



What is collaboration?

Collaboration is defined as a working practice whereby individuals work together towards a common purpose or goal to achieve benefit for others. Project collaboration sees a group of people with varying skills and experiences coming together to tackle a common purpose or goal.

“When educators work together, we create a better learning experience” ([National Education Association, 2018](#)).

Why is clear and strong collaboration important to SHINE?

SHINE understands that collaboration on multi-school projects is key in leading successful changes to school-led systems. True and clear collaboration reduces the risk of projects failing due to lack of engagement or ownership of a project.

We are passionate about collaboration and knowledge sharing. We understand that where schools are working together, every school/person involved should feel investment and ownership of the project. All collaborating schools should be advocates, co-creators and learners who influence delivery in the ways that work best for them and their students.



What does the guidance and research say about good school collaboration?

Research shows that, to be effective, school-to-school collaboration requires a framework or structure to ensure the necessary rigour. There is evidence to suggest that if the framework is co-created by those involved it would benefit the project by increasing ownership for those participating.

[Friend and Cook, 1992](#) defined the characteristics of successful collaboration as follows:

- ◆ Collaboration is voluntary
- ◆ Collaboration requires equality among participants
- ◆ Collaboration is based on mutual goals
- ◆ Collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making
- ◆ Individuals who collaborate share their resources and,
- ◆ Individuals who collaborate share accountability for outcomes.

Collaboration relies on trust, openness and sharing of knowledge, along with some level of focus and accountability on the part of the schools involved in a project. All those involved should be included in the decision-making process and have access to all relevant information. The schools and staff involved should have clarity on the aims, share a common belief in the objective and should be involved from beginning to end of the project. It can also be useful to have clearly defined roles for the governance and management of the project.

Good collaboration should see schools working together to share excellence, good practice and learning experiences that will support the progress of students in all areas across the curriculum. Sharing ideas and systems enables schools to learn from one another and enhance the learning experience for all children.

What might this look like in practice?

SHINE is looking to understand the level of collaboration among the schools involved. Areas to consider when developing an application for funding include:

Awareness

- ◆ Are all the participating schools aware of their involvement and the ultimate objective?
- ◆ Are they prepared to become part of a working body with a shared goal?

Motivation

- ◆ Are all schools motivated to be involved and to find solutions to the identified problem?
- ◆ Do schools recognise the problem identified in their own setting?



Participation

- ◆ Have all schools named on the application agreed to participate in the project? If they have, great! If they haven't, what is the plan to engage/recruit them?

Exchange

- ◆ Are all schools ready to share and learn from one another?

Engagement

- ◆ Are all schools prepared and willing to proactively engage with the project?
- ◆ Do they have the capacity to commit and actively participate in the project?

Accountability

- ◆ Are all schools involved aware what is expected of them and when?
- ◆ Do all schools feel that they are equally involved and accountable for the project outcomes?



Useful reading

[SecEd, Successful school-to-school collaboration](#)

[Department for Education, Effective school partnerships and collaboration for improvement: a review of the evidence](#)

[National Education Association, Benefits of Collaboration](#)