The following chapters seek to outline key considerations that collaboratives must take into account as they embark upon this critical phase.
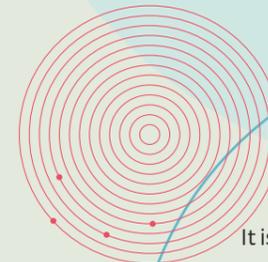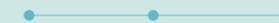
It is important to reinforce here that in reality, neither do the four phases, nor do the steps within each phase play out in a distinct or linear manner. Dasra has learned that the work involved in setting up and managing a multi-stakeholder collaborative is complex, iterative and often simultaneously carried out. This framework must therefore be treated as a guide or GPS that offers direction along a collaborative's journey, and be customized to the collaborative's own unique context and agenda.

Roadmap to Developing Multi-Stakeholder Collaboratives:
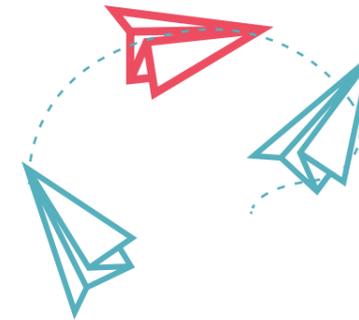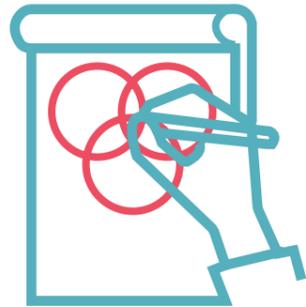
Phase

1. Initiation Phase:
Developing the Idea

2. Design Phase:
Solidifying the Approach and Seeking Alignment

3. Launch Phase:
Planning for Implementation

4. Start-Up Phase:
Setting the Collaborative in Motion

Considerations

- Define the problem area and vision for change, while clarifying reasons for adopting a collaborative model
- Identify the host or backbone organization
- Identify goals for the collaborative
- Bring key anchor funders on board

- Outline the strategy of the collaborative
- Consult with funding and non-profit experts on the direction and strategy
- Maintain an open channel for honest dialogue
- Define a clear governance structure and decision-making process

- Build the right team with strong leadership
- Form a well-defined operating model
- Determine the costs and bring more funding partners on board
- Focus on branding and launch of the collaborative

- Move from strategy to action
- Select implementing partners
- Introduce practices for effective collaboration

- Focus of Collaborative Force: Empowering 10 to 19
- Focus of this report

Moving From Strategy To Action
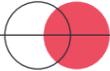
On setting the collaborative into motion, backbone organizations[a] must begin the process of translating the strategic decisions of their collaborative into action and results. While this may intuitively be crucial to the success of any initiative, research has found that most organizations falter at this stage – a large number of global CEOs, for example, list executional excellence as their foremost challenge, and as a result struggle to translate their strategies into operational and tactical plans.[8] These challenges can be amplified in the context of a multi-stakeholder collaborative, which typically involves several layers of added complexities including building alignment, understanding and trust among a diverse set of partners.

To effectively navigate and mitigate these challenges, collaboratives can take into account the following considerations as they work to translate their strategy into action:

1.

Ensure continued alignment between partners on the vision and mission of the collaborative

The experiences of experts and organizations with a history of collaborating to implement projects or deliver services, have repeatedly demonstrated the importance of continued alignment around the shared goals at every stage, but especially when transitioning from strategy to action.[9]

Despite having a shared vision articulated in the goals, objectives and strategies of the collaborative, each participating stakeholder invariably has varying agendas, priorities, values, leadership styles, and notions of how decisions are taken. These differences will come into play as collaboratives work to translate their strategies into execution plans and select partners to implement those plans. When these stumbling blocks emerge in the form of conflict or disagreement amongst the partners, or in the form of difficult choices or decisions that must be made, it is useful to leverage the shared vision, mission and goals as a north star for the collaborative.

2.

Break down the strategy into a detailed operational plan

With an overarching strategy in place, it is time for the collaborative to get specific and break down its long-term goals into timely, digestible, and definable segments that will bring alignment between the day-to-day activities and the overarching tenets of the strategy. Practically speaking, this means translating the multi-year high-level strategic objectives into a 12-18-month operational plan that outlines:

- Specific, timely and measurable goals
- Responsible and accountable entities or individuals for each goal
- Key activities that have to be undertaken to achieve each goal
- Timeline, including key milestones or decision points
- Metrics that will guide the measurement of progress towards the goals
- Required resources and capabilities (including people, equipment and finances) to carry out the work

The goal of the operational plan is to create a detailed roadmap towards achievement of the strategic goals. It is important to ensure that the plan is as granular and realistic as possible, allowing the collaborative to review, monitor progress, and course-correct, if required.

Spotlight | 10to19

10to19 is a multi-stakeholder, outcome-led collaborative with a range of funders, technical experts and nonprofit organizations working together towards a common vision, mission and set of outcomes. Being outcome-led has allowed Dasra, as the backbone organization, to leverage the four selected outcomes of the collaborative as north stars to align a diverse range of partners with varying, but complementary agendas. It has also enabled us to build a theory of change that was broad enough to accommodate several agendas, yet specific in how it targeted shared outcomes.

[a]An organization "with staff and specific set of skills to serve the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies" (Kania and Kramer, "The Collective Impact Framework")

3.

Ensure alignment and joint commitment among partners on the collaborative's definition of "success"

As rubber hits the road, it is critical for each partner to align on a shared understanding of what success looks like for the collaborative. To enable such alignment, a results framework – a tool that provides an explicit articulation of the different levels or chains of results expected from a particular program – can be useful to develop.[10] These results typically refer to the longer-term outcomes or impact as well as the intermediate outputs that precede and lead to these outcomes.

Dasra has found that a clear and robust results framework that has buy-in from all partners, can help keep measurable objectives in sight, assess progress toward those objectives, and assist with adjustment and management of program implementation.

The vision, mission and key outcomes of the 10to19 Collaborative have remained constant since its inception, geared towards ensuring that adolescents in India make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. However due to the dynamic nature of the adolescents sector in India and based on the experiences of the Collaborative's partners, the path taken to reach these goals have evolved over time. From districts of implementation to the nature and scale of the Collaborative's normative change initiatives, maintaining a flexible and nimble strategy has allowed Dasra to incorporate diverse voices, co-create the Collaborative's plans with a range of partners, incorporate learnings along the way and pursue the path that we believe will allow us to achieve the desired outcomes.

4.

Incorporate voices of field experts and partners, and ensure that the operational plan is effectively communicated

Consulting with field experts and the collaborative's partners at this stage can help ensure that local contexts and ground realities can be accounted for from the very beginning. It also helps to grow trust amongst partners and build confidence that the collaborative is not guided by the self-interest of a particular organization or individual. Finally, and most importantly, if partners are involved in creating the strategy, they are more inclined to take ownership of the execution of that strategy, making implementation smoother.

It is especially important to invest time and effort into communicating the strategy and operational plans of the collaborative to its host and partner organizations. The strategy of the collaborative must feel real and achievable to everyone involved in its execution, and partners and their teams must have an idea of how each of their roles are related to the strategic vision of the collaborative.[11]

5.

Allow your strategy and operational plan to be both flexible and nimble

As collaboratives begin planning for implementation, it is important to acknowledge that there is no such thing as a perfect plan. With the global development sector continuing to be an especially dynamic environment, no plan can accurately predict every shift or opportunity.[12] Collaboratives that are agile, and begin execution while continuing to develop and adapt their strategies can establish a cycle of quick wins and consistent momentum that keeps the partners aligned to the vision and energised by the possibilities.

Additionally, as collaboratives begin to move out of the design and launch phases, it is likely that most will need to course-correct, as they start getting more visibility and understanding of their intervention landscapes. A strategy that is nimble and able to absorb learnings from these insights while maintaining forward movement is important for collaboratives to avoid analysis paralysis – a real danger when many partners are involved.

At the same time, it is also important that collaboratives do not sacrifice strategic priorities in pursuit of this agility. Here as well, the shared vision, mission and goals of the collaborative can continue to be a valuable tool to drive alignment, and a constant north star by which to evaluate new information or opportunities.[13]

> *It is critical for collaboratives to involve a range of voices that represent various aspects of the collaborative and of the sector. Doing so will ensure that ground realities are taken into account, increase ownership of the work and magnify momentum.[14]*
>
> *-Hisham Mundol,*
> *Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)*

> *One of the most common pitfalls that organizations and collaboratives encounter is trying to dot their i's and cross their t's too much before moving into execution. You can never have a 100% right answer and the best collaboratives recognize the benefit of an agile test-and-learn approach.[15]*
>
> *-Srikrishnan Srinivasan,*
> *Bain & Company*

10to19
DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE
Moving From Strategy To Action

The 10to19:Dasra Adolescents Collaborative moved into the Start-Up phase in early 2017. With a range of funding partners already committed to the vision and goals of the 10to19 Collaborative, and a strategy for change in place, Dasra set about the process of detailing how the strategic plans could be translated into action. This involved first defining the "what" of the Collaborative by detailing specific output goals.

The "What" of the Collaborative:

Output Goals of the 10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative

- Improve intermediate outcomes by 10% each, for adolescent girls in program areas
- Scale proven approaches to comprehensive programming
- Fundraise and direct USD 50M to the field of adolescent health and development in India
- Strengthen coordination with the government, foundations, corporates, and the private sector
- Influence behaviour change through enhanced normative change programming for adolescents, through campaigns and communications
- Work with the government to improve implementation of adolescent-focused policies and programs
- Develop and disseminate best practices for field building based on issue-aggregated programming across multiple states
- Reach 5 million adolescents over the next 5 years
- Build a community of practice among adolescent-focused partners across 25 states in India

After defining the "what" of the Collaborative, Dasra set out to identify the strategic approaches that the Collaborative would take to achieve the desired outcomes.

The "How" of the Collaborative:

1.
Aggregating impact in specific geographies

2.
Placing big bets on local, scalable organizations

6.
Promoting knowledge sharing and a collective voice

5.
Focusing on measurement, evaluation and leaning (MEL)

4.
Focusing on outcome-led funding

3.
Funding multi-sectoral programming
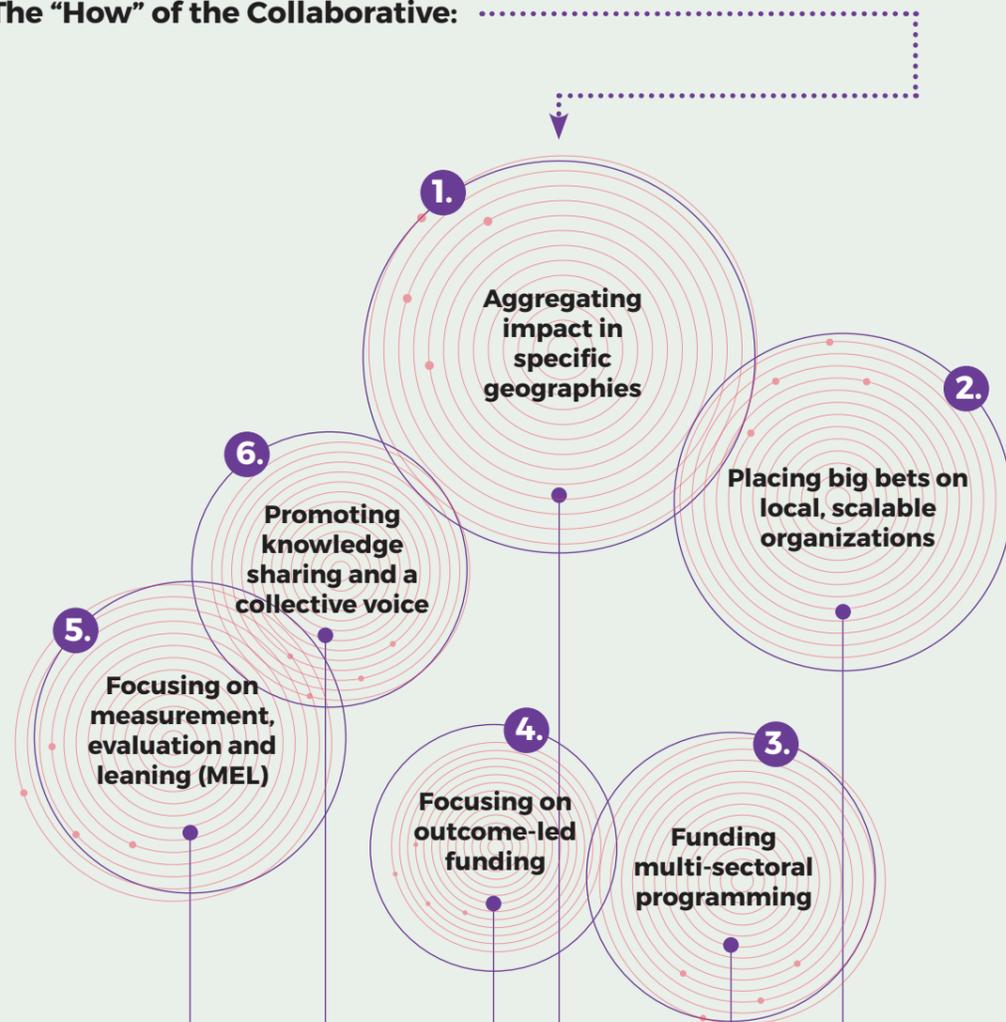
During the Start-Up phase of the Collaborative, Dasra began to detail out the practical considerations and define the way forward for the first four approaches, as captured in the following pages.

1. Selected a geographic focus

With the intention to aggregate impact in specific geographies, 10to19 elected to begin implementation in Jharkhand, a state which presents a unique opportunity to create large-scale impact on adolescent lives, primarily owing to 2 key factors:

a. Extremely poor development indicators for adolescents across literacy, child marriage and sanitation, indicating a need for immediate action.
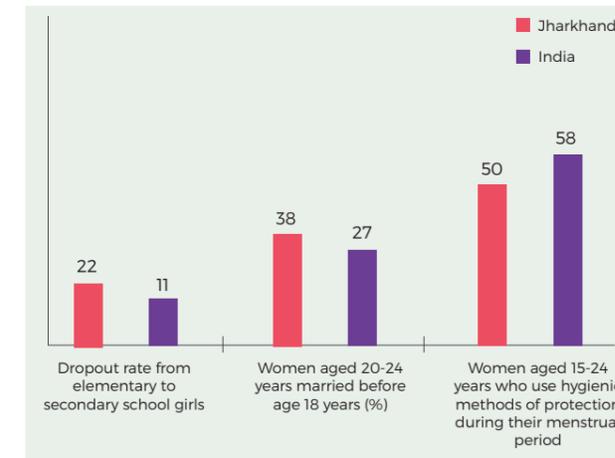

Source: National Family Health Survey 4 – 2015-16

b. A strong positive environment and momentum to drive change

- Proactive state government: The Jharkhand state government has demonstrated commitment to serving adolescent needs via schemes like *Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram, SABLA, Mukhyamantri Vidyalakshmi Yojana and Pehle Padhai, Phir Vidai*. These have a combined annual outlay of over USD 3 million, as per Dasra's internal analysis.

- Support from multilateral bodies: The state goverment has also established MoUs with agencies such as the World Bank to empower adolescent girls through skill training or completion of secondary education, e.g. *Tejaswini* program

- Presence of strong enablers: Jharkhand is home to strong non-profits who, along with funders, have demonstrated a willingness to scale in this geography

2. Defined a comprehensive implementing partner selection process

The success of 10to19's state-based approach heavily depends on the execution capabilities of the collaborative's implementing partners. In early 2017, Dasra set out to define a comprehensive implementing partner selection process to identify four local, scalable and high impact organizations to invest in, based on the quantum of funding available, and the goals outlined previously.

3. Identified programmatic pathways

Having identified the importance of multi-sectoral programming, Dasra, in consultation with field experts, worked to identify how organizations move towards models that address adolescent health and development as a whole, while leveraging their existing strengths and expertise in their original pathways. These are programs through which adolescents receive all the relevant support and services required to make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood.

In the context of the 10to19 Collaborative, a comprehensive approach implies the duality of a demonstrated link between a selected intervention and at least one key outcome chosen by the Collaborative, and a hypothesized link between the intervention to all four outcomes of the Collaborative. Implementing Partners could choose to work towards these outcomes through a combination of health, education, employability or agency pathways – each of which have been shown to be effective in impacting each of the four outcomes. Because of this dual link, the collaborative measures progress of each intervention across all four outcomes, despite the accountability to only one selected outcome.

The **Education Pathway** includes strategies to enhance school retention/re-enrolment and academic success as the central component of the program. Activities could include improving the skills of teachers, remedial classes for improving the academic performance of enrolled students as well as helping drop-outs to re-enter, and even support in the form of scholarships/financial support to enable the students to complete their schooling.

The **Health Pathway** includes strategies to build adolescents' skills to make informed choices around reproductive health, fertility and sexuality. The activities could include community engagement and mobilization to transform norms with men and other gatekeepers, community efforts to increase knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour for adolescent sexual and reproductive health, puberty and body awareness activities that may build on existing menstrual hygiene management efforts, and support to government efforts that provide adolescent-friendly health services in communities.

The **Employability and Skills Pathway** includes elements like vocational training, placement services, entrepreneurship activities, financial literacy, saving and loans, and/or scholarships for training to support adolescents who have completed formal education to take on vocational skills so that they have more employment opportunities available to them.

The **Agency Pathway** is seen as a crosscutting pathway that can be achieved within each of the education, health and employability pathways, by integrating the holistic approach that accounts for the structural and power inequities that women and girls face while challenging the rigid norms that dictate their roles and behaviour. Achieving this pathway is critical, as it is difficult to achieve impact in any of the above pathways without simultaneously increasing the agency of adolescents.

4. Outlined measures of success

Because of the outcome-led nature of the Collaborative, it became important to articulate a definition of success that moved beyond an activity-level, and instead considered points that relate specifically to the achievement of the desired outcomes. Leveraging this approach, Dasra, in consultation with funding partners, implementing partners and technical experts, defined themes that will be used to measure the success of the Collaborative across each aspect of programming.

Success for the Collaborative means:

Achieving scale through replication of the model, or by driving sustainability by advocating for the adoption of the model or key components of the model. This could be through adoption by other civil society organizations, adoption by the government or adoption by the community.

Demonstrating impact or the ability to show movement on the four outcomes, which leads to positive impact on the life of adolescents and considers outcome-level results beyond activities and inputs.

Enabling cost-effective program delivery that ensures that maximum impact is achieved for each rupee spent. This is important to ensure government buy-in to the effectiveness of the program, and to ensure scalability.

Effectively engaging with the government at the national, state and district/local levels.

Building effective organizations that have strong systems and capabilities across areas including strategy and planning, partnerships, leadership, organizational structure, talent development, board and governance, program design, fundraising capability and strategy, diversification of funding, funder engagement, communications, and financial management.

Enabling collaborative action through effective project management that will ultimately support the Collaborative's initiatives at a sector level and help realize Dasra's vision for field building with its partners. This involves aspects such as adopting a multi-stakeholder approach, working towards a vision for field building, garnering alignment with various stakeholders on key decisions, engaging with the government and executing several initiatives that converge towards the outcomes of the Collaborative.

Mobilizing community engagement around adolescents by shifting attitudes, behaviours and mind-sets and creating a national-level dialogue around the issues surrounding this demographic, while leveraging research, campaigns and media towards this. Such narrative change will ultimately lead to increased demand that will push for more action from the delivery side (for example, more effective implementation from governments working on adolescent-focused schemes and greater focus on cross-sectoral programming from civil society organizations).

Selecting Implementing Partners

Once a collaborative develops a clear understanding of how its strategy will translate to execution, it must determine which implementing partners to work with to deliver impact for the targeted communities. Of course, not all types of collaboratives will go through an intensive selection process for partners – an inclusive approach that welcomes players through a low or no threshold for selection is beneficial when collaboratives are looking to increase the number and diversity of actors identifying with an ecosystem or to grow the collective voice of the players in an ecosystem. However, in cases where there is finite funding or other resources available to be directed to implementing partners, where adoption of a particular approach is needed, or where specific capabilities are required to carry out the work, it is important that collaboratives curate a select group of partner organizations through a thorough process.[16]

Customizing the Approach

There is no single "right way" for collaboratives to approach the selection process of implementing partners. Each collaborative will have its unique priorities and objectives that will guide the nature, breadth and depth of a collaborative's approach to selecting its implementing partners. For example, considering the history of the funders' relationships with the prospective partner organizations and the types of grant – unrestricted or programmatic – will help determine the type and amount of information a collaborative will look to gather along the process, as well as the method of collecting it. The size of the grant and the resources available within the collaborative to devote to the process may also dictate the level of investment collaboratives will make to select implementing partners.[17] For example, "big bet" grants,[b] that are relatively large for the grant-making organizations will warrant a much more exhaustive diligence process as compared to a proportionally smaller grant. While designing an effective and streamlined selection process, it is important to keep in mind the values and goals of the collaborative, required capabilities, nature and size of the grant and resources available within the team. An efficient process factors into account all these variables while minimizing the burden on potential partners.

Due Diligence as a Tool for Effective Partner Selection

Due diligence is the process through which an investor or funder learns more about an organization's health to guide an investment or grant-making decision.[18]

While due diligence has historically been limited to understanding financial and legal compliance matters in the Indian development sector, its scope is beginning to broaden to take into account other factors – such as the ability to demonstrate impact, strength of the leadership, organizational capacity and values – that guide one's decision to support a given organization.[19] Having a deep understanding of these factors helps provide confidence that the investments have a high likelihood of delivering the desired impact, allows funders to understand and manage any risks associated with their grants, and develops greater transparency between the two partners.

In a collaborative setting however, where there are often large pools of funding involved, increased accountability to audacious outcomes and complex dynamics between multiple stakeholders, developing a strong understanding of these parameters and selecting partners that are aligned in their values and vision, becomes all the more significant. An overreliance on the strength of the collaborative's vision, without answering pertinent questions about the organizations implementing the work on the ground, can prove detrimental to the collaborative's ability to bring about the desired impact. On the other hand, selecting a partner that resonates strongly with the collaborative's vision and values and that can effectively work with the complexities that come with multi-stakeholder collaboration, can fuel the collaborative's mission and lift it to even greater heights.

It is important therefore, that the process of selecting implementing partners for a collaborative takes into account not only an assessment of organizations' objective strengths, challenges, and ability to effectively deliver the relevant programs, but also a thorough analysis of the fit of the organizations with the collaborative's mission and values.

While due diligence is not intended to provide an insurance against failure, it can be leveraged to acquire familiarity with some basic parameters that form the foundation for healthy and strong organizations. It is usually most effective when funders and other collaborative partners have a clear understanding of how the process is serving or advancing the mission of the collaborative, and the purpose within which it is rooted.[20]

[b]Grants of $10 million and up going to a single organization or cause (Foster, Perreault, Powell, and Addy, "Making Big Bets for Social Change").

Given 10to19's commitment to taking big bets on organizations and working with them over the long term, it was clear from the start that their success was almost synonymous with that of the Collaborative. To this end, 10to19 decided to undertake a rigorous selection process over 6-9 months, hiring a dedicated team with specialized expertise in non-profit due diligence. While Dasra was familiar with the work of several organizations it had engaged with over the last 20 years, we understood the danger of limiting our search to only these organizations; with the vision of the Collaborative at the centre of our approach, we set out to understand the ideal role and capabilities required of the Collaborative's implementing partners and to explore the universe of possible partners against these. Because achieving scale was a critical goal of 10to19 and the grants were largely flexible in terms of utility, we designed our selection process in a way that would identify organizations with a strong institutional backbone and the ability to drive impact and influence at a sector level.

Why due diligence?

Builds confidence

Due diligence provides collaboratives with greater confidence that they are supporting partners who have the right capabilities and capacities to effectively deliver the given work, and who offer a high likelihood of achieving the collaborative's goals.[21]

Promotes trust and transparency

With lack of trust being one of the largest barriers to increasing philanthropy, due diligence provides an opportunity to build transparency between funders and implementing partners by enhancing communication and dialogue, and nurturing a shared understanding of the organization's strengths and challenges. It also leaves organizations with a better understanding of the collaborative's interests and needs.

Allows foresight of risks and challenges

By understanding the challenges faced by a non-profit, collaboratives and the implementing partners can foresee risks and build a plan to effectively support the organization's efforts towards collective success.

Offers insights into ground realities

The due diligence process can provide collaborative funders with a stronger understanding of non-profits' work with communities, in turn enhancing their understanding of the issue or sector as a whole.

Protects reputation

Due diligence provides an opportunity for collaboratives to demonstrate to themselves and others that they are operating in good faith to achieve their mission.

Distilled to its simplest version, due diligence is an opportunity for grantmakers to get to know and build relationships with grant-seekers. When done well, it provides a deeper and broader understanding of all of the factors that contribute to an organization's effectiveness and the context within which it works.[22]

– Emily Wexler,
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations

Designing an Effective and Streamlined Due Diligence Process

As mentioned previously, every collaborative needs to design its own approach to due diligence based on its unique needs and priorities, as well as the nature of the specific grant. It is also important to recognize that assessing an organization through due diligence is not entirely a science – there is inevitably some dependence on intangible factors such as intuition and relationship dynamics. For example, experienced funders often speak about the emphasis they place on their "feel" about an organization's leadership.[23] Nevertheless, it is important to acquire familiarity with basic parameters that can indicate the health of an organization, strength of its programs and compatibility with the collaborative.

Leveraging Dasra's experience of conducting due diligence on more than 1100 non-profit organizations over 20 years, the framework on the right proposes a set of steps that collaboratives may follow to gather this information through an effective due diligence process that can ultimately yield value for both the collaborative as well as organizations. Every collaborative may not follow all these steps in every instance, and in reality, the path may not be as linear as depicted here. The goal of this framework is therefore not to advocate on behalf of a rigid set of practices, but to provide key considerations to guide the due diligence process, which must be customized to each collaborative's unique context.

Ultimately, what is most important is making sure that collaboratives are getting the information they need to make a sound decision, without placing undue burden on the organizations.

STEPS

1. Set expectations and build a tone of transparency and respect

2. Determine a method of identifying potential partners and create a shortlist based on minimum criteria

3. Evaluate the organization's health

4. Determine the organization's strategic fit with the collaborative

5. Consider the organization's value-based alignment with the collaborative

6. Analyze findings and make a decision, seeking buy-in from all existing partners

7. Communicate the decision with a tone of honesty and transparency

1. Set expectations and build a tone of transparency and respect

Collaboratives must recognize that interactions with non-profit organizations along the due diligence process will undoubtedly influence the tone for their future relationship- a transparent and trust-based approach can lay the groundwork for a strong relationship that derives meaningful value for all those involved.

One of the first and most important considerations for collaboratives is to set expectations upfront with the organizations by explaining the process to them, clearly outlining roles, responsibilities and timelines, and honestly laying out all possible outcomes. Being transparent also involves helping the organizations understand the value of the due diligence process for them, which in turn incentivizes them to make the process as successful as possible. Finally, it is vital to constantly maintain an open channel for communication and dialogue, keep an open mind, and treat every organization with respect and equality, irrespective of how they participate in the process.

2. Determine a method of identifying potential partners and create a shortlist based on minimum criteria

The process of identifying potential partners will vary across collaboratives. For some, welcoming unsolicited proposals in response to published guidelines allows them to cast a wide net and explore possibilities that extend beyond those already on a collaborative's radar. For others, inviting select organizations – either directly or through a request for proposal (RFP) – allows them to strategically identify and deepen relationships with organizations that they have some existing confidence in and that meet specific pre-determined criteria.

Especially if going with the latter approach, it is important to avoid the temptation of taking shortcuts or making assumptions without conducting a basic scan of various players in the sector, as it can lead to potentially promising partners being overlooked. Conducting secondary research and leveraging existing networks to understand the landscape of non-profits working in the sector of interest can help in creating a thorough master list of potential implementing partners.

To determine which organizations to take forward in the due diligence process, collaboratives must then create a shorter list of organizations by identifying some minimum criteria that are integral to the vision and model of the collaborative. Some examples of minimum criteria that collaboratives often consider at this stage include:

- Geography of focus (E.g. specific state(s)/ pan-country)
- Target demographic (E.g. adolescents/ women/ farmers)
- Basic statutory compliance (E.g. 80G, 12A, FCRA certifications in India)
- Budget floor or range

This information can be gathered through a scan of the organization's website or a quick phone call with its staff members. Having applied the minimum criteria on all the organizations in the master list, collaboratives will now have a smaller and more curated pipeline of partners to take forward in the due diligence process.
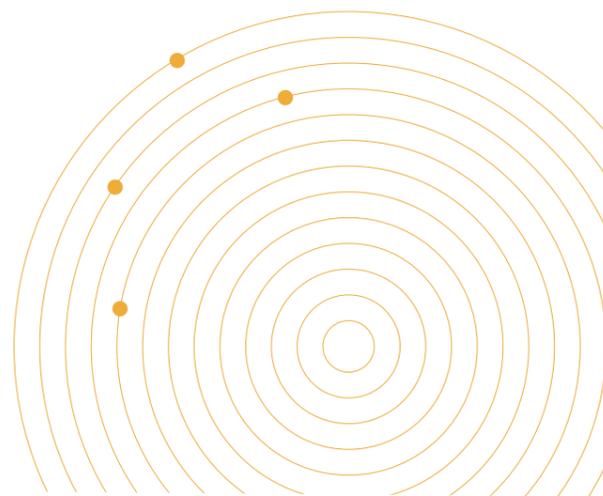
Gathering information in the due diligence process

A robust due diligence process relies on information gathered through multiple sources and mediums, with each area of inquiry supporting and informing the other. Below are some suggested guidelines for how to collect information along the due diligence process.

a **Conduct preliminary research:** Conducting secondary research and speaking to sector experts to identify the range of players in a given sector can help broaden the horizon for collaboratives that may be focusing only on organizations that they have existing relationships with, while missing newer and more innovative ones. Preliminary research can also help collaboratives to better understand the field of interest and leverage these learnings to sharpen their questioning along the due diligence process.

b **Request relevant documents:** Depending on the collaborative's past relationship with and level of existing knowledge about the organization, the nature and depth of information required will vary. With a clear understanding of what information they want to know, collaboratives can set out to request the organization for relevant documents such as program proposals and financial data.

c **Engage in dialogue with the leadership:** Conversations with organization leaders and employees can form a core part of the due diligence process, offering tremendous insights into their motivations, strategies, plans and other nuances that may not be discernable from documents. Rather than allowing these conversations to rehash what the collaborative already knows about the organization, they should be seen as an opportunity to hone in on key questions raised in the review of the proposal and preliminary research.

d **Conduct field visits:** Field visits are an important part of the data collection process, helping collaboratives to gain first-hand experience of the organization's impact and insights into the ground realities. It is important to note however, that these visits take time and preparation on part of organizations, necessitating the need to be mindful of using their time wisely.

e **Include other perspectives:** Exploring added perspectives and gathering feedback through discussions with colleagues, experts, board members and others who may have insight into the organization's work can help further nuance a collaborative's understanding of the organization.

3. Evaluate the organization's health

Doing due diligence well means considering a range of factors that could contribute to an organization's health – its ability to function effectively, cope adequately, change appropriately and grow from within.[24] With no standardized or universal set of parameters to define non-profit excellence, each collaborative will need to reflect on its relationship with the organizations, size and nature of the grant, and other factors to create its own list of priority criteria to focus on and determine the weightage to place on each one. Additionally, factors such as the size and growth stage of the organization being evaluated, as well as the geography and level of maturity of the sector within which the organization is operating, will impact the approach to questioning.

Below is a suggested and non-exhaustive list of some parameters that are commonly considered when evaluating an organization's health. Guiding questions that will help the assessment of organizations against each parameter are outlined in Appendix 1.

Parameter	Description & Significance
Vision and Strategy	An organization's vision and strategy are critical determinants of its overall success, warranting adequate attention in the due diligence process. Effective organizations are guided by a clear and sound vision and strategy. It is important to know that the organization's work is based on realistic goals and evidence-based approaches — and that the vision and strategy are feasible, given the resources and the capabilities the organization brings to its work.
	It is also critical to assess the extent to which the board, the leadership team, and employees all have a shared understanding of the vision and core strategies they are following as they strive to achieve their goals.
History and Track Record of Impact	An organization's history and track record of impact can speak volumes about its ability to successfully carry out the collaborative's work. This is usually best captured through an understanding of the evolution of its programs and institutional functions, key milestones across the growth journey and significant accomplishments in recent years.
	Together, these pieces of information can help collaboratives develop a solid understanding of the sustainability of the organization's programs and operations and its ability to successfully deliver impact. It is important to consider both quantitative and qualitative data points when determining the organization's track record of impact.
Leadership	The strength of an organization's leaders is one of the most important determinants of its health and ability to work effectively with the collaborative. This can be gauged through an understanding of their leadership capabilities, knowledge of the sector, outlook towards the organization's current and future trajectory, and reputation and influence within the sector. The extent of the leadership's presence as a thought leader in their respective sector is often an indicator for how far they can push the boundaries of potential impact.
	It is also critical to gauge how well the leaders work together, how self-aware they are, and whether individual strengths and weaknesses are balanced effectively.
Governance	The board serves as an oversight body for non-profit organizations, providing governance and strategic direction, and ensuring accountability. Understanding the composition, role and functioning of the board can give collaboratives important insights into the organization's overall stability and health.

Parameter	Description & Significance
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	Monitoring, the ongoing collection of information about program implementation, helps organizations understand what is and is not working. Evaluation, the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, can help shed light on the value of a program or policy by looking at what the organization has accomplished against its objectives, and how these achievements were made. Learning in this context, commonly indicates the use of data and insights from a variety of information-gathering approaches—including monitoring and evaluation—to inform strategy and decision-making.[25]
	The MEL systems in an organization underscore the maturity with which it develops goals for its programs, proving the effectiveness of the program model and its openness to data-led validation.
Talent Management	Given that employees form a core part of any organization, a due diligence exercise would be incomplete if it did not take into account talent management systems that enable effective contributions by its human resources.
	For example, understanding how decisions are taken in the organization and the relationship between various departments, can help shed light on whether the organization is structured optimally to function effectively and efficiently. Learning about the recruitment process can provide insight into the retention rates, quality of employees and extent of future planning that an organization does with regards to its people. Inquiring about performance management systems can help collaboratives understand how the organization invests in its talent and provides opportunities for learning and professional development.
	All of these factors can have a significant bearing on the collaborative's confidence in an organization to deliver quality work efficiently, adapt to complex and dynamic environments, retain high calibre talent, and ultimately contribute positively to its success.
Financial Health	Non-profit organizations need strong financial systems for developing budgets based on realistic plans, as well as the capacity and capability to monitor these plans through accurate, timely reports that compare budgets to actual financial performance.[26]
	Understanding whether the organization has stable and reliable sources of revenue, has reasonable expenses, is facing any cash flow challenges, and has a sufficient financial reserve will help paint a picture of its financial health.
	Additionally, gaining insight into the process and assumptions in developing the budget, extent of technology being leveraged in the auditing process, and level of financial expertise present in the team can help indicate how accurately and efficiently the organization is able to capture relevant financial data. This is especially important in a collaborative setting, where there is significant emphasis placed on reporting such data to funders and other stakeholders on a regular basis.
Fundraising	Understanding the ability of an organization to raise funds in a structured and targeted manner, as well as access and maintain relationships with a diverse network of potential funders, can help build a collaborative's confidence in the financial sustainability of the organization beyond its role in the collaborative.

4. Determine the organization's strategic fit with the collaborative

In a collaborative setting where multiple stakeholders with varying agendas, approaches and priorities need to be working towards an audacious shared vision, it is vital to select implementing partners not only by relying on an assessment of their objective strengths, but also by considering their strategic fit with the collaborative.

A review of the organization's proposal or strategic plan can provide a good sense of what it intends to do with the collaborative's support. Leveraging this, collaboratives should look to determine whether the organization's proposed work is aligned with its own mission, strategy and theory of change. For example, if developing replicable models to scale interventions is a core tenet of a collaborative's strategy, assessing an organization's ability and appetite to do this would form an important part of the assessment at this stage. In addition to assessing the strategic fit of each individual organization, it is useful to also take a portfolio approach – one that considers the relative position of the organization within the collaborative, so that complementary skill-sets can be identified, and strengths and limitations can be balanced across all partners.

At this stage, collaboratives should also seek to determine whether the proposed plan allocates sufficient resources (staff, expertise and funds) and lays out an appropriate time frame to accomplish the goals. Finally, understanding to what extent the organization is supported by a sufficient capacity to absorb and effectively utilize the collaborative's grant is critical, and can be done through an analysis of the organization's budget and financial position.

5. Consider the organization's value-based alignment with the collaborative

Every collaborative has a set of values and soft skills that guide its strategy, structure, the way it makes decisions, and ultimately the type of partners it involves along its journey. Understanding these often overlooked yet critical aspects and incorporating them into the due diligence process can help ensure greater alignment with the organization and provide increased confidence of a strong partnership.

Below is a list of parameters that collaboratives may look for when gauging the extent to which an organization's values align with its own. Guiding questions that will help the assessment of organizations against each parameter are outlined in Appendix 2.

Criteria	Description & Significance
Agility and Adaptability	A collaborative is characterized by multiple perspectives, shifting agendas, continuous learning and course correction, and heavy investments in garnering buy-in and alignment among partners. It is therefore important for organizations to be flexible and agile while having the respect and ability to manage the complexities, challenges and rigor of what it takes to participate in a large-scale multi-stakeholder collaborative.
Systems Change Mindset	Collaboratives often have audacious goals and look to leverage the power of the collective voice to create systemic change. Being able to do this effectively requires the implementing organizations' leaders to have a deep understanding of the web of interrelations in a system and a strong focus on bold outcomes, rather than on outputs.[27]
Openness to Learning and Sharing	A key tenet of any successful multi-stakeholder collaborative is embracing the cycle of continuous feedback, learning, iteration and application of the learnings. These include learnings that individual stakeholders derive from each other, as well as those which members collectively acquire along the collaborative's journey. Being able to derive genuine value from this cycle therefore requires partners to demonstrate a sense of readiness to share information and learnings about successes and failures, as well as openness to incorporating these learnings into their current and future work.
Belief in and Ability to Champion the Collaborative's Model	With collaboratives having a specific agenda and model around which to converge partners, it is important to gauge the extent to which the implementing organization truly believes in and is aligned to the model. Genuine belief and strong alignment can go a long way not only in increasing the likelihood of successful delivery, but also in empowering the organization to champion the collaborative and its work amongst its network of peer non-profits and funders.
Ability to Effectively Build and Nurture Relationships	Participating in a collaborative undoubtedly requires partners to be able to work with multiple stakeholders – funders, non-profits, government partners, academics, and others – with varying agendas, priorities and personalities, while leveraging each other's strengths and rallying around a shared vision. Gauging the organization's ability to effectively foster and nurture relationships with diverse stakeholders at every level – from field workers to individuals in the highest level of government – is therefore a critical part of selecting a collaborative's implementing partners.

When selecting an organization for a single grant-making entity or individual, one would be looking for an organization that can stand on its own feet vis-à-vis key parameters such as management, track record, and financial health. When selecting partners for a collaborative, there is a lot more to consider – for example, one of the most important parameters to judge would be how the organization works in tandem with others around the table.[28]

- Pritha Venkatachalam,
The Bridgespan Group

6. Analyze findings and make a decision, seeking buy-in from all partners

The due diligence process rarely leads to a consistent set of findings — either all positive or all negative. There will inevitably be some points that will lead collaboratives to a favourable impression of the organization and others that cause concern. Making a decision involves understanding both the strengths and weaknesses of an organization, weighing these against factors that are most important to the collaborative, considering any risks and red flags that may have surfaced in the due diligence process, and determining the extent to which they should weigh in on the final decision.[29]

In addition, it is important to remember that the decisions emerging from a collaborative's due diligence process are not made in a vacuum. The analysis should lead to an understanding of where the organization stands vis-a-vis other organizations in the pool, to ensure that collectively, skill sets are complementary, and strengths and limitations balanced between the collaborative's partners. Not only this, findings should also be analysed against the geography and level of maturity of the sector within which an organization is operating, and benchmarked against best practices within that sector.

Finally, it is critical that every partner within the collaborative is bought into the decision being arrived upon. Garnering such buy-in and alignment can be difficult given the often varying perspectives and agendas of the different partners. Yet, given that implementing partners play a key role in determining the success of the collaborative, backbone organizations must invest the required time and effort to ensure that all partners are satisfied with the outcome of the selection process.

Identifying red flags and deal breakers

As collaboratives analyse the information collected on each potential grantee, certain red flags may emerge. These are findings that indicate that the organization has serious challenges in one or more assessment areas. In order to effectively process these flags, it is important for the collaborative's partners to align on which areas are assessment criteria (areas important to know about), versus selection criteria (non-negotiable features). In other words, which of the red flags are deal breakers? For example, a collaborative may be willing to work with an organization to improve monitoring and evaluation capabilities further, or in streamlining their human resources systems, but may be unwilling to take on an organization with serious compliance red flags or an organization that has shown difficulty in collaborating with others.

This decision will be influenced by many factors, and it is important to acknowledge that red flags must be evaluated in the context of each organization. The same red flag may be weighted differently across two organizations depending on whether, for example, the leadership of the organization understands the concern and has taken corrective measures or is open to change. Weighing these flags against the relative strengths of these organizations could also impact how one sees the severity of these flags.

An assessment of red flags can be guided by the following questions:[30]

1 How extensive are challenges or organizational shortcomings? Are there many red flags across different areas, or are they clustered?

2 Taken as a whole, are the challenges significant (critical) enough to affect the organization's ability to carry out the grant? Why?

3 Could the issues be addressed? How?

4 Is the organization willing to take the necessary steps to remedy the weakness or deficiency? Is the collaborative willing to provide resources to support it?

> "When it comes to analyzing findings from the due diligence process, you cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. A good assessment will in large part, take into account the maturity of the sector. For example, education is a relatively advanced sector and the benchmark for what 'good' looks like is higher than in many other sectors. It is therefore important to tailor the due diligence approach to the sophistication of the sector.[31]"
>
> – Srikrishnan Srinivasan, Bain & Company

7. Communicate the decision with a tone of honesty and transparency

When making a decision on which organization(s) to support through the collaborative, it is important to communicate the results to all the organizations that have been through the due diligence process, regardless of the final outcome. Doing this effectively can enhance transparency in the process, and build the collaborative's credibility. Additionally, having spent time and resources to get to know each organization, collaboratives may consider sharing their findings with the organizations, as they help the organization to identify blind spots or to understand where they need support. Whether or not the outcome of the decision is positive, below are some useful guidelines for collaboratives to think through what to say, and how to say it, as they look to communicate their decision to the organizations:[32]

Be honest, but constructive

While it is important to be straightforward about concerns that have emerged, it is important to acknowledge that each organization is on its growth trajectory. Honest and constructive feedback can be invaluable, but judgement and criticism can make organizations less inclined to accept that feedback.

Be clear and specific about the reason you are choosing not to select an organization

While it may be an uncomfortable conversation, it can be extremely helpful for organizations to understand what reservations funders may have. It is important to be specific about these reservations, with clear explanations of the red flags found in the organization's proposal and documentation.

Acknowledge strengths and challenges

As with any feedback, it is important to recognize and reinforce an organization's strengths along with its weaknesses, regardless of the decision being communicated. Even in cases where the collaborative is communicating a positive outcome, it must communicate not only the strengths of the organization and fit with its own mission, but also things it learned during the course of the due diligence process and any concerns that may have been raised along the way. Informing the organization of these concerns upfront can help lay the foundation for a healthy relationship based on honesty, openness and a shared commitment to impact.

Rules of thumb along the due diligence process

As collaboratives go through each of the steps outlined in this due diligence process, keeping the below best practices in mind can help streamline the process, build an environment of trust and respect, and ensure a stronger outcome:

1 Be mindful of the power dynamic between funders and non-profits

The power dynamic between non-profit organizations and funders is heavily skewed in favour of the latter. This can have serious implications when it comes to any selection process:

- **Skewed assessments of organizations based on reputation:** An organization's reputation in the social sector is often driven by the funders that support it i.e. if there are credible funders supporting an organization, other established funders will gravitate towards it. While this can be a genuine indicator of an organization's credibility, it can also be misleading. Funders may prioritize this metric over other vital criteria such as past performance and skillsets of the organization. Additionally, this metric makes it difficult for newer and smaller organizations to attract stable funding.
- **Limited transparency:** Organizations going through a selection process are often aware of the criteria funders could use to evaluate them. This can sometimes make organizations inclined to show potential funders what they would like to see, and deter them from being forthcoming in discussions. Funders who can establish themselves as supporters of the organization's mission are sometimes able to move beyond these limitations.

2 Avoid placing undue burden on organizations

Funders often fall into the trap of asking organizations for things that are not needed, or used in a meaningful way. Additionally, some of these asks are highly resource or time intensive and are prohibitive for smaller organizations. With many non-profits having limited capacity to dedicate to even core activities such as fundraising and business development, providing extensive information for the due diligence process can be extremely burdensome.

It is possible for funders to mitigate this burden by taking on the onus of gathering basic information themselves, such as by searching publicly available online records, revisiting documents that have already been submitted and having open conversations with the organization's leaders. Alternatively, some recommend providing grants to help organizations bear the significantly higher overhead costs involved with rigorous and lengthy diligence processes. This can be done by either providing a short term grant to allow organizations to bring on specialized support in undergoing the process, or by providing sufficient room in the grant once it is awarded, to allow the organization to build its institutional capabilities.

Spotlight | 10to19

Keeping in mind the heavy administrative burden that a comprehensive diligence and proposal process can entail, the 10to19 Collaborative leveraged documentation from past interactions to inform initial information requests. We also awarded small, short-term grants to those organizations that participated in the final and most intensive stage involving site visits, in order to lend flexibility and allow them access to any support they needed.

3 Understand the context that the organizations work in

Conducting secondary research and speaking to sector experts to develop a nuanced understanding of the field that is of interest to the collaborative – level of maturity, community needs, systemic gaps, evidence-based interventions and key players – can help shape the collaborative's selection criteria, sharpen its questioning along the due diligence process, and strengthen the assessment of findings. Conducting due diligence with this informed rather than isolated perspective will ultimately lead to a more contextual, more objective and ultimately stronger outcome when selecting implementing partners for a collaborative.

> *In most partnerships involving funding, there is a very clear power dynamic at play, which is often brushed over or unacknowledged. It is important to go in with empathy, understanding and a sense of awareness of this power dynamic. Without these, relationships can become very transactional and can take away from the core spirit of a collaborative.[33]*
>
> *-Abhijeet Mehta, Quest Alliance*

10to19
DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE

Selecting implementing partners

The process of selecting implementing partners for 10to19: Dasra Adolescents Collaborative builds on five years of research, due diligence and capacity building support provided to the adolescent girls sector under the Dasra Girl Alliance, the earlier avatar of the 10to19 Collaborative. This history and repository of work allowed Dasra, as the host of the Collaborative and lead in the due diligence process, to build on existing knowledge and relationships with organizations, allowing the collaborative greater insight into the landscape of organizations in the adolescent sector. However, at the same time, the grants under 10to19 are Dasra's "big bets." These were the largest ever grants Dasra had given, in both quantum of funding and the length of the commitment. This necessitated a comprehensive and detailed selection process, that assessed a range of criteria, including compliance, organizational health, strategic fit with the Collaborative, programmatic alignment with the chosen pathways, and ability to collaborate (among others).

Below are the steps the Collaborative followed:

1. Built a database of organizations to draw from

To begin the implementing partner selection process, Dasra compiled a list of potential organizations, drawing from past and present organizations in Dasra's Girl Alliance Portfolio, those that were evaluated as part of Dasra's various research processes, those who graduated from Dasra's social impact executive education programs, including the Leadership Program and Accelerator Program, and finally organizations that were recommended by the donor partners in the Collaborative.

2. Evaluated organizations against minimum criteria

This shortlist of organizations were evaluated against selected criteria:

Step 1: Basic Minimum Criteria

Each organization under consideration was required to meet the following criteria:
- **Compliance:** Organizations were required to have the all applicable registrations – i.e. 12A, 80G & FCRA
- **Size:** The organization budget was less than INR 2 crore or more than INR 50 crore

Step 2: Eligibility for the Collaborative

Keeping in mind the goals and outcomes of the 10to19 platform, organizations were evaluated on:
- **Alignment to Outcomes:** Organizations addressed at least one key outcome or intervention pathway
- **Leadership Capabilities:** Organization leadership had a clear vision and future plan for the organization, was open to a strategic and pragmatic approach to scaling, and required very little handholding as they had a high ability to identify and run with opportunities.
- **Demonstrated Impact on the Ground:** Organizations were able to show movement on some intermediate outcomes.

Step 3: Attractiveness and Ability to Deliver

In order to assess an organization's institutional and programmatic strength, organizations were assessed on the following criteria:
- **Attractiveness:** The strength of their leadership, second line management and board strength
- **Ability to Deliver:** Their demonstrated ability to work with partners (i.e. government, non-profits, and other intermediaries), ability to engage with the government, program scalability, program focus on adolescents, and impact on the ground.

3. Assessed the health of the organizations, strategic fit with the Collaborative and ability to collaborate effectively

In order to paint a realistic picture of the organizations' health, Dasra had a two-step process to get to know these organizations better. These included Initial Assessments and an extensive Due Diligence process:

A

Initial Assessments

In order to assess the organizations openness, readiness and suitability for the Collaborative, exhaustive assessment documents were prepared in consultation with the organizations' leadership team. These included qualitative assessments of:

Institutional Readiness for Scale
- Budgets - historical and projected
- Fundraising ability and pipeline
- Board Composition
- Partnerships
- Impact Assessment Ability and Systems

Program Strength
- Operating Model
- Outreach
- Growth Plan

B

Extensive Due Diligence

At this stage, exhaustive diligence reports were prepared on each organization. The process included:
- Visits to the organizations' offices and program sites closest to proposed sites for the Collaborative
- Extensive discussions with the organizations' leadership
- Reference calls to the organizations' funders, board members and auditors
- In-depth reviews of audited statements and board meeting minutes
- Assessments of financial and legal risks

The reports detailed the findings from each of these approaches, and assessed the overall strengths and weaknesses of each organization.

4. Made a strategic decision, taking into account alignment of values with the Collaborative

Throughout the due diligence process, Dasra and the partners of the Collaborative sought to work with like-minded organizations, with proven programmatic track records, and the intention and ability to scale. It was important that each partner agreed with and bought into the theory of change for the Collaborative, and saw the value of a collaborative model to help them build the ability to deliver multi-sectoral programming to their target populations. At the same time, the vision of the Collaborative required that organizations and leaders in the Collaborative go beyond individual agendas, and operate at a sector level to push for progress of the sector as a whole. Additionally, given the collaborative ethos of 10to19, it was also vital for organizations to be comfortable with open sourcing material, and to sharing their learnings from implementing this experimental model (both good and bad) in order to showcase what really works in adolescent programming, and to influence the sector in that direction. Underlying all these criteria, it was vital that the organization leadership had a bold vision, was not risk-averse, and was aligned to the vision, mission and goals of the Collaborative.

Aangan Trust

Aangan works to ensure that even the most vulnerable child is safe, supported, in school and assured of a life free from trafficking, child marriage, child labour, abuse and exploitation.

Aangan primarily works towards increasing the agency of the most vulnerable adolescents in program areas, and its model has also been effective at helping adolescents complete their schooling and delay their age at marriage.

The organization's community-based prevention of harm model for hotspots of child harm posits that children are safe when their protection is the concern of a broad range of stakeholders, working together. Aangan therefore works to strengthen formal child protection mechanisms so that government authorities become responsive and accountable. It also builds local capacity to mobilize families and communities to be aware of child protection risks and enables them to work with local authorities for their children's protection and development. Finally, Aangan works with adolescents, so that they are empowered, aware, connected and supported to negotiate a safe future for themselves. Aangan's model has been recognized and endorsed by the government in several states across India.

Child In Need Institute

CINI facilitates the convergence of government, community and service providers to collaborate on building child and woman friendly communities (CWFCs).

CINI works towards all four DAC outcomes – delaying age at marriage and pregnancy, completing secondary education, and increasing agency by working in rural and urban communities to strengthen government systems around health and child protection and build community awareness around the prioritization of adolescent concerns. Today, CINI leverages knowledge and expertise gained from 40 years of direct program implementation to build child and adolescent friendly systems, institutions and communities.

Centre For Catalyzing Change (C3)

C3 works towards a future in India where women and girls are fully empowered and enabled to realize their rights, opportunities and achieve gender equality.

The Centre for Catalysing Change works towards increasing agency, completing secondary education and delaying the age at marriage and of first pregnancy for adolescents.

The organization implements long-term, state-wide programs through creative public-private partnerships to equip adolescents with life skills, increased agency and decision making ability. They do this by leveraging government infrastructure (e.g. schools) and schemes (e.g. RKSK and SABLA) to reach both in and out of school adolescents. C3 is currently working to implement the state-wide UDAAN and the RKSK scheme in Jharkhand for in-school and out of school girls, and is working to implement enrichment camps to ensure girls continue their education.

Quest Alliance

Quest Alliance works to provide learning experiences that inspire and empower educators and learners alike.

Quest Alliance works to improve the agency of adolescents and ensure that they complete their secondary education by working to bridge the education and skills divide. They do this by delivering replicable solutions through civil society and government partners. Their model enables self-learning for young people aged 10-35 years. It is a three pronged approach, in which they work to create joyful learning environments which retain students, identify girl champions to engage out-of-school girls, and focus on career development for youth. Quest is led by research, strengthened by partnerships and driven by innovation and technology.

Introducing Practices For Effective Collaboration
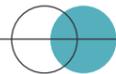
With a clear execution plan in place and strong implementing partners on board, collaboratives can now zoom out and focus on creating a thriving environment for collaboration to take place among all partners. Research has shown that the success of a collaborative is largely dependent on the quality of interactions among partners.[34] However, as with many multi-stakeholder models, sustaining the momentum and ensuring effective collaboration between partners is difficult and time-intensive. Bringing multiple stakeholders on board through a collaborative means managing differing interests, priorities and cultures as well as navigating complexity, ambiguity and rigor, all while driving convergence towards a shared vision and approach.

Introducing a strong backbone of mechanisms for incentivizing and supporting meaningful and regular collaboration between the various partners can help collaboratives effectively manage these complexities. While these mechanisms can be introduced in the Start-Up phase of the collaborative, they must be sustained and reinforced throughout its lifecycle. Some approaches that collaboratives can consider as they set the ground-work for effective engagement among partners, are listed below.

1. Create spaces for formal and informal interactions between partners

Creating spaces for frequent interactions between a collaborative's partners plays a vital role in stimulating meaningful collaboration. Formal meetings can serve as a platform to discuss updates regarding the collaborative's ongoing work, achievements, challenges, concerns and future plans. Partners can also leverage these meetings to provide relevant insights from their respective fields and share learnings from their own experiences. In addition to facilitating meetings between all the partners, it is particularly helpful to create separate spaces for interaction among the implementing partner cohort, to enable the exchange of learnings and best practices regarding the execution of their respective programs on the ground. Facilitating interactions through more informal gatherings is also a critical means of building camaraderie, nurturing friendships and fostering a community of purpose amongst partners at an individual level. Finally, since in-person meetings are not always feasible to organize, collaboratives can consider leveraging technology as an effective tool to ensure ongoing communication and collaboration between meetings.

2. Demonstrate quick wins

While many of the collaborative's strategies will be systemic and long-term, intentionally identifying quick-wins or short-term successes can help demonstrate the value of collaborative work, keep people engaged and motivated while working towards long-term goals, and build greater support amongst stakeholders outside the collaborative.[35]

3. Regularly reinforce the big picture

As implementation begins and partners dive into their respective responsibilities, it is easy for them to lose sight of the bigger picture and get lost in silo-ed agendas. To ensure that partners constantly stay motivated and inspired about the collaborative's work, it is helpful for the backbone or host organization to regularly reinforce the collaborative's mission, remind partners of the big picture, and ensure that the collaborative's north star remains at the centre of every conversation and decision.

4. Facilitate field visits

Field visits can be a powerful way for the collaborative's partners to get to know the staff and work of the organizations first-hand, observe programs in action, deepen their understanding of the issue they are supporting, and better understand the impact of their support. Doing this can help keep them inspired about and deepen their connect with the collaborative's work.

5. Cultivate champions amongst partners

Members who are deeply invested in the collaborative's success, truly believe in its approach, and are enthusiastic about advocating for its model among their networks, can be instrumental in pulling everyone together, promoting trust among stakeholders, and garnering greater support and attention towards the collaborative.[36] Identifying these members and nurturing them to serve as champions of the collaborative are therefore critical considerations for a collaborative at this stage.

6. Listen, learn & document learnings

For any multi-stakeholder collaborative, the criticality of embracing the cycle of continuous feedback, learning, and application of the learnings cannot be overstated. These learnings can be about technical or programmatic information, as well as softer aspects of establishing effective collaboration among partners. Seeking regular feedback from key stakeholders within and outside of the collaborative, as well as from the very communities that the collaborative is working to support, are important ways of gathering these learnings and developing a pulse on the collaborative's effectiveness. Speaking to sector experts and reading about latest trends and innovations in the given sector of interest are also valuable means of incorporating new ideas and ensuring that the collaborative continues to operate at the forefront of that sector.

As collaboratives move forward in their journey, documenting these learnings along the way and sharing them with members of the collaborative as well as with the sector at large, can help prevent replication of mistakes, ensure continuity of institutional learnings in case of key personnel transitions, accelerate progress of the work, and allow for cumulative learning within the sector.

It is important to reinforce here that facilitating effective collaboration and meaningful engagement among a collaborative's partners is a long-term and time-consuming effort, in which backbone organizations play a central role. The insights offered in this chapter in no way reflect the entirety of what it takes to successfully enable such collaboration – they serve only as initial recommendations based on Dasra's experience with laying the ground-work for effective engagement among partners. As we continue to collect learnings along the journey of 10to19, we hope to document even more insights on this critical aspect of managing a multi-stakeholder collaborative.

> *Don't underestimate the value of frequent in-person meetings. Living in a world where everything is so virtual, it becomes all the more important to create spaces for interpersonal relationships to grow. It provides the opportunity for partners to get to know each other's culture and ideas both at an organization as well as individual level and sets the tone for a successful partnership.*[37]
>
> *-Abhijeet Mehta,*
> *Quest Alliance*

10to19
DASRA ADOLESCENTS COLLABORATIVE
Introducing practices for effective collaboration

With all partners on board the Collaborative, 10to19 has now begun working towards creating an enabling environment for effective collaboration among its partners. Since embarking on the Start-Up phase, it has introduced the following practices towards this:

1. Formal meetings across and within partner groups

Once a year, all of 10to19's partners – including funders, implementing organizations, government supporters, technical experts and the backbone organization – meet in person to discuss updates regarding the Collaborative's ongoing work, share achievements, challenges and learnings, and raise any questions or concerns they may have. These interactions have been helpful not only in strengthening relationships and garnering alignment among partners, but also in keeping them motivated and connected with the work.

The Collaborative's implementing partners also meet periodically to exchange learnings and insights from their work on the ground. Understanding the various pathways that each non-profit is focusing on helps them gain exposure to and better understand how to effectively implement the multi-sectoral programming model. Given both the newness of this model in India as well as the interconnectedness that characterizes it, such exposure and understanding among non-profit partners is especially valuable.

Finally, the Collaborative's funders also meet each other periodically to track progress of the work, discuss achievements and concerns, reflect on the impact of their investment, and plan future milestones of the Collaborative.

2. Informal interactions

The Collaborative's partners continue to interact with each other in-between formal meetings, through platforms such as WhatsApp groups and casual gatherings. Many partners have articulated the value of such informal and unfacilitated interactions in building friendships and understanding each other's values on a personal level, in turn laying the foundation for a stronger working relationship.

3. Immersive field visits

To better understand the context in which the non-profit partners are carrying out their work, the Collaborative's funders periodically visit the program sites in Jharkhand. These visits have also shown to be helpful in deepening relationships between non-profit leaders and funders, and enhancing funders' knowledge of the many issues surrounding adolescent girls in the area.

As the backbone organization of the Collaborative, Dasra also continues to regularly meet all partners individually to understand progress of their work, update them on the work of other partners, address questions or concerns, and incorporate their perspectives along the way.

With the recognition that sustaining effective collaboration amongst partners in a collaborative is a difficult and long-term effort, 10to19 continues to learn through its experiences and work towards building an environment where partners' individual and collective strengths are leveraged towards driving transformative impact for India's adolescents.

Conclusion
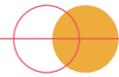
India has defined ambitious development targets for itself, as evidenced by its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. Being home to a large proportion of the world's population that experiences some of the most extreme challenges, achieving these goals in India will play a significant role in improving key development indicators globally.[38]

However, given the complexity, severity and scale of these challenges, uncoordinated efforts and disjointed interventions among disparate stakeholders will simply not be enough to achieve meaningful change. Addressing these challenges requires a multitude of stakeholders to converge around a shared vision and approach and work together to achieve systemic change. In this context, the power and promise of multi-stakeholder collaboratives to advance India's development agenda has never been more apparent.

Yet, there has been little effort, especially in the Indian context, to understand what makes such collaboratives succeed or fail. The structure, management and dynamics of such collaboratives are not well understood, yet play a critical role in determining their ability to deliver the desired impact.

Arising from the Dasra Adolescents Collaborative's strong belief in the value of documenting and sharing its learnings with the sector at large, this report along with the first in the series – *Collaborative Force: Empowering 10 to 19* – is an effort towards encouraging greater adoption of multi-stakeholder collaboratives and developing a discipline around their effective functioning. **The following illustration offers a summary of considerations to take into account along the Start-Up phase of a collaborative's lifecycle, as detailed in this report:**

Start-Up Phase

Moving from Strategy to Action

- Ensure continued alignment between partners on the vision and mission of the collaborative
- Break down your strategy into a detailed operational plan
- Ensure alignment and joint commitment among partners on the collaborative's definition of "success"
- Incorporate voices of field experts and partners, and ensure that the operational plan is effectively communicated
- Allow your strategy and operational plan to be both flexible and nimble

Selecting Implementing Partners

- Set expectations and build a tone of transparency and respect
- Determine a method of identifying potential partners and create a shortlist based on minimum criteria
- Evaluate the organization's health
- Determine the organization's strategic fit with the collaborative
- Consider the organization's value-based alignment with the collaborative
- Analyze findings and make a decision, seeking buy-in from all partners
- Communicate the decision with a tone of honesty and transparency

Introducing Practices for Effective Collaboration

- Create spaces for formal and informal interactions between partners
- Demonstrate quick wins
- Regularly reinforce the big picture
- Facilitate field visits
- Cultivate champions amongst partners
- Listen, learn and document learnings

What next?

While the focus of this report is limited to detailing key considerations and insights along the Start-Up phase of a collaborative's journey, activities that are typically executed later on in the lifecycle of a collaborative, such as monitoring impact on the ground and engaging with the government, will be addressed in subsequent reports.

Appendix 1

Below is a suggested and non-exhaustive list of parameters that are commonly considered when evaluating an organization's health, along with guiding questions that will help the assessment of organizations against each parameter.

Parameter	Guiding questions
Vision and strategy	• How clear and bold are the organization's vision, mission and goals? • What is the strategic plan in place to achieve the desired vision? To what extent does this plan take into account evidence from the sector? • How feasible is the vision and strategic plan given the resources and capabilities of the organization? • To what extent do the board members, organization leaders and employees have a shared understanding of the vision and strategy to achieve it?
History and Track Record of Impact	• What have been the key milestones along the evolution of the organization? • What have been some significant accomplishments of the organization in the last 3-5 years? • What have been the most significant challenges and how did the organization respond to them? • To what extent has the organization been able to demonstrate impact, and over what period of time?
Leadership	• What are the leaders' qualifications? Do they have the necessary training and experience to effectively lead the organization? • How passionate and ambitious are the leaders about their work? • What are the leaders' areas of strengths and weaknesses? • If the leaders don't have all the skills required, are they aware of what is needed and do they have the resources to acquire it? • What kind of reputation and influence do the leaders have within the sector? • How centralized or decentralized is the decision-making process? • How capable is the second in line leadership team?
Governance	• Who is on the organization's board and what do they bring to the table? • How diverse is the composition of the board? • What role does the board play with regards to key areas such as strategic planning, fundraising and financial oversight? • Is the board structured to meet the needs of the organization? How often do members meet? • How does the board work with the leadership team and how are decisions made?

Parameter	Description & Significance
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	● Does the organization monitor and evaluate its programs on a regular basis? If so, how often? ● What tools does the organization have in place to monitor and evaluate its work? How rigorous is the approach? ● Who is responsible for data collection, entry and analysis? Do they have the required skills and expertise? ● To what extent and how does the organization incorporate what it learns into its ongoing and future work?
Talent Management	● To what extent is the organization structured logically and effectively to meet its goals? ● Are job roles and descriptions clearly outlined? ● How does the organization evaluate and manage staff performance? ● To what extent does the organization invest in staff training and development? ● How effective is the organization's recruitment process in bringing on the right talent in a timely manner? ● Does the organization have clearly articulated shared values and a culture that supports them?
Financial Health	● Has the organizational budget increased or decreased from last year? What has caused this change? ● Does the organization appear to have appropriate income streams and a realistic budget that adequately covers core operating costs? ● Does the organization have a track record of operating in surplus? ● Does the organization have sufficient cash flow and financial reserve? ● How strong are the organization's budgeting, accounting and reporting systems? ● Does the organization have a clear vision of its financial position in the next 3-5 years?
Fundraising	● What are the organization's plans for attracting sustainable sources of funding going forward? ● Does the organization have the adequate capacity and capabilities capacity to effectively fundraise? ● How does the organization monitor progress against its fundraising goals? ● How diversified are the organization's funding sources?

Below is a suggested and non-exhaustive list of some parameters that are commonly considered when evaluating the extent to which an organization's values align with that of the collaborative, along with guiding questions that will help the assessment of the organization against each parameter.

Parameter	Guiding questions
Agility and Adaptability	● Has the organization undergone notable transitions or shifts recently? If so, how has it responded to these shifts? ● To what extent has the organization demonstrated nimbleness and agility in responding to changing market needs? ● Have there been any significant internal transitions (eg: team restructuring) recently? If so, how did the organization's leaders manage this transition? ● Are there any other examples that demonstrate the organization's agility and adaptability in response to dynamic environments?
Systems Change Mindset	● Do the organization's leaders have a nuanced understand of the root causes of the issue they are aiming to tackle? ● Are the organization's programs geared towards tackling these root problems? ● Are the leaders able to appreciate and articulate the complexity and interconnectedness of various components that contribute to the system or problem at hand? ● Do the leaders truly appreciate the idea that changing systems takes time, and are they willing to take such a long-term outlook to their work?
Openness to Learning and Sharing	● Does the organization have a history of sharing data as well as learnings on successes and failures with others in the sector? What are some examples to demonstrate this? ● Are there instances that demonstrate the organization's ability to effectively incorporate learnings from within and outside of their own organization into their work?
Belief in and Ability to Champion the Collaborative's Model	● To what extent do the organization's leaders truly believe that the collaborative's implementation model is an effective approach to achieving the desired change? ● How likely are the organization's leaders to serve as champions for the collaborative and advocate for its model among stakeholders in their network? How does the board work with the leadership team and how are decisions made?
Ability to Effectively Build and Nurture Relationships	● Has the organization engaged in multi-stakeholder collaborations or partnerships in the past? ● If so, who has it been able to foster strong relationships with, how did it go about doing this, and what have been the outcomes of these collaborations? ● What challenges has the organization faced in building and nurturing partnerships with other stakeholders? How did it navigate these challenges?

Appendix 3

In addition to the due diligence frameworks offered in this report, collaboratives can consider using the *Dasra Capacity Assessment Tool (DCAT)* when selecting implementing partners. The DCAT is a rubric that enables non-profits and funders to develop a shared picture of an organization's institutional capacities. It does this by curating a guided, introspective journey for organizations to evaluate their maturity across seven critical capacities through tangible, easy-to-identify markers.

The DCAT identifies four levels of maturity across key capacities. What the maturity level conveys regarding an organization's strengths or weaknesses depends on context including growth stage, strategy to scale, sector and nature of program(s). For efficient deployment of the DCAT, it is helpful when a participatory approach is taken between the funder and/or intermediary and nonprofit so that a holistic and objective organizational snapshot is captured.

The tool was built by incorporating learnings from 800+ capacity building engagements, 10+ expert interviews and the study of 20+ existing capacity assessment tools. Dasra continues to refresh and improve the tool in order to ensure that it is reflective of the realities of diverse organizations while providing ease of use. For questions or a demonstration of the tool, please write to dcat@dasra.org.

Appendix 4

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Individual	Organization
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