Blueprints - Collaborative R&D&I projects

University – Industry Interaction Mechanisms 2.0

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Collaborative R&D&I projects between universities, industries, RTOs, SMEs and public sector entities

PROJECT TEAM – COLLABORATIVE R&D&I PROJECTS

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Collaborative R&D&I Projects (Definition)

*The term "collaboration" can be defined as **the process of shared creation**: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own."* [1]

Collaborative R&D or innovation projects, when performed effectively and efficiently, provide the benefits to **create highly innovative solutions** and **to capture the value of (public) money invested**.

The subsequent blueprint to support the implementation of this interaction mechanism "Collaborative R&D&I Projects" is based on an analysis of the process of initiating and executing H2020 EU projects.

[1] *Schrage, M. (1990). Shared Minds: The New Technologies of Collaboration. Random House*

Process overview
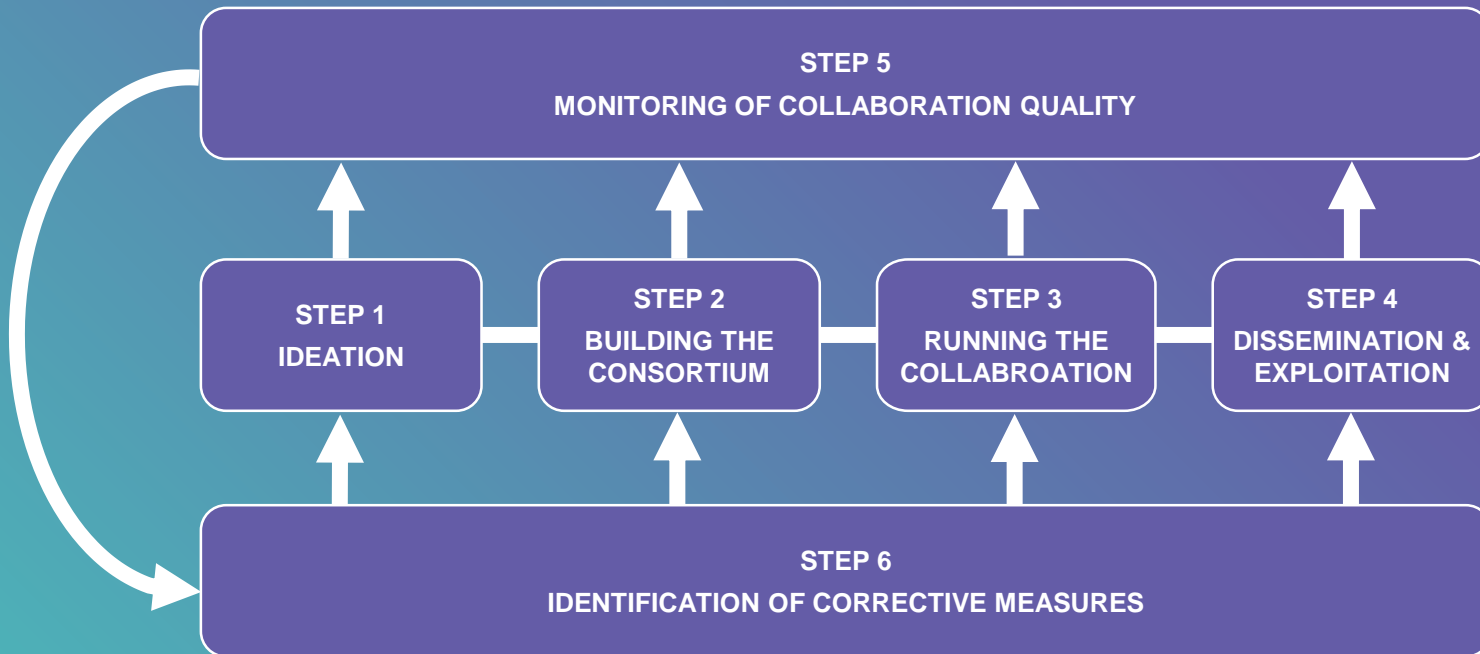
STEP 1
Ideation

- Develop a clear project idea within a small core team.
- Find a consensus between core team partners on project scope.
- Communicate project idea to other partners.
- Ensure a common understanding of project mission.
- Align project objectives and research goals (e.g. call topics).

MAIN ACTORS

- Coordinator
- Core Team Partners

ENABLING ELEMENTS

- Creativity techniques (e.g. brainstorming)
- One-Page-Proposal
- Graphical representation of idea
- Continuous communication: frequent conference calls

CHALLENGES & TIPS

- Form an agile core-team of domain experts (max. 3-5) to effectively develop the idea.
- A very clear graphical representation of the project idea is useful.
- A One-Page-Proposal facilitates the communication of the idea.

STEP 2
Building the consortium

- Ensure that partners complement each other.
- Get the commitment of partner organisations.
- Clearly define the partner's role in consortium.
- Compose an adequate core team.
- Build/maintain trust & motivation among in the consortium.
- Build common ground in consortium regarding project scope.

MAIN ACTORS

- Coordinator
- Core Team Partners

CHALLENGES & TIPS

- Reflect on how the partner's expertise will be combined to address the project's objectives.
- Consider level of knowledge, competencies and qualification of partners.
- A legal basis is necessary to build trust among partners (e.g. CA; NDA).
- Maintain the commitment of partners: e.g. constant access to project results. explicit individual exploitation plan /added value.

ENABLING ELEMENTS

- Conference calls
- f2f meetings
- Develop a „Map of Expertise"
- Draft of consortium agreement (CA)
- IPR principles
- Draft of exploitation plan

STEP 3
Running the collaboration

- Foster partners' trust and motivation.
- Choose a proficient project coordinator.
- Maintain a good cross-organisational relationship.
- Use appropriate communication tools with good usability.
- Ensure a continuous flow of information (decisions, project status, problems).
- Force immediate resolution of misunderstandings.

MAIN ACTORS

- Coordinator
- Core Team Partners
- All partners

CHALLENGES & TIPS

- Foster responsible behaviour, honesty, respectful communication and honourable behaviour.
- Meet project team members in person.
- Ensure a full commitment of the project coordinator to the project – he/she has immense impact on the project success.
- Project Coordinator needs a good conflict resolution and mediatorial capabilities, responsiveness and good project management skills.
- Know and respect individual working styles and personalities.
- Hold interactive and conversational meetings.

ENABLING ELEMENTS

- f2f meetings
- Social events
- Conference calls
- Email
- Online collaboration tools
- Definition of one responsible person per partner
- Transparent organisational structure of project

STEP 4
Dissemination & exploitation

- Ensure access to project results for all partners.
- Plan exploitation of project right from the start of the project.
- Define external communication channels.
- Promote your project externally.

MAIN ACTORS

- Coordinator
- Core Team Partners
- All partners

ENABLING ELEMENTS

- Online collaboration tools
- Open innovation platforms
- Exploitation plan
- Dissemination Plan
- Social networks
- Conferences
- Journals

CHALLENGES & TIPS

- Making use of online collaboration tools facilitates the dissemination of detailed results.
- Keep the exploitation plan updated during the whole project.
- Open innovation platforms help to disseminate the project's results.

STEP 5
Monitoring of collaboration quality

- Use the <u>survey template</u> from Science2Society to gain insights into the satisfaction level of your collaborative project.
- Translate the satisfaction levels into a KPI for measuring the collaboration quality.

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MAIN ACTORS

- Coordinator
- Core Team Partners
- All partners

ENABLING ELEMENTS

- <u>Survey Template</u>
- <u>Template to calculate KPI</u>

CHALLENGES & TIPS

- Let a neutral/external person perform the interviews to gather project feedback

| STEP 1 | STEP 2 | STEP 3 | STEP 4 | STEP 5 | STEP 6 |

STEP 6
Identification of corrective measures

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- Use <u>DOS AND DON'TS</u> to identify actions improving the satisfaction level of your collaborative project.

ENABLING ELEMENTS

- <u>Document containing DOS AND DON'TS</u>

CHALLENGES & TIPS

- Satisfaction level as key success factor for successful collaborative interaction.

Learning points

- **Most important findings**
  - Most important aspects for facilitating collaborative interaction:
    - Responsible behaviour of the persons involved.
    - Global view on project by the project coordinator.
    - Face2Face meeting(s) as a communication method.
    - Consortium Agreement between all partners to organise the cross-organisational relationship.
  - Least important aspects for facilitating collaborative interaction:
    - "Strategy of the coordinating Partner" and "Strategy of the Individual Partners".
    - The reason why to collaborate is not that important for the collaborative action itself.
  - In general, **Capabilities and Skills of Project Coordinator** play an important role, together with **Trust and Motivation** within the collaborative team.

- **Most important recommendations**
  - The following issues were reported to hinder collaborative interaction:
    - Not complying with deadlines.
    - Lack of a common understanding of the project mission and no clear project objectives for the project.
    - Poorly prepared meetings.
    - Poor usability of online collaboration tools (e.g. failures in document versioning).
    - Technical problems and IT restrictions of partners when using online collaboration tools.

References

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