Collaboration for Civic Change:
Connecting High-Tech Growth and Community Well-Being
Teaching Case in Cross-Sector Collaboration Teaching Note

The teaching case describes a collaborative process that is a response by actors across sectors to new economic conditions within a geographical region. This teaching note provides the case summary, suggested questions for class discussion, supplementary readings, interactive options within or outside class, and possible writing assignments. Students are assigned to read Part 1 of the case before the first class. The case itself can be covered over one or two class sessions. It is intended to foster thinking about how collaboration is initiated and sustained, who are the players, and what are the interorganizational relationships involved in these processes.

Case Summary
This case describes an ongoing collaborative process—the Tech Valley Civic Forum in New York State's Capital Region—that was mobilized in the civic space of collective activity among the state, the market, and individuals. The Forum involves nonprofit, business, government, and education leaders in efforts to link social and economic development. Its tag line captures the central purpose of Forum deliberation and action—connecting high-tech growth and community well-being.

Additional Case Information for the Instructor
The Tech Valley Civic Forum is a cross-sector collaboration initiated and rooted in the civic sector. Government is a player, along with business, nonprofits, and education, but government is not the lead organization. In fact, there might not be a lead organization in the usual sense. Will this prove to be a significant detriment to meaningful collaboration outcomes? Perhaps the

fundamental civic character of this cross-sector collaboration, in which all participants contribute precious and scarce resources of time and expertise voluntarily, may insulate it from the potentially negative consequences sometimes associated with the absence of a lead organization. Or the fact that government is not the initiative's primary mover may remove the barrier to sustainability that looms large when the attention of policy makers shifts, as it inevitably does, to another priority on the governmental agenda. This is at the heart of what students should and can debate within this case study.

The case study of the Tech Valley Civic Forum demonstrates the feedback loops often present in a complex and dynamic social phenomenon like cross-sector collaboration. A case study of Austin, Texas and its experience during the boom and post-boom years of the 1990s and beyond was itself a product of the Nonprofit Executive Roundtable, an intra-sector collaboration among nonprofit leaders that preceded and subsequently hosted the Forum. The Austin case study included a Call to Action of which the Forum was a response, thereby setting the stage for joint activity to catalyze a broader collaborative effort. The iterative, expanding, and reinforcing character of the civic change process in Tech Valley provides additional evidence of the wisdom of Bryson, Crosby, and Stone's conclusion: ―To say that cross-sector collaborations are complex entities that defy easy generalization is an understatement‖ (2006, p. 52).

The case study includes several components in cross-sector collaboration for students to consider:
- the initial conditions present that foster cross-sector collaboration
- a collaborative process that spans over 18 months with several key community players
- the entity or entities in a community that are best positioned to be the 'lead organization'

The case uses class discussion, supplementary readings, and group activities to address these dimensions of cross-sector collaboration. In addition, writing activities can be integrated into the class session(s) dedicated to this case.

How to Use the Case

Students should be given Part 1 with the questions to read in preparation for class discussion. With Part 1, students will have background information about the Tech Valley Civic Forum process. They should come prepared to class having thought about how the collaborative process started and what direction the process is going. They will consider the following questions that can be discussed first among pairs or smaller groups and then by the entire class.

    Discussion Questions for Part 1:

1. In your opinion, why is cross-sector collaboration happening?

2. Where did the impetus for the collaborative initiative originate?

3. How might this influence subsequent developments?

4. Who are the players involved?

5. What players in a community may be left out of the process?

6. What challenges do you foresee? For example, are they related to process? What about leadership?

7. How might this process be sustainable? Should the conversations among Task Forces continue?

8. What possible outcomes can you see?

9. What are some possible next steps?

Discussion Questions for Part 2

Part 2 of the case can be read and done within the class session or students can be assigned to read Part 2 for a second class session. Part 2 allows students to think about the initial outcomes of the Tech Valley Civic Forum process in comparison with the possible outcomes that they had predicted from Part 1. Part 2 asks students to think again about the players involved, their roles, and how the process should proceed. Discussion questions include:

1. How is the outcome different from your hypothesized outcome?

2. Should there be a "lead organization"?

3. If yes, what organization should lead?

4. If no, how can the process proceed without a lead organization?

5. Based on some of the outcomes, can you think of next steps?

Further Class and Out-of-Class Activities: Activity 1 and Activity 2

Both Part 1 and Part 2 offer opportunities for writing assignments and in-class activities beyond the discussion questions above. For example, **Activity 1** suggests that the case be read in conjunction with:
Bryson, J. M., Crosby, B. C., & Stone, M. M. (2006). The Design and Implementation of Cross Sector Collaborations: Propositions from the Literature. *Public Administration Review* 66:6 (Supplement), 44-55.

Students can examine the case to find evidence of any of the 22 propositions suggested in the article. They can debate whether the propositions are confirmed and/or challenged by the case. Other relevant articles are:

Gray, B. (1996). Cross-Sectoral Partners: Collaborative Alliances among Business, Government and Communities. In *Creating Collaborative Advantage*, edited by Chris Huxham. London: Sage Publications, 57-79.

Simo, G. & Bies, A. L. (2007). The Role of Nonprofits in Disaster Response: An Expanded Model of Cross-Sector Collaboration. *Public Administration Review,* December Special Issue, 125-142.

McGuire, M. (2006). Collaborative Public Management: Assessing What We Know and How We Know It. *Public Administration Review* 66:6 (Supplement), 33-43.

Provan, K & Milward, H. B. (2001). Do Networks Really Work? A Framework for Evaluating Public Sector Organizational Networks. *Public Administration Review* 61:4, 414-423.

In addition, the instructor might want to provide students the opportunity to work in groups. In the suggested **Activity 2,** the class is divided into eight groups and assigned one of the ‖players‖ listed below. Groups should discuss why or why not their entity would be a good lead organization. Students can ask themselves if they see any potential challenges to their entity being the lead organization. They can consider some of the characteristics of an organization that might enable it to be a good lead organization. This can be an assignment to be completed outside of the class session as well. Students can take the time to research more about the entities (for example, all entities' websites are provided) and in a paper present reasons why or why not the entity makes a good lead organization.

NOTE: Paper assignments can be structured by assigning students specific entities or the instructor can allow the students to choose an entity they feel should take the lead. The student would then lay out the argument defending his or her decision in a paper.

Organizations include:
1. Nonprofit Executive Roundtable
2. Center for Economic Growth (CEG)
3. The Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce
4. Nonprofit Business Council
5. The Capital District Regional Planning Commission
6. Center for Women in Government & Civil Society
7. University at Albany
8. Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy

NOTE: Students or the instructor might find that the University at Albany and Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy can be grouped as one entity or that they should be differentiated. This could be addressed during class session.

Below are brief descriptions of each of the players involved. Students can be given these with the assignment.

The **Nonprofit Executive Roundtable's** planning group consists of twelve executives of nonprofit organizations in the Capital Region that represent different fields within the sector. Its purpose is to facilitate ongoing analysis and sharing of best practices related to changing economic conditions among nonprofit executives, conduct relevant research, and strengthen partnerships between the University and the nonprofit sector.

Since 1987, the **Center for Economic Growth (CEG)** has been committed to fostering visionary economic growth throughout the 11-county Capital Region, as well as a significant portion of the Tech Valley corridor. As a private, not-for-profit organization we work with a diverse group of members and partners to advance the ability of the region and it's assets to succeed in the global marketplace. With a focused and strategic approach we work to: GROW local companies by offering tactical business development strategies and services; ATTRACT opportunities for technology investment and expansion throughout Tech Valley and PREPARE communities to achieve their desired economic growth while enhancing the region's excellent quality of life. In addition to support from its dedicated members, CEG receives funding and resources from the NYS Foundation for Science, Technology and Innovation (NYSTAR), New York's high-technology economic development agency, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) / Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and National Grid.

For more information:
http://www.ceg.org/

The **Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce** has the vision for business. We are an organization that works to improve business – by providing networking opportunities, health insurance programs, cost-saving benefits and many other services and programs – for our membership. The Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber is made up of 2,500 businesses that employ more than 110,000 workers. These are companies of all types and sizes and from throughout the region that know they will prosper and grow in a healthy business environment.

For more information:
http://acchamber.org/home.aspx

The Tech Valley Nonprofit Business Council – a joint initiative of the Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber and the Chamber of Schenectady County – collaborates with the business community to enrich quality of life, create a healthy and robust economy, engage the public in advancing nonprofit missions and increase public appreciation for the role nonprofits have in the development of Tech Valley. The Tech Valley Nonprofit Business Council provides a forum for nonprofit, member businesses to learn from and support each other, to address common issues and opportunities, to develop a unified voice for public and political relations, to educate Chamber members and the public regarding nonprofits and to attract the support of Chamber members for nonprofit missions. The goal is for the Tech Valley Nonprofit Business Council to become "the voice of nonprofit business in Tech Valley," and to attract all current and future nonprofit Chamber members to participate.

For more information:
http://acchamber.org/Councils/TechValleyNonprofitBusinessCouncil.aspx

The **Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC)** is a regional planning and resource center serving Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. CDRPC provides objective analysis of data, trends, opportunities, and challenges relevant to the Region's economic development and planning communities. CDRPC serves the best interests of the public and private sectors by promoting intergovernmental cooperation; communicating, collaborating, and facilitating regional initiatives; and sharing information and fostering dialogues on solutions to regional problems.

For more information:
http://www.cdrpc.org/

The **Center for Women in Government & Civil Society (CWGCS)** is a university-based research center with a social change agenda. By conducting and applying first-rate research, CWGCS illuminates and works toward eliminating often hidden, structural inequities in society, and making public policy more responsive to the needs of women, children, and families without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability status, region or country of origin. Center programs cultivate and nurture values of democratic life, provide a training ground for future civic and political leaders, promote access to policy knowledge, strengthen civil society, and hold political leaders accountable for persistent gender and racial gaps in public policy leadership appointments.

For more information:
http://www.cwig.albany.edu/

The **University at Albany,** strategically located in the state capital of New York, is an internationally recognized public research institution that brings "The World Within Reach" to nearly 18,000 students at the graduate and undergraduate levels. The varied perspectives and life experiences of a student body and faculty which represent more than 100 nations provide a diversity that enriches learning at UAlbany.

For more information:
http://www.albany.edu/

The **Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy,** University at Albany, State University of New York. The College is top ranked in the nation in providing educational preparation for academic and public service careers, to undertake research on significant public problems and issues, and to assist in the continuing professional development of government executives. It offers appropriate assistance to the governments of New York State and the United States, and to foreign governments and international organizations in meeting the responsibilities of contemporary citizenship and governance through special courses and conferences; research and consultation; and publications for the dissemination of information.

For more information:
http://www.albany.edu/rockefeller/

Additional References

Academic Papers:

Bryson, J. M., Crosby, B. C., Stone, M. M. (2006). The Design and Implementation of Cross-Sector Collaborations: Propositions from the Literature. *Public Administration Review,* 66:6 (Supplement), 44-55.

Coghlan, D. & Brannick, T. (2001). *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. London: Sage Publications.

Gray, B. (1996). Cross-Sectoral Partners: Collaborative Alliances among Business, Government and Communities. In *Creating Collaborative Advantage*, edited by Chris Huxham. London: Sage Publications, 57-79.

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Research and Community Reports:

Fosler, R. S. (2002). *Working Better Together*, a report of The Three-Sector Initiative, a collaborative effort among: The Conference Board, Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, National Academy of Public Administration, National Alliance of Business, National Civic League, and National Governors Association. Available at: www.independentsector.org.

Koschinsky, J. (2003). A $4 Billion Growth Industry That Cares The Impact of the Nonprofit Sector on the Capital Region of New York State A Report of the Nonprofit Executive Roundtable. Center for Women in Government and Civil Society. Albany, N.Y. Available at: http://www.cwig.albany.edu/ under research.

Saidel, J. R. (2007). In Economic Development Nonprofits Should Not Get Stuck in the Bleachers.‖ *The Nonprofit Quarterly*, 30-34.

Saidel, J. & Bordenave, T. (2006). High-Tech Growth and Community Well-Being: Lessons Learned from Austin, Texas. A Report of the Nonprofit Executive Roundtable. Center for Women in Government and Civil Society. Albany, N.Y. http://www.cwig.albany.edu/ under research.

Metrics for Success Task Force (2009, May). *Tech Valley Trends – A Basis for Civic Change.*
The Capital District Regional Planning Commission, Albany, N.Y.
http://www.cdrpc.org/Tech_Valley_Trends.pdf

Media Articles:

Saidel, J. & Bulgaro, P. J. (2003, September 7). Nonprofits are the Core of the Capital Region.
Albany Times Union. Albany, NY**.**

Websites:

Tech Valley Futures, www.techvalleyfutures.org

The Center for Economic Growth (CEG),
http://www.ceg.org/

The Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce,
http://acchamber.org/home.aspx
The Tech Valley Nonprofit Business Council,
http://acchamber.org/Councils/TechValleyNonprofitBusinessCouncil.aspx

The Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC),
http://www.cdrpc.org/
The Center for Women in Government & Civil Society (CWGCS), http://www.cwig.albany.edu/

The University at Albany, http://www.albany.edu/

The Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy,
http://www.albany.edu/rockefeller/