



# Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership Conference 2024

Voluntary Sector Collaborations:  
Cohesive or Coercive Influences on  
Leadership Strategy

A hybrid conference from the OU Business School

Wednesday 22 May 2024, 09:15 – 16:30

# Programme

## 09:15 – 09:20

**Berrill Lecture Theatre, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA and online**

Welcome by Dr Fidèle Mutwarasibo, Director, Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership in The Open University (OU) Business School

## 09:20 – 09:30

Opening Remarks: Professor Siv Vangen, Head of OU Business School

## 09:30 – 10:00

Keynote speaker: Professor David Gilchrist, Director of the Centre for Public Value at the University of Western Australia

### **Myths and Misunderstandings Derailing Nonprofit Effectiveness**

The nonprofit sector is critical to the establishment, maintenance and ongoing improvement of civil society. Further, governments and communities rely greatly on the sector to deliver policy outcomes, be long-term holders of experience and skills, and to be first respondents when crises emerge. However, notwithstanding these great expectations, there exist myths and misunderstandings that work together to prevent the sustainability of the sector. They are perpetuated by the sector, by governments and by communities, often innocently but resultant from poor analysis, poor historical understandings and poor appreciation of systemic needs.

In this keynote presentation, Professor David Gilchrist will examine these issues and posit key solutions. He will frame his discussion in the context of collaboration and the important roles to be played by the sector, government and commerce.

## **10:00 – 10:15**

Q&A with Professor David Gilchrist, facilitated by Dr Fidèle Mutwarasibo

## **10:15 – 10:45**

Tea and coffee break, in-person guests to join us in the Berrill Café

## **10:45 – 11:05**

Dr Francesca Calo, Senior Lecturer in Management, The Open University

### **Collaboration in doing research with and for communities**

There are different ways of researching with and for communities and unlocking the power of collaborating with them. In this talk, Dr Francesca Calo will reflect on success stories to navigate the challenges of collaborating with communities and voluntary sector organisations in research. She will spotlight strategies for fostering impactful collaboration between researchers and voluntary sector organisations by providing practical tips and solutions.

## **11:05 – 11:10**

Discussant, Dr Steven Parker, Lecturer in Management, The Open University

## **11:10– 11:35**

- Emma Bell, Professor of Organisation and Leadership, The Open University
- Karin Axelsson, School of Innovation, Design and Engineering, Mälardalen University
- Linda Höglund, School of Business, Society and Engineering, Mälardalen University

### **The ethics and politics of collaboration in management research: A reflexive review**

In this session, the team will explore the meaning of collaboration in management research through a reflexive review of the literature that draws attention to its ethical and political implications. They will trace the increasing pressure experienced by researchers to do collaborative research which is driven by an ideological argument that places value on knowledge being co-produced. Through reflexive analysis of their own situation in a university context where the language of collaboration is widespread, the team will draw attention to the problems associated with instrumental approaches to collaboration that tend to overlook considerations of politics and ethics and the role of reciprocity. They will argue for a more reflexive approach to research collaboration that enables actors involved to clarify how they use and understand these words and to identify differences of interest and positionality.

## **11:35– 11:40**

Discussant, Dr Nik Winchester, Senior Lecturer in Management, The Open University

## **11:40– 12:00**

Dr Fidèle Mutwarasibo, Director, Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership, OU

### **Collaboration with Community and Corporate Partners in Leadership**

#### **Development and Capacity Building**

The collaboration between voluntary sector organisations and the corporate sector, with the aim of promoting inclusion, is a fascinating area for research and practice. These sectors often strive to improve the lives of those in the community, for example, by providing employment opportunities or by supporting those on the margins, who would otherwise be unable to harness opportunities. Dr Fidèle Mutwarasibo focuses on how effective collaboration between voluntary sector organisations, the public sector, and corporate institutions in Ireland and the UK, can help to enhance and promote inclusion.

He will discuss the lessons he has drawn from the Manchester Hub of the Black Leadership and Empowerment Programme (BLEP). BLEP is a programme Dr Fidèle Mutwarasibo leads, working in collaboration with the Prince's Trust (as a community partner), plus Autotrader and Manchester Airport Group (as corporate partners). He will share his insights into how this partnership and collaboration has enabled The Open University to run the BLEP pilot, supported leadership development of racialised minorities and enhanced the learners' capacity to become influential leaders in the community and the workplace.

## **12:00 – 12:05**

Discussant, Dr Steven Parker, Lecturer in Management, The Open University

## **12:05 – 12:15**

Q&A facilitated by Dr Nik Winchester and Dr Steven Parker

## **12:15 – 13:00**

### **Lunch and networking**

Berrill Café for guests joining us on campus

## **13:00 – 13:15**

### **Keynote speaker (pre-recorded exclusively for the conference)**

Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of Community Foundation Ireland

## **13:15 – 13:30**

### **Keynote speaker**

Matthew Brown, Deputy Chief Executive, Wales Council for Voluntary Action

## **13:30 – 13:45**

Q&A facilitated by Dr Daniel Haslam, Lecturer in Management, The Open University

## **13:45 – 14:15**

- Time for guests to move to Wilson Block for afternoon sessions
- Facilitated networking for our online guests (please remain in the virtual room if you'd like to attend this)

**14:15 – 15:30**

## **Afternoon parallel sessions**

### **Option 1: Ethics and Collaboration**

See page 8 for details

### **Option 2: Project Management and Collaboration**

See page 9 for details

### **Option 3: Embedding a Collaborative Culture in Philanthropic Practices**

See page 10 for details

### **Option 4: Exploring Collaboration (session for our online guests)**

See page 11 for details

# Ethics and Collaboration

## Cherry & Pine Meeting Room (only available to those on campus)

- Dr Nik Winchester, Senior Lecturer in Management, The Open University
- Patrick Nyikavaranda, PhD Researcher in Primary Care and Public Health
- Andra Alexander, Strategic Community Development Lead, Race Reflections

Collaboration is often thought as the bringing together of people and organisations to achieve a shared goal, leveraging synergies through working together and sharing resources. Despite this positive gloss, studies have shown the tensions and difficulties within collaborative practice, some of which border on the unethical. However, little attention has been paid to the kinds of ethical issues that arise when working across organisational boundaries in pursuit of a shared aim.

The team will approach the issue by thinking about ethics as a lively engagement within collaboration in respect of both what is being achieved and how it is carried out. They will surface the following issues:

- The tension between organisational and collaborative aims
- Representing and responding to the voice of all participants
- Actively engaging those affected in the domain of the collaboration
- Practices to facilitate robust, challenging and effective dialogue within collaboration

The three speakers will explore ethics and collaboration from a variety of perspectives with the aim and bringing together theory and practice.



# Project Management and Collaboration

## Elder & Maple Meeting Room (only available to those on campus)

- Pastor Pavle Trajkovski, Milton Keynes Central Seventh Day Adventist Church and West Bletchley Community Seventh Day Adventist Church
- Ophelia Cole, Founding Director, Action Speaks
- Dr Steven Parker, Lecturer in Management, The Open University

Projects create the future and come in many shapes and sizes, including large organisational and infrastructure projects, but also smaller, socially focused projects aimed at the public and citizens.



This workshop will take a broad view of projects incorporating a range of individuals and organisations motivated to progress community priorities. The session provides some observations on project management within this context, particularly the call to integrate citizen stakeholders, co-production and co-creation into project design and delivery. Voluntary sector speakers will provide their reflections on the topic.

In summary, the session will explore the relationship between project management and collaboration in voluntary sector projects.

# Embedding a Collaborative Culture in Philanthropic Practices

## Spindle & Walnut Meeting Room (only available to those on campus)

- Dr Fidèle Mutwarasibo, Director, Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership in the OU Business School
- Michaela Clark, Capacity Building Manager at MK Community Foundation

Voluntary sector organisations' leadership practices involve balancing collaboration and competition with other organisations working in similar fields or covering the same geographical areas. Philanthropic

organisations that fund some of the work of voluntary sector organisations, on the other hand, are striking a balance between being too directive or financing duplicating activities. The increase in demand for voluntary sector services in a context where fewer resources are available, coupled with pressure on fundraising, means that collaboration within the sector is needed more than ever. In this workshop, participants will discuss how philanthropic institutions can promote collaboration while being agile enough not to stifle the voluntary sector's innovation.



# Exploring Collaboration

## Online session (for our guests joining via Microsoft Teams)

- Dr Daniel Haslam, Lecturer in Management, The Open University
- Sonia Bassey, PhD Student, Faculty of Business and Law, The Open University

This online session will provide space for participants to further discuss the issues and concepts presented in the morning sessions. It is a space to explore the impact of these aspects on the practice of collaboration, potential areas of support, further areas of academic insight, and ideas for future research.



We will run an online poll before and during the lunch break to gather comments and suggestions and help structure the discussion. It is intended to be participatory and informal with all contributions welcome.

## 15:30 – 16:30

Tea, coffee, cake and networking in the Oak Meeting Room for campus guests. The conference will close at 15:30 for our online guests.

## 16:30

Event close

