



# Governance and implementation structures

## What will you learn?

The purpose of governance and steering structures in multi-stakeholder collaborations

How a stewarding council should be composed

## What will it help you with?

Consolidate your collaboration initiative with adequate structures

Build up a stewarding council for your stakeholder collaboration

## When is this factsheet particularly relevant?

At the end of Phase 2 of the **Dialogic Change Model**



For an in-depth understanding of making collaboration work, please view our open access publication

Kuenkel, P., Kuehn, E., Stucker, D., Williamson, D.F. (2020)

**Leading Transformative  
Change Collectively**  
A Practitioner Guide to  
Realizing the SDGs

# The purpose of governance and implementation structures

Collaborative change requires sufficient governance and implementation structures that hold the *collaboration ecosystem* together and help people to work together towards concrete results. High-quality process architectures (see **factsheet 1**: “High Quality Process Architectures”) build diverse actors’ capacity to constructively work together for a shared vision. This increasing capability to collaborate across institutional boundaries and societal sectors needs to be contained and sustained by appropriate collaboration structures.

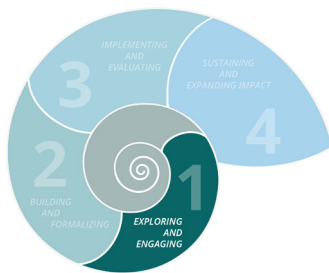


Figure 1: Typical Structures in Multi-Stakeholder Collaborations

## Governance or stewarding structures

**Governance or stewarding structures** create trust, if set-up in the right way with representation from all key stakeholders. The purpose of stewarding structures is to

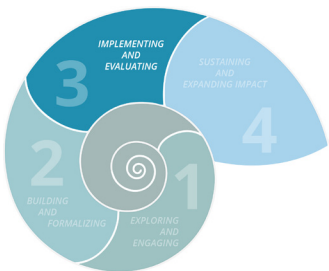
ensure high-quality collaboration patterns, to co-design and oversee process architectures, as well as guide and review implementation.



■ **Phase 1:** In the phase of **Exploring and Engaging**, stewarding structures remain loose and rather informal. They mainly refer to the initial Container that develops into the core group as a driver of process and engagement.



■ **Phase 2:** In the phase of **Building and Formalizing**, multi-stakeholder collaborations create stewarding bodies that can take the form of a steering committee, a stakeholder council, or more general a **stewarding council** with the representation of all key stakeholder groups.



■ **Phase 3:** In the phase of **Implementing and Evaluating** multi-stakeholder collaborations, the chosen form of a **stewarding structure** is responsible for all major strategic decisions and review of progress. It guides implementation.



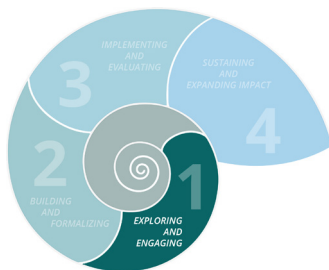
■ **Phase 4:** In the phase of **Sustaining and Expanding Impact**, the **stewarding structures** develop into fully representative governance and steering structures for long-lasting transformative change.

## Implementation structures

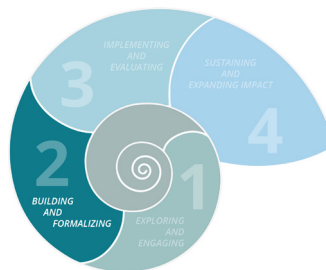


**Implementation (management) structures** ensure delivery, if they enable coordinated and collective action.

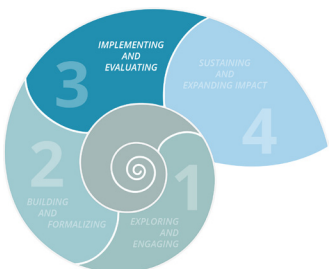
The purpose of implementation structures is to facilitate the relationship and collaboration between stakeholders, make sure process architectures are appropriately designed, and ensure that the actual work is done.



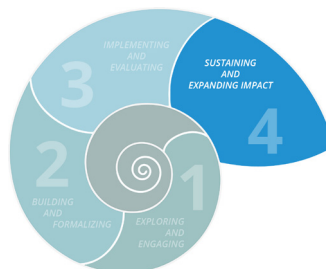
■ **Phase 1:** In the phase of **Exploring and Engaging**, implementation structures hardly exist and the task of facilitating stakeholder relationships and driving the process lies with the initiators or the core group. In well-funded complex multi-stakeholder collaborations, the initiators form a project secretariat or can even bring in a backbone organization (see **factsheet 4**: “Understanding the Role of Backbone Support”) as a dialogic facilitator of the collaboration process.



■ **Phase 2:** In the phase of **Building and Formalizing**, implementing structures become more important: roles and responsibilities for implementation will be allocated and a core group, a project secretariat or backbone support) needs to be tasked to coordinate implementation. Content work can be supported by technical working groups focuses on specific topics and composed of experts in the field.



■ **Phase 3:** In the phase of **Implementing and Evaluating** multi-stakeholder collaborations, the project secretariat or backbone organization is the organizer behind collaborative events, coordinator of thematic technical working groups, or reviewer of roadmaps. It looks at what takes place and how results are achieved and can be reviewed by stewarding structures.



■ **Phase 4:** During this phase of **Sustaining and Expanding Impact** implementation structures become consolidated into professional management structures that sustain outcomes.

## Special focus: Building a stewarding council

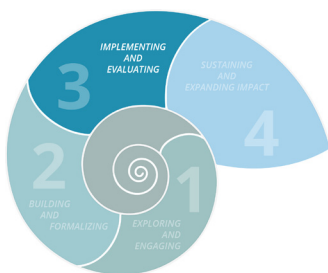
More complex multi-stakeholder collaborations do well with establishing strategic steering and decision-making structures in the form of a **stewarding council**. This is usually established at the end of Phase 2 with representation from all key stakeholder groups, and should be in full operation in Phase 3. As much as stewarding structures' purpose is strategic guidance, there is no fixed hierarchy or line of reporting between stakeholders.

A **stewarding council** reflects the system of stakeholders; it becomes a microcosm of the stakeholder system that needs to operate differently together. In more complex multi-stakeholder collaborations, it is important

to ensure the credibility of a council by empowering stakeholder groups to nominate members for the stewarding structure from their constituencies according to agreed-upon criteria.

### How should a stewardship council look like?

- Involve the initial core group to design the composition of a stewarding council in Phase 2.
- Depending on the complexity of the multi-stakeholder collaboration, establish a stewarding council ranging from 3 to 12 persons – making it too big will complicate decision-making and create inefficiencies.
- Ensure that all key stakeholder (groups) are represented
- Assign a proxy for absent members
- Consider to rotate chairpersonship among represented sectors
  - Rotations can help share responsibilities while maintaining credibility of the collaboration vis-à-vis the wider stakeholder system.
  - Rotating on an annual basis
- Ensure regular and well-prepared meetings of the stewarding council: depending on the need for strategic guidance and budgetary cycles, stewarding councils can meet offline or online from bi-annually to monthly.



■ **Phase 3:** In the phase of **Implementing and Evaluating** the key responsibilities of a stewarding council is

- to focus on outlining the collaboration's core strategy
- making decisions related to policy
- approving budgets

**Stewarding councils work closely** with the **backbone support** (see **factsheet 4**) and with one or more **technical working groups**. The backbone support prepares regular meetings, offers updates on the overall process, and makes recommendations for capacity building and next process steps.

The capacity of the **stewarding council** to lead transformative change collectively is crucially important, because it has a decisive influence on the quality of collaboration. This is the body that needs to model the new way of interacting constructively among stakeholders. The more members of this body can move towards generative dialogue, deal with conflicts constructively, and understand the delicate needs of functional collaboration ecosystems, the more likely will they be able to steward the multi-stakeholder collaboration towards success.



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