ABSTRACT

Scott S. Senatore, THE IMPACT OF CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (Under the direction of Dr. David Siegel). Department of Educational Leadership, May 2024.

Cross-sector collaboration is a valuable tool to address difficult societal challenges. Solving societal problems within boundaries, or sector silos, is a decreasing trend. Collaboration, particularly cross-sector collaboration, is emerging as an effective method for addressing social challenges. However, executing cross-sector collaborations can be difficult based on the differences between the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Differences, in the form of internal forces and external pressures, can be prohibitive to the collaboration or put a strain on the collaboration. Given the importance of cross-sector collaboration, further research on how to sustain cross-sector collaboration can provide more consensuses on collaborative practices, which could lead to more robust results to some of our society's most challenging issues.

Economic development, a social issue that most nations, regions, or local communities discuss and invest in, can be positively affected by cross-sector collaboration through successful sustainability. This research focused on a business incubator, a form of economic development that involved local partner organizations in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Through the lens of participants in the business incubator, leaders from partner organizations from different sectors that support the business incubator, and members of stakeholder organizations that support the business incubator, this study focused on the collaborative experience and the outcomes, consequences, and effects of collaboration. Ultimately, this study advances extant research by providing some insight into how to mitigate risks for the benefit of sustaining the cross-sector collaboration.

The Impact of Cross-Sector Collaboration on Economic Development

A Dissertation

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DEDICATION

There is no substitute for hard work.

Thomas A. Edison

I want to dedicate my dissertation to my family. They made significant sacrifices to help me complete this journey. My hard work was for them, and I hope this serves as an example for my sons, Conner and Landon, that hard work and persistence can lead to great achievements.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Today's economic environment is undergoing rapid changes due to shifts in demographics, a more accessible global economy, technology advancements, and trends toward efficiency models. Concurrently, the convergence of political, economic, and social pressures is weighing heavy on businesses and organizations (Austin, 2000; Blockson & Van Buren III, 1999; Gray 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Emery and Trist (1965) refer to turbulent environments, such as the convergence of the issues above, which drive the need to solve problems collaboratively rather than alone (Kraatz, 1998; Park, 2008). Research highlights collaboration as one means to tackle turbulent environments and specifically references cross-sector collaborations as increasing phenomena (Austin, 2000; Edmond, 2007; Siegel, 2010; Waddell & Brown, 1997). One area to observe the impact of cross-sector collaboration is in economic development initiatives. Business incubators, for example, involve multiple entities working in their respective communities to create an environment representative of shifts in workforce culture and demographics, among other things.

According to Siegel (2010), social issues, such as economic development, could fall through the cracks of established organizations and sectors due to the confusion of ownership and responsibility. So, who owns economic development issues, such as business incubators, that can positively impact society? One area to start would be public entities, such as universities or cities. Another place to look could be businesses or nonprofit organizations. In any case, there are several examples where all sectors (public, private, and nonprofit) shed boundaries to expand the channels through which economic development initiatives can positively impact society (Siegel, 2010).

The university, as an example, is facing the pressures mentioned above to play a more significant role in economic development. Traditionally, universities have been structured around three imperatives: teaching, research, and service. However, the university has evolved over the years, as university boards, systems, and advisory councils have made economic development much more of an imperative. According to Rothaermel and Thursby (2005), the university connection stems from the institutional infrastructure of technology transfer. Matkin (1997) notes how universities organize activities beyond teaching and research that will both determine and reflect some fundamental shifts in university organizational structure and a radical redefinition of the role of the university in society.

Business incubation, an emerging economic development trend, is one example that demonstrates the positive power of cross-sector collaborations, which includes the “expanded” role of the university. Recently, an entrepreneurial lab space opened up on the campus of New York University, which provides coworking spaces, meeting rooms, an event space, and a fabrication lab to encourage interaction, prototyping, and collaboration. Additionally, North Carolina State University (N.C. State) demonstrated an interest in incubation spaces. N.C State started the “Garage,” which is an incubation space for business creation and prototyping designed for students who have a passion for entrepreneurship. The space features 3D printers, whiteboards, collaboration rooms, and opportunities for coaching and mentoring.

In 2012, the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce (Greenville, North Carolina), in partnership with the City of Greenville, launched SEED (Support Economic and Entrepreneurial Development) - a public-private partnership for economic development. The SEED is a nonprofit 501c (3) organization. Today, East Carolina University (ECU) is an integral part of SEED and has partnered with the City and the Chamber to advance SEED. The new version of SEED, now referred to as SEED@ECU, is located on ECU's campus and is implemented mainly with ECU resources. In another university-related example, The Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC), associated with Georgia Tech, has a primary function to facilitate the growth of high-technology start-ups. To do this, it offers labs, research facilities, business assistance, subsidized space, and connections to potential partners.

When discussing cross-sector collaboration, the literature often references three main sectors, or the "big three" (Siegel, 2010) – public, private, and nonprofit. Naturally, the three main sectors of the economy focus on their respective core purposes first. To achieve its core role, each sector must engage in productive relationships with one another (Fosler, 2001). However, these roles and relationships are changing in the face of an ever-evolving list of pressures, both internal and external (Siegel, 2010). External pressures encompass the demands and expectations of stakeholders, customers, professional associations, advocacy groups, and government bodies (Siegel, 2010). Internal forces revolve around competitive advantage, innovation, resource acquisition, stability, and survival (Siegel, 2010). Cross-sector collaboration serves as a means for increased responsiveness to pressures (Siegel, 2010), as they eliminate duplicate efforts, redundancy, and overlap for all parties involved, which ultimately increases effectiveness and efficiency.

The involved parties are challenged, more than ever, to play a more defined role in society (Siegel, 2010). For example, the defined role has been "codified" as civic engagement or corporate social responsibility for the private sector (Siegel, 2010). In other words, it is the responsibility of private sector organizations to focus on more than just their self-interests, which leads to their involvement in the greater good. The opposite would be a razor-sharp focus on their needs, which then could lead to the unintentional disregard for the betterment of the greater good. In the cases where the greater good at least rises to the level of internal goals or purposes, the partnership leads to major institutions working harder, smarter, more efficiently, and more collaboratively for social change (Siegel, 2010).

In the cases mentioned earlier, factors such as timing, trust, and proper leverage of resources led each sector to shed their respective boundaries for the greater good of economic development. A big question, however, revolves around the sustainability of the collaborations. How long will they last? How can they be strengthened? What could derail them?

Problem Statement

Collaborations have intensified significantly over the past 30 years (Mattessich, Murray-Close, Monsey, & Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2001; Selsky & Parker, 2005). The twenty-first century is predicted to be the age of organizational alliances (Austin, 2000). Beyond collaboration, there are very few options to positively influence or change the issues mentioned earlier because it is rare that a single entity, or a single sector of the economy, can tackle these issues alone (Kraatz, 1998; Park, 2008). Furthermore, organizations from different sectors seem to be more compelled to offer perspectives and resources to jointly solve a societal problem with a shared vision and shared goals.

Currently, cross-sector collaboration is vast and, therefore, can be confusing (Huxham, 1996). The cross-sector component adds another layer of complexity that sometimes does not exist with same sector collaborations. Beyond the initial collaboration concept, there are several ideological, structural, and relational aspects of a cross-collaboration that need to be discussed and addressed. Therefore, it is imperative that more research is conducted to better understand how to *sustain* cross-sector collaborations, because our society is very dependent on *sustainable* cross-sector collaborations. Society would suffer if cross-sector collaborations were continually fractured or dissolved. Additionally, further research on how to sustain cross-sector collaboration can provide more consensuses on collaborative practices, which could lead to more robust results to some of our society's most challenging issues.

Purpose of Study

The objective of this study is to generate findings that broaden the literature and improve the likelihood of the sustainability of cross-sector collaborations. In other words, there are many references to cross-sector collaboration efforts, but it is rare to read something about how or why they are sustained or not sustained. Through the lens of participants, leaders from partner organizations, and members of stakeholder organizations, this study focuses on the collaborative experience and the outcomes, consequences, and effects of a local, cross-sector economic development collaboration. Ultimately, this study seeks to provide some insight into how to mitigate risks for the benefit of sustaining the cross-sector collaboration.

Research Question

This study aims to analyze the question, *How do organizations sustain cross-sector collaborations for the benefit of economic development?* Additionally, the following sub-questions are addressed through the study:

- *What is the current state of the cross-sector collaboration?*
- *What is the direction in which the cross-sector collaboration is moving, if at all?*
- *What are the boundaries of the individual partner roles and the organizational roles within the cross-sector collaboration?*

Theoretical Foundation

The study uses Austin's (2000) collaboration continuum, which includes the following three stages: philanthropic, transactional, and integrative. The continuum categorizes different types of collaborations and provides a tool to track their evolution. Table 1 provides a visual for the continuum. It is important to note that most collaboration, according to Austin (2000), falls within the transactional stage.

Table 1

Collaboration Continuum

Nature of Relationship	Stage 1 (Philanthropic)		Stage 2 (Transactional)		Stage 3 (Integrative)
Level of Engagement	Low	→	→	→	High
Importance to mission	Peripheral	→	→	→	Central
Magnitude of resources	Small	→	→	→	Big
Scope of activities	Narrow	→	→	→	Broad
Interaction level	Infrequent	→	→	→	Intensive
Managerial complexity	Simple	→	→	→	Complex
Strategic value	Minor	→	→	→	Major

Note. (Austin, 2000).

Definition of Key Terms

The many facets of collaboration will be illuminated during this research. There are many words interchanged within the collaboration research: partnerships, alliances, associations, cooperation, and coalitions, among others. Additionally, there are many different definitions and meanings related to the "big three" sectors of the economy. The following definitions will help clarify the respective meanings for this study. Table 2 provides example organizations by sector.

Table 2

Example Organizations by Sector

Public/Government	Private/Business	Nonprofit
Federal, State, Local/Municipal Government	Small Business	Educational organizations
Government Agencies	Industrial Organizations	Nongovernmental organizations
Military	Financial Institutions	Foundations/Professional Associations

Note. (Siegel, 2010).

Private/Business sector - Operate in the free market for the sole purpose of profit maximization.

Nonprofit sector - Emphasize their mission. Chartered for the benefit of public good and not individual gain. Designated as nonprofit by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) designation.

Public Sector/Government - Define and promote the achievement of public purpose in a manner that retains the confidence of the public and is compatible with democratic values.

Collaborate - Two or more organizations work together, in the same sector or across sectors, to achieve a common objective.

Organizational Leadership - Higher-level executives of organizations within each of the big three sectors.

Assumptions

For this study, the collaboration focuses on the partnerships among the private, nonprofit, and public sectors. Excluded from the analysis are market-driven (buyer-supplier) and authoritative (hierarchical) collaborations. Additionally, the study assumes that sustainability is essential to the collaboration.

Scope/Delimitations

The literature on various types of collaboration is vast, as different kinds of structures are needed to address some of the aforementioned complex issues facing society (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). It is impossible to sift through all collaboration literature within sectors or across sectors. The number of case studies reviewed, people interviewed, and literature analyzed had to be reduced to a reasonably manageable level. In doing so, the scope of this study includes case studies that illuminate concepts that can be generalized to the cross-sector collaboration among the “big three” sectors.

Limitations

This study sets out to explore, utilizing a single-case study design, how organizations (representative of the big three) sustain cross-sector collaboration for the benefit of economic development. This approach excluded other case studies that include examples of cross-sector collaboration (representing the big three) for the benefit of economic development. Including other examples of economic development related to cross-sector collaboration could have provided additional insight into the sustainability of such collaborations.

In qualitative studies, there is more focus on the adequacy of interviews than the number of interviews. Thus, the richness of information and the number of adequate participants can be a concern (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Additionally, there has been confusion about saturation in terms of its meaning, when it should be used, and when it is applicable (Green & Thorogood, 2004).

Moreover, I am a former employee of one of the partner organizations, as well as one of the founding committee members of the business incubator. As a member of the incubator committee, and later its Board of Directors, I was directly involved with the planning and execution of the business incubator model. My biases and preconceptions do not materially impact the research or the ability for interviewees to be candid during interviews. According to Yin (2014), case study researchers can be prone to bias because they have to understand the issues beforehand. To ensure that my prior knowledge did not sway me toward supportive evidence, I was open to contrary evidence during the data collection process. Yin (2014) notes that being open to contrary evidence is an excellent way to avoid potential bias. Additionally, it has been more than three years since I have worked at one of the partner organizations or have been otherwise involved with the business incubator. Since that time, the partnerships and collaboration that have helped the business incubator evolve are more advanced and mature, which is important for purposes of this study.

Significance of Study

The phenomenon of cross-sector collaboration is increasing, as more pressures weigh heavily on the “big three” sectors of the economy. This research will illuminate what constitutes sustainable cross-sector collaboration, and, in some cases, collaboration from a broader perspective. This is crucial because, as noted above, there is an emerging trend that complex issues can be addressed by multiple entities across multiple sectors.

Therefore, this research adds to the collaboration scholarship by contributing more empirical data to the lightly mentioned aspects of sustainability. Additionally, sectors and organizations can apply the study to the benefit of creating sustainable collaborations, which could lead to the potential *long-term* solutions available through cross-sector collaborations for some of the most complex societal issues we face.

Moreover, I strive in this study to provide more clarity around cross-sector collaborations and how they can be effectively utilized. In other words, this research focuses not only on why the collaboration takes place but on how it can move forward on the continuum, which leads to a cultural shift between respective collaborative partners. Concurrently, the study illuminates the resources needed for collaborations and how difficult they are to achieve.

Summary

Overall, cross-sector collaboration is a significant trend, as several stakeholders from respective sectors are looking for solutions to many of today’s societal issues (Austin, 2000; Siegel, 2010). As stakeholders turn to entities within their respective sectors, it is apparent that collaborations are forged to make a sustainable difference. It is nearly impossible for sectors and organizations to tackle these issues alone (Kraatz, 1998; Park, 2008). The collaborative effort of entities and sectors that leverage their own resources to achieve a common purpose for the greater good is a sustainable process for dealing with social, political, and economic issues (Austin, 2000; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992; Siegel, 2010).

More specifically, this study reveals how partners can move along the collaboration continuum (Austin, 2000). In other words, the study is designed to highlight what enables or disables movement along Austin's (2000) continuum (philanthropic ←→transactional ←→transformational).

Ultimately, the study advances our insight related to cross-sector collaborations, which is essential since cross-sector collaborations are one vehicle used to address many of today's societal issues. To set the stage for the study, the literature review (next chapter) provides more information about collaborations and business incubators, as well as each sector of the economy. Following the literature review, I review the study's research methods (Chapter 3), findings (Chapter 4), and conclusions (Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature provides the background for the phenomenon of collaboration. The research related to collaboration is extensive and includes several different disciplines, including business, government, education, management, public policy, nonprofit, and community development, among many others. The following literature review will touch on collaborations in the previously mentioned fields but will focus on the broader collaboration of the "big three" (Siegel, 2010) sectors in the economy – private, public, and nonprofit.

The literature review begins with an overview of collaborations, including collaboration enablers and factors that cause collaboration inertia (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). The literature review consists of more specific definitions of collaboration and highlights significant distinctions among the "big three" sectors. The literature review then discusses cross-sector collaborations and their emerging importance.

Collaboration

Today's economic environment is undergoing rapid changes due to shifts in demographics, a more accessible global economy, technology advancements, and trends toward efficiency models. Concurrently, public entities, private entities, and nonprofit organizations are facing immense pressures to deal with political, economic, and social issues (Austin, 2000; Blockson & Van Buren III, 1999; Gray, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2000). As Austin (2000) notes, the convergence of political, economic, and social pressures is weighing heavily on businesses and organizations.

The convergence of the issues mentioned above could be viewed as what Emery and Trist (1965) call a turbulent environment. Turbulent environments lead to problems that are beyond the scope of a single organization to solve. On a larger scale, the problems could be beyond the scope of a single sector to solve as well. Collaboration is often triggered when issues are complex and multi-faceted, such as can be found in the convergence of political, economic, or social issues (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000). For example, Huxham and Vangen (2000) discuss the number of problems collaboration can address, including those in the domains of economic development, anti-poverty, health, and education, among many others.

Therefore, collaboration is an increasing phenomenon, as single entities, or single sectors, are not equipped to deal with turbulent environments. Practitioners and researchers agree that collaboration and partnership have increased due to various major social, economic, and political factors (Blockson & Van Buren III, 1999; Gray, 1996). For example, decreased funding for nonprofits, the public demand for the government to be more efficient, and the ever-mounting pressure on business to solve social issues are forcing each sector toward collaboration. In another example, global competition has challenged the parochial interests of organizations (Siegel, 2010), which has caused companies to go beyond their traditional boundaries to develop collaborations (Cricelli & Grimaldi, 2010). Overall, in this context, collaboration is a method of coping with a complex (or turbulent) environment (Park, 2008), which can provide the foundation for innovative solutions to complex problems (Gray, 1989).

One of the main problems when studying collaboration is settling on a definition for it. Collaboration remains complex in large part because there is not an accepted standard definition (Blount, 2003). Furthermore, once it is defined, there are a variety of different types of approaches with more ambiguity around additional definitions, agendas, and assumptions (Phillips et al., 2000). Huxham (1996) adds that there is a great deal of variety, which confuses the meaning of collaboration and partnership, and there seems to be little consensus in the field about how to use the terms in either theory or practice.

For this research, it is essential to review some definitions of collaboration to clarify its meaning. The word *collaborate* is derived from the Latin word "collaborare," which means to "work together" (Collaborate, 2020). Therefore, in its most basic form, collaboration denotes working together (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). The following sample of definitions, from the literature, provides further nuance:

- Collaboration involves mutually beneficial relationships between two or more parties who work together toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results (Chrislip, 2002).
- Collaboration is a co-operative relationship among organizations that relies on neither the market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control (Phillips et al., 2000).
- Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve a common goal. The relationship includes a commitment to a definition of mutual relationships and goals, jointly developed structure and shared responsibility, joint authority, and accountability for success, and sharing of resources and rewards (Mattessich et al., 2001).
- Collaboration suggests something less than authoritative coordination and something more than tacit cooperation (Folser, 2001).

In sum, the literature suggests that collaboration generally involves shared responsibility and accountability amongst two or more parties or organizations. A collaborative activity can range from formal (using contracts or letters of agreement) to informal (Simo & Bies, 2007).

One of the confusing aspects of research pertaining to collaboration is the interchangeable use of collaboration with words such as partnership, relationship, alliance, coordination, cooperation, or coalition. In some cases, it seems that when the definition of collaboration goes from general to more specific, the terms identified above are used more often and, therefore, become subsets, or even byproducts, of collaboration. In other cases, the terms describe initial arrangements, and as the arrangement becomes more formal, “collaboration” is used. In other words, collaboration takes place at the culmination of the arrangement. Of all the interchangeable terms mentioned above, “partnership” is most frequently interchanged with “collaboration.”

With vast forms of the meaning of collaboration come different definitions of commitments, benefits, costs, and risks associated with collaboration. “Different forms of engagement…correspond to different levels of commitment, interdependence, accountability, risk and reward, and specifications of deliverables” (Siegel, 2010, p. 50). For example, most definitions include some references to “working together.” Therefore, another challenge in defining collaboration lies within the challenges of defining “working together,” as there are many levels and forms of structuring the activities related to “working together.” In another example, benefits might be defined quantitatively or qualitatively. Therefore, each collaborative situation is different, which means collaboration can be molded or shaped differently for each case. Additionally, the definition of commitments, benefits, costs, and risks associated with the collaboration will often change as the collaboration matures or retreats over time.

Although there are many differences related to the collaboration phenomena, at its core, collaboration, no matter how formal or informal, is meant to solve complex problems that no one person, entity, or sector can solve independently. For example, many forms of collaboration take place between the private sector and the nonprofit sector. In many cases, the nonprofit seeks to achieve a mission related to an important social issue. The Boys and Girls Clubs of America, for example, sets out to enable at-risk youth and help youth all over the country reach their full potential (Boys and Girls Club of America [BGCA], 2015). The children who attend the Boys and Girls Clubs do not pay for the service. However, the Boys and Girls Clubs do have several expenses related to carrying out their mission. The private sector provides most of the funding for the Boys and Girls Club. In other words, businesses that believe in the mission of the Boys and Girls Club, but do not have an internal focus set out to achieve a similar mission themselves, fund the clubs. The business sector primarily supports the clubs through donations and sponsorships, which is an example of cross-sector collaboration for the benefit of society.

In another example, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (n.d.) describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources. More specifically, partnerships between higher education institutions and the private sector, according to the literature, have transformed their respective regions. The success stories of areas such as Silicon Valley (California), Research Triangle Park (Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina), and Boston (Massachusetts) have certainly elevated the perception that universities can be a catalyst for economic development within a community and region.

In each of the regions mentioned above there are world-class universities: Silicon Valley has Stanford University, Boston has the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Research Triangle Park (RTP) has the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke University, and North Carolina State University.

Mayer (2007) discusses how MIT's and Stanford's close partnerships with high-technology industries benefited regional economic development. The close relationships between industries and the university encouraged an entrepreneurial mindset of Stanford graduates and leveraged the Stanford Industrial Park as a real estate strategy for economic growth (Mayer, 2007).

In the MIT example, Mayer (2007) describes how MIT functioned as an early hub for electrical engineering and government contract work. Mayer (2007) also notes that the universities within RTP played a prominent role in its creation, which is considered one of the most transformational public-private partnerships in history, according to some. Currently, RTP has more than 170 global companies focused on scientific development and innovation. According to Mayer,

> "In all these regions, a university's contribution to the development of a local technology industry is an attribute to three factors: labor, knowledge creation, and entrepreneurship. First, they supplied the region with a specialized technical workforce that was hired by the emerging technology companies. Second, universities spearheaded knowledge creation efforts. Third, research universities fostered entrepreneurship (2007, p. 39).

The public-private partnerships in this context develop human capital, apply knowledge to the creation and commercialization of new products or processes, make capital investments, provide regional leadership, co-produce the region's knowledge-based infrastructure, and create a favorable economic environment.

Using one final example, integrated healthcare for the benefit of behavioral and primary healthcare is becoming increasingly important to patients during the recent changes in the healthcare industry (Linkins, Frost, Boober, & Brya, 2013). The impetus behind integrated healthcare started with the problem that many behavioral health patients receive care in primary care facilities, and nearly half the population experience behavioral health conditions throughout a lifetime (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Merikangas, & Walters, 2005). Consequently, three foundations (Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, The California Endowment, and the Maine Health Access Foundation) came together, in the form of collaboration, to explore better integration processes related to primary and behavioral health practices:

> "To build a core base for advancing integrated care and achieving systems change, the foundations invested significantly in key activities designed to understand the problem, build visibility and awareness, and expand partnerships and collaborations. After investing in environmental scans and literature reviews to define the issues and understand the problem, all three initiated at least one major grant-making program at the practice level, funding organizations to change service mechanisms to integrate behavioral and primary health care, along with rigorous evaluations to establish further evidence to advance integrated policies and practices in their respective states." (Linkins et al., 2013, p. 56).

Overall, this effort led to significant, multiyear investments in transforming and advancing the field of integrated care in their respective states and nationally through improved service access, reduced stigma, and improved treatment outcomes for underserved populations (Linkins et al., 2013). This collaborative example demonstrates a systematic change that involved accountability, investment, policy change, and research, among other things. Moreover, it was an example of formal and informal collaborations that revolved around advancing interests related to integrated care.

Collaboration Enablers

Naturally, given the vast array of definitions, meanings, and structures related to collaboration, several characteristics lead to successful and sustainable collaborations. The literature commonly refers to communication, organizational structure, accountability, value creation, and relationships as some critical elements of collaboration.

Communication

Communication, both formal and informal, is crucial to the success of a collaboration, and healthy communication can lead to enhanced benefits of the collaboration. To realize the full benefits of a collaboration, the partners need to have a means of communicating effectively, efficiently, and frequently (Austin, 2000). Effectively sharing knowledge creates synergies to the benefit of the collaboration. For example, it affects the competencies, shared resources, distribution of risks, and movement through incremental change to radical, innovative change (Cricelli & Grimaldi, 2010). Moreover, shared knowledge might produce the boundaries to a more permanent structure (Trist, 1983).

Organizational Structure

Some research notes the importance of having an organizational structure, which incentivizes respective leaders to focus on the collaboration. Focused attention, as Austin (2000) notes, requires a significant part of the organization's leadership to be involved beyond the initial personal connection. Additionally, the organizational system could include incentives to promote and encourage leaders to maintain focused attention on collaboration (Austin, 2000). Subsequently, key leaders in crucial roles lead to what Crosby and Bryson (2005) call "shared leadership," which leads to the accountability that forces partners to demonstrate they produced the expected benefits (Austin, 2000). Austin (2000) refers to this as a mutual responsibility that drives value creation, which keeps the collaboration reliable and relevant.

More specifically, as it relates to organizational structure, understanding what each person, entity, or sector brings to the collaboration is an essential factor of success. For example, given that participants in collaboration bring their institutional intelligence (rules and resources), the collaboration arena provides an environment for the negotiation of rules and resources. Therefore, institutional wisdom contributes to the negotiations of collaborative relationships (Phillips et al., 2000).

In this context, Sharfman, Gray, and Yan (1991) mention that institutional forces affect collaboration over time. As participants draw on institutional resources during the collaboration, they are challenging, reproducing, or building the same structures (Phillips et al., 2000). Furthermore, these actions become the backdrop for future negotiations and collaborations (Phillips et al., 2000). In other words, pre-existing institutional rules and resources affect collaborations over the long term.

Accountability

Research seems to put a heavy weight on accountability, which can be informal or formal (Roberts, 1996), as a core factor in collaboration. According to Munro and Mouritsen (1996), accountability includes liability, answerability, and blameworthiness, among other things. Additionally, Kamuf (2007) notes that the narration side of accountability tends to be the subjective component, whereas the calculation is the objective component. Roberts (1996) elaborates by noting that the formal form of accountability indicates solitude, whereas the informal indicates interdependence. The deeper the level of outlined responsibility and accountability achieved by the collaboration, the better off the collaboration will be.

It is important to note that some research related to accountability in collaboration suggests it could be best to shy away from specific accountability measures. In other words, accountability measures should not be too rigid; instead, they should be broad. Crosby, Bryson, and Stone (2006) go on to say that broad accountability measures should be followed with processes and outcomes that can cover all the results of the collaboration, which allows for the accurate establishment of the accountability.

Value Creation

An essential factor in collaboration, at any level, is what Austin (2000) refers to as value creation. Successful value creation, according to Austin (2000), happens when parties are continually scrutinizing each other's resources and capabilities to see how they can create value. Value is defined as innovative ways to develop new ideas and discover creative solutions to problems.

Value creation must weigh the benefits, risks, and costs associated with the collaboration. In other words, the desirability to partner will rest with the forecast of a positive cost-benefit ratio (Austin, 2000). The forecast is a very challenging calculation, however, due to the intangible benefits and costs associated with collaborations. For example, an intangible benefit of collaboration is the relationship building that can come from it. The cost-benefit, as it relates to collaborations, is not as explicit in terms of monetary benefit or cost, as other business terms are. Strategic value is often a complex equation that involves uncertainty, and the more involved the collaboration, the more complex the calculation (Austin, 2000).

The literature does not suggest a definitive process to value creation. Still, as long as the perceived value for both parties is continually flowing in both directions, which is what Austin (2000) calls value balance, the collaboration creates a high degree of (perceived) opportunity (Jarillo, 1988). It is important to note that when done correctly, the collaboration creates additional stakeholders. According to Philips and associates, "As individuals come to share a vision of the problem and see themselves, collectively, as a part of the solution, they become stakeholders" (2000, p. 27).

Often, the costs needed for consideration are management and staff time (Austin, 2000). In addition to cost, there are reputational and relational risks if the collaboration does not play out as either party intended.

Subsequently, value renewal is necessary for collaborations. Value renewal, the continual assessment of value among partners (Austin, 2000), can lead to new value creations, which could be beneficial due to the constant and evolving pressures exerted on either partner. Put another way, partnerships are mechanisms that allow organizations to adapt to environmental changes (Siegel, 2010). If the collaboration becomes complacent, then value renewal is not taking place, which can be dangerous for the collaboration (Austin, 2000).

Relationships

Personal relationships also drive collaborations. As Austin reminds us, "Institutional partnerships are created, nurtured, and extended by people" (2000, p. 82). More specifically, personal relationships lead to increased trust, which is a critical element that is common with most forms of collaboration (Burke 1999).

Austin (2000) explains that interpersonal relationships might not guarantee the success of the collaboration, but poor interpersonal relationships can destroy collaboration. Different types of relationships among participating parties can lead to different kinds of collaborations, which lead to varying consequences for individual partners and for the system as a whole (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982).

Collaboration Inertia

Although there are examples of successful collaboration in the literature, Huxham and Vangen (2000) note that it is common to hear stories of slow or negligible progress, as well.

They refer to this phenomenon as collaborative inertia. Ironically, some of the factors mentioned above as successful traits of collaboration are also causes of collaboration inertia.

Organizational Structure

Austin (2000) writes that the alliance marketplace is underdeveloped, which complicates the collaboration process in many ways. One significant way it complicates the collaboration process is the ambiguity around the organizational structure of collaborations.

There are varying opinions as to the balance between competing values and objectives found in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors (Erakovich & Anderson, 2013). The varying opinions lead to an almost endless number of metrics to choose from when deciding on a structure that will be successful. Therefore, the permanent demand for justifying success can become a burden.

Despite a significant amount of research, alliance performance remains one of the least understood aspects of alliances, and research hardly agrees on measures of alliance performance (Das & Teng, 2003). Many of the reasons behind the ambiguity of performance revolve around the use of subjective and objective measures. For example, linking collaboration to profits is complicated by all the intervening variables because, as it relates to business, for example, some studies find little relationship between corporate social performance and financial results (Arlow & Gannon, 1982; Cochran & Wood, 1984; McElroy & Siegfried, 1986). In this context, it can be difficult for leaders to establish a meaningful and useful structure for collaboration due to the inability to measure the success of the structure.

Accountability

Naturally, without somewhat of a defined organizational structure, it can be challenging to assign accountability. Even with some structure, accountability is difficuult to assign.

Additionally, given that collaboration requires shared accountability, it can be easy to see how collaboration can be hard to initiate or sustain (Blount, 2003) due to the differences of respective interests and perceptions (Crosby et al., 2006).

The difficulty of assigning accountability could be due to the ambiguity around who should be held accountable to whom and what they should be accountable for (Crosby et al., 2006). Additionally, not all components of collaboration can be accounted for, as there is an abundance of different business models, management styles, and differences between the parties entering into the collaboration. For the most part, when accountability becomes too rigid, it can become burdensome.

Communication

Lack of communication (and understanding) can be a challenge as well. According to Huxham and Vangen (2000), frustration can arise due to difficulty in communicating the differences between parties. From an individual entity's standpoint, the values might be clear, but it is the cross-value, before or during the partnership, that can lack clarity with ineffective communication. Huxham and Vangen (2000) use examples such as procedures, organizational purposes, language, and power, among other elements, that can become an issue with a lack of communication before or during the collaboration.

Therefore, the lack of communication is a surface-level issue that could affect more specific aspects of the collaboration at any time during the process. For example, a lack of communication could alter the balance of power in the collaboration. If the balance of power, which is the ability to influence other's actions (Emerson, 1976), shifts more toward one party over another, the flow of value becomes one-sided. For the party who is not getting the flow of benefits at the level agreed upon, the cost and risk allocated to the collaboration do not become worth it. Austin (2000) indicates that the imbalance in the value exchange may hinder the development of the relationship due to the possibility of resource depreciation. Similarly, Parker and Selsky (2004) note that the imbalance of power can lead to the instability of the relationship.

Due to its many challenges, some observers appear to have lost confidence in the benefits of collaboration (Zwarenstein & Reeves, 2000). For example, Cooke-Lauder (2005) believes that "collaboration is not a process but a noisy, complex, unwieldy and unpredictable situation where the competing interests of different parties are always present, and where the resulting tensions and ambiguities need constant attention" (p. 37).

Sectors

The aforementioned abstract environment, or what Emery and Trist (1965) call a turbulent environment, can lead to collaboration among sectors within the economy. Collaboration among the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, in general, is due to some reaction needed to solve a political, economic, or social issue. Sagawa and Segal (1999) note cross-sector partnerships can solve complex problems. More often than not, the scale and scope of each social issue require each sector's resources and skills.

The following section will provide some context for the "big three" sectors – private, public, and nonprofit. This context is critical, as it will decipher relevant distinctions among the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Al-tabbaa, Leach, and March (2014) break down context into an outer context and inner context. An external context, over which the organization has little control, deals with social, economic, or competitive conditions. The internal context deals with structure, process, and policy, all of which are controlled or controllable (Al-tabbaa et al., 2014).

This section will illuminate some inner context that affects outer context, particularly in terms of collaboration. Most notably, the context will explain some of the pre-existing conditions and pressures that inherently exist within each sector. Naturally, these pre-existing conditions tend to shape the decisions relative to each sector.

To start, it is important to define "sector" explicitly. According to Siegel (2010), sectors are fields of similarity, such as public, private, and nonprofit domains. The "big three" are very diverse, which is outlined by the sheer number of each within the United States economy. Also, in some literature, the terms "private," "for-profit," and "business" are used interchangeably. Additionally, in the research, the term "government" and "state sector" are used interchangeably with "public sector." "Nonprofit" seems to be used consistently through the literature without an interchangeable term.

Naturally, each sector brings its values, perceptions, skill sets, resources, knowledge, etc. to collaborative efforts. There has been extensive research on each sector that serves as the foundation to research in cross-sector collaboration. The three sectors have distinctive roles, and it is clear to see how vast the needs and expectations of each sector are, as well as the individual entities within each sector.

Public Sector/Government

The government's role in society and the economy is continuously debated. The core role of government, according to Folser (2001), is to define and promote the achievement of public purpose in a manner that retains the confidence of the public and is compatible with democratic values. The government's main source of revenue is tax revenue from its constituents. Those tax dollars are used to provide public goods, public services, and public infrastructure and to govern society at local, state, and federal levels.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 87,536 government units in the United States as of 2020. Moreover, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (2023) mentions that government units account for about 11% of gross domestic product (GDP). From a wage-earning perspective, the public sector accounts for about 14% of wage and salary accruals in the United States (Wage Bill and Employment Diagnostic Report, 2022). Elected officials govern the public sector by making sure tax dollars are equitably distributed to provide the services and infrastructure for their respective "community." According to Johnson (2002), the community is defined as those citizens who demand special rights.

According to Trist (1983), governments have increasingly sought to solicit the resources and expertise of the nonprofit sector and the private sector for several complex social issues. In other words, organizations are brought together to help manage society. More specifically, governance is carried out through horizontal relationships instead of improving vertical links in existing bureaucracies (Klijn, 2008).

Nonprofit

The term “nonprofit” is broad – it includes small and large nonprofit organizations. In 2012, according to Roeger et al., there were about 1.6 million nonprofit organizations registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and more than 30 types of legal entities classified as 501(c) organizations; all are exempt from corporate income taxes, but not all are charitable. Recent data, according to McKeever (2015), suggest there are about 1.4 million nonprofit organizations in the United States.

The nonprofit sector is an integral part of the United States economy. According to Roeger et al. (2012), nonprofit institutions serving households (NPISH) – which excludes chambers of commerce, universities, and credit unions – contributed $804 billion (5.5 %) to the gross domestic product (GDP). From a wage-earning perspective, the NPISH account for about nine percent of wage and salary accruals in the United States (Roeger et al., 2012).

Generally, nonprofits encourage civic participation; allow for the expression of religious, social, and artistic values; provide basic social structures; and strengthen communities (Roeger et al., 2012). Put another way, nonprofit organizations are in existence for the benefit of a greater society, which is what Folser (2001) means when he notes that the core role of nonprofit organizations is to meet worthy social needs. To put it in more formal terms, nonprofits are typically described as organizations driven by a mission, from which their strategic objectives are derived (Kaplan, 2001).

The scope of a nonprofit can span from a local focus to a worldwide focus and everything in between. For example, a social service nonprofit could focus on trying to eliminate problems such as poverty or curing specific types of diseases. There is roughly one nonprofit for every 175 Americans in the United States (Roeger et al., 2012).

According to Johnson (2002), the nonprofit community focuses on the people demanding services or volunteering services. Naturally, the scope of the work in the nonprofit sector will dictate this. In some cases, a nonprofit could serve a broad community and smaller community. For example, the American Heart Association has a national headquarters whose community would be, from a geographical standpoint, the United States of America. At the same time, the American Heart Association has local chapters (branches of corporate) whose definition of community would be shaped by the local people they serve.

In contrast to the other two sectors, nonprofits measure themselves not around their financial returns but around their mission, or the services they offer (Kanter & Summers, 1987). More specifically, Beisland and Mersland (2014) state that nonprofit executives are less likely to be compensated based on reported earnings.

Similar to the work nonprofits tackle, their structure varies. Some nonprofits have paid staff, while others are strictly volunteer led. Additionally, Johnson (2002) notes that nonprofits are governed by boards who are interested in the success of the organization as measured by the impact it has on the community related to its mission.

At the same time, organizations, such as nonprofits, are tasked to contribute to a prosperous society. In contrast to the private sector, nonprofits are created and operated exclusively for the public good. In other words, the significant increase in nonprofits is related to the increase in magnitude and complexity of social issues (Austin, 2010).

Nonprofits are operating in a constrained environment, where maintaining their economic viability and growth has become a critical issue (Weerawardena, McDonald, & Mort, 2010). Such conditions have induced nonprofits to explore new approaches to maintain their services while remaining sustainable. For example, social service nonprofits are facing challenges related to increasing demands and scarce resources (Park, 2008). As Kearns (2000) notes, these types of challenges for social service nonprofits have led to a paradigm shift in how these nonprofits are structured. Kearns (2000) mentions specifically that nonprofits have adopted private-sector strategies for success. Salamon (2003) mentions that nonprofit market strategies for social purposes now include cross-sector collaborations.

Private/Business

In 2017, there were 7,860,674 business firms in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The core role of business, which makes up about 75% of GDP (Roeger et al., 2012), is to produce goods and services demanded by customers in a competitive market (Folser, 2001). In other words, businesses operate in a market economy for the sole purpose of profit maximization.

For business, revenue comes from the sale of output. The sale of output is a metric important in determining the success of the organization and the respective executives of an organization. Financial measures are central in for-profit organizations not only because profits can be measured easily but also because there is a good test of both market-need satisfaction and the capacity of the organization to run itself efficiently (Kanter & Summers, 1987).

Beisland and Mersland (2014) note that business executives need to report favorable financial data and have a private financial incentive to do so. Additionally, the executives of the for-profit sector are typically governed by boards whose members are owners or stockholders, which lend to the perspective of profit maximization for their respective community. From a wage-earning perspective, the business sector accounts for about 73.8% of wage and salary accruals in the United States (Roeger et al., 2012).

One form of collaboration between businesses is known as a collective strategy where companies co-operate rather than compete (Bresser & Harl, 1986). Similar to the other two sectors, the business community has faced external pressures that affect its operations and has for many years operated under a corporate social responsibility mandate (Siegel, 2010). Additionally, Siegel (2010) notes that business is perceived to be very powerful, which leads to an innate responsibility to contribute more to an equitable and prosperous society. Furthermore, businesses have more than just economic goals; they also have societal goals, which is what is sometimes referred to as the double bottom-line (Siegel, 2010). In other words, collaboration can help businesses contribute toward solving society's problems (i.e., creating social value) while delivering economic gains (i.e., creating financial value) (Al-tabbaa et al., 2014).

Major Distinction

Some would argue that the major distinction among the public, private, and nonprofit sectors is to be found in their revenue-generating mechanisms. As noted above, for businesses, revenue is derived from the sale of output, whereas the nonprofit sector uses donations or dues, and the public sector uses tax dollars. The differences just mentioned, possibly more than other differences, drive the distinct models and purposes of each sector. For example, businesses make money, nonprofits serve the greater good, and the public sector serves its constituents. Therefore, each sector has different perceptions and motivating factors that drive the "why" in terms of involvement in partnerships or collaborations. In sum, the following outlines the general motivations of collaboration between the big three sectors:

> Businesses will usually have a predominantly commercial perspective in a partnership, commonly, but not always, focused on profits. Alternatively, the business partner may have a concern to develop market credibility by being associated with the government or

may have political motives such as gaining an 'insider' position in policy processes, working to achieve policy outcomes favorable to business. In contrast, government partners may be motivated by values less entrenched in the business sector, such as a greater concern for equity. Nonprofit organizations might enter a partnership for altruistic reasons, with the partnership seen primarily as a means of securing financial support for their activities from government. At other times, nonprofit organizations may have political objectives aimed at influencing policy based on their core values. With such a variety of motives and underlying values, the potential for conflict in public-private partnerships [cross-sector organizational collaboration is real. (Carroll & Steane, 2000, p. 50)

As Johnson (2002) notes, the motivations above are a product of context in addition to their definition and roles. For example, Johnson (2002) uses the example of the three sectors' definition of the word "client." He explains that "within the government 'clients' are the public or constituents who require accountability from their elected officials; within the private sector, they are defined as customers paying for a particular service; and, within the voluntary sector, clients are most often perceived as those receiving the public service" (p. 38). Johnson (2002) uses this analogy: private corporations make money, the public sector is the regulator, and the nonprofit sector provides the services that the other two sectors could not or would not provide.

Cross-Sector Collaboration

The upshot of collaboration among the "big three" sectors is cross-sector collaboration. Cross-sector collaboration, which Edmond (2007) notes can happen locally, nationally, or internationally among "the big three" sectors, has been taking place for a while –it is certainly not a new phenomenon. Although cross-sector collaboration has a long history, it would be fair to say that recent pressure in terms of forging cross-sector collaborations for each sector has increased. More specifically, society's expectations of public, private, and nonprofit organizations to relieve society of the pressures mentioned above are growing. In an age of increased transparency, due largely to more advanced technology, stakeholders are exerting pressure on each sector to address pressing social, political, and economic issues facing society.

As the environment becomes more challenging and the pressures become more prevalent, each sector will have to answer to their respective stakeholders in meaningful ways through cross-sector collaborations. Additionally, each sector becomes more accountable to more than just their direct stakeholders; they must also be responsive to a variety of indirect stakeholders (Siegel, 2010). Phillips et al. (2000) notes that this type of collaboration takes form through joint ventures, strategic partners, alliances, or outsourcing. In this arena, research focuses on the advantages and efficiencies related to combining competencies with partner organizations. Said another way, companies take advantage of collaborations instead of facing limitations alone (Kraatz, 1998).

Waddell and Brown (1997) define multi-sector or cross-sector collaboration as a strategy to improve coordination and resource execution among public, private, and nonprofit entities. Cross-sector collaborations are becoming strategically important due to the many benefits to all sectors. In general, cross-sector collaborations, if constructed properly, can alleviate some of the limitations that a single organization or sector might face if trying to address issues or solve problems. More specifically, some of the main benefits of cross-sector collaborations are enhanced image, cost savings, synergies, promoting goodwill among employees and citizens, and revenue enhancement (Austin, 2000; Edmond, 2007). Cross-sector collaborations are more likely to be successful if partners can overcome one of the following costs associated with most collaborations: the cost of finding partners, the cost of negotiating agreements between the partners, or the cost of monitoring and maintaining compliance of the agreement (King, 2007; Macher & Richman, 2008)

Austin (2000) notes that each sector will begin to create alliances with one another due to trends in the financial environment. One of the ways cross-sector collaborations can be financially beneficial is from the cost savings due to the elimination of duplicate costs. Additionally, cross-sector collaboration can lead to increased profits.

As noted above, the nonprofit sector has seen a significant increase in the number of entities in its sector. This growth has caused fierce competition among nonprofit organizations, which stems from the competition for fundraising dollars. Fundraising efforts have not kept pace with the increase in the number of nonprofit organizations, nor have they kept pace with the resources nonprofits need to address today's social issues. Now, nonprofits must join together with the business sector for more effective organizational approaches (Austin, 2010) and to acquire the limited funding resources (Edwards, Yankey, & Altpeter, 1998).

When discussing image, as it relates to the business sector, the business sector does not take charitable giving lightly, as most businesses and corporations genuinely believe it is right in terms of improving image (Austin, 2000). Additionally, for-profit business leaders can be viewed as community-builders (Edmond, 2007).

Moreover, leaders of each respective sector believe that separate efforts by separate sectors to address societal issues have failed and cannot be fixed by a separate entity alone (Crosby et al., 2006). Organizational leadership seems to be taking notice, as leaders find themselves working across sectors to solve problems that cannot be solved by one single company. As Erakovich and Anderson explain, “These managers are no longer just unitary leaders of unitary organizations. Instead, they find themselves facilitating and negotiating with public, private, and nonprofit organizations and individuals, as well as with the public” (2013, p. 164).

Therefore, partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit entities can lead to benefits that reach beyond each sector or beyond individual entities within each sector. In other words, the benefits of cross-sector collaboration can benefit society as a whole. For example, many major social issues, such as HIV, global warming, economic development, and poverty, among others, can only be addressed adequately through the collaboration of numerous organizations (Crosby et al., 2006). Most of the pressing issues of our time can benefit from the pooled expertise of multiple organizations and sectors (Siegel, 2010).

Cross-sector partnerships involving public, private, and nonprofit entities will intensify (Austin, 2000) due to an era of blurring industry boundaries, fast-changing technology, and global integration (Das & Teng, 2003). Austin (2000) goes as far as saying that the 21st century will be the age of alliances. Some of the literature suggests that current forms of cross-sector collaboration are beginning to blur the boundaries of each sector. Siegel (2010) mentions that boundaries define, divide, and demarcate things – they establish a kind of order. Siegel (2010) goes on to say that boundaries can become too rigid and restrictive. In other words, they can add a level of bureaucracy that can negatively affect the efforts of solving social problems. Put another way, boundaries can distract from a focus on the greater good.

As Hammack and Young (1993) state, it is naive to think that public, private, and nonprofit entities have separate and delineated roles, and current research focuses on a society that is interwoven and interdependent. As Siegel (2010) notes, "Sector convergence refers to the tendency of formerly distinct sectors to become more like one another in certain aspects" (p. 51). This contrasts with past research, which generally viewed the public, private, and nonprofit sectors as separate entities whose roles did not intersect and where sector boundaries were stagnant and inflexible (Hansmann, 1987; Weisbrod, 1988). Salamon (2003) seem to think the "old" system, which was less collaborative, has not kept up with the persistent social problems.

As noted above and by Park (2008), the complexity of problems prevents any one sector from solving the problem alone. Park (2008) suggests that the blurring of boundaries is the change in the interaction patterns of the "big three" sectors, which allows sectors to deal with community issues and challenges collectively.

It is common to see the "big three" working together in today's society. Park (2008) states that it is not unusual to see collaborations among the "big three," which has led to the phenomena of blurred boundaries amongst the sectors. Also, Siegel (2010) states that social issues disregard boundaries and push the boundaries of established organizations and sectors. As the traditional boundaries of the "big three" continue to erode, research needs to focus on the evolving organizational structures.

Additionally, as the boundaries of each sector continue to blur, the distinctions mentioned above of each sector become more trivial. In this type of situation, the collaboration is forced, not by its members or participants, but from external influences. Moreover, Huxham (1996) notes that external forces can even creep their way into the structure or process of the collaboration. The external pressures can go as far as determining which organizations are involved and how each organization organizes the formation of the collaboration, which even includes who will lead the collaboration.

Some research suggests that networks are replacing hierarchies. Erakovich and Anderson (2013) note that companies engage with networks across public, private, and nonprofit sectors. According to Ausin, “Partners’ collective capacity to envision ever more enriching and powerful engagement opportunities accelerates and extends the development and value of the alliance” (2000, p. 84). Additionally, Austin (2000) notes that successful collaborations feature parties who are continually hungry to learn each other’s processes for value creation. Siegel (2010) adds that there is widespread acceptance for the collaborative model of engagement.

As noted above, cross-sector collaborations are essential to deal with the growing number of complex issues facing our society. However, cross-sector collaborations are not risk-free strategies. According to Al-tabbaa et al. (2014), the risk falls into the following three categories: collaboration failure, collaboration cost, and damage of image. Much like the several factors related to the success of the collaboration, some factors can mitigate the risk. According to Austin (2000), the level of collaboration serves as the moderator between the relationship and depth between partners. In other words, the initial level of involvement and accountability plays a role in how involved the collaboration might be. Naturally, a loose collaboration can be less risky and vice-versa.

Business Incubation – A Form of Economic Development

The literature is full of varying terms related to business incubation, which include, but are not limited to, coworking spaces, collaboration spaces, accelerators, and shared spaces. The terms are often intertwined, which can lead to varying research related to business incubation. For example, although business incubation has been around since the early 1980s (Knopp, 2007), the literature refers to the first coworking space opening in creative cities in the United States, such as San Francisco and New York, around 2005 (Moriset, 2014; Sykes, 2014). Since 2005, the literature goes on to state that coworking spaces have become a global phenomenon; in 2013, around 2,500 coworking spaces existed worldwide (Moriset, 2014), and in 2015, 7,800 spaces existed worldwide (Foertsch, 2015). In another example, Knopp (2007) states that in the United States alone, organizations that provide incubator services grew to over 1,400 from the early 1980s to 2007. Moreover, there are mentions in the literature of spaces that are simply a social platform for freelance or independent workers.

For the present study, the focus is on incubation spaces that fit within the following description: a business incubator is an organization, profit or nonprofit, that supports the creation and growth of new businesses by providing a *combination* of subsidized office space, shared administrative services, access to capital and financing, networking opportunities, and assistance with legal, technology transfer, and export procedures (Allen & Weinberg, 1988; Amezcua, 2010; Erlewine & Gerl, 2004; Hackett & Dilts, 2004).

The significant emergence of business incubation in the United States is partly due to start-up companies accounting for the majority of the job creation over the last twenty years (Davis, Faberman, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2010). Another reason for the emergence is the rise of the independent workforce, which started around the economic recession of 2008 (Sykes, 2014). This nonstandard form of employment is referenced as a ‘third way’ of working, halfway between a ‘standard’ work-life within a traditional, well-defined workplace in a community-like environment, and an independent work life where the worker is based at home in isolation (Gandini, 2015; Spinuzzi, 2012). Another term for the independent workforce, according to the literature, is entrepreneurship, which results when individuals act to produce a new good, improve the quality of a current good, adopt a more efficient method of production, open new markets for an already available good or service, discover and control a new supply of raw materials, and/or alter the competitive dimensions of an industry (Amezcua, 2010; Baumol, 1993; Schumpeter, 1934).

No matter which term used to describe the people who subscribe to business incubation services, business incubation is designed for people in a flexible organizational arrangement to produce outcomes across the network-based, collaborative schemes of production (Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Gandini, 2015; Osnowitz, 2010; Spinuzzi, 2012). Generally, people within incubation spaces are not working toward the same goals and tend not to be in alignment with one another (Gerdenitsch, Scheel, Andorfer, & Korunka, 2016). Moreover, according to Gerdenitsch et al. (2016), some people within incubation spaces can be in direct competition with one another but can escape the competitive framework by building trust and communication relationships to engage in collaborative relationships (Capdevila, 2013; Gandini, 2015). The collaborative relationships, according to Capdevila (2013), enable knowledge transfer through 'microclusters' and suggest that various people utilize incubation spaces for their social advantages, as well as business advantages (Gerdenitsch et al., 2016; Pohler, 2012).

Generally, today's incubation spaces are relaxed, have open floor plans or layouts with informal table arrangements, kitchen/break areas, conference rooms, and dedicated suites or offices (Sykes, 2014). Most incubation spaces involve various types of partnerships and come in multiple shapes and sizes (Sykes, 2014). Some incubation spaces are industry-specific, which means they might be set up for technology companies, for example. Others are more general in terms of the types of businesses that can participate and tend to open their doors to any business, idea, or concept (Sykes, 2014). Some operate inside of a university, while others act as separate, individual entities. No matter the “theme” of the incubation space, they generally all provide professionals with a form of group thinking, which promotes supportive behavior (Gerdenitsch et al., 2016). Put another way, incubation spaces offer a focused, community-driven, and cost-effective environment to support evolving and established businesses (Sykes, 2014).

According to Fetsch (2015), there are very few studies that evaluate the incubation process in terms of firm growth or economic impact. One of those studies, according to Fetsch (2015), conducted by Amezcua (2010), showed a marginal difference in terms of job growth, revenue, and overall survival when comparing incubated businesses versus non-incubated businesses. Rothaermal and Thursby (2005) studied 79 companies over a six-year period (1998-2003) that were associated with the Advanced Technology Development Center. The results of the study led them to conclude that being linked to the university reduced the probability of a firm failing.

In addition to the lack of research around success factors of incubation spaces being a concern for future growth and sustainability, Moriset (2014) notes a concern relative to the future of the ‘creative class.’ Society will be confronted with a ‘coworking bubble’ because ‘freelancers’ and ‘startuppers’ are shifting to the establishment of an individual enterprise with varying levels of stability and certainty (Gandini, 2015; Moriset, 2014).

Other research, however, highlights that incubation spaces will continue to expand by a rate of 40% annually over the next five years on the heels of the significant growth rate of nearly 100% from 2007 to 2012 (Sykes, 2014). A potential reason for that growth could be the funding dollars incubation spaces are receiving from big companies in high-tech industries, such as

Microsoft and Google. Among other motives, supporting incubation initiatives can improve their public profile and provide them a connection to local entrepreneurs (Malecki, 2011). Moreover, other research shows that the university has started to get involved in incubation spaces as well. The move toward incubation spaces is in line with the trend of students exploring entrepreneurship on campus. Although there is limited research on the intricacies of collaboration or partnership efforts to help create and sustain incubation spaces, the examples mentioned above suggest that high-level partnerships have been leveraged to assist incubation spaces.

Summary

Research suggests that cross-sector collaborations are increasing phenomena. As Friedman (2005) notes, "It's now possible for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real-time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on more equal footing than at any previous time in the history of the world" (p. 8).

A deeper understanding of how cross-sector collaboration works, particularly as boundaries continue to blur, can lead to more information pertaining to collaboration structure and increased efficiency as it relates to cross-sector collaboration among public, private, and nonprofit sectors. There are several continuum models referenced in the literature that describe the evolutionary stages of collaboration. The models contain examples of no collaboration to full collaboration. For example, Peterson (1991) proposed a model characterized by three distinctive levels of interaction: cooperation, coordination, and collaboration, while Hogue (1993) proposed a five-level model of community linkage in which the stages are differentiated by purpose, structure, and process. Bailey and Koney (2000) expand the work of Peterson (1991) and Hogue

(1993) by adding a final stage identified as coadunation. Mergers and consolidations are examples of coadunation.

Moreover, Gajda (2004) described a five-level model and constructed an accompanying rubric to assess strategic alliance formation. The five model levels include networking, cooperating, partnering, merging, and unifying. The multiple levels of integration are differentiated by purpose, 34 organizational strategies and tasks, leadership and decision-making, and interpersonal and communication characteristics.

In one final example of a collaboration model, Johnson (2002) provides a brief overview of Huxham's framework, introducing five dimensions that catalyze influence and impact partnership activity: empowerment and participation, power relationships, addressing conflict, and the means of resolving conflict. Within these five dimensions, Huxham (1996) identifies eight sets of "contrasts," which characterize the possible range of behavior within each dimension. This multi-dimensional construct attempts to show the relationship between why collaborations are created and how they might operate.

Although the work of numerous scholars helps set the context for research on collaborations, the concepts presented in the research of Austin (2000), who is heavily cited in the literature, discuss a continuum of collaboration, which includes the following three stages: philanthropic, transactional, and integrative. Austin's (2000) models differentiate the stages of collaboration (see Table 1) by engagement level, the importance of collaboration to the mission, resource magnitude, activity scope, interaction level, managerial complexity, and social value. Overall, the present study focuses on cross-sector collaboration among the “big three” sectors and, more specifically, on how the sectors can sustain collaborations for the benefit of economic development.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This project utilized a single-case study design to explore the phenomenon of cross-sector collaboration for the benefit of regional economic development, with a specific focus on partners' efforts to sustain their joint participation in a business incubator space. Business incubator spaces are an example of cross-sector collaboration that can involve the "big three" sectors (Siegel, 2010). The business incubator space investigated in this study, SEED@University, involves partnerships between The University, the City, the Chamber, and private businesses and other nonprofit organizations.

Qualitative approaches seek to arrive at an understanding of a particular phenomenon (whether an event, a process, an individual, or a group) investigated through one or more cases within a given context and includes the perspective of those experiencing it (Creswell, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). My central research question – *How do organizations sustain cross-sector collaborations for the benefit of economic development?* – was best addressed through a case study method because I was interested in whether and how Austin's (2000) collaboration continuum (philanthropic ←→transactional ←→integrative) illuminates the collaborative process and the specific conditions that enable or disable movement along the continuum.

This case study entailed an in-depth analysis of the cross-sector collaboration that established the business incubator through the perceptions of the people experiencing it. According to Yin (2014), a single case can represent a significant contribution to knowledge and theory building by confirming, challenging, and extending a theory. In this case, the research was designed to collect data to determine the factors that led to the collaboration, the boundaries of each partner (before and during the collaboration), and the current point on the collaboration continuum. The data should help illuminate why different organizations from different sectors partnered for economic development. In other words, what was the proposed value proposition for the partnership – was there public value?

Additionally, each partnering organization comes to the table with its ideas – perceptions of the value proposition, resources needed, desired outcomes, and so on – to benefit regional economic development. How do their ideas change, if at all, from the start of the collaboration, and do the constituent groups served by each organization put any pressure on the ideas? The results of studying a business incubator at this level of detail led to a better understanding of how to better sustain cross-sector collaborations for the benefit of economic development.

Research Settings

The field research took place at the Chamber of Commerce and through WebEx meetings. The incubator space, SEED@University, which is on the campus of the University, had limited accessibility during the field research portion of the study due to the restrictions from COVID-19. Off-site research (e.g., document review, some telephone interviews) also took place.

The Chamber of Commerce has nearly 1,000 member businesses and organizations. Although the members vary significantly in size (financially and in terms of number of employees), sector, mission, and purpose, they all utilize the Chamber to ensure continued progress for business success and community development. The Chamber is accredited at the highest level (5-Star Accredited) by the United States Chamber of Commerce. The accreditation displays the high quality, expertise, and strong leadership of the Chamber (Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce, 2020).

The Chamber of Commerce has been in existence since the early 1900s. The impetus for its creation came from the need to advocate, on behalf of Greenville and Pitt County, for East Carolina Teacher Training School in Greenville. Over time, the Training School evolved into what is now East Carolina University, which is the fourth-largest public university in the state of North Carolina. ECU, located in the southeastern United States, is a constituent member of the 17-campus consolidated UNC System and accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) per the Principles of Accreditation. Enrollment at East Carolina University is over 26,785, and ECU offers 104 undergraduate and 113 graduate-level degrees (East Carolina University, 2024).

The SEED@University is on ECU's campus, in the Willis Building. The Willis building, like the Chamber, is located in Greenville's Downtown District. The portion of space in the Willis Building designated for SEED@University is referred to as the collaboration space. The collaboration space has four private office suites, eight cubicles, one common area, one conference room, an auditorium, and a shared business center (SEED@ECU, 2017).

Criteria for Business Incubator Space

The following criteria, assembled from the synthesis of best practices from the literature, were used to identify the business incubation space to study:

- Met the core definition of a cross-sector collaboration by having representation of the "big three" (Siegel, 2010) sectors (e.g., public, private, and nonprofit);
- The partnership is tax-exempt, under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
- The partnership involves an accredited research university and a business community with an active economic development focus. The economic development focus is assumed, based on the many partner organizations (including, but not limited to, the

Greenville-Pitt County Chamber, ECU, Pitt Community College, Pitt County, City of Greenville, Greenville Utilities, and Uptown Greenville) that reference economic development in their respective literature;

- Has a strategic “economic development” focus through a well-defined mission statement and goals to advance economic development in the respective community;
- Is beyond the planning stages with the active participation of all partner organizations;
- Has participants from a region that has a mix of urban and rural cities/towns, receiving services from the business incubator; and
- The business incubator has support from additional stakeholders.

Research Design

This study utilized a single-case study design that focused on the partnership (the business incubator) and the partnering organizations. Yin (2014) notes the common case and the longitudinal case as two (from a list of five) primary rationales for conducting a single-case study. The common case, according to Yin (2014), captures the circumstances and conditions of everyday situations. There are many examples of business incubators around the world; however, this study focused on a business incubator formed by a cross-sector collaboration that met the criteria as mentioned above. The collaboration took place in a particular region to positively impact the economic development efforts of that particular region and the organizations involved.

The longitudinal case provides insight at different points in time, according to Yin (2014). As it relates to this study, focusing on the origin of the cross-sector collaboration that established SEED@University and how it moved, if at all, along Austin’s (2000) Collaboration

Continuum could illuminate different forms of engagement, levels of commitment, and how the organizations are working across boundaries. Austin (2000) notes that the Collaboration Continuum enables the characterization and categorization of different types of relationships and the stages they might pass through as an alliance evolves. It is important to note that one step on the continuum is not necessarily better than the other. Movement along the continuum is the result of conscious decisions by the partners, and lower levels of engagement might be better suited in specific partnerships (Sinclair & Galaskiewicz, 1997).

Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum served as a guide for the following research sub-questions:

- What is the current state of the cross-sector collaboration?
- What is the direction in which the cross-sector collaboration is moving, if at all?
- What are the boundaries of the individual partner roles and the organizational roles within the cross-sector collaboration?

Data Collection

The most commonly used sources of evidence in case study research are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. Using multiple sources of evidence allows the researcher to address a broader range of historical and behavioral data and provides various measures of the same phenomenon. Moreover, the utilization of convergent lines of inquiry could be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information (Yin, 2014). I used Microsoft Excel to create a case study database to organize and document the data collected. For this study, the following data sources, listed in Table 3, were used.

Table 3

Data Sources

Data Source	Purpose	Types of Data
Documentation and archival records	Historical data about the collaboration and key stakeholders	Records, documents, web pages
Direct observation	Participants in the natural context of business incubator	Field notes documenting interactions, conversations, activities, routines
Interviews	Gain individual perspective and in-depth information relative to the participant's relationship with the collaboration	Transcripts from in-person interviews

Documentation and archival records were reviewed to assist with understanding the cross-sector collaboration. More specifically, data concerning where and how the collaboration started were helpful in illuminating the initial use of each organization's resources (i.e., structures, processes) that defined the collaboration. Additionally, these date provided an understanding of the factors leading to movement and, subsequently, the respective resources being utilized to alter or sustain the direction. Meeting minutes, budgets, and the Web sites of each partner organization were checked for activities, mission statements, and any other information related to the business incubator.

Direct observation can provide information about social and environmental conditions, according to Yin (2014). The business incubator was close enough in proximity to observe. Yin (2014) notes the importance of observing the work environment for additional information. Observations of the physical business incubator setting, the activities, people, and aspects of the daily routine did not occur, however, due to the restrictions from COVID-19 during the period of the study.

Interviews, scheduled for about one hour, were conducted with identified participants who were selected based on criteria mentioned later in this chapter. The questions were designed to gain a more in-depth insight into the cross-sector collaboration relative to its origin, the current state of the collaboration, and the future of the collaboration relative to partnership roles/resources and the cross-sector collaboration itself. The participants were employed by the partner organizations, which were identified based on the perceived significance of the organization's role in the business incubator collaboration.

According to Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum, there are three stages of cross-sector collaboration: Stage 1, Philanthropic; Stage 2, Transactional; and Stage 3, Integrative. The following variables are used to identify the type of collaboration: level of engagement, importance to the mission, the magnitude of resources, the scope of activities, interaction level, managerial complexity, and strategic value. The relationships between the stages and variables are demonstrated in Table 4.

The variables mentioned above served as my structural codes. Structural coding is question-based coding that "acts as a labeling or indexing device, allowing researchers to quickly access data likely to be relevant to a particular analysis from a larger data set" (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008, p. 141; Saldaña, 2016). I used the following structural codes: Structural Code 1: Level of Engagement; Structural Code 2: Importance to Mission; Structural Code 3: Magnitude of Resources; Structural Code 4: Scope of Activities; Structural Code 5: Interactional Level; Structural Code 6: Strategic Value. Additionally, I used in vivo coding, which allowed me to identify a word or phrase in the actual interview transcripts, documentation, and archival records. According to Saldaña (2016), in vivo coding is used in studies that prioritize the participant's voice. In this study, the participant's views were used to help answer the sub-questions mentioned above.

Participants

Interviews were held with people at varying levels (including at least one senior-level member, determined by title) who were familiar with or had an active role in their respective organization's involvement in the cross-sector collaboration. Additionally, interviews with participants of the business incubator and members of stakeholder organizations that have supported the business incubator (not directly involved in the partnership from a leadership role perspective) were carried out. Yin (2014) highlights the importance of interviews in case study research due to the deep and broad data they produce.

Table 4

Collaboration Continuum

Nature of Relationship	Stage 1 (Philanthropic)		Stage 2 (Transactional)		Stage 3 (Integrative)
Level of Engagement	Low	→	→	→	High
Importance to mission	Peripheral	→	→	→	Central
Magnitude of resources	Small	→	→	→	Big
Scope of activities	Narrow	→	→	→	Broad
Interaction level	Infrequent	→	→	→	Intensive
Managerial complexity	Simple	→	→	→	Complex
Strategic value	Minor	→	→	→	Major

Note. (Austin, 2000).

Demographic information, such as the participant's name, organization, and position, was obtained during the interview. This information was collected to assist with the organization and categorization of the data. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. The goal was to conduct at least 10 one-hour interviews. This range of interviews allowed me to gain insight from the majority of the stakeholders involved. For example, each partner organization (university, nonprofit, select businesses) has designated one person as its lead to assist with the project. Therefore, I could focus on a large sample of the participants in the incubator to create a stronger pool of data. The initial range of interviews allowed me to sufficiently answer the research question by fully accounting for categories, explaining the variability between them, and testing and validating them (Green & Thorogood, 2004). Saturation was determined not by the number of participants but by the appropriateness of the dataoccurred (Green & Thorogood, 2004).

Procedure

The research was carried out for several months from 2020 to 2021. The materials created for fieldwork included guides for interviews (see Appendix A-C) and an observation guide (see Appendix D). Once I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I identified sites and secured times to conduct individual interviews. Shortly after the observations took place, notes were reviewed and analyzed. Taped interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed for themes.

The procedures followed were designed to convert the evidence into results and to strengthen the accuracy of the findings relative to the central research question. Utilizing evidence from multiple sources increased confidence that the single-case study rendered the event accurately (Yin, 2014).

After the fieldwork and collection of data were completed, the analysis was organized around Austin's (2000) collaboration continuum using the sub-questions and codes identified earlier in this chapter. In a scenario where the continuum was not helpful in terms of answering my research question, I was prepared to re-analyze the data using Austin's (2000) four alliance drivers: alignment of strategy, mission, and values; personal connection and relationships; value generation and shared visioning; and continual learning. The alliance drivers contribute to the strength of the collaboration. The final steps included writing up the findings and conclusions.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or testing evidence to produce empirically based findings (Yin, 2014). Generally, the data collected and prepared for a single-case study analysis should generate meaning toward the research question. There are few fixed formulas for analyzing data from a case study, so a lot of how the data are analyzed depends on the researcher's style and interpretation of the evidence (Yin, 2014). Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum served as a guide to make sense of the data utilizing the following steps (Creswell, 2009):

1. Create and organize files and data generated from each set of data (i.e., interview transcript, documents, press releases, etc.).
2. Review and analyze data in different ways to understand how they relate to the phenomenon and the generated themes.
3. Themes and patterns will be identified by using categorical aggregation based on the predefined codes.
4. Interpret the data, which will consist of establishing patterns and identifying a correspondence between two or more categories.

5. Findings and meanings will be presented to provide a clear understanding of the data. More specifically, within each of the structural codes and the indicators discovered through reviewing the data sources, I was able to organize and theme the data in a way that illuminated what type of relationship the organizations involved with SEED@University had at its origin and in its current state. The knowledge of the interrelationships at these two points in time allowed me to better understand the purpose of the relationships and their potential as a cross-sector collaboration. I organized the data so that I could access it by an individual or by a partner organization represented in the study.

Additionally, analyzing the data from different perspectives can lead to patterns, insights, and concepts that are beneficial to the research. Formal strategies and techniques, such as pattern matching, can be utilized for further analysis. According to Yin (2014), pattern making is one of the most desirable methods because it can help a case study strengthen its internal validity by matching an empirically-based pattern with one or several predicted patterns.

I went beyond the initial impressions of identifying where the collaboration started and its current state by utilizing a secondary coding tactic called pattern coding (Saldaña, 2016) to explore the potential sustainability of the SEED@University collaboration. Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum: Drivers and Enablers Table (see Appendix E) served as a guide during the analyses. According to Austin (2000), collaboration drivers and enablers can propel the collaboration. By reviewing the data sources a second time, with the continuum drivers and enablers as my reference, I better understood how the drivers and enablers were affecting or not affecting the SEED@University collaboration. The pattern coding technique condensed the data in a way that illuminated significant themes. This process led to an explanation or theory around the sustainability of the SEED@University collaboration.

Summary

Collaborations, particularly cross-sector collaborations, have become increasingly important to society. Single sector solutions are becoming increasingly rare, which puts more importance on research related to sustainable cross-sector collaborations. The purpose of this study was to add to the literature relative to the phenomenon of collaboration. With more information about sustaining cross-sector collaboration, society could benefit from the refined power of organizations and sectors working together for the greater good.

Business incubation spaces are one of many examples of cross-sector collaboration. In the example used in this study, the cross-sector collaboration was assembled to benefit economic development. Understanding collaboration drivers and limitations related to the SEED@University cross-sector collaboration broaden the body of knowledge and potentially improves the collaborative practices of our society.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter explores the patterns, subthemes, and themes that address the study's central research question: How do organizations sustain cross-sector collaboration for the benefit of economic development? The primary objective was to focus on the collaborative experience of the SEED@University, with particular attention to the outcomes, consequences, and effects of cross-sector collaboration.

The single case study explored in this research was the business incubator space, SEED@University. SEED is a public-private economic development partnership. As a separate 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization, SEED@University supports economic and entrepreneurial development in a region in North Carolina by providing office space and support for entrepreneurs and start-up businesses.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data source used in the single-case study method. Additional details - notes from partner meetings, draft agreements, and websites - were obtained through documentation and archival records. Direct observation data was unavailable due to restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the following section describes the SEED space.

The people who occupy the SEED space are entrepreneurs. More specifically, they are entrepreneurs with a relatively new business idea or business. They tend to be dressed in a relaxed fashion – jeans, T-shirts, and tennis shoes, for example. It is very rare to see an entrepreneur in a suit unless they are preparing for a meeting with investors, advisors, or other people who might be visiting. A visitor might conclude that an entrepreneur sitting in the shared space (coffee shop-like set up of desks and chairs) just started working on an idea or business. An entrepreneur who has an office is relatively more established than one working in the shared space, which could warrant an exit (positive next step) from SEED into another, larger office within the area. Typically, upon entrance, the entrepreneurs, regardless of where they are seated, are working from a computer. One of the "rules" of SEED is to "bring your own devices," which means entrepreneurs in the shared space bring their computers, laptops, or tablets. When the entrepreneurs are not working on their respective businesses alone, they collaborate – sometimes in the break room, conference room, or one another's space. Additionally, a few times each month, there are planned meetings, networking functions, and seminars that bring in people not associated with SEED to interact with the entrepreneurs.

Within the case study, the partner organizations and their respective representatives embraced the opportunity to discuss the SEED@University initiative. It was easy to schedule the interviews because I received quick responses and no cancellations. Additionally, discussions tended to flow naturally, and there was an appreciation for the complexity of the partnerships.

The identified participants were people at varying levels (organized by title) of their respective partnership organizations who were familiar with or have played an active role in the SEED@University. Ten interviews were scheduled for one hour but, on average, lasted about fifty minutes. Of the ten interviews, there were no cancelations. Additional follow-up emails were sent after three of the interviews to obtain notes or documents mentioned by the participants during the interview. One interview was conducted in a face-to-face setting, two over the phone, and seven were conducted via Webex or Zoom. The questions in Appendix B-D were followed throughout the ten interviews, and there was no reason to adjust the questions as the interviews took place. Table 5 provides a Participant Profile Summary.

Table 5

Participant Profile Summary

Participant Identifier	Participant Company Identifier	Role within Company
Maxwell Rivers	The University and formerly The City	Director
Leo Ashford	The Alliance	Director
K.T. Inkwell	The Chamber	Chief Executive
J. C. Mannington	The University	Director
Dana Harris	The City	Director
Taylor McBride	Private Company	Owner
Sharon Hammond	The University	Executive
Thomas Warner	The Chamber	Chief Executive
Allison Grant	The County	Director
Ashley Williams	The City	Chief Executive

Each interview was recorded using the software Otter, which transcribed each interview. After downloading each interview from Otter, the transcription was saved as a Microsoft Word document. From there, each interview was analyzed three times using Microsoft Word. The first analysis put the interview into a two-column table. The first column contained the transcribed interview. The second column contained the highlights, or summation, of each section. The second analysis then connected the patterns to the structural codes. As noted in Chapter 3, in Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum, there are variables: level of engagement, importance to the mission, the magnitude of resources, the scope of activities, interaction level, managerial complexity, and strategic value. These variables are used to identify the nature of the collaboration relationship (philanthropic, transactional, or integrative). For the semi-structured interview questions, the variables served as structural codes. Questions related to each structural code were prepared (see Appendix B-D) based on the interview participants. Additionally, the answers from each interview were compared with Austin's (2000) Collaboration Drivers and Enablers Table (see Appendix F) to help determine where each variable was perceived to be on the Collaboration Continuum. This was done by using the "Review" features in Microsoft Word and tracking notes. The third and final analysis included coding the patterns, subthemes, and themes with a separate tracking color using the "Review" tab in Microsoft Word. Table 6 summarizes the results.

Table 6

Patterns, Subthemes, Themes

Patterns	Subthemes	Themes
Organizations willing to contribute financial resources or in-kind services to helping people with business ideas analyze and potentially grow an idea. Involvement benefits the community's potential growth and development of small business. Supporting community economic development initiatives help organizations achieve their missions.	**Entrepreneurial Ecosystem** Building an entrepreneurial ecosystem for community members with business ideas that needed support. **Well-Rounded Economic Development Strategy** Creation of SEED "rounds out" the community's economic development strategy.	1. **Community Support** Partners are motivated by a desire to advance their respective missions by allocating resources to support and be involved with community economic development and entrepreneurship initiatives.
Uneven resource distribution, roles, and responsibilities among the partners. Lack of interaction by the partners in the day-to-day operations or the decision-making process. Perceived shift in ownership to a University program.	**Undefined Needs** No clear understanding of resources needed or how to allocate them. **Lack of Governance Structure** Lack of governance structure to oversee SEED initiative.	2. **Confusion** Partner organizations and partner representatives need clarification about their respective involvement and what type of governance structure, if any, guides the SEED initiative.
The partnership lost momentum, but there is still a desire to continue partnership. Reboot phase and plans are unclear. Partner organizations do not know what resources are needed to reboot SEED.	**SEED Paused** Partner-specific concerns about SEED being paused. **Partner ROI Concerns** Concerns about return for their respective resources allocated to SEED.	3. **Unclear Path Forward** Partners have a desire to stay involved but are still determining how to move forward.

Community Support

The first central theme is each partner's desire to be involved with mission-driven initiatives that they perceive can be categorized as "community support." In this sense, community support is driven by a purpose and passion for breaking away from traditional business-related or sector-related habits described in Chapter 2 and supporting social initiatives that would be considered tangential to their respective missions but require partnerships or collaborations. In this case, each organization has stated economic development initiatives they are involved with related to their respective core functions discussed in Chapter 2. Table 7 shows each organization's missions and how they view their respective roles in economic development.

Table 7

Organization Profile Summary

Organization	Mission	Stated role within Economic Development
The University	To be a national model for student success, public service, and regional transformation.	Educating future work force; Create high-tech research and innovation hub through business, corporate, and university research.
The Alliance	Market the region to support new and existing businesses while maximizing opportunities for investment, job creation, and economic growth.	Collaborative approach to business recruitment, retention, and expansion
The Chamber	To be the recognized leader for business success, strategic economic growth, and community development	Support, engage, and advocate on behalf of the business community; Advance the development of the community, maintain a favorable business climate for sound economic growth, and improve quality of life.
The County	To enhance the health, safety, and well-being of our community by advocating for and providing quality services in a friendly and cost-effective manner.	Facilitates and supports attraction, retention, and expansion. Attraction of talent, investment, and companies; retention of graduates and industries; and expansion of business and supporting assets.
The City	To provide all citizens with high-quality services in an open, inclusive, professional manner, ensuring a community of excellence now and in the future	Foster a strong business climate supported by entrepreneurialism.

The organizations above have examples of economic development initiatives that fit tightly within their respective "boundaries," meaning they fit tightly into each partner's core mission. Moreover, there is a division of labor, resources, and accountability related to each respective initiative. The interview participants highlighted the importance of their organizations being willing to move beyond the traditional "boundaries" to create something new and innovative. The importance they noted was pooled expertise and resources to add a component to the economic development continuum (SEED co-working space) that was perceived to be missing in the area. The traditional sector and entity thought process provided a limited perspective on fit, related to strategic planning and allocation of resources, for one entity to pursue the SEED concept on its own. However, the collaborative approach allowed SEED to leverage the traditional sector and entity strengths while also allowing and encouraging innovation through partnerships.

Findings from the research revealed that the organizations involved with the cross-sector collaboration, in the form of pooled resources and expertise, to implement SEED@University had a similar macro vision of making the community and region a "better place" for business and entrepreneurs. More specifically, a "better place" was defined as a community where organizations collaborate to invest, whether through in-kind or financial resources, in initiatives designed to create opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Ashley Williams noted, "More jobs are created in small business than any other business sector, and when we are creating more jobs we can see investment and growth throughout the entire community." The "investment" and "growth" were noted as having a positive trickle-down effect on growing and supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs. The subthemes that were illuminated from the research were 1) building an entrepreneurial ecosystem for community members with business ideas who need support, and 2) the SEED collaboration was perceived to round out, or complete, the community's economic development strategy.

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Due to the community's higher-education student population and large industrial manufacturing workforce population, the partner organizations had a vision to create a program to attract like-minded entrepreneurs and offer them business support. The research conveyed that there was an "unmet need" in terms of a community-wide initiative that supported early-stage entrepreneurs. The participants generally noted that some of the partner organizations provided small business support, but the support was not for early-stage entrepreneurs, and it did not foster an environment of collaboration, as the support was provided individually upon request. The partner organizations viewed the co-working space concept as a solution to an "unmet need." It provided a great opportunity for the respective organizations to take a leadership role in developing a program that encouraged deeper collaboration and contributed to a broader overall economic development effort. Until SEED's creation, the community economic development effort often focused on business and industry recruitment and expansion. Moreover, the respective partner organizations had their specific resources, direction, and initiatives related to business and industry recruitment and expansion. Although there was some coordination, the economic development efforts operated mainly in silos.

What became apparent in the research was the partners' desire to start a program on the "other end of the economic development spectrum," in other words, fostering the organic creation and growth of small businesses through the support of the entrepreneurial community. The partner organizations thought there was a lack of programming available in the community related to supporting entrepreneurs. This set the table for a collaboration that pooled knowledge and resources together, which Leo Ashford noted was important because SEED served as the community "programming" needed for entrepreneurship. Additionally, Ashley Williams noted,

> "I feel like this entrepreneur space is important for all cities, but particularly for this area. I think because of our proximity to The University, some students and faculty have business concepts in their heads, and they just need support to help them get started."

SEED@University was seen as an initiative that provided the opportunity to boost the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the area. Before SEED@University, the economic development efforts of the partner organizations focused on established small business support, retail business recruitment, and large industry recruitment and expansion. There was some programming, such as free consultation, business plan reviews, and networking events for early-stage small businesses and entrepreneurs, but they were not the core focus of each partner organization's economic development efforts.

The partners noted a paradigm shift in economic development efforts through their national associations that emphasized the importance of focusing on entrepreneurship and small business growth in the same way communities would organize resources for large industry recruitment and retention. Some participants took note of what was going on in Raleigh (the North Carolina State University Entrepreneurship Garage) and Durham (American Underground and Bull City Startup Stampede), North Carolina, as examples of communities with similar types of partners who added to their support of the entrepreneurial community. This led to a consensus that supporting entrepreneurship could benefit the people with a business or concept and could lead to future benefits (i.e., job creation) within the community.

Leo Ashford mentioned the need for partner organizations to share their resources (knowledge, financial, and professional) to assist in creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Moreover, K. T. Inkwell indicated "that creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem not only helps entrepreneurs, but it helps sell the community to entrepreneurs and small business owners. Therefore, growing a program like SEED was very important for the community." Inkwell went on to discusses that without a SEED-like program, there was a fear that the entrepreneurs would move to other communities with established entrepreneurial support.

Leo Ashford added similar thoughts from a recruitment and retention standpoint. Ashford stated, "We have a responsibility to recruit, whether that is entrepreneurs already in the community or entrepreneurs seeking a community for relocation and help them be successful here." Taylor McBride (a college student during the time referenced below) provided perspective on how important SEED was to the expansion of her business in the community. McBride noted,

> We had five full-time employees by the time I graduated, and we were in a leased office space in the community. So, I would definitely say that the SEED@University was part of the reason we had grown to five employees and could lease office space in the area. It helped us experience community support for small businesses because we felt if we had moved to other major markets in North Carolina, we probably would not have had the same type of support.

When drilling down to what makes SEED@University an attractive initiative for building an entrepreneurial ecosystem, the interviews highlighted networking, mentoring, and risk mitigation. The partner organizations alluded to the need for a formal platform to allow entrepreneurs to showcase their respective efforts and connect with influential business community leaders, partner organization representatives, and other like-minded entrepreneurs. There was a thought process among the partner organizations that networking and connecting were happening informally, making it hard for them to understand the entrepreneurial community's needs. Subsequently, if the needs of the entrepreneurial community are unknown, the risk of organizing and executing irrelevant programming increases. To that extent, SEED@University held monthly networking events for entrepreneurs that were free, open to the business community, and provided the entrepreneurs with a unique platform to share concepts and learn from each other. J. C. Mannington described the events:

> We tried to do monthly coffee meetings for entrepreneurs to speak about their business. People from the community were invited, and the events were free to attend. The idea was to learn about a business and provide an opportunity to network with people from the community and university. Once a month, we tried to do a seminar-type meeting where we would either have a small panel to speak about a business topic or a business. This format was also open to the community and provided an opportunity to network with the university, small businesses, and people from the community.

The need for mentoring for small businesses and entrepreneurs was another pattern that was apparent through the research. Mentoring, in this context, could take place from a peer-to-peer standpoint. In other words, there was a belief that if entrepreneurs were sharing space at SEED@University, each entrepreneur had the potential to be a mentor to each other.

Leo Ashford expanded on the concept of peer-to-peer mentoring: "What I have learned with the entrepreneurial ecosystem is how important it is to talk to somebody else who might be a little bit further along in building a start-up business. The importance of finding out where the roadblocks are or thinking of things differently. Additionally, providing information about who can assist with accounting, branding, or distribution, for example."

The partner organizations alluded to the satisfaction they gained when they provided support and guidance to the SEED participants. J. C. Mannington, the SEED coordinator, offered this perspective on the mentorship aspect of SEED:

> So, in addition to having access to me, as the SEED coordinator, to mentor them, there were other people available from time to time. So, it was meant to be a place where you could work, build your business, and get advice or mentoring as needed.

Providing entrepreneurs with a strong network of individualized support – whether peer support from other entrepreneurs, technical support (e.g., legal or accounting), or guidance from a partner organization – seemed to create momentum for SEED@University and for the overall collaboration. Momentum, in this case, referred to the positive reputation SEED developed as being a resource and mentor to entrepreneurs.

The advice and mentoring topics depended on each entrepreneur's type of business and the stage of their respective business cycle. In cases where specific or specialized expertise was needed, the partner organizations were willing to offer subject-matter experts (i.e., legal, finance, human resources, etc.) to SEED participants. Additionally, SEED had partnerships with local firms that were available to assist SEED participants when needed. J. C. Mannington noted the agreements in place with local firms to provide some legal or accounting advice as needed. He added, "That is a big deal, because SEED became a place where entrepreneurs could get technical support to get a business off the ground."

Another pattern was the benefit of mitigating risk for entrepreneurs. The partner organizations noted how influential their respective resources were to the success of the SEED participants in developing a case for or against the business concept. The "no wrong door concept," as Leo Ashford stated, is very important. Entrepreneurs could walk into

SEED@University with an idea and encounter a support group to push them in the right direction and maybe get to a point where they could "graduate" with a concept or idea they could pursue. One example of this is illustrated by a private company that joined SEED@University in early 2018. The owners of Private Company started a business that specialized in personalized gifts. The owners started Private Company from a dorm room at The University during their freshman year. As the company began to grow, space became limited and the turnaround time for orders was two weeks because they could not fulfill orders fast enough. Taylor McBride, owner of Private Company, elaborated:

> "Anticipating that I would need more space, I connected with the entrepreneurship school at The University to seek guidance. I felt uncomfortable hiring an employee to work at my apartment. So, The University knew about my issues, and they knew about SEED, so they suggested I get a little office space at SEED so I could hire an employee."

During its tenure in SEED, Private Company had office space and could hire an employee. "I had a 10-foot by 10-foot room, and we were also using the common space because it was not like I needed a space with a desk in it to go and sit and work on the computer," said McBride. "I need a physical space to make gift boxes and things like that, so it ended up allowing me to hire my first part-time employee, which was really helpful."

The support group for Private Company included the director of SEED@University and the small business resource center at The University. McBride elaborated about the support her company received:

> "I have always been really good at gifts, so when it came to the actual product, I was really good at that. However, I did not grow up in a household with business owners, nor did I know anything about business. The small business resource center was located in

the same building at SEED@University, so I was talking to them probably every day. We developed good relationships with them, and they offered some help with business strategy."

In addition to the outcome of an entrepreneur advancing a business concept, there was a possible outcome that the entrepreneur would realize that the idea or concept would not work. In the example of a failed concept, limited resources were expended, and the entrepreneur could pivot without the material financial burden or a significant waste of time. The partners considered helping an entrepreneur realize a flawed concept to be just as crucial as helping them advance a new concept. The partners noted that SEED needed to be a place where people with ideas could get support and determine whether their ideas were commercially viable.

SEED served as a launching point for entrepreneurs with ideas and concepts. The intent was not for someone to be in the SEED for an extended period of time. Although there were no strict rules about the length of time, if demand for the SEED space increased, then participants within SEED@University would have been asked to prove their concept within a 12-month to 18-month window. Generally, "proof of their concept" meant they developed a viable business that had potential and could generate enough revenue to operate on their own outside of SEED's office.

In sum, the partners felt that SEED@University pulled together components of what could be considered an entrepreneurial ecosystem. From their perspective, the ecosystem was an internally coordinated network of systems and resources to help entrepreneurs advance their businesses. Additionally, the partners realized that in cases where a business or concept failed within SEED, the ecosystem served its purpose by illuminating the flaws in a business concept, which allowed the entrepreneur to fail without wasting significant time and money. Although “internally” focused, external resources were leveraged to help build the ecosystem described above.

Well-Rounded Economic Development Strategy

Another subtheme is the partner organizations’ desire to ensure that the community has a well-rounded (i.e., more than just recruitment and expansion of business and industry) approach to economic development. The partner organizations noted that being proactive through collaborations with entrepreneurial-focused programs such as SEED@University helps fill a perceived gap in the area’s economic development efforts. “Entrepreneurship is vital to economic development. It is the third leg (recruitment and retention being the other two legs) of the stool,” stated Maxwell Rivers. Ashley Williams added, “If we can do economic development on the big scale, but we can also support economic development on this smaller sort of micro-scale and through business formulations, we will see job creation and investment throughout the community.”

Said another way, it ensures there is more to economic development than waiting for a large industry to move to the area and create jobs. By supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem, the partner organizations are helping create a more diversified approach to economic development that benefits the community. Dana Harris added, “I think the number one thing that folks always think about is bringing in the big businesses or industries that create jobs. However, we (The City) know and understand that small businesses are the greatest generator of jobs. Therefore, if you build your small business community, you improve your local economy through job creation. So, it (SEED) was definitely an economic development strategy.”

Another motivational factor for the partners was the explicit recognition of the value of growing businesses that eventually move into a local office space to continue growing. There are long-term community benefits to filling commercial building vacancies, growing jobs, and adding to the tax base. Dana Harris said, "SEED is a good concept to help grow our small business community."

Leo Ashford noted that a lot of industry in the community could be traced back to entrepreneurship, and he elaborated with the following examples:

> "If you look at our major industries, the big names, many of them started as entrepreneurs. Pharma Company, Sporting Goods Store, Hammock Store, and Gaming Company are examples of our area's major employers now, with major facilities paying taxes and providing jobs to people in our community. They all started here, which I think makes them more loyal to the area. And if SEED can launch a company like that and support them, I think they'll be more loyal (i.e., committed to keep their business located in the area) to the community."

These examples served as the inspiration for the SEED collaboration. The consensus among the participants was that by supporting the entrepreneurial and small business community, jobs can be created, and a positive impact is made on the economy. So, the SEED@University was definitely viewed as a community-wide economic development strategy.

In sum, the partner organizations felt their respective roles within the SEED@University collaboration helped fill a void within the community's collaborative economic development efforts. The components of the aforementioned entrepreneurial ecosystem added to the economic development strategies already taking place, and from the partner organizations' perspectives, this created more of a well-rounded community approach to economic development. In doing so, the partner organizations felt confident about their economic development efforts' ability to support the community through job growth.

Confusion

The big-picture perspective of the partnership was apparent in the view that "organizations created SEED together" for entrepreneurial and economic development to support the community. However, as discussions went deeper into the mechanics of operating SEED, confusion among the partners was another central theme illuminated by the research. More specifically, there was confusion about 1) undefined resource needs and resource allocation and 2) the lack of a governance structure.

Undefined Needs

The research uncovered confusion about how each partner organization saw its respective role and how they viewed what resources were needed to operate SEED@University. The SEED needed a combination of funding and personnel dedicated to the program. There were differing perspectives from the partner organizations regarding who was contributing resources, how much, and how often resources were needed.

The SEED needed personnel to carry out the day-to-day operations. The representatives of the partner organizations were providing strategy, but there was a need for daily, tactical execution. The operations included back-end office operations (i.e., accounting and record keeping, for example) and front-end office operations (programming for SEED and front-line interactions with SEED participants, for example).

The University funded a part-time staff position – occupied by J.C. Mannington – dedicated to SEED. Mannington oversaw the start of the SEED program and its day-to-day operations. He was responsible for recruiting participants to SEED, providing programming and events for SEED participants and prospective participants, helping meet the varying specific needs of the SEED participants, and providing updates to partner organizations. Mannington worked 24 to 30 hours per week during SEED@University's peak activity level. He elaborated on the responsibilities of his part-time position:

"I was part-time, and during the whole two years, and I think at the peak, I might have been 30 hours a week. I did have other responsibilities, but my office was right across from SEED, so if entrepreneurs came by, I was there to help. It was an open-door policy, so I would spend as much time with them as needed, and I even helped certain entrepreneurs after hours."

In addition to Mannington's role, the Chamber had a role in some back-end office operations for SEED. The Chamber noted that their staff dedicated time to keeping the financial books for SEED@University and providing partner organizations with financial information routinely. Also, the Chamber staff dedicated time to complete administrative priorities, such as paperwork for new SEED participants (see Appendix G for example). The staff at the Chamber who helped with SEED were current Chamber employees and not hired solely for SEED.

J. C. Mannington went on to explain that access to other resources The University offered was in the plans for SEED participants, but details were not worked out before Mannington's position was eliminated. According to Mannington, "Some of the amenities we discussed were access to The University's library, discounted tickets for athletic events, access to the gym facilities, access to the cafeteria, and discounted tickets for performing arts productions."

In addition to personnel costs, The SEED needed programmatic funding to continue to carry out the SEED's programs and services and also to potentially expand them. However, the amount of funding needed and who was responsible for the funding was confusing to the participants.

Leo Ashford noted being surprised by the amount of money his organization was asked to contribute to SEED because his organization did not have an active role in the day-to-day decision making. Ashford elaborated by saying:

> We have been proposed as a funding partner ($30,000). The funding amount that was presented was larger than anticipated. Plus, we see SEED as a tangential economic development effort. We do not have a budget for supporting tangential economic development efforts. Our organization's first priority is recruiting industry and funding small business stuff, like entrepreneurship, and the level requested is not what we raised money for from our investors.

K. T. Inkwell noted that the funding proposed to The Chamber was $20,000. Inkwell went on to say, "I shared with them (SEED) that there is a lot of uncertainty with SEED, and that type of financial commitments is not the best use of our budget dollars."

Another partner organization mentioned vaguely understanding that funding could be needed but mentioned not ever receiving more detail about funding. Ashley Williams said, "Early on, we agreed to participate in SEED with the idea that we could provide some funding and somebody else would operate it. And we did not really have, as far as I knew, direct knowledge about how much funding was needed or what the funding would be used for."

The Chamber's staff felt they were providing enough support in terms of the personnel time mentioned earlier in this chapter. Thomas Warner expanded by saying, "We still do the accounting services for SEED, so I do not know if we can be a financial partner because we already have material resources, from our perspective, dedicated to SEED."

In sum, there were times when The University and The Chamber provided resources (personnel, budget dollars, in-kind resources) to SEED@University. The resources they provided seemed to be coordinated enough to meet the needs. However, other partner organizations contributed sporadically (when asked, for example) or nothing at all because they were not aware of what was needed or the status of the SEED program.

Lack of Governance Structure

One of the biggest concerns of the current state of SEED@University was the lack of a governance structure. As it relates to this study, governance structure broadly means distributing the rights and responsibilities of the partner organizations involved with SEED@University. Early in the SEED collaboration, the partner organizations agreed that a governance model that would include a board or a group of stakeholders who would routinely convene to talk about SEED@University's progress and areas for improvement would be necessary for the sustainability of SEED@University.

From a governance perspective, the interaction level among the partner organizations, whether in terms of everyday communications or in-person meetings, is sporadic. The research highlighted inconsistencies related to what type of information was shared, how it was shared, and which partner organizations shared it. More specifically, J.C. Mannington elaborated, "When SEED first launched, there were monthly meetings between partners. After the first six months, there were no meetings, and it went into maintenance mode." In this case, "maintenance mode" referred to a shift from routine meetings with partner organizations to just the University executing the day-to-day operations independently and only providing updates and scheduling meetings when partner organizations requested them. Over time, the requests from partnership organizations to meet or obtain information became nonexistent.

The research suggests that the partner organizations were aware of the undefined governance structure and wished to define it for to benefit the SEED collaboration. As K. T.

Inkwell noted, “There is lots of gray (uncertainty) around the board or committee.” The research also revealed that partner organizations of SEED@University acknowledged no goal setting or vision-creating process due to the lack of a governance structure.

Without a governance structure, the research revealed a perceived shift in ownership of the SEED partnership. The genesis of SEED was in 2014 when discussions between the Chamber and the City began about complimenting current economic development strategies by adding an entrepreneurial component or program called The CitySEED. At that time, the location of The CitySEED was an office space in the downtown area of the City. The University was involved by sharing the initiative with students, providing participants with resources available through its small business counseling program, providing office furniture, and occasionally sending guest speakers to SEED. However, at that time, it was more apparent, according to the research, that the Chamber and the City were the primary partners.

The research highlighted that the University got more involved, from a primary partner perspective, around 2016 or 2017 because SEED needed space to operate. It had moved locations a few times since its inception, and since the partner organizations’ budgets (as they related to SEED) were tight, the University offered to have SEED operate out of one of its buildings. According to Maxwell Rivers, around 2016 or 2017, the SEED needed a new space because the partner organizations were required to cut costs, as SEED was operating on a “shoe-string budget.”

Rivers went on to say, “I, along with some colleagues from the City, met with representatives from the University and said ‘we have got this program that we have been partnering with the Chamber on, and we need some space, and we need someone to help manage it.’ And that is how the University got involved, and that is when The CitySEED turned into

SEED@University.” J. C. Mannington said, as it relates to the SEED needing space, “The University supported SEED by providing the space for $1 per year to the Chamber for the program.”

The following examples suggest that the switch in office space and name was a leading factor in the perceived “shift” in ownership of the SEED initiative:

- Leo Ashford noted, “I think SEED@University is with the University. Honestly, I think it has evolved into a University-focused effort.”
- K. T. Inkwell further elaborated, “After 2017, when the University took over (the day-to-day operations by moving SEED to one of its buildings and hiring a staff person to run it), it seemed like it became more of a University initiative.”
- Thomas Warner mentioned, “I think it is more of a University initiative, but I'm not sure.”
- Ashley Williams explained, “The move to ECU made sense in a lot of ways because of closer resources, more access to buildings not paying rent. One negative was it became sort of just an ECU thing. I think it kind of got lost and became a student only thing.”
- Maxwell Rivers noted, “Since the move to the University, there has been a shift of the program to more of a University-constituent model, meaning it only markets the SEED to its constituents. The original model was designed to be open to the entire community as an entrepreneurial resource. From 2016 to 2019, it was more of a University-constituent entrepreneurial resource.”

Ashley Williams mentioned that SEED@University became too focused on the University over time, losing the community-wide focus. The research revealed that when the

University allowed SEED to operate out of its space and hired a staff person to run it, SEED seemed like it was a program meant exclusively for the University's constituents. Therefore, the "community-wide" focus that helped create the SEED@University was diminishing.

The research also revealed that the partners, including the University, recognized that the program unintentionally transitioned to a model utilized more by university constituents and less by community small businesses. As a result, one approach mentioned in the reboot steps was to evenly select community and student entrepreneurs as participants during each selection and participation period.

Maxwell Rivers noted, "We (the University) want to give it more accountability by having a community-wide advisory board of partner organizations that would help us with policies, procedures, and goal setting. However, we would use the University's entrepreneurial and small business resources to help advise entrepreneurs and small businesses in the SEED program. Therefore, we must be more accountable to the community as opposed to it being an ancillary University function."

In sum, the research highlighted that the absence of a governance structure that created clear partner roles and authority led to the perceived "shift" in ownership. Moreover, the confusion related to the collaboration's undefined resource needs and the lack of a governance framework led to uncertainty and an unclear path for the future of the SEED@University.

Unclear Path Forward

Another central theme that was uncovered during the research was the lack of clarity for the next steps or a future path forward for the SEED collaboration. SEED is currently paused and has been paused since the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020. Additionally, as talks about reinvigorating SEED continue, the partner organizations are concerned about their respective organizations' return on investment.

SEED Paused

The partner organizations talk about SEED before COVID-19, which refers to 2014 through 2020; from 2020 until the present, there is what the partner organizations refer to as the "reboot phase." The peak of activity for SEED@University, according to J. C. Mannington, was before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. It was then that the partner organizations mentioned being the most active in the SEED collaboration. For example, the Chamber staff mentioned spending a few hours a month processing the necessary paperwork and payments for new SEED@University participants. Additionally, Mannington was the University staff person who led SEED and assisted with planning and executing the activities (i.e., events, programming, mentorship, etc.).

During COVID-19, the Chamber and the University did not spend time on SEED@University financial or administrative work because the SEED space was closed due to community-mandated social distancing requirements. Due to the closure of the SEED space and the budget issues at the University caused by COVID-19, the part-time position J. C. Mannington occupied was eliminated. K. T. Inkwell provided more insight:

> "J. C. Mannington was the staff person who led SEED and was on a contract with The University when COVID-19 hit, and when expenses were cut, they eliminated J. C. Mannington's contract. Since then, no staff person at The University has overseen the SEED program."

As a result, no one was dedicated to running the day-to-day operations of SEED@University. Therefore, entrepreneurs' participation dwindled, information and communication from the partner organizations slowed, and SEED was paused. Sharon Hammond elaborated, “As COVID-19 took effect and lots of things happened, we had some funding reductions, and so SEED has been paused.”

Sharon Hammond also elaborated on SEED’s future: “Since COVID-19, we've had some conversations with The City, The Alliance, The County, and The Chamber to think about what the partnership looks like moving forward through sustainability models that would allow the SEED to exist.” K. T. Inkwell noted,

> “Sharon Hammond really kind of pulled the group of partner organizations back together to figure out where we went from here. Sharon Hammond made it very clear that The University did not have the finances to do what they once did with the SEED Program.”

More specifically, this meant that The University could not afford to pay for the part-time position that J. C. Mannington occupied before COVID-19. As discussions reemerged after COVID-19, a reboot phase was discussed with the partner organizations. In the early stages of the “reboot phase,” The University created a business plan that identified reboot steps and the operational needs to run SEED. Below are the highlights of the reboot phase steps:

- Establish a 12-to-18-month business incubation period for program participants with its continued location in the current University building. When space is available at the University Research and Innovation Campus, the program should migrate to the campus after funding can be obtained to support the leasing and related costs (approximate time frame over the next five years).
- A new governance committee should be established and consist of representatives from the University, the Chamber, the Alliance, and the County. The committee will also develop governance and curriculum standards for the SEED program.

- The program should establish a goal to attract 8-10 start-up businesses that the new governance committee selects.
- Selected SEED program entrepreneurs will participate in a Small Business curriculum developed for the customary educational needs of small businesses. The curriculum might include the following components: business plan development/refinement, growth and sustainability planning, product/service market discovery, prototyping, licensing, business tax and fee education, maintenance of finances, and resource identification, among other topics. Participation in the curriculum will also continue to link businesses to current or retired executives who will serve as business mentors.
- Program participants will be expected to pay a monthly lease at a reduced incubation rate to support the business over the 12-to-18-month incubation period. Following the incubation period, the business will be expected to migrate fully out of SEED into the private business space market.
- One important modification will be to ensure that SEED reaches and attracts entrepreneurs outside of ECU.
- The University is positioned and committed to lead and administer the program. This endeavor will involve additional costs that are not currently available. As a community need, this presents an opportunity to invest in the future of small businesses. From Maxwell Rivers's perspective, the vision is that funding will come from the partner organizations to help fund an executive director to oversee the day-to-day operations of SEED. The executive director will serve in a similar capacity as J.C. Mannington did before his position was eliminated due to budget cuts.

According to the business plan, the reboot phase focuses on the University using 2020 as a period to study the future of SEED with area partners. According to the plan, the evaluation was supposed to be completed by mid-May of 2020. The research revealed that the evaluation was not completed within the proposed timeline, and the other partners did not know the status of the evaluation. Some of the partners reviewed the reboot steps. However, other partners mentioned not seeing the reboot steps.

Partner ROI Concerns

As the discussions resurfaced about rebooting SEED, and the need for funding from community partners showed up in the business plan, the research revealed that the partner organizations wanted to better understand return on investment (ROI). Additionally, the research highlighted that the partner organizations were starting to perceive a limit on goodwill. Goodwill, in this case, refers to the partner organizations dedicating the aforementioned resources to SEED@University in support of entrepreneurs and small businesses for the greater good of the community. Beyond the greater good, the partner organizations wanted to know if their investment was working. For example, the partner organizations wanted to know how many participants were involved and how many businesses and jobs were created. In other words, the partners needed more quantifiable outcomes (i.e., ROI) for the partnership beyond the initial result of the benevolence of the partnership.

Without an ROI formula or metrics, it became challenging for the partner organizations to measure success from a community-benefit perspective. Ashley Williams further explained the need for ROI data for the community: “And so, we have to continue to make sure the community knows why SEED exists and the value the community gets from SEED. We are trying to create jobs and to promote investment in our community.”

The research also revealed that ROI will differ slightly from an organizational perspective based on each organization's mission statement. Earlier, "greater good" was mentioned, and the partners rallied around the concept of SEED improving the community. However, the partner organizations also have an organizational-level expectation of how SEED will advance their missions.

The University, for example, intends for SEED to advance its mission statement's "regional transformation" component mentioned in Table 7. Regional, to the University, generally refers to the 29 eastern counties within the state. SEED, from the University perspective, needs to transform (regionally) the entrepreneurial landscape. Furthermore, if job and business creation for the "community" was a measurement of success, the University expected the same type of data from a regional perspective as well. Sharron Hammond noted that from a regional transformation perspective, the University is looking at the possibilities SEED creates for job creation and maybe retention.

The City, on the other hand, will focus on what SEED can do to advance the municipality. In other words, The City's interests lie in how SEED could benefit the citizens and businesses within the City's geographic footprint. This perspective is slightly different than the regional perspective of the University. Ashely Williams elaborated on the City's interest: "From a city perspective, supporting entrepreneurship is really important because that's economic development for the City. We want to see job creation and investment all throughout the City."

The Chamber's interests are focused on the City’s and County's geographical footprint. As the City and County Chamber, SEED needs to advance business success (giving entrepreneurs a chance to create successful businesses) and strategic economic growth (job creation for the City and County). Thomas Warner said, “SEED fits our purpose and program of work with what we are trying to do regarding business success and strategic economic growth by helping new businesses in the county get up and running."

The research showed that the partner organizations were not threatening to pull out of the partnership if the organizational-level ROI was not addressed immediately. It seemed clear that the primary ROI concern was related to the community-level benefit of SEED, and the organizational-level ROI was something that needed to be on the SEED's radar. What became evident was the difference in the intentions of some of the partner organizations beyond the greater good and the need for the SEED collaboration to articulate value from a community perspective and eventually from a partner organization perspective.

Summary

This research explored how to sustain cross-sector collaboration to help with some of our society's most challenging issues. This chapter presented three themes and six subthemes from the research conducted. The three major themes were (1) Community support - partners are motivated by a desire to advance their respective missions by allocating resources to support and be involved with community economic development and entrepreneurship initiatives, (2) Confusion - partner organizations and partner representatives need clarification about their respective involvement and what type of governance structure, if any, guides the SEED initiative, and (3) Unclear path forward – partners desire to stay involved but are still determining how to move forward and the ROI on their respective investments.

The study findings demonstrate that the partners of SEED@University agree on the vision of supporting the community's economic development strategy through the SEED entrepreneurial initiative. The analysis also revealed that logistical details regarding resources, governance structure, and COVID-19 caused the collaboration to stall.

The next chapter will discuss the research findings and their relationship to the current collaboration literature. In addition, I will provide practical implications and recommendations for future research about how to sustain cross-sector collaborations for the betterment of society. Also, I will present a practical application for SEED@University to consider as it continues to navigate the "reboot phase" of the collaboration.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This research study explored the phenomenon of cross-sector collaboration through the SEED@University collaboration and the people experiencing it. Through the qualitative, single-case study analysis method, the outcomes, consequences, and effects of the collaboration added to the growing literature on the sustainability of cross-sector collaborations.

Using the central research question – How do organizations sustain cross-sector collaboration for the benefit of economic development? – the study revealed three major themes:

(1) Partners are motivated by a desire to advance their respective missions by allocating resources to support and be involved with community economic development and entrepreneurship initiatives.

(2) Partner organizations and partner representatives need clarification about their respective involvement and what type of governance structure, if any, guides the SEED initiative.

(3) Partners have a desire to stay involved but are still determining how to move forward.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the unifying factor bringing together the partner organizations from different sectors was the desire to make a positive difference in the community and, more specifically, to improve economic development for the local community through a specific initiative to advance entrepreneurship. The community support aspect of the partnership was enough to advance the collaboration during its infancy. As time passed, the study also revealed insights into the uncertainty of partner relationships, roles, and resources, leading to significant confusion. As the partnership evolved, confusion and ambiguity hindered the partnership's ability to maintain momentum. They ultimately led to shifts in "ownership," ROI concerns, resource allocation inconsistencies, and decreased scope of activities.

Last, the partnership's future is uncertain because the partner organizations are unclear on how to advance the partnership. The collaboration has stalled and is in a "reboot" planning phase.

Overall, the purpose of the study, which was to contribute to the literature of cross-sector collaboration, was achieved. With more information on sustaining cross-sector collaboration, society could benefit from the refined power of organizations and sectors working together for the greater good.

Discussion

As discussed earlier, collaborations, particularly cross-sector collaborations, have become increasingly important to society due to various major social, economic, and political factors (Blockson & Van Buren III, 1999; Gray, 1996). Subsequently, single-sector solutions are becoming increasingly rare because they cannot adequately deal with the growing complexities of societal issues (Kraatz, 1998; Park, 2008). This trend emphasizes research on sustainable cross-sector collaborations in which companies and organizations expand beyond traditional boundaries to work together (Cricelli & Grimaldi, 2010). Society's increasing need for expertise in cross-sector collaboration continues to pressure the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. Those pressures are being passed to businesses, nonprofit organizations, and governmental agencies as they seek solutions to deal with political, economic, and social issues (Austin, 2000; Blockson & Van Buren III, 1999; Edmond, 2007; Gray, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2000).

The SEED is an example of local organizations developing a cross-sector collaboration to solve a complex, multi-faceted issue – improving the area's economic development efforts. The literature notes that economic development is a typical "societal issue" that requires cross-sector collaboration (Crosby et al., 2006). Additionally, the study was consistent with the literature related to the SEED partners' desire to collaborate to improve coordination and resource execution and combine competencies related to advancing economic development in the community (Phillips et al., 2000; Waddell & Brown, 1997). Austin (2000) refers to this as value creation, which happens when parties are continually scrutinizing each other's resources and capabilities to see how they can develop new ideas and discover creative solutions to problems.

The SEED study revealed similarities to the literature referencing collaboration enablers and inertia. For example, Bryson and Crosby (2005) discuss shared leadership as an enabler for the collaboration partners to produce the expected benefits. Early in the SEED partnership, the study revealed that the committee of representatives from partner organizations was put in place to govern the SEED initiative without formal authority by any one entity and to foster an environment of creativity and accountability. Over time, the study revealed that the committee had difficulty with accountability due to what the literature references as inertia caused by differences in respective interests and perceptions (Crosby et al., 2006). Those differences became hard to communicate, which supported the research of Huxham and Vangen (2000), who found that inertia can come from frustration due to the difficulty of communicating the perceived differences between partners.

In another example, the study showed that the relationship among the organizational partners was critical to the SEED collaboration. The interorganizational relationship developed over many years from being vital organizations within the same community. According to the SEED study, there was a familiarity with each partner. The study revealed that at the entity level, there is a built-in trust factor based on a history of collaboration. Within the partner organizations are the people and their trust, helping to create and sustain the collaboration (Austin, 2000;

Burke, 1999). Early in the study, the people of the partner organizations started with high trust because of past relationships and organizational credibility. However, as accountability and communication became difficult and the perception of an "ownership" shift came into question, the study revealed the possible perception of an imbalance of value exchange. Austin (2000) explains how interpersonal relationships and an imbalance of value exchange can destroy a collaboration. While the SEED collaboration was not destroyed, it was stalled, which jeopardized its sustainability.

To increase the likelihood of the sustainability of the collaboration, the partner organizations will have to engage differently. One way in which the organizations can figure out how to engage differently is to identify where the SEED collaboration falls within Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum. The following section provides specific insight into why Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum is a useful model for gauging the sustainability of the cross-sector collaboration studied in this research project.

Interpretation of Findings Using Austin's Model

This section includes an exploration of findings from the research sub-questions proposed in Chapter 1 that intended to determine the current state of the SEED collaboration and whether there has been any movement along the continuum. These sub-questions were:

- *What is the current state of the cross-sector collaboration?*
- *What is the direction in which the cross-sector collaboration is moving, if at all?*

At the time of the study, the current stage of the SEED collaboration, according to the findings in Chapter 4, was Stage 1 (Philanthropic). Stage 1 is the base level and, according to Austin (2000), the most common stage of collaborations. The literature notes that Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum is not a normative model – one stage is not necessarily better than the others. For example, in other collaborations researched, the partners might decide that a collaboration is better suited to be categorized in the earlier stages of the Collaboration Continuum (2000), meaning there is no desire to "advance" it. In this case study, however, progress along the continuum can indicate its likelihood to be sustainable.

Assumptions about the SEED collaboration's original stage on Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum could be made using the data from the study, which uncovered references to timelines. This would help provide some information on any potential movement along the continuum. One important factor to consider is where the SEED collaboration would have been on the continuum if the study had been conducted closer to the creation of the collaboration. A case could be made that the SEED collaboration started between Stage 2 (Transactional) and Stage 3 (Integrative) and, over time, shifted toward the Philanthropic stage. This shift could imply that the collaboration's progress is regressing. This can be concluded from further exploring Austin's (2000) Continuum's Nature of Relationship aspects that are reviewed throughout the rest of this chapter.

The study revealed that the "Level of Engagement" and "Importance to Mission" for the initial phase of the SEED Collaboration could have been identified as Stage 2 (Transactional). Overall, the partner organizations that were involved had good intentions, and it seemed as if there was a vision to advance and support economic development through the SEED entrepreneurial initiative. Early in the partnership, the SEED initiative was more central to each organization's mission through the lens of supporting economic development in the area. Although the SEED initiative was not the only thing either partner was working on to support economic development, it did address, at the time, a perceived gap in the entrepreneurial component of an overall economic development strategy for the community. In other words, the

SEED concept was more community-oriented and addressed the perceived community support aspect of each partner organization's mission and values.

Additionally, it was mutually beneficial and was perceived as a win-win because, in addition to the partners benefiting by fulfilling their respective missions to advance the area's economic development effort, the SEED was benefiting, in the form of creation and successful execution, from the engagement provided by the partners. The study revealed that community support is enough to get the organizations to collaborate, even if the initial collaboration is loose and undefined at the start. As Austin (2000) notes, the cornerstone of successful collaboration is the overlap of desired outcomes and missions. As the initial phase of SEED progressed, the engagement level and mission overlap created momentum that led to other enablers that benefited the collaboration.

One of those enablers was resources. The study revealed that the partnership started with a Stage 3 (Integrative) level, "Magnitude of resources." Early in the partnership, there was an initial and continual allocation of resources available to SEED from its partner organizations. As the resources (in the form of money, in-kind services and materials, and people) were allocated toward SEED, the momentum generated from the vision of the entrepreneurial initiative was at its peak. In other words, the partners were inspired by allocating resources to co-create an advancement in economic development for the area and region with the entrepreneurial initiative. It is important to note that this was more than a one-time annual commitment of resources that each partner made to the SEED collaboration. The commitment of resources could be defined as big (Austin, 2000) and therefore satisfies a Stage 3 (Integrative) characteristic, meaning the magnitude of resources flowing is significant. At that time in the evolution of SEED, the excitement and vision overshadowed the need for organizations to tie individual returns back to investments. It was more about the global impact of SEED. Additionally, partners were more proactive in offering and allocating resources to the partnership.

Similarly, there was a broader scope of activities, and the interaction level was demanding during the early stages of the collaboration, which could be considered Stage 2 (Transactional) on the Continuum. More specifically, the activities and interaction level included the partner organizations holding regularly scheduled meetings, providing services, raising funds, organizing the work, and generating ideas. The activities and interactions that took place seemed to be a byproduct of the initial momentum of the collaboration to start SEED. One assumption to explore would be how much the Stage 3 level of resource commitment positively affected the activities and interaction level. In other words, the more resources are available from the partner organizations, the more activities are needed to invest, allocate, and use the resources successfully. Subsequently, the more activities needed to carry out the SEED's objectives, the more interactions are needed to ensure the partner organizations understand how to execute the agreed-upon activities.

Early in the partnership, the managerial complexity did not hinder momentum and progress. There was a desire to take an active learning approach to help manage the complexity of the partnership. Initially, goal setting was articulated broadly through terms like "job creation," "business growth," and "support of entrepreneurship." Over time, there was confusion about how to measure the success or progress of the goals. As the confusion manifested, the lack of a governance structure of the collaboration was further illuminated. The collaboration was leaderless, and questions about the specific metrics of the joint value creation of improving economic development for the community began to surface. Subsequently, resource allocation became sporadic, and minimal collaboration occurred when defining activities that needed to happen to maintain or advance the collaboration.

Ambiguity around the overall strategic value of the collaboration at the partner level did not slow it in its early stages. The value-added discussions remained at the community level, creating and sustaining early momentum to launch the initiative. There was logic that executing the program would improve the community and surrounding area by adding businesses and jobs. In other words, there was public value to the collaboration. As the collaboration continued, the value-added discussions began to narrow, and each partner organization began to seek value-added variables for their respective organization. As the literature notes, these types of discussions can be challenging and can prohibit progress because, in a cross-sector partnership, concerns about the organizational-specific mission and values can make a partnership stall or falter (Austin, 2000).

Organizational Boundaries

This section provides further examination of the study relative to the research sub-question discussed in Chapter 1 having to do with the effect of perceptual and actual organizational boundaries:

- *What are the boundaries of the individual partner roles and the organizational roles within the cross-sector collaboration?*

As discussed in Chapter 2, each organization in the collaboration inherently has different organizational boundaries (Siegel, 2010). The boundaries, which are organizational and sector-specific, were familiar to the partners before the SEED collaboration because the partners have a long history of working together. What became an issue related to the boundaries was boundary expansion or the blurring of boundary lines. More specifically, the partner organizations were at a point where bureaucratic norms were prohibiting risk taking, creativity, and progress. This "point" or "step" in the process is normal during collaborations, and it is consistent with what collaboration literature attributes to intensifying the need for cross-sector collaboration (Austin, 2000; Das & Teng, 2002).

If the organizations in the SEED collaboration wanted to push their respective boundary limits to advance SEED, they could not because of the lack of structure. In this case, the lack of structure was illuminated by the partner organizations' inconsistency with SEED's priority status, varying levels of leadership involved (or not involved), and the lack of a shared plan for oversight regarding the management and execution of SEED. Subsequently, there was substantial confusion around roles, resources, and activities. With confusion comes invented roles and expectations by each partner organization relative to their fit, such as which organization should lead the collaboration or fund certain aspects of the collaboration. When assumptions about partner organizations are made to fulfill the collaboration's perceived needs or gaps, there are growing levels of inconsistency. This type of inconsistency does not suppress bureaucratic norms to allow partner organizations the opportunity to be creative or take risks to advance a cross-sector collaboration such as SEED.

Another factor to consider when the partners' organizational boundaries were too confusing was the confidence level among the partners in the purpose of the SEED collaboration. As the confidence in the SEED concept, which started high, began to decline, more questions led to complex issues that the partner organizations could not answer. However, the confidence concerns never bled into the partner's trust in each other. This goes back to the long-standing history mentioned earlier in this section of the partners working together in the community to advance societal issues for the betterment of the community.

Recommendations For Future Research

Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that the overall collaboration remains in the Philanthropic Stage (Stage 1), with no evidence of advancing. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are several collaboration theories and models in the literature, which means there is no universal model for the SEED collaboration to follow to increase its chances of sustainability. This study's findings add to the theories in the literature and will have implications for future readers and researchers of cross-sector collaboration.

This study demonstrated that cross-sector collaborations could begin with partners more engaged (Stage 2 or 3) according to Austin's (2000) Collaboration Continuum. One explanation is that the power of the initial excitement of the collaboration's impact overshadows the need to identify and document logistical details on how to execute the collaboration. In other words, during the start of the collaboration, the vision positively influences the engagement levels within the Nature of Relationship aspects of the partner organizations, and the initial lack of detail does not stall the partnership. The details relative to complex issues are what stalled the SEED collaboration years after it began.

A future study could focus more on the correlation between Austin's (2000) Nature of Relationship aspects. For example, does one Nature of Relationship aspect have more influence on the entire collaboration's movement along the continuum, assuming the collaboration needs to progress or remain at a higher stage than philanthropic (Stage 1)? As noted in Chapter 4, the perception that SEED became tied to one specific partner is one of the factors that led to the SEED collaboration's regression. When the perception shifted that one partner took more control or ownership of SEED, and the overall mission of SEED was questioned by other partners, it naturally affected how SEED related to their respective organizational missions and the overall community. From there, the Level of Engagement regressed, and communication and scope of activities dwindled. The partners felt uninformed about what was happening with the SEED Collaboration, which limited relationship building and resource allocation.

Similarly, the managerial complexity escalated as the initiative's mission perceptually changed from a community-oriented initiative to an initiative that focused on the constituents of one of the partners. It escalated due to the individual partners' perceived differences in the rhetoric and the reality of the SEED partnership. As the complexity grew, the partner organizations discussed the need for a governance structure to guide the collaboration. Hence, each organization would know its roles and responsibilities to advance the SEED concept.

Earlier in this chapter, a possible correlation between the Nature of Relationship aspects in the Collaboration Continuum was mentioned. Furthermore, the exploration of using a weighted scale to determine the impact of the correlation on the collaboration was also mentioned. Using a weighted scale could identify predictive relationship aspects that are relatively important based on the individual partnership.

Additional research into when to discuss important logistical details in the collaboration process could be explored. Researching the point in the collaboration timeline where details are discussed would be interesting. For the SEED collaboration, an assumption could be made that if the details were discussed in the collaboration's infancy, then obtaining consensus has the chance to cast a shadow over the collaboration's vision and build silos where fear of losing control becomes too hard to overcome. Ultimately, limited progress is made, and the logistical details deter the collaboration. As it relates to future studies, finding the right time to work through details for the sustainability of the collaboration would be helpful.

As demonstrated in Table 8, looking at Austin's Collaboration Continuum from the perspective of grouping the Nature of Relationships could help sustain future collaborations. The Ideology section groups together the organizing principles of the collaboration. Absent both "Importance to Mission" or "Strategic Value" being at Transactional (Stage 2) or higher, the Structural relationships are simply empty shells. Therefore, categorizing the Nature of Relationship variables into Ideological and Structural components might be a more effective way to view them as a way to develop a phased approach to organizing the collaboration.

For example, in a collaboration with Philanthropic (Stage 1) Ideology, it might be a waste of resources to analyze the Nature of Relationships variables in the Structure category (assuming sustainability is important), because the tactics could be short-term and lack long-term (sustainable) potential. Additionally, when a partnership is not considered at the Transactional (Stage 2) or Integrational (Stage 3) levels from an Ideological perspective, there is the risk that the number of details, their relative complexity, and the level of resources needed will repel the partnership and ultimately cause it to stall or fail. In contrast, when a collaboration is aligned from an Ideological perspective, meaning the Nature of Relationship variables in that group are considered at Transactional (Stage 2) or Integrational (Stage 3), the details involved with Nature of Relationship variables in the Structural group, although still materially complex, command the commitment from the partners to find long-term solutions while preserving the partnership.

Table 8

Updated Collaboration Continuum

Nature of Relationship	Stage 1 (Philanthropic)		Stage 2 (Transactional)		Stage 3 (Integrative)
Ideology					
Importance to mission	Peripheral	→	→	→	Central
Strategic value	Minor	→	→	→	Major
Structure					
Magnitude of resources	Small	→	→	→	Big
Level of Engagement	Low	→	→	→	High
Scope of activities	Narrow	→	→	→	Broad
Interaction level	Infrequent	→	→	→	Intensive
Managerial complexity	Simple	→	→	→	Complex

Recommendations For Practice

The literature discusses the need to go beyond traditional sector boundaries, to challenge parochial organizational interests and restrictive institutional logic, and to begin to blur boundaries to expand cross-sector collaboration capabilities and remove blind spots that diminish the effectiveness of such collaborations (Park, 2008; Selsky & Parker, 2010; Siegel, 2010). The structure and defined roles within the collaboration become critical to its success and its broader impact on society.

The literature suggests that "shared leadership" leads to accountability and drives value creation (Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Austin, 2000). The SEED collaboration lacked the structure to create shared leadership. To increase the likelihood of the success and sustainability of the collaboration, the SEED's principal partners should sign an agreement. The agreement should be approved by the respective Boards and signed by the respective chief executives of the principal organizations. An example agreement is in Appendix H.

The agreement aims to create and define a mutual understanding of the cross-sector collaboration and how it will be governed. The agreement will articulate the vision for collaboration and provide a framework for execution. It is important to keep the framework general to allow for flexibility. Additionally, the partner organizations need to avoid the temptation of having to articulate or define all the assumed details of the collaboration. This level of detail will likely cause the organization to resort back to traditional boundaries and organizational limitations. One critical factor in expanding boundaries is sharing knowledge to create synergies to leverage organizational competencies, share resources, distribute risks, and deal with incremental challenges to create innovative change (Cricelli & Grimaldi, 2010). The literature also references that social issues disregard boundaries and push the boundaries of established organizations and sectors (Siegel, 2010). This agreement would allow the SEED to complement traditional plans and execution with the agility and flexibility to create and innovate as it develops. In other words, it could expand the established boundaries.

Conclusion

Cross-sector collaborations are critical for organizations to deal with complex societal issues. At some point soon, mention of cross-sector collaboration should shift from an emergent method to the preferred method to deal with complex social issues that span the big three sectors. The sustainability of cross-sector collaborations should continue to be researched to create greater awareness and knowledge of how to execute successful and sustainable collaborations. To date, most of the research on collaboration includes same-sector or two-sector collaborations. The single case study, SEED@University, offered insight into a collaboration that spanned the big three sectors. My research offers insight into how collaborations start with a shared vision with less focus on individual and organizational return. As the collaboration evolves, if the appropriate structure is not in place, tension grows as the specific questions about partner roles, accountability, and resource allocation are raised. A balance between planning and flexibility is essential to alleviate tensions that will ultimately stall the collaboration or cause it to fail. The goal is to create a collaboration that the partners want to sustain for the social or economic good that it sets out to do. Not all collaborations are made to sustain – some have a designed sunset period. However, society needs more successful and sustainable collaborations in situations where partner organizations set out to build something that lasts.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · **rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/**

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Scott Senatore
CC: David Siegel
Date: 3/10/2021
Re: UMCIRB 20-002985
THE IMPACT OF CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATION ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 3/10/2021. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category #2b.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
Interview Questions.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Phone Script(0.02)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Survey-Research-Consent-Letter- 3 9 21.doc(0.03)	Consent Forms
The Impact of Cross-Sector Collaboration on Economic Development(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

Study.PI Name:
Study.Co-Investigators:

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE 1

Start with a brief overview of the study.
Interview Questions (members of lead partner organizations)

1) **Level of engagement**
   - Tell me about your organization's involvement with SEED@ECU.
     - Why did your organization become a partner member?
   - How has the organization's involvement in SEED@ECU changed since the partnership started?
     - What might be an example of such a change? Why did the change occur?
   - Tell me about your organization's time commitment to SEED@ECU?

2) **Importance to mission**
   - How would you describe the purpose of SEED@ECU?
   - Who would you say benefits the most from SEED@ECU?
   - How does SEED@ECU fit with your organization's goals?

3) **Magnitude of resources**
   - What types of resources does your organization make available to SEED@ECU?
     - Can other partners readily access those resources mentioned above?
   - Can you easily access other partner's resources, if needed?

4) **Scope of activities**
   - What kinds of roles and responsibilities has your organization taken on as a partner?
     - How have those roles and responsibilities changed over time, if at all?
   - In thinking about the other partner organizations, how has their involvement changed over time?
   - If there were something you could change about the scope of activities for SEED@ECU, what would it be?

5) **Interaction level**
   - How often do the partner organizations interact relative to SEED@ECU?
     - How has the frequency changed, if at all, over time?
   - How often does leadership interact relative to SEED@ECU?
     - How has the frequency changed, if at all, over time?
   - If there is interaction, how does it take place (i.e., emails, face to face meetings, phone calls, etc.)?
     - How has that changed, if at all, over time?

6) Managerial complexity

- What is the process for goal setting and vision setting for SEED@ECU?
- How involved is your organization in that process?
- Describe the governance structure of SEED@ECU.
- How are daily decisions made?

7) Strategic value

- In what ways, if any, has being a part of SEED@ECU influenced your organization's view of economic development in the county/region?
- In what ways have being a part of SEED@ECU influenced the way your organization operates, both internally and externally?
    - Has the partnerships had anything to do with these operational changes?
- What are some of the things that have gone 'right' in the collaboration and why?
- What are some of the critical challenges the collaboration has faced?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE 2

Start with a brief overview of the study.
Interview Questions (modified for participants of businesses in SEED@ECU)

1) **Level of engagement**
   - Tell me about your organization's involvement with SEED@ECU.
     - Why did your organization become a partner member?
   - How has your organization's involvement in SEED@ECU changed since the partnership started?
     - What might be an example of such a change? Why did the change occur?

2) **Importance to mission**
   - How would you describe the purpose of SEED@ECU?
   - Who would you say benefits the most from SEED@ECU?
   - How does SEED@ECU fit with your organization's goals?

3) **Magnitude of resources**
   - Do you access the resources available to you through SEED@ECU?
   - What types of resources does your organization make available to SEED@ECU?
     - Can other partners readily access those resources mentioned above?
   - Can you easily access other organization's resources, if needed?

4) **Scope of activities**
   - What kinds of roles and responsibilities has your organization taken on as a participant of SEED@ECU?
     - How have those roles and responsibilities changed over time, if at all?
   - In thinking about the other partner organizations, how has their involvement changed over time?
   - If there were something you could change about the scope of activities, what would it be?

5) **Interaction level**
   - How often do the partner organizations interact relative to SEED@ECU?
     - How has the frequency changed, if at all, over time?
   - How often does your organization interact with SEED@ECU?
     - How has the frequency changed, if at all, over time?
   - If there is interaction, how does it take place (i.e., emails, face to face meetings, phone calls, etc.)?
     - How has that changed, if at all, over time?

6) **Managerial complexity**

- What is the process for goal setting and vision setting for SEED@UNIVERSITY?
    - How involved is your organization in that process?
- Describe the governance structure of SEED@UNIVERSITY.
- Is your organization involved with any decision making for SEED@UNIVERSITY?
- What influence, if any, does SEED@UNIVERSITY have on your organization's ability to make decisions?

7) **Strategic value**

- Do you feel SEED@UNIVERSITY will advance your business?
- Are you aware of the cross-sector collaboration taking place to run SEED@UNIVERSITY?
- In what ways, if any, has being a part of SEED@UNIVERSITY influenced your organization's view of economic development in the county/region?
- In what ways have being a part of SEED@UNIVERSITY influenced the way your organization operates, both internally and externally?
    - Has the partnerships had anything to do with these operational changes?
- What are some of the things that have gone 'right' in the collaboration, and why?
- What are some of the critical challenges the collaboration has faced?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE 3

Start with a brief overview of the study.
Interview Questions (modified for non-leadership partners of Greenville-SEED@UNIVERSITY, i.e., sponsors)

1) **Level of engagement**
    - Tell me about your organization's involvement with SEED@UNIVERSITY.
        - Why did your organization become involved?
    - How has your organization's involvement in SEED@UNIVERSITY changed since the partnership started?
        - What might be an example of such a change? Why did the change occur?

2) **Importance to mission**
    - How would you describe the purpose of SEED@UNIVERSITY?
    - Who would you say benefits the most from SEED@UNIVERSITY?
    - How does SEED@UNIVERSITY fit with your organization's goals?

3) **Magnitude of resources**
    - Do you access the resources available through SEED@UNIVERSITY?
    - What types of resources does your organization make available to SEED@UNIVERSITY?
        - Can other partners readily access the resources mentioned above?
    - Can you easily access other organization's resources, if needed?

4) **Scope of activities**
    - What kinds of roles and responsibilities has your organization taken on as a partner?
        - How have those roles and responsibilities changed over time, if at all?
    - In thinking about the other partner organizations, how has their involvement changed over time?
    - If there were something you could change about the scope of activities, what would it be?

5) **Interaction level**

- How often do the partner organizations interact relative to SEED@UNIVERSITY?
    - o How has the frequency changed, if at all, over time?
- How often does your organization interact with SEED@UNIVERSITY?
    - o How has the frequency changed, if at all, over time?
    - o If there is interaction, how does it take place (i.e., emails, face to face meetings, phone calls, etc.)?How has that changed, if at all, over time?

6) **Managerial complexity**

- What is the process for goal setting and vision setting for SEED@UNIVERSITY?
    - o How involved is your organization in that process?
- Describe the governance structure of SEED@UNIVERSITY.
- Is your organization involved with any decision making for SEED@UNIVERSITY?
- What influence, if any, does SEED@UNIVERSITY have on your organization's ability to make decisions?

7) **Strategic value**

- Do you feel SEED@UNIVERSITY will advance your business?
- Are you aware of the cross-sector collaboration taking place to run SEED@UNIVERSITY?
- In what ways, if any, has being a part of SEED@UNIVERSITY influenced your organization's view of economic development in the county/region?
- In what ways have being a part of SEED@UNIVERSITY influenced the way your organization operates, both internally and externally?
    - o Has the partnerships had anything to do with these operational changes?
- What are some of the things that have gone 'right' in the collaboration, and why?
- What are some of the critical challenges the collaboration has faced?

APPENDIX E: FIELD OBSERVATION GUIDE

Location:
Day/Time:
Event: Y/N. If Yes, what event:

Physical setting

Participants

Activities and interactions

Content of conversations

Researcher’s experiences, comments

APPENDIX F: COLLABORATION CONTINUUM DRIVERS AND ENABLERS

Table 2. Collaboration Continuum: Drivers and Enablers

	Philanthropic	*Transactional*	*Integrative*
Alignment of strategy, mission, values	Minimal fit required, beyond a shared interest in a particular issue area Gratefulness and charity orientation	Overlap in mission and values Partnering mindset Relationship as tactical tool	High mission mesh Shared values Relationship as strategic tool
Personal connection and relationships	Minimal personal connection to cause or people	Strong personal connection at leadership level Expanded personal relationships throughout the organization Increased understanding and trust	Expanded opportunities for direct employee involvement in relationship Deep personal relationships and trust across organization *We* mentality replaces *us versus them*
Value generation and shared visioning	Generic resource transfer Typically unequal exchange of resources Minimal collaboration in defining activities Corporations respond to specific requests from nonprofits	Core competency transfer More equal exchange of resources Shared visioning at top of organization Projects of limited scope and risk	Joint value creation Value renewal Culture of each organization influenced by the other Projects identified and developed at all levels within the organization, with leadership support Broader scope of activities of strategic significance
Continual learning	Minimal or informal learning	More active learning about process and substance	Systematic learning and innovation Discovery ethic
Focused attention	Little top leadership attention	Top management engaged at start-up and periodically	Significant and ongoing attention from top management
Communication	Generally annually around grant process	More frequent communication between partners and externally	Explicit internal and external communication strategies and processes
Organizational systems	Corporate contact usually in community affairs or foundation; nonprofit contact usually in development	More people involved with responsibilities for specific collaboration activities	Partner relationship managers Organizational integration in execution, including shared resources
Mutual expectations and accountability	Use for stated purpose but minimal other performance expectations	Explicit performance expectations for targeted collaboration activities	High performance expectations and accountability for results Incentives for collaboration

APPENDIX G: SEED MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT

This Membership Agreement (the "Agreement") is entered into as of ___________ by and between SEED, Inc., ("SEED") and, _________, a Private Corporation, having its principal place of business at ______________________________________ ("MEMBER").

WHEREAS, SEED offers memberships to entrepreneurs and small business, and the membership allows the user to participate in programs and offerings of SEED;

WHEREAS, membership to SEED provides flexibility to members to use SEED's space and resources during normal operating hours and subject to availability;

WHEREAS, the Member desires SEED membership and intends to make use of the SEED resources;

NOW THEREFORE, In consideration of the mutual covenants contained herein as good and valuable consideration, the parties hereby mutually agree as follows:

Member Information

Name: ____

Company Name: ____

Address: ____

Telephone: ____

Email: ____

Type of Membership: ____

Monthly Membership Fee: ____

Membership Term: start: ______________ end: _________________

Cancellation: No Cancellation fees apply. MEMBER understands that if Member decides to cancel within a monthly membership term, MEMBER will not receive a refund of dues for the current month. To cancel the membership, MEMBER must submit written notice to SEED thirty (30) days in advance. MEMBER's resignation will become effective on the last day of the month and dues will be charged for the full month.

Indemnification: MEMBER hereby agrees to indemnify and hold harmless SEED from any and all liability and responsibility for any claim, expenses, costs, damages (including reasonable attorney fees), attributable to the negligence or willful acts of MEMBER.

SEED hereby agrees to indemnify and hold harmless MEMBER from any and all liability and responsibility for any claim, expenses, costs, damages (including reasonable attorney fees), attributable to the negligence or willful acts of SEED.

Non-transferable: Membership is specific to MEMBER and is non-assignable, non-transferable and nonrefundable except as specified by this Agreement. A member may not loan their membership identification or entry card or permit it to be used by anyone.

SEED access: All memberships permit the holders the right to use the facilities of SEED subject to these terms and conditions and the SEED policies in place from time to time. Amendments and/or changes in policies and rules shall apply to all members notwithstanding the date of membership. It is expressly agreed and understood that the members shall neither individually nor collectively have any voting rights or other proprietary rights or interest in the properties, assets, premises or its facilities of operation of the SEED.

Check-in with the SEED manager is required for SEED access. MEMBER may not proceed into the facility until a SEED associate verifies their account status.

Cubicles access: Membership includes use of the cubicles up to the weekly hours limit for the membership level. Use of the business cubicle space is based upon availability. Times may be reserved by contacting the SEED manager.

Conference room, auditorium, copier, scanner and fax: Use of the conference room, auditorium, copier, scanner and fax are subject to availability and the policies in effect from time to time. Check with SEED manager regarding availability of the conference room and auditorium.

Parking access: Parking is subject to the city or university rules applicable to the spaces controlled by these organizations.

Termination: SEED reserves the right to terminate membership in the event of a non-compliance with the policies and rules of SEED, including failure to pay fees and charges.

A holder of a membership who has fulfilled the contract and is in good standing and current in all obligations to SEED may resign by submitting a written notice to an SEED manager.

Additional Terms:

Governing law: These terms and conditions shall be governed in all respects by the substantive laws of the State of North Carolina.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Agreement has been executed by duly authorized representatives of the parties on the dates below.

Sign on behalf of:	Sign on behalf of:
SEED, Inc.	**Small Business/Startup**
By:	By:
Printed Name:	Printed Name:
Title:	Title:
Date:	Date:

APPENDIX H: EXAMPLE AGREEMENT

AGREEMENT BETWEEN
UNIVERSITY, CITY, AND CHAMBER

TO
ADVANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA
THROUGH A JOINT VENTURE WITH THE ASSUMED BUSINESS NAME OF

SEED

THIS Agreement is entered into (the Effective Date), between University, Chamber, City

WHEREAS, The University, Chamber, and City have mission-driven interest to improve economic development in eastern North Carolina.

WHEREAS, The Agreement requires coordination and cooperation to improve economic development efforts in eastern North Carolina.

WHEREAS, Three organizations, University, City, and Chamber, are the principal entities in support of SEED;

NOW, THEREFORE, for and in consideration of the mutual covenants contained herein, the parties agree to the following understanding:

1. ***Purpose.*** The SEED will advance economic development in eastern North Carolina by:
    a. The principal entities coordinating and aligning resources to provide a business coworking space ("SEED") for current and aspiring entrepreneurs in the area.
    b. Creating new strategies to sustain the operations of SEED.
    c. Creating jobs in eastern North Carolina.

2. ***Structure***. The structure of SEED operations is illustrated in Exhibit A.

3. ***Coordinated Operations.*** The purpose of this Agreement is to align and coordinate the operational resources from the University, Chamber, and City to operate SEED. The three principal entities have determined that this combination and its goals can best be accomplished through the mutual binding commitments described herein and through shared executive leadership through an Executive Director of SEED, which will be

4. funded by the principal entities. Specifications of the consolidated operations are described in Exhibit B.

5. ***Term and Termination.*** The term of this Agreement shall commence as of the Effective Date and shall continue in full force and effect for a period of three (3) years. Sixty (60) days' prior to the conclusion of the initial three (3) year period, the principal entities will initiate a formal review to assess opportunities for continuation.

UNIVERSITY

By:

Print Name:

Title: Chancellor

Chamber

By:

Print Name:

Title: President & CEO

CITY

By:

Print Name:

Title: City Manager

Exhibit A. Structure

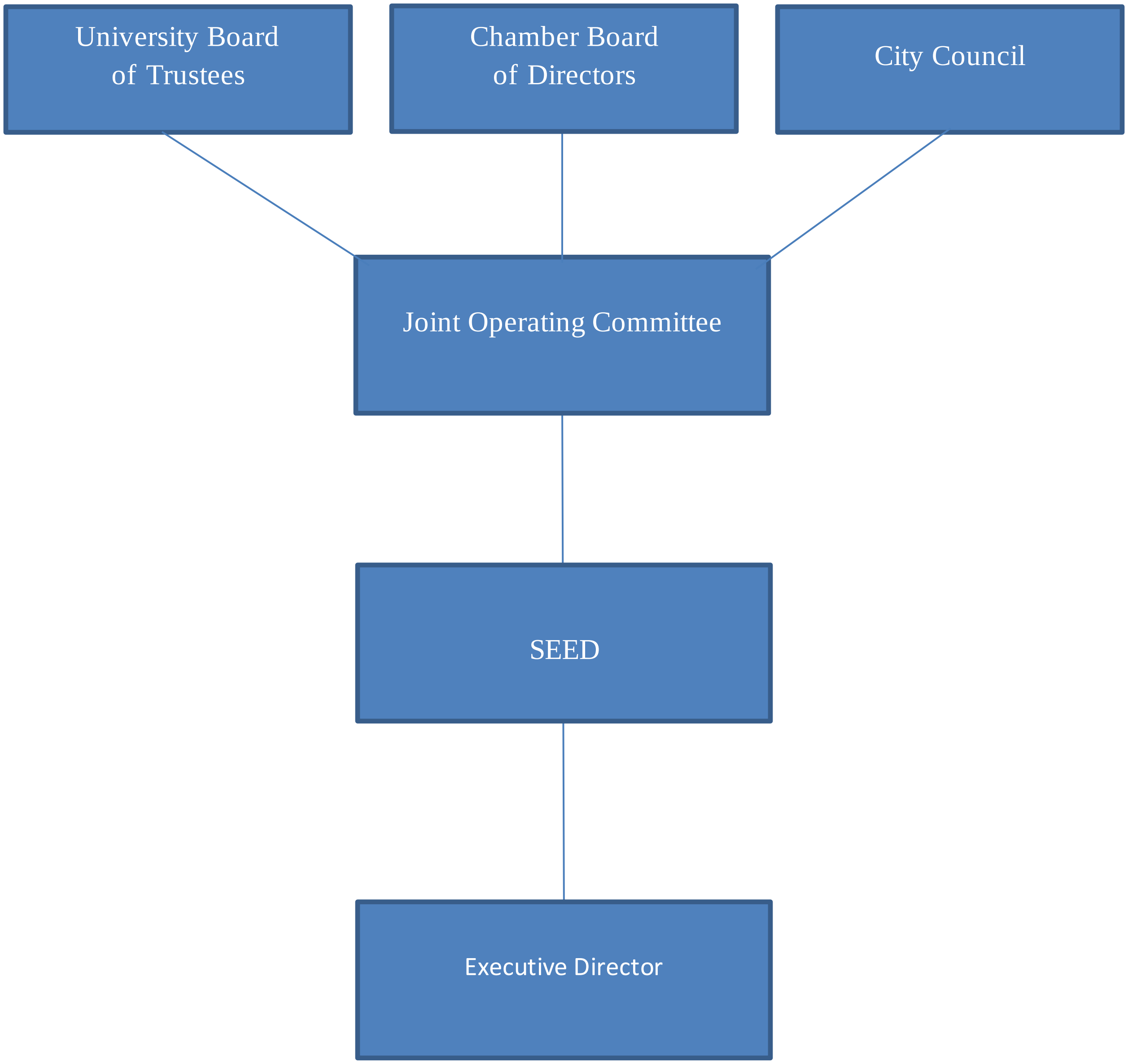

Exhibit A. Structure

ELEMENT	**SPECIFICATION**
Structure	SEED A joint operation between the Officers, Staff, and Resources of the University, the Chamber, and the City
Joint Operating Committee	Joint Operating Committee (JOC) - composed of equal number of appointees from the principal entities respective Boards. The JOC will have the responsibility of exploring and proposing to the respective Boards options for limiting the liability of the Joint Venture. The JOC shall provide routine oversight to the SEED.
Leadership	Executive Director - reporting to the Joint Operating Committee. Selection and/or removal of the Executive Director is approved by the principal parties respective Boards.
Affiliation Agreements	The SEED will be affiliated to the University, Chamber, and City.

Exhibit B. Operations

ELEMENT	SPECIFICATION
Location	SEED will operate out of an agreed upon office space location that can accommodate varying level of entrepreneurs and the SEED's operational needs.
Shared Services	Maintained and Coordinated - Shared services currently provided to SEED by the principal entities will be continued. The Executive Director and JOC will determine how shared services are best utilized in a coordinated fashion.
Budgets	Maintained – operational budget processes will remain in place. Separate budgets for SEED support from each principal entity will be approved annually per the usual method used currently by the respective Boards. Rollup budgets and reports will be created for SEED. Adjustments to approved budgets must also be approved by the principal entities respective Boards.
Performance Goals	To evaluate the performance, within of six months of establishment/re-launch of SEED, the Executive Director in concert with the Joint Operating Committee will propose performance goals and objectives that are approved by the principal entities respective Boards.
Reporting	The Executive Director will have scheduled time to report the progress of SEED at the principal entities respective Board meetings.