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**CROSS-SECTOR SOCIAL PARTNERSHIPS:  
A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY  
OF PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE**

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**A Research Project  
Presented to the Faculty of  
The George L. Graziadio  
School of Business and Management  
Pepperdine University**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
in  
Organization Development**

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**by  
Lizbeth Landon  
August 2016**

This research project, completed by

LIZBETH LANDON

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE  
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: August 2016

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## **Abstract**

Globalization has had a tremendous impact on society. While creating opportunity for corporations to expand into new markets, globalization has also created significant negative repercussions to the environment, human rights, health, and education (Reece, 2001). In the past twenty-five years Cross-Sector Social Partnerships (CSSPs) have emerged as a possible solution to the negative impacts from globalization with mixed results (Nidumolu, Ellison, Whalen, & Billman, 2014) Although there are inherent challenges, the case for corporations and the public sector to continue to work together is compelling. By contributing their technical expertise and financial resources, companies can leverage the public sector's experience, knowledge networks, know-how and legitimacy to begin addressing large-scale global issues that directly impact society as well as their businesses. This study gathered data from interviewing nine participants. Interview questions were designed to answer the primary research question: Are there consistent best practices in CSSP governance? Findings from the study identified three best practices: formal governance, strategy, and stakeholder management. Additionally a CSSP Governance Framework was defined consisting of three categories: structure and processes, relationships, and governance dynamics. The result of the study is a flexible and adaptable framework for CSSPs that integrate the use of governance as one tool that increases the likelihood of positive partnership outcomes.

## **Acknowledgements**

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Thank you to the 9 people who took the time to openly share their knowledge, passion, and insights on a topic that is important to the future of corporations and civil society as they work together to address large-scale global issues. You are all significant leaders and have made incredible contributions to this common purpose.

I dedicate this work to my dad, Herman T. Landon, who passed away in 2002. I know you have been with me on this journey. It is your love of knowledge and incredible work ethic that I carry with me always. I am so proud to be your daughter.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Today we know that corporations, for good or bad, are major influences on our lives. For example, of the 100 largest economies in the world, 51 are corporations while only 49 are countries, based on a comparison of corporate sales and country GDPs (“Technology,” n.d.). Social movements routinely take aim at corporations from the targeting of Nestle, Chevron, and The Home Depot for environmental degradation, to animal rights protests against Proctor and Gamble and General Motors, to the battle between gay rights proponents and opponents for sway over Disney and AT&T (Bartley & Child, 2014).

Despite power and controversy, business and society are inextricably linked – in the long term neither can thrive without the strength of the other. The international community has worked for decades to set standards for companies to conduct business in a responsible manner (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2010). As early as the 1960s the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) became popular, touching on the legal and moral responsibility of corporations. Over time CSR has also evolved to include sustainability. Together both are an emerging pattern through which companies aim to achieve enhanced international principles and a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives addressing global concerns and expectations. This pattern also reflects the way in which businesses have addressed their global responsibilities and corporate citizenship (Matten & Crane, 2005) and the way that corporations have influenced and assumed control over the social and environmental governance agenda (Utting, 2005). Corporate Responsibility (CR) and sustainability link

the private sector to a broader governance movement where the business management approach is seen as a part of the long-term provision of better value for society, the environment and all stakeholders (Albareda, 2010).

Multinational corporations are the unmistakable frontrunners in CR. There is a clear intrinsic motivator locked into their license to operate and to build reputational capital in the global marketplace. During the last decade many multinational corporations have implemented new policies in the area of CR (Albareda 2010). For example, Paul Polman, Unilever's CEO since 2009 and a self-proclaimed "hard-core capitalist," has put sustainability at the core of its business. In a 2010 manifesto called the Sustainable Living Plan, Unilever promised to double its sales even as it cuts its environmental footprint in half and sources all of its agricultural products in ways that don't degrade the earth by 2020. The Company also promised to improve the well being of 1 billion people by, for example, persuading them to wash their hands or brush their teeth, or by selling them foods with less salt or fat. "The essence of the plan", Polman tells Fortune, "is to put society and the challenges facing society smack in the middle of the business" (Gunther, 2013). Coca-Cola's CEO, Muhtar Kent, agrees. In an October 2011 interview with Harvard Business Review Kent states that "we have a simple belief in Coca-Cola that if we can't help create sustainable communities where we operate, we won't have a sustainable business. It needs to be embedded in your business as opposed to inserted in your corporate social responsibility report." He goes on to cite some examples; "we were the first to declare water neutrality as a goal. We're also tackling our packaging and recycling, and trying to grow our business without enlarging our carbon footprint. Up to 30% of our bottles now use resin made from sugarcane not fossil fuels."

It has been predominantly since the 1992 World Summit For Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro that businesses have come together with international organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs) and the governments of nation-states to address current sustainable development issues (Murphy & Bendell, 1999; Schaltegger, Burrit, & Petersen, 2003). Since the Rio Summit many relationships have been forged and the business community has recognized the potential benefits of actively contributing to sustainable development initiatives (LeFrance & Lehmann, 2005).

By contributing to the relationships with technical expertise and financial resources, companies leverage the experience, knowledge networks, know-how and legitimacy of being associated with the public sector. However, real and meaningful partnerships can only be established through development of social relations, through commitment and mutual trust and through establishing mutual understanding and consideration (Grabher, 1993; Kjaer, Abrahamson, & Raynard, 2003; Schaltegger et al., 2003). Corporations may use these partnerships as vehicles to strengthen their corporate images and positively impact their social and economic performance (LaFrance & Lehmann, 2005).

### **Research Objective and Approach**

The purpose of this research is to determine if there are consistent best practices in CSSP (Cross-Sector Social Partnership) governance. The research also goes beyond best practices to understand governance practices that aid in managing tensions that may arise from competing priorities and identify specific activities that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. The assumption stands that many partnerships are ill conceived and result in meeting less than expected goals or worse yet complete failure. The research

assumes that partnerships can be in the following arenas: business-non-profit, business-government, and business-non-government organizations (NGOs). Research Questions:

Primary Question:

1. Are there consistent best practices in CSSP governance?

Secondary Questions:

1. What governance practices work best?
2. How do governance practices change during the partnership lifecycle?
3. How does governance manage potential tensions inherent in CSSPs?

### **Implications of This Research**

Addressing global social challenges is beyond the capabilities of even the largest company. However, countless efforts to work together to tackle the most complex challenges facing our world today have failed because of competitive self-interest, a lack of a fully shared purpose, and a shortage of trust (Nidumolu et al., 2014). The findings of this study highlight the perspective of the corporate partner, identifying the essential governance practices that help generate the value proposition they are looking for from this type of partnership. The study also creates a “living” framework that helps balance the necessary structure and flexibility that is required to meet the changing needs of the participants over time allowing for “real time governance.”

Additionally, these findings have implications for organizations that partner with corporations. Demands for corporate social responsibility encourages businesses to partner, non-profits are motivated by demands for improved efficiency and accountability, and governments are encouraged to provide more benefits and services while being less intrusive and more transparent. When actors from different sectors focus

on the same issue, they are likely to think about it differently, to be motivated by different goals, and to use different approaches.

Lastly sources of concern for social issues tend to be multifaceted, spilling over traditional boundaries of organizations, sectors and nations (Selsky & Parker, 2005). Understanding motivations across sectors will enhance collaborative efforts leading to higher rates of successful initiatives.

### **Organization of the Report**

Chapter 2 explores literature related to Cross-Sector Social Partnerships, determining if there are consistent best practices related to partnership. Chapter 3 reviews research methods, including the study participants, data collection, and analysis approaches. Chapter 4 describes the critical results learned from data collection and analysis performed. Chapter 5 presents conclusions of the research. Recommendations and implications are discussed, limitations are cited, and suggestions for further research offered.



## Chapter 2

### Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this study is to determine if there are consistent best practices in Cross-Sector Social Partnership (CSSP) governance. The purpose of the literature review is to examine governance and how it is integrated into partnership management. It is important to note there are competing definitions of cross-sector social partnerships. For purposes of this review the terms “cross-sector partnerships,” “alliances”, and “collaborations” have been interpreted as “cross-sector social partnerships.”

This chapter starts with the definitions of partnership and governance. It then goes on to review governance mechanisms, both formal and informal, the need for governance, tensions in cross-sector social partnerships, and governance dynamics.

#### Definitions

**Partnerships.** Partnerships are two or more organizations that enter a collaborative agreement based on: (a) synergistic goals and opportunities that address particular issues that single organizations cannot accomplish on their own; and (b) whose individual organizations cannot purchase the appropriate resources or competencies through a market transaction (Zadek & Radovich, 2006).

Westley and Vredenburg (1997) discuss partnership formation activities where they stress that participants must first successfully identify the problem which includes finding a common definition, generating a variety of information, making a joint commitment to collaborate, identify and legitimize critical stakeholders, find an appropriate convener and identify initial resources.

Cross-sector social partnerships provide (a) an appreciation of the uniqueness and differential strengths and weaknesses of governments, non-profit organizations, businesses and communities; (b) ongoing process dimensions, including leadership broadly defined; and (c) the dynamic nature of partnership development (Stone et al., 2006).

Implied in the definition of cross-sector social partnerships is the existence of heterogeneous stakeholders introducing natural tensions between members. Heterogeneity is deliberately sought as it increases the possibility of innovation. However, partnership performance may suffer when mindsets and goals collide (Venn & Berg, 2014).

**Governance.** Governance concerns the structures, processes, rules and traditions through which decision-making power that determines actions is exercised, and so accountabilities are manifested and actualized (Zadek & Radovich 2006). These structures and processes act as mechanisms to carry out governance activities. Governance structures refer to the rules and resources people use while processes cover the behavior and actions of individuals. These structures and processes cover formal structures, statutes, administrative guidelines, judicial decrees, and informal exercise of judgment by numerous actors involved in policy and program implementation (Lynn, Heinrich, & Hill, 2000). Formal and informal aspects describe different approaches to achieve governance (Hayes, Cornforth, & Vangen, 2011). Parkhe, Wasserman, and Ralston (2006) argues that partnerships must be viewed as both structures and flows where ‘flows’ represent processes by which collective decision- making occurs and resources are mobilized.

Hughes (2010) defines governance slightly differently: “Governance is about running organizations, about steering as in the original derivation, how to organize, and how to set procedures for an organization to be run.” Hughes uses the term “organization” liberally leading to conceptualize governance at several different levels of analysis. At the first level is governance of a single organization; the second is governance of inter-organizational networks or partnerships; and third is governance of societies or communities by public and non-governmental entities, both formal and informal (Stone et al., 2010).

### **Governance Mechanisms**

Rivera-Santos and Rufin (2010) discuss governance mechanisms in terms of Transaction Cost Economics theory. Mechanisms influence the partners’ behavior by increasing the cost of opportunistic behavior and aligning the interests of each partner with success of the partnership.

Partnership members, can to a certain extent, use different combinations of formal and informal mechanisms to reach an acceptable level of risk and governance costs (Poppo & Zenger, 2002). It is important to remember that one cannot exist without the other as informal mechanisms act as the organizational glue that focuses on the relationships of people and how they work together (Rivera-Santos & Rufin, 2010).

**Formal mechanisms.** Formalized partnering agreements are frequently advocated as being necessary to ensure accountability in partnerships, firstly, of partners to each other and, secondly of partners in relation to meeting their obligations regarding implementation of project activities (Evans, McMahon & Caplan, 2004). For example, such an agreement may take the form of a legal contract or a less formal Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU). Irrespective of the level of formality, developing such an agreement is often perceived as the starting point for working together as the process binds the partners to specific aims and objectives and also helps to define the roles and responsibilities of each partnership participant (Rein & Stott, 2009). Elements of formal agreements might include a broad purpose, mandate, commitment of resources, designation of formal leadership, description of members, decision-making structure, and built-in flexibility (such as allowing waivers) for dealing with local conditions and changes (Arino & de la Torre 1998; Crosby & Bryson, 2005a).

A critical component of partnership governance is monitoring progress and measuring performance to achieve common goals. Participants assert different forms of control depending on desired outcomes (Schirmer, 2013). Formal control uses the establishment and utilization of formal rules, policies, and procedures to monitor and reward desirable performance. It can further be divided into output and behavior control. While measuring (and controlling) behavior focuses on an appropriate process (that ‘turns into desirable output’; Das & Teng, 2001) output control is the assessment and monitoring of the partner’s performance (Schirmer, 2013).

The type of control, which is appropriate in a specific situation, depends on two characteristics, task programmability and output measurability. If tasks are programmed, behaviors are defined and therefore measured. If goals are clearly defined, output can be measured in a precise and objective manner. If both of these characteristics are low, social control seems to be the appropriate control mode (Das & Teng, 2001; Eisenhardt, 1985).

**Informal mechanisms.** By definition cross-sector social partnerships have multiple stakeholders with different cultures, backgrounds, and organizational purposes. It stands to reason that each stakeholder will have a different view of partnership purpose, communication, and standards of operation. Each organization also takes on different aspects of risk: financial, legitimacy, or reputation.

Informal governance mechanisms provide the glue that allows a partnership to accomplish their stated goals and withstand crises should they occur. Structures and processes associated with informal governance aim to direct and make participants accountable through less certain, vague or implicit approaches. Behavior and boundaries are not defined to begin with and boundaries are not set. There is knowledge about social values expectations and inter-personal interaction to develop and maintain them. Existing literature thoroughly documents the importance of trust as a critical element in the approach to governance (Hayes et al., 2011). Yan and Gray (1994) note that institutionalizing common goals will help mediate the relationship between organizational control and partnership performance.

Provan and Kenis (2005) point out the choice among types of governance structure are likely to influence partnership effectiveness. These types include (a) self-governing structures in which decision-making occurs through regular meetings of members or through informal frequent interactions; (b) a lead organization that provides major decision making and coordinating activities and (c) a partnership administrative organization formed to oversee partnership affairs (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006).

Various approaches to governance and structures are possible (Brown, 1991). Provan and Kenis (2005) also note that if we assume that partnerships are horizontal

systems then a hierarchical concept such as governance is troublesome. However, governance as a set of coordinating and monitoring activities must occur in order for partnerships to survive. Some argue that partnership governance emerges through frequent, structured exchanges that develop the partnership level values, norms, and trust, enabling social mechanisms to coordinate and monitor behavior (Jones, Hesterly, & Borgatti, 1997; Ostrom, 1990).

Informal social systems encompass additional coordination mechanisms characterized by relationships rather than by bureaucratic structures (Jones et al., 1997; Powell, 1990). As these are often not explicit, they may appear through self-regulation such as norms (Dwyer & Oh, 1988; Heide & John, 1992; MacNeil, 1981) conventions and standards (Ponte & Gibbon, 2005) and in informal cultures and social bonds between participants (Spekman, Kamauff, & Myhr, 1998; Wilson, 1995).

This research also has implications for managers involved in cross-sector social partnership management. Studies suggest it is important to treat governance mechanisms not as a fixed variable to be determined once and for all in the beginning of the relationship, but rather to adapt the coordination mechanisms to the external and internal context of the relationship and the characteristics at hand (Alvarez, Pilbeam, & Wilding, 2010).

In reality the choice is not often between one mechanism or another, but rather between one particular set of mechanisms and another alternative combination to govern interactions among the organizations in the partnership (Alvarez et al., 2010). What has often been crucial is how well the structure of governance supports the informal processes of the partnership as it evolves (Zadek & Radovich, 2006).

## **Need for Governance**

Misunderstandings between partners are more likely when participants come from different sectors. Issues arise from power imbalances and lack of trust. Used appropriately, governance can help mitigate conflict between participants (Bryson et al., 2006).

**Power.** An important aspect of cross-sector social partnerships is the influence different participants have in defining governance mechanisms. Taking the partnership as a unit, Provan, Kenis and Human (2008), distinguish between either shared governance or governance by a focal organization. The deciding factor will depend on who has sufficient resources and legitimacy to play the lead role (Jarillo, 1988; Provan et al., 2008; Sydow & Windeler, 1998). Power can also be derived from legislative and regulatory conditions external to the partnership (Knoke & Chen, 2008). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) and Pfeffer (1992) note similarly possessing or being able to access critical resources including financing, legitimacy and strategic allies creates power differential amongst members that can influence governance structures and forms.

Large power imbalances are viewed as problematic because they may lead partners into political or opportunistic behavior that can serve one or both partners' interests at the expense of partnership performance (Doh & Teegen, 2002; Parker & Selsky, 2004). Covey and Brown (2001) and Waddell (2000) argue that power between partners does not need to be equal but that each needs to recognize the other's influence on their own well being.

**Trust.** Trust as a governance mechanism refers to a positive expectation regarding the other's likely behavior in a risky situation (Das & Teng, 2001; Faems,

Janssens, Madhok, & van Looy, 2008; Gambetta, 1988). Das and Teng (2001) distinguish between goodwill trust and competence trust. The former is based on an organization's good intentions, its integrity and its responsibility to deal with a partner organization in a fair and caring manner without unfairly exploiting the other organization. The latter refers to trust that is based on the resources and capabilities of an organization. In other words, it is the expectation or confidence of one organization that the partner organization can accomplish its task successfully within the partnership because of its competences (Das & Teng, 2001; Walker, 2007).

“Partnerships for development unfold in an uncertain, complex and often-distant setting, where good governance is frequently lacking, thus requiring an even greater degree of trust” (Kolk, van Tuler, & Kostwinder, 2008, p. 14). Trust builds slowly and incrementally through repeated interactions, and breaks down rapidly when betrayed (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Nooteboom (2002) adds that trust can be defined as an “expectation that things or people will not fail us . . . even if there are opportunities and incentives for it” (pp. 48-49). If terms of exchange between participants are known and guaranteed, little trust is needed (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000). Trust also gains importance with uncertainty (Venn & Berg, 2014).

As this section has shown, existing literature talks in-depth about challenges between partners but does not adequately explore how the corporate partner views power and trust and how governance can help manage conflicts related to the inequities resulting from power and lack of trust.



## **Tensions in Cross-Sector Social Partnerships**

By definition governance is a complex concept that provides an organization with the means to direct, control and coordinate activities in line with its purpose and accountability. When multiple organizations are introduced into the mix a whole new level of complexity comes to the surface. Undoubtedly there will be competing approaches to governing and collective decision-making. Accountability becomes more ambiguous (Huxham & Vangen, 2005) as partnership governance is more likely to occur through horizontal interactions (Kooiman, 2010) and change over time (Stone et al., 2010).

There are a variety of tensions discussed in the literature on governance and cross-sector social partnerships. Tensions describe conflicting, contradictory or competing positions that participants may face throughout the life of a partnership. Tensions appear through formal and informal structures and processes, from organizational and partnership perspectives, and they may change over time. Tensions are connected to partnership performance and directly impact those who carry out governance activities (Connelly, Zhang, & Faerman, 2006; Das & Teng, 2000). If tensions are left unattended partnerships can fail to be mutually successful (Gray, 1998; Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005) or meet participants expectations (Connelly et al., 2006; Killing, 1982; Ring & Van de Ven, 1989).

Understanding tensions and the need for balancing and living with multiple positions is a part of governance and critical to partnership sustainability. Positions are linked to each other, for example trust building and control mechanisms influence each other and both are required to develop confidence between participants (Das & Teng,

1998). In practice participants must consider multiple positions to decide how to develop their partnership. Understanding the relationship between each position and tension allows participants to avoid splitting or undoing tensions creating an untenable situation. No one position can dominate – participants live with tensions (Connelly et al., 2006; Das & Teng, 2000).

Suchman (1995) discusses that a tension in governance may arise due to a difference in perspective between an organization and partnership for example between internal and external legitimacy. Legitimacy describes the appropriateness, suitability, or desirability of an entity's actions in reference to values, working practices, or beliefs. In cross-sector social partnerships there are multiple sets of these values and thus potential for differences within a partnership and its internal legitimacy. This is further complicated as partnerships also have to maintain legitimacy to those who are not part of it – external legitimacy (Hayes et al., 2011). Members must identify and mobilize important stakeholders (Waddell, 2001) involved in decision-making and demonstrate that stakeholder interests are not being co-opted (Elbers, 2004).

Tensions can be arranged between structures and processes that have both formal and informal aspects. Provan and Kenis (2008) discuss the tension between efficiency and involvement. There is a need for efficiency – focusing on administrative task-based performance outcomes or a partnership (formal), yet various social pressures such as trust building, which have important roles in achieving involvement (informal) take time and effort. Mechanisms for achieving governance are formal and informal.

Tensions also have a temporal dimension reflecting adaptations from changes in circumstances. Provan and Kenis (2008) describe a tension between stability and

flexibility. Stability covers formal hierarchies to maintain legitimacy, continuity in response and efficient partnership management. Flexibility highlights the importance of being able to respond to competition and new demands emphasizing some of the advantages of partnerships over hierarchies. Different approaches to partnership management may be dependent on the short-term vs. long-term nature of a project (Hayes et al., 2011).

Provan and Kenis (2008) outline a typology of governance structures that facilitate managing tensions between participants:

- Participant governed partnerships have no separate governance entity per se as members perform all monitoring and coordinating activities through formal and informal interactions.
- Lead organization structure is one in which a single, powerful core organization coordinates all activities and makes major decisions
- Network administrative organization – separate organization formed to oversee network affairs through the management and governance of partnership activities (Stone et al., 2010).

To aid in balancing tensions, leadership plays a pivotal role that requires extensive visionary and political leadership by numerous formal and informal leaders (Crosby & Bryson, 2005b). Two main types of leaders – champions and sponsors – are usually required for successful complex change efforts. Champions lack formal authority but supply ideas, energy and determination to help stakeholders define public problems and advocate for solutions. Sponsors have formal authority that they can bring to bear securing political support and others resources for the effort. Champions' informal

leadership may be especially important since participants cannot rely on easily enforced, centralized direction or persons in positional authority (Stone et al., 2010).

### **Governance Dynamics**

Governance processes and structures are interrelated and dynamic where rules about collective decision making provide a bridge between processes and structures.

Ostrom (1990) points out there are multiple levels of rules that must be considered, and each is relevant to governance. First, operational rules govern day-to-day behavior and action including how the entity intends to implement specific activities. Second, policy-level rules determine what actions are allowed, constrained or sanctioned. They provide the context for social control over members or as Larson (1992) states, “Self regulation with a moral dimension . . . and a feedback process that is jointly determined by and diffused across multiple participants.” And third, constitutional choice rules determine who is eligible to determine collective choice rules (Stone et al., 2010).

More than anything, partnership governance and accountability is more usefully thought of as an on-going mediation mechanism and process:

- Bridging organizations with differing values, interests, viability strategies, constituencies and specific governance and accountability requirements, norms and infrastructure.
- Delivering coherence and efficiency without integrating the partners, as partnerships’ strength is to leverage synergies between sustained organizational differences.
- Building and sustaining legitimacy for the partnership given the diverse and evolving legitimacy needs of each partner (Zadek & Radovich, 2006).

Literature touches on the lifecycle of governance introducing the concept of applying different governance mechanisms at different stages of the partnership. What might be appropriate in the initial stage will most likely not work during the exit phase of the partnership. The evolution of governance mechanisms over time, consistent with the observations of managing the relationship over time, is usually more important than crafting the initial formal design (Doz & Hamel, 1998). Changes that impact evaluation on equity, efficiency, and uncertainty (Arino & de la Torre, 1998) include execution of commitment, learning, conflict resolution, external changes, relationship quality, and learning-action-reaction loops.

A partnership evolves through the iterative processes of negotiations, commitments and executions, each of which is assessed by the participating organization in terms of efficiency and equity. Supplemental contractual agreements can be established to deal with misunderstandings or conflicts, while informal, psychological contracts are more prevalent as partners become more committed. Doz (1996) identifies learning as a mediating variable between internal conditions surrounding the partnership and the outcomes of the partnership.

Finally in terms of governance and accountability processes, the partnership literature recommends clear boundaries, together with robust and transparent structures and sound systems of communication, to not only support the functioning of a partnership and maintain partner engagement but also to potentially facilitate conflict resolution and avoid the marginalization of partnership participants (Rein & Stott, 2009).

## Summary

Existing literature tells us that achieving sustainability throughout the lifecycle of the partnership is elusive. Starting with the heterogeneous nature of partnerships there is a fundamental difference in structure, processes, and management. Success or failure often hangs in the balance the entire time partners are working together. There is an abundance of literature that discusses reasons for partnership failures pointing out the lack of accepted best practices or insurmountable sectoral differences.

This literature review also looked at the multiple dimensions of governance. The research reveals that formal and informal aspects of governance are critical components of partnership management. Formal governance provides structure to the agreement between partners identifying roles and responsibilities of each member. Informal aspects define how participants work together focusing on boundaries and limits of acceptable behavior. Inherent in any relationship are issues of control, power and trust and governance helps partners navigate these waters. Understanding tensions are a natural phenomenon in heterogeneous partnerships enables members to apply the appropriate governance mechanism to achieve their common goals. Lastly, knowing that governance is iterative provides the needed flexibility in partnerships where high levels of uncertainty exist by definition.

The goal of this review was to understand how governance is integrated into cross-sector partnership management. However, there is little information that focuses specifically the corporate partner's point of view on what is needed to successfully utilize the tool of governance and its related practices in order to produce positive outcomes. The remaining chapters of this research will determine if there are best practices that

generate the value proposition from governance that corporate partners are seeking from these relationships. Understanding these practices will add significant insight into cross-sector social partnership governance and increase the likelihood of success.

Chapter 3 of this research project details the design and methodology used to gather data from multinational corporations currently engaged in CSSPs. The chapter describes the research design, selection criteria for participants, data collection and data analysis procedures used for this study.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

The purpose of this study is to determine if there are consistent best practices in CSSP (Cross-Sector Social Partnership) governance. This chapter describes the research design, selection criteria for participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures used in this study.

#### **Research Design**

This study applied qualitative research principals to identify unanticipated phenomena and influences, in order to generate new grounded (Glass & Strauss, 1967) theories about CSSP governance. The theory is grounded in the actual data collected, in contrast to theory that is developed conceptually and then tested against empirical data. Qualitative research also has an inherent openness and flexibility that allows modification of design and focus during the research process to pursue new discoveries and relationships (Maxwell 2013).

The study began with the extensive review of CSSP governance that appeared in research literature over the past three decades. Although there was substantial information on corporate and partnership governance there was little research done specifically from the corporate partner perspective. This gap in the literature influenced the decision to use qualitative analysis and the design of the interview protocol seeking to understand how governance was used in the day-to-day operations of partnership management.



## **Participant Profile**

Sample sizes in qualitative research tend to be small and purposive (Punch, 2005).

The participant selection criteria was based on the following criteria:

- Mature Multinational Corporations who sought market share growth through emerging markets. This growth strategy often required companies to form partnerships with local organizations in order to successfully operate in their country increasing the likelihood that individuals interviewed would be intimately familiar with partnership governance.
- Internal employees managed both long-term and short-term partnerships so that governance could be analyzed in several different contexts within the partnership lifecycle.
- Evidence that Corporate Responsibility was a strategic initiative embedded into the company's business model demonstrating their commitment to civil society. This was apparent in their strategy, mission and values.
- The company follows Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards (see Appendix A) showing partnerships have achieved measurable results and accomplished their intended goals.

Companies were selected from three different industries to develop a broader perspective. There were a total of nine participants from five companies. The majority of the participants were senior managers. The general profile included the following characteristics:

- Headquartered in the USA or Europe,
- Majority are public corporations,

- 175,000 employees (average),
- 125 years old (average)
- 145 countries of operation (average).

### **Researcher's Role**

I am passionate about business, leadership, and making a difference. I strongly believe that corporations have an inherent obligation to be good stewards, acting in the best interest of their employees and their customers. It is imperative that organizations understand their impact on the environment and take action to mitigate damage caused in the process of doing business. Fulfilling this obligation does not have to come at the expense of making profits, just the opposite. I contend that corporations can be responsible, make money, and contribute to the greater good of society.

I have an extensive career working for corporations that spans multiple industries including banking, real estate, and technology. I believe in stewardship and serving my community. I have volunteered my entire adult life, including participating as a board and/or founding member of two organizations.

Participants were selected based on purposive criteria without any relationship between the researcher and the organization. Preliminary information was obtained from documents or information available through public sources.

### **Data Collection and Research Setting**

Based on a review of previous research, an interview protocol (see Appendix B) was developed to explore CSSPs with the intended goal of understanding partnership governance. Areas of interest include member relationships, decision making/autonomy,

and the feedback loop / continuous change. Additionally, understanding the use of governance mechanisms to manage tension/conflict throughout the partnership lifecycle.

A proposal (see Appendices C, D, and E) explaining the nature and purpose of the research was sent to seven corporations inviting them to participate in the study with five acceptances. Semi-structured one-hour interviews were conducted with each individual participant. Additionally, seven thirty-minute follow-up sessions were conducted to gain needed clarification. Interviews were conducted via WebEx. Eight out of the nine interviews were electronically audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist. The researcher took notes for the final interview based on the interview protocol.

The researcher also reviewed documents that were available from public sources to understand the company's activities, both past and present. Information was gathered from annual sustainability reports, articles, and social media.

### **Interview Protocol and Questions**

The Interview Protocol began with a definition of key concepts: Cross-Sector Social Partnership (CSSP), Governance, and Corporate Sustainability. The purpose of defining these concepts was to ensure that there was a common understanding between the researcher and participants. Following the definitions, a process overview outlined the purpose and methodology. Interview questions started with participant background questions to understand the role and responsibilities of the individual. Topic questions were derived from the literature review with the intent to identify themes and consistent actions used in partnership governance. The complete interview protocol can be found in Appendix B.

## **Protection of Human Subjects**

Individual informed consent forms were obtained to conduct the research study pursuant to the exempt approval process as well as Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board. In addition, the researcher completed the Human Subject Research Participants course on September 3, 2014 sponsored by the National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research.

A proposal was submitted to each company consisting of a project summary, interview protocol, and concept map. The proposal also included a consent form that was returned to the researcher prior to commencement of individual interviews. Participation was completely voluntary with the option to refuse to proceed at any time.

## **Data Analysis**

Data Analysis is the systematic process of sifting and arranging all information obtained from interview transcripts, field notes and other material collected to increase understanding of the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002). In a grounded theory approach the researcher is reducing the data into manageable units and coding is integral to the analysis process (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

**Transcription.** Qualitative data analysis seeks to organize and reduce the data gathered into themes, which, in turn, can be translated into descriptions, models, or theories. The researcher followed the grounded theory approach by first reading interview transcripts, observational notes, and public company documents. Listening to interviews tapes and reading notes prior to transcription allowed the researcher to begin analysis by creating tentative ideas, categories and relationships (Maxwell, 2013).

Following professional transcription the researcher coded the data by reading the interviews and performing a line-by-line analysis highlighting key concepts, practices, or descriptors. The concepts were put into an excel spreadsheet to allow for easy manipulation and analysis of the data.

**Coding.** To code data, each thought expressed by an interviewee was broken down, compared, and then placed into a category. Similar data were placed in similar categories and different data created new categories. Coding was an iterative, inductive, yet reductive process that organized data from which the researcher constructed themes, essences, descriptions and theories. A Data Matrix was developed in terms of the main research questions, categories, or themes and the data that addressed or supported these. Frequency of concepts was noted and saturation called out (Maxwell, 2013).

**Categories.** Categories and themes were identified. However, in an effort to go beyond pure data analysis, the practice of writing of short memos was used. Memos gave the researcher the opportunity to reflect on goals, methods, theory, prior experiences, and relationships with participants. Not only did memos capture analytic thinking about data they facilitated thinking and stimulated analytical insights (Maxwell, 2013).

**Validation.** The triangulation methodology (Maxwell, 2013) will be used to validate research data. The following approaches were used:

- Respondent Validation – Referred to as ‘member checks’, this was a systematic soliciting of feedback about the data and conclusions from the people who were in the study. This was the single most important way to rule out the possibility of misunderstanding the meaning of what participants said and did and the perspective they had on what was going on.

- Sustainability Report – Reviewed public reports that discussed corporate mission, values, and goals corroborating employee experience.
- Website or Articles – Reviewed for evidence of commitment to sustainability and goals set by partnerships.
- Inter-rater reliability – Two independent coders rated the same interview based on a definition code key provided by the researcher. Agreement was measured based on a line-by-line analysis of the interview and the number of matching codes generated by all three coders.

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the research methodology for this research project including the research design, selection criteria for participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures. This study used a grounded theory analysis that helped determine if there were consistent best practices in Cross-Sector Social Partnership governance. The next chapter reports on the results of the analysis.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

This chapter reports and analyzes the results of the interviews. These results inform the primary research question: Are there consistent best practices in Cross-Sector Social Partnership (CSSP) governance? To provide more context three additional questions were asked: (a) What governance practices work best? (a) How do governance practices manage potential tensions inherent in CSSPs? and (c) How do governance practices change during the partnership lifecycle?

The study identified three consistent best practices in cross-sector social partnership governance: (a) Formal Governance, (b) Strategy, and (c) Stakeholder Management. Additionally, the study generated a CSSP Governance Framework that included three general categories: (a) Structure and Processes, (b) Relationships, and (c) Governance Dynamics (evidence of development or change). Within each category the participants all mentioned the following tasks/behaviors as primary activities: formal governance, strategy, management practices, core business integration (for Structure and Processes), stakeholder management (for Relationships), feedback loop mechanisms and triggers for change (for Governance Dynamics). The interviews also explored key factors in relationships including the importance of communication, building trust, and managing power.

There were a total of nine participants, representing five organizations, who generated 1131 distinct comments. For discussion purposes the definition of “best practice” was determined by a comment mention rate of 9% or higher reflecting the overall importance of the topic. The discussion of “primary activities” was defined as a

participant frequency of 67% (2/3) or higher focusing on important behaviors/tasks (See Table 1). Although not hitting the 67% participant frequency rate some select activities were also included in the discussion if participants who function at a higher level of CR Core Business Integration (i.e. detailed governance model supporting CR, goal ownership distributed to the business unit level) mentioned them. The sections below describe these topics in detail.

### **Governance**

In conducting the interview protocol it became apparent that the term “governance” is subject to individual interpretation and needed to be clarified to reach a common understanding between the interviewer and the participant. In discussing governance, all participants talked about the management practices that helped define the term including formal governance practices, partnership structure, and project management practices. Participants also discussed governance in terms of what conditions prompted partners to change the formal governance agreement and if governance facilitated the management of potential partner tensions. These discussions clarified the role of governance in managing partnerships and what factors increase the likelihood of successful outcomes.

### **Best Practices**

Table 1 outlines the three best practices of CSSP governance: Formal Governance Practices, Strategy, and Stakeholder Management. Following are separate discussions of each topic.



**Table 1*****CSSP Governance – Best Practices***

Criteria	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)		Comments ( <i>N</i> = 1131)	
	Count	% of total	Count	% of total
Formal governance practices	8	89%	220	19%
Strategy	8	89%	103	9%
Stakeholder management	7	78%	107	9%

**Formal governance practices.** Formal Governance Practices were identified as the number one best practice of CSSP governance, as the topic was the focal point of the research study, 8 participants discussed the topic generating 19% (n=220) of the total comments. Highlighted in Table 2, Participants further defined common practices to include the key tasks of (a) formal reporting (n=9), (b) decision-making (n=9), (c) legal documentation (n=9), (d) defining roles and responsibilities (n=8), (e) setting goals/metrics (n=6), and (f) measuring performance (n=5). Five of the six tasks were considered to be primary activities each earning a frequency rate of 67% (2/3) or higher. Participants offered these comments on formal governance practices:

- Governance formalizes and memorializes the intentions of the members. It creates a common platform from which to operate.
- The MOU defines who is playing what roles, so who brings in what to the project and who has responsibility over which areas. Then there is a mechanism to bring the partners together and one of them has been assigned a lead role. Also if there is contention or anything that doesn't go smoothly in the first place they will solve it. If there is any lingering problem they will bring it to the management committee for final resolution.

- I think the more clear we can be right upfront not only about the goals of the project and the milestones, but how decisions are going to be made as part of the governance process the more likely we are going to be able to avoid conflict in the future and the more likely the project will be successful if the governance process is clear upfront.

**Table 2**

***Formal Governance Activities***

Criteria	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)	
	Count	% of Total
Formal reporting	9	100
Decision making	9	100
Legal documentation; MOU/contract	9/7	100/78
Roles & responsibilities	8	89
Metrics/goals	6	67
Measuring performance	5	56

**Strategy.** Eight out of the nine participants pointed to Strategy as the second best practice in CSSP governance producing 9% (n=103) of the total comments, directly behind the discussion of governance. One of the participants stated: “For me, creating an integrated strategy is the number one success factor, because it takes the partnership out of the CSR philanthropic/public relations realm and puts it deep into the strategy of both organizations.” The participants who discussed strategy emphasized that Strategy is an antecedent to partnership formation and must be a collaborative process. The same participant went on to say, “without a clear strategy before the partnership is formed it is not possible for the participants to design an appropriate governance model that will achieve their shared goals and produce the desired results.”

Table 3 outlines two components included in strategy that participants considered primary activities: Strategic Alignment (n=8) and Understanding Organization Motivation (n=6). Participants defined Strategic Alignment as the optimal state when all

partners are clear about their objectives, there was a mutual understanding of how their objectives overlap and results yielded performance against their respective corporate strategies. The discussion on Organization Motivation brought to light the importance of each partner understanding the mission, vision and goals of their partner. One participant offered the following insight into what works best: “Be upfront and put your motivation “on the table” such as: 1) finding solutions for solving social problems collectively, 2) improving government relations or 3) selling products or services.” Motivation transparency raised potential areas of conflict in the beginning of a partnership allowing the members to discuss how these issues could be managed when they work together. Lastly in discussing Strategy four of the participants talked about Partner Selection as the culmination of Strategic Alignment and Organization Motivation.

A participant offered the following:

When I am selecting a partner what I look for is do they have the right competencies that I need for the task at hand. Second, I’m looking at their ability to scale a project on a global basis; can they operate in 30 countries? The last dimension that is critical is mission alignment. Even if they fulfill the first 2 requirements if they are currently unhappy with the way we approach things that will make it very difficult.

**Table 3**

*Strategy Activities*

Criteria	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)	
	Count	% of total
Strategic alignment	8	89
Organization motivation	6	67
Partner selection	4	44

**Stakeholder management.** Stakeholder Management was considered the third best practice in CSSP governance also generating 9% (n=107) of total comments. Although equal in the comment mention rate to strategy, stakeholder management ranked behind strategy in level of importance by the participants. The difference stemmed from the critical distinction that strategy was an antecedent to the formation of the partnership.

Table 4 outlines activities included in Stakeholder Management. The first topic participants identified, as a primary activity within stakeholder management was internal and external reporting reaching 100% (n=9) agreement by the participants. They all agreed that Internal Reporting focused on performance management; work plan status, goal attainment, and achieving metrics. An integral part of reporting was communication and transparency. Participants discussed the importance of maintaining an open relationship, sharing information both positive and negative that may impact the work they are doing together. Additionally, participants talked about the use of Internal Reporting to garner senior management support in their organizations. External reporting was defined in terms of Sustainability Reporting that was disclosed to the public. All participants followed the Global Reporting Initiative standards set out by the UN Global Compact. There was an additional level of rigor that was required to ensure the information was accurate, timely and added to the corporation's sustainability objectives. Participants felt that Sustainability Reporting supported their credibility in the marketplace and added to their corporate reputation. One participant elaborated on this point:

There is an 836 page report on our website with the details of every project that we are working on. A 3rd party has validated each and every fact that is included

in the report. It's all there for the public to see. So it's total transparency. I found that that's been really important from a credibility standpoint, from a reputation management standpoint. We want to make sure we protect our reputation so we have this kind of functionality, this kind of validation done.

Another critical element of Stakeholder Management was support from senior management, engaging a champion or advocate from the top level of the organization. Considered a best practice, seven of the participants stated this level of support clearly added to the success of a partnership. One participant said: "When a partnership is considered to be strategic you need to have a hierarchy in your governance, a champion from both organizations." Another participant added: "Cultivating senior leader advocates is critical. The key is to find your advocates, cultivate those relationships, and give them the ammunition to prove the business value is critical."

Although not considered a primary activity (since not reaching the threshold of 67%), four of the participants discussed the topics of corporate reputation and local partner engagement. The participants who talked about corporate reputation were concerned how their behavior as an organization impacted both existing and potential customers. Here is what one participant offered:

The work we do here is an investment in the community. The members of the community are also potential consumers of our products and they know our brand and our company. We can't have our name and our company reputation attached to anything that's not working correctly in the field.

Participants who discussed local partner engagement strongly felt that having the "right people in the room", the local partners, added to positive outcomes and the sustainability

of the project work that had been done. One participant said having “the right people” means the following:

So if you manage to have the right people involved you will have people who will be able to say; “we will keep this on and do this.” You have built capacity for local partners to do this for a whole region or for the whole country or take this in to their policy. It is essential to have those people there from the start.

**Table 4**

***Stakeholder Management Activities***

Criteria	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)	
	Count	% of total
Internal and external reporting	9	100
Senior management	8	89
Corporate reputation	4	44
Local partner	4	44

**CSSP Governance Framework**

**Structure and processes.**

***Management practices.*** Table 5 highlights the Management Practices of Partnership Structure and Project Management Practices. All participants felt primary activities included a multi-level partnership structure composed of members at three different levels: corporation, partnership and project. The need for an oversight board such as a governance board / steering committee was deemed necessary for complex initiatives. As one participant said, “the board is responsible for key operating issues such as determining decision-making rules, resolving conflicts, and deciding what to do if the project fails to meet the stated objectives.”

Participants who discussed Project Management Practices considered practices to be tactical with six of the Participants stressing the execution of work plans to be a

primary activity. Secondly, three of the Participants also mentioned that projects were implemented in phases.

**Table 5**

***Management Practices Activities***

Criteria	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)	
	Count	Count
Partnership Structure		
Multi-level Structure: (a) Governance Board/Steering Committee, (b) Partnership, and (c) Project	9	100
Project management practices		
Execution of work plans	6	67
Project phases	3	33

***Core business integration.*** Participants were asked to talk about the influence corporate governance plays in partnership governance, initially focusing on constraints. However, as the discussion developed the topic evolved from constraints to how the corporation actively supported the partnership, integrating corporate responsibility into their core business model (Core Business Integration).

Table 6 outlines the components included in Core Business Integration. Of the participants that talked about Core Business Integration a total of 86 (n=5%) comments were generated. The top two primary activities were sponsoring corporate-wide CR initiatives which was discussed by all nine of the participants as well as emphasizing Corporate Responsibility (CR) as a Strategic Business Initiative discussed by eight of the nine participants. Examples in corporate wide initiatives included helping to solve global social/environmental issues and supply chain responsible sourcing. Strategic Business Initiatives were activities that supported the mission, vision and goals of the corporation. Including a separate governing body in the corporate governance model that specifically established and monitored CR goals and results created evidence of CR integration into

the core business model. Seven out of nine participants stated their corporation had this in place. Further evidence of business integration surfaced in the discussion of ownership of CR goals in the organization. Eight participants stated that CR goals were distributed within their organization, five stated goals were held at the senior management level while three stated goals were distributed down to the business unit level.

**Table 6**

***Core Business Integration Activities***

Criteria	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)	
	Count	% of total
CR corporate wide initiatives	9	100
CR is a strategic business initiative	8	89
Governance model supporting CR	7	78
Goal ownership - senior management	5	56
Goal ownership - business unit managers	3	33

**Relationships.**

***Communication and common understanding.*** Table 7 reflects the theme of communication and common understanding that emerged during the interview process as participants discussed CSSP governance capturing 8% (n=90) of total comments and falling directly behind Stakeholder Management in order of importance. The seven participants that discussed the concept of communication defined it in two ways: (a) frequency and types communication and (b) language and common vocabulary.

Participants shared the following comments:

In the context of building trust, you have to have a detailed internal communication plan in place. It should be very specific on how often you and your partner need to communicate internally and to other people in your organizations about the partnership. How you communicate to each other, who



needs to do this communication and what form does it take. You need to be specific; such as in person meetings, frequency of phone calls, emails, or Internet sites, whatever the information is.

There are all kinds of jargon involved, so there can be real problems. .... Language is important and there are always sticky points around certain issues, how you describe them and it takes a while before you find the common language. By common language I mean the term that everyone understands in the same way.

Participants also discussed the importance of creating a common understanding. In addition to communication, fleshing out substantive differences between partners related to strategy or organization culture increased the likelihood of positive outcomes for the partnership. One participant shared the following key insight: “Creating a shared understanding of what we actually wanted to achieve was not easy. It was challenging to agree on the same thing when we were coming from very different worlds.”

**Table 7**

**Communication and Common Understanding Activities**

Criteria	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)	
	Count	% of total
Communication & Common Understanding	7	78%

***Building trust.*** The following question was posed to the participants: “How do you build and sustain trust in a partnership?” The question was included in the interview protocol to explore one of the potential areas of natural tension in relationships. Defining trust helps create three key ingredients in a partnership: (a) an environment of safety

between partners, (b) belief that the other is competent, and (c) the understanding that intentions are positive and mutually serving.

Table 8 reveals that all nine participants believed in order to build and sustain trust it was critical to cultivate personal relationships outside of the formal workplace. One participant said: “What worked best was spending time together and not in a meeting with an agenda. Taking people to lunch or dinner, this helped to build trust.” Another participant expounded on the idea:

Building, cultivating and encouraging personal relationships is important. At the end of the day this is all about people. In face-to-face meetings you have to build time for team building, something away from the office. It might be going to a sporting event or going paddling on the river, something that really establishes a personal connection. I’m not saying everyone has to be friends, but I see the power in informal conversations and a more casual setting to help to build that trust.

The second category of “delivering on a commitment”, six of the participants said was critical to building trust. The discussion was simple. One participant said, “we do what we say, say what we do and there are no surprises on either side”. Another participant offered: “building trust is of course that you actually do what you say from the onset of a partnership.”

The last category of transparency was discussed by five of the participants. Two aspects emerged from the discussion: clarity regarding rules and openness in the relationship. Regarding rules one participant said: “Transparency was being very clear about our objectives upfront, what we can and can’t support, having this well

documented and agreed upon between the parties and then continuing to monitor that.” Another participant talked about openness in a relationship or transparency evolved from a long-standing relationship where trust was built over time; crediting openness for more momentum in the partnership and adding to it’s sustainability.

**Table 8**

***Building Trust Activities***

Criteria	Participants = 9	
	Count	% of total
Personal relationships	9	100
Deliver on commitments	6	67
Transparency	5	56

***Managing power.*** The interview protocol included the discussion of managing power to better understand the natural tension of power, perceived or real, which may impact the relationship between the multinational corporation and their chosen partner. The assumption was that the corporation derived power from several sources such as financial resources, access to human capital, legitimacy in the marketplace, or relationships with strategic allies. The question posed to the participants was: “How do you use governance mechanisms to manage the potential imbalance of power?” The discussion of power captured 38 comments representing only 3% of the total, reflecting a relatively low level of importance. The majority of the participants stated they did not think in terms of “power” in a partnership as the partnership was formed to solve a mutual problem.

Although there was general agreement that the participants didn’t think in terms of power, Table 9 indicates six said they used formal governance to balance power and five stressed the need for “equality” in the partnership. One participant said: “ I think we

manage possible power imbalances by trying to as much as possible set up the governance process, partnership structure and roles in a way that it is even. Another participant talked about some critical factors needed in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

We think the largest source of tension when it comes to power imbalance is decision- making and resources. So the MOU specifically covers these two topics. For example, we might state that decisions are taken by consensus, we make it clear upfront what resources are available or what we will make available from both sides, including financial resources, all resources, so it is clear from the word go through the text of the MOU, who will make what efforts.

Also reflected in Table 9, Participants shifted the discussion of power to a conversation about contributing expertise (n=5) and leadership (n=4) in order to build capacity between partners. Participants often leveraged local partner expertise and then offered subject matter expertise when needed. Comparing leadership vs. power one participant said, “If you think about leadership instead of power it changes your whole operating model. You have to be willing to learn, to make mistakes, and to empower others. “ Lastly three participants talked about transparency as an equalizer of power. One participant shared the need to be transparent in the partnership as well with the public at large stating the following:

If you have an imbalance of power, a good way to mitigate the imbalance is to be transparent and not just between the partners but transparency in a wider sense that includes the public interest. People may quickly step in if they see that something is not going well in the partnership where they might want protect the weaker partner.

**Table 9*****Managing Power Activities***

Criteria	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)	
	Count	% of total
Use of formal governance	6	67
Equality	5	56
Expertise	5	56
Leadership	4	44
Transparency	3	33

**Governance Dynamics**

**Change in governance.** Table 10 reflects the results from the discussion on Change in Governance. Participants were asked to talk about change in governance to determine if there was “real time” change that increased the likelihood of successful partnership outcomes. Change in governance was further broken down into feedback loop mechanisms that were commonly used to facilitate the change process. The result of the discussion was unanimous, all agreed on the need to have management routines in place in the form of meetings and regular communication. Standing meetings were scheduled at 30, 60 or 90-day intervals, formal reports were generated and annual reviews were completed. Standing agendas were also set to review work plans and discuss actions that needed to be taken. One participant stated:

Standard work plans are put into place. Then we have quarterly accountability meetings where we go back to the plan and we have conversations at the partnership level. Each work stream reports out on what’s working and what’s not working. They discuss the progress being made, changes to the plan, and if there are any obstacles or barriers.

The discussion on “real time” change in governance revealed the importance of partners being flexible to get things done. However, the participants were very clear that governance did not automatically change throughout the partnership lifecycle. Those who talked about change unanimously agreed that there must be a clear trigger for governance to change. Examples of triggers included failure to meet metrics/goals (n=4) or change in personnel (n=4). In a conversation about failed metrics one participant said: “We would try to renegotiate the metrics, because often times it may be something that comes up in the course of the project that wasn’t anticipated in the beginning. We value the work that is there and do not want to ruin the partnership.” Three participants mentioned that long-standing partnerships were more likely to make changes in governance, citing there was a good chance the same people that started the partnership would not be there at the end and the scope of the partnership was more likely to change over an extended period of time (5 to 10 years).

**Table 10**

***Change in Governance Activities***

Criteria	Participants (N = 9)	
	Count	% of total
Feedback loop mechanisms		
Management routines: standing meetings and agendas, formal reporting	9	100%
Triggers for change		
Change in personnel	4	44
Failure to meet metrics / goals	4	44
Change in partnership size/ scope of work	3	33

**Understanding Partnership Failure**

Lastly participants were asked to talk about the primary contributors to partnership failure capturing 5% (n=56) of total comments. Table 11 shows that topics

included lack of strategy (n=8), lack of trust (n=6), change in personnel (n=6) and lack of governance (n=3). Lack of strategy with eight of the nine participants aligned with the importance of strategy second only to the discussion of the primary topic of governance. One participant shared “ I think the lack of connection at the strategy level is the number failure mode.” Another participant offered the following reason for partnership failure in order of importance: “Unclear objectives, unclear governance process upfront, misalignment on overall aspirations by the 2 sides and change in personnel.”

**Table 11**

***Understanding Partnership Failure***

Criteria	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)	
	Count	% of total
Lack of strategy	8	89
Lack of trust	6	67
Change in personnel	6	67
Lack of governance	3	33

**Summary**

The chapter reported the findings that emerged from the study. Using a grounded theory of qualitative interview analysis, the study identified three best practices: formal governance, strategy and stakeholder management. The study further defined the best practices by identifying their associated key tasks and/or behaviors. Formal governance included the tasks of formal reporting, decision-making, legal documentation, roles and responsibilities, and metrics/goals. Strategy included creating strategic alignment and understanding organization motivation. Lastly, Stakeholder Management included the task of internal and external reporting as well as the importance of engaging a senior management champion.

Additionally the findings generated a CSSP Governance Framework that included three general categories: structure and processes, relationships, and governance dynamics. Within each category the participants all mentioned the following tasks/behaviors as primary activities: formal governance, strategy, management practices, core business integration (for Structure and Processes), stakeholder management (for Relationships), feedback loop mechanisms and triggers for change (for Governance Dynamics). Lastly the natural tensions of trust and potential power imbalance were explored uncovering critical and often complex elements of relationships in CSSP. The next chapter provides a discussion of these results.



## Chapter 5

### Summary, Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

This research project was an exploration of Cross-Sector Social Partnerships (CSSP) from the perspective of the corporate partner. The study attempted to answer the question: Are there consistent best practices in CSSP governance? Bringing two or more organizations together to help solve a mutual problem creates the possibility for creativity and innovation that cannot be found by working alone. However, Huxham and Vangen (2005) caution that working together is a serious resource-consuming activity and should only be considered when the stakes are really worth pursuing.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section will discuss the conclusions and interpretations derived from the research study. The second section is a discussion of the conceptual framework that helped define the primary activities related to governance practices that emerged from the research. Comparisons of how the findings relate to literature will also be included. Next, the limitations of this study are identified. Lastly, the chapter ends with a discussion of recommendations and future research possibilities.

#### Conclusions and Interpretations

**Best practices.** A review of the research data and an examination of the study's key findings led to the identifying three best practices. By definition cross-sector social partnerships have multiple stakeholders with different cultures, backgrounds and organizational purpose. When coming together to work on a problem it was first found that identifying and agreeing on a common strategy is an antecedent to the partnership formation process and has to be a collaborative process. Participants agreed that without

knowing the strategy first it is impossible to design an appropriate governance model that will achieve shared goals and produce the desired results. Zadek and Radovich (2006) support this conclusion stating that organizations entering into a partnership must make a collaborative agreement based on synergistic goals and opportunities that address a particular issue that a single organization cannot accomplish on its own. Westley and Vredenburg (1997) also agree, stressing participants who choose to form a partnership must first successfully identify the problem, which includes finding a common definition and making a joint commitment to collaborate.

Second, findings revealed formal governance as a best practice identifying the need for a written agreement and partnership structure that best supports the intent and complexity of the partnership. This research showed the most common written agreement was a memorandum of understanding that outlined roles and responsibilities, decision-making processes, metrics/goals and performance measurement requirements. Schirmer (2013) agrees noting a critical component of partnership governance is monitoring progress and measuring performance to achieve common goals. Participants also asserted different forms of control depending on desired outcomes. Bryson et al. (2006) discusses the three types of governance structures: (a) self-governing (primary structure amongst the participants), (b) lead organization providing the major decision-making and coordination activities, or (c) partnership administrative organization overseeing partnership affairs. This research indicated that project management activities did not require a separate formal governance structure, instead relying on the general rules outlined by the partnership. Project activities were tactical and focused on execution of work plans requiring managers to be flexible and make changes as needed. Provan and

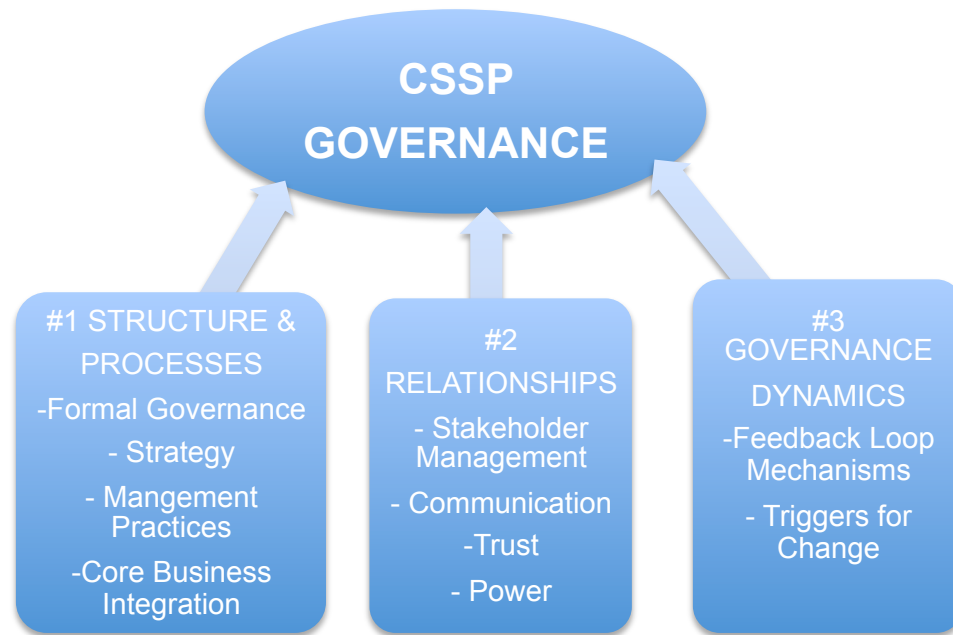
Kenis (2005) support this finding, highlighting the need for flexibility in a partnership to perform key functions including comprehensive project planning as environmental conditions such as adding new members frequently happens.

Third, findings showed Stakeholder Management to be a best practice underscoring the importance of accountability and performance to all stakeholders. Key activities included partnership reporting, senior management support and local partner engagement. Evans et al (2004) and Schirmer (2013) agree with this finding, supporting the necessity to ensure accountability to all stakeholders through monitoring progress, measuring performance, and engaging the right people within the organization to achieve common goals.

**CSSP governance framework.** Participants were asked to validate the themes and definitions that emerged from the interview process. Eight of the nine participants responded, confirming the accuracy of the data. The framework that emerged from the study included three primary categories: (a) Structure and Processes, (b) Relationships, and (c) Governance Dynamics. Within each category the following tasks/behaviors were identified as primary activities: formal governance, strategy, management practices, and core business integration (for Structure and Processes), stakeholder management (for Relationships), feedback loop mechanisms and triggers for change (for Governance Dynamics; see Figure 1).

**Structure and processes.** The study showed strategic alignment and partnership governance clearly helps corporate partners manage the added complexity of working with heterogeneous stakeholders. Additionally the research uncovered the growing importance of building corporate responsibility into the organization's core business

model. Examples include senior management support and sustainability goal allocation increased the likelihood of positive outcomes.



**Figure 1**

***CSSP Governance***

**Relationships.** Study findings also revealed the need to develop strong relationships that can withstand the inevitable misunderstandings and disagreements inherent in CSSPs. Previous research found that real and meaningful partnerships could only be established through development of social relations, through commitment and mutual trust and through establishing mutual understanding and consideration (Grabher, 1993; Kjaer et al., 2003; Schaltegger et al., 2003). Participants also confirmed the importance of trust in relationships, highlighting the need for delivering on commitments and transparency between partners. Nidumolu et al (2014) supported this, noting that building and maintaining trust is an ongoing practice foundational to every other practice during a collaborative project. A surprising result from this research was the discussion of

power, a potential source of partnership tension. Instead of power, participants talked in terms of creating equality through the decision-making process and offering expertise and leadership where needed. These statements differed from literature where discussion of large power imbalances were viewed as problematic because they may lead partners into political or opportunistic behavior that can serve one or both partners' interest at the expense of the partnership (Doh & Teegen, 2002; Parker & Selsky, 2004). Perhaps the participants in this study found that creating equality was a way to mitigate power imbalances.

**Governance dynamics.** This study found that participants depended heavily on feedback loop mechanisms such as meetings, reports, and communication to manage the demands of the partnership over time. This research also revealed that participants are willing to make changes to the governance model if there are clear triggers that warrant the change. However, participants in this study also noted that changes do not happen automatically and proper documentation is required. Participants noted that partnership efforts are under more scrutiny with the growing importance of their contribution to corporate sustainability goals and sustainability reporting.

### **Study Limitations**

There were several limitations in this study. First, the sample size was small as it proved to be a significant challenge to secure participation of multinational corporations. Second, it is important to remember that the study was structured to understand the viewpoint of the corporate partner in CSSPs. The framework and best practices may not apply to all CSSPs. They also may differ if the viewpoint was one of the non-profit partner(s). Third; an effort was made to get participants who worked in the same

functional area of the corporation in order to gain a deeper understanding of best practices in a single area. However, individuals came from different areas of the organization including corporate responsibility, environmental stewardship, supply chain, and corporate foundation; each with different perspectives and motivations. Additionally the original intent of the study was to gain perspective from individuals working at multiple levels within an organization, however 8 of the 9 participants were senior managers. Lastly, the coded samples were subject to the researcher's interpretations. In addition to the researcher, two individuals did code the same interview sample reaching an average of 80% agreement.

### **Recommendations and Future Implications**

Corporations that participated in this research are clearly committed to Corporate Responsibility in its many forms; CSSPs are only one mechanism in their business model. Though this inquiry provided some interesting findings, selecting participants from a single functional area within a corporation would provide deeper insights into one specific area's best practices. There could be tremendous value in sharing best practices across functions within the same organization.

The participants readily agreed that although CSSPs are complex and problems are inevitable, additional research to understand positive problem solving that fosters creativity and innovation will equip partners with more tools that lead to success. Diving deeper into the components of innovation would also add to future research efforts.

Additionally, more study is needed on how positive CSSP and Corporate Responsibility efforts add to a corporation's competitive advantage. Elements in the research might include the following: (a) market share, (b) profitability, (c) corporate

culture, ability to attract top talent, and (d) understanding corporate reputation in terms of credibility, legitimacy, and proximity to the customer.

Finally, further research on the three primary components of the conceptual framework of CSSP partnership governance would be beneficial to validate the study's findings as well as additional research on factors that would add to increasing positive results.

### **Conclusion**

Globalization has created opportunity for corporations as they expand into new markets all over the world. With this opportunity comes tremendous responsibility as the realization grows that there are finite resources in the communities where they choose to live and work. Additionally, government and civil society are placing more demands on business to do their part to create a sustainable future. No longer an option, corporations have begun to address these issues through the integration of Corporate Responsibility and sustainability efforts into their core business strategy. Although not easy, a corporation can make a conscious decision to drive holistic change, improve industry standards, and change people's lives.

One piece of the Corporate Responsibility puzzle is the CSSP. Although complex, CSSPs are versatile and can be implemented in many different contexts such as responsible sourcing, social initiatives or environmental stewardship. The key to CSSP success rests in three things: (a) Build a governance model that supports Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability efforts, ensuring accountability and performance, (b) Insist on strategic alignment with partners, and (c) Operate at a level of transparency that is clearly evident in relationships with your partners and the public at large.

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## **Appendix A: GRI Standards**

## **About Global Reporting Initiative**

GRI is an international independent organization that helps businesses; governments and other organizations understand and communicate the impact of business on critical sustainability issues such as climate change, human rights, corruption and many others.

### **Pioneer of sustainability reporting**

We have pioneered sustainability reporting since the late 1990s, transforming it from a niche practice to one now adopted by a growing majority of organizations.

GRI's Sustainability Reporting Standards are foundational to this success. With thousands of reporters in over 90 countries, GRI provides the world's most widely used standards on sustainability reporting and disclosure, enabling businesses, governments, civil society and citizens to make better decisions based on information that matters. In fact, 93% of the world's largest 250 corporations report on their sustainability performance.

### **Vision, Mission and Beliefs**

Our vision is to create a future where sustainability is integral to every organization's decision-making process.

Our mission is to empower decision makers everywhere, through our sustainability standards and multi-stakeholder network, to take action towards a more sustainable economy and world.

We believe:

- In the power of a multi-stakeholder process and inclusive network
- Transparency is a catalyst for change
- Our standards empower informed decision making
- A global perspective is needed to change the world
- Public interest should drive every decision an organization makes

*<https://www.globalreporting.org/information/about-gri/Pages/default.aspx>*



## **Benefits of reporting**

An effective sustainability reporting cycle, which includes a regular program of data collection, communication, and responses, should benefit all reporting organizations, both internally and externally.

### **Internal benefits**

Internal benefits for companies and organizations can include:

- Increased understanding of risks and opportunities
- Emphasizing the link between financial and non-financial performance
- Influencing long term management strategy and policy, and business plans
- Streamlining processes, reducing costs and improving efficiency
- Benchmarking and assessing sustainability performance with respect to laws, norms, codes, performance standards, and voluntary initiatives
- Avoiding being implicated in publicized environmental, social and governance failures
- Comparing performance internally, and between organizations and sectors

### **External benefits**

External benefits of sustainability reporting can include:

- Mitigating – or reversing – negative environmental, social and governance impacts
- Improving reputation and brand loyalty
- Enabling external stakeholders to understand the organization's true value, and tangible and intangible assets
- Demonstrating how the organization influences, and is influenced by, expectations about sustainable development

See more at: <https://www.globalreporting.org/information/sustainability-reporting/Pages/reporting-benefits.aspx#sthash.ghqPGRo6.dpuf>

## **Appendix B: Interview Protocol**

## Interview Protocol

### **Definitions**

#### **Cross Sector Social Partnership**

Two or more organizations that enter into a collaborative agreement based on: 1) synergistic goals and opportunities that address particular issues that a single organization cannot accomplish on its own, and 2) whose individual organization cannot purchase the appropriate resources or competencies through a market transaction. For purposes of this research partnerships can be in the following arenas: business-non-profit, business-government, and business-non-government organizations (NGOs).

#### **Governance**

Structures, processes, rules and traditions through which decision making power that determines actions is exercised, and so accountabilities are manifested and actualized. Structures refer to the rules and resources people use and processes cover the behavior and actions of individuals. These structures and processes cover formal structures, statutes, administrative guidelines, and informal exercise of judgment by numerous actors involved in policy and program implementation.

#### **Corporate Sustainability**

Corporate Sustainability is a business approach that creates long-term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risks deriving from economic, environmental and social developments. In this context corporate sustainability is based on two guiding principles:

- Sustainable business practices are critical to the creation of long-term shareholder value in an increasingly resource-constrained world. And
- Sustainability factors represent opportunities and risks that competitive companies must address.

#### **Overview of the Process**

- Conducting interviews regarding Cross-Sector Social Partnerships (CSSP) in order to learn if there are consistent best practices regarding project governance.
- The following types of individuals will be interviewed to gain perspective of project governance through multiple levels within the company
  - Sustainability Executive that deals directly with partnership governance
  - Partnership Manager
  - Project Manager
- The questions are designed to identify themes and consistent actions used in project governance.
- Key practices will be put in an easily understandable framework highlighting different phases of project governance and commonalities across industries.
- All information you provide will be confidential and reported at the aggregate, summary level only.

## Questions

### **Background Questions**

- What is your job title and describe your job role within the company?
  - How long have you worked in your current job?
  - What was your background that qualified you for your current role?
  - How long have you worked at your company?

### **General Framework Questions**

#### **What is the formal governance structure for the partnership?**

- Legal, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or Informal

#### **Consistent governance practices in CSSP project management**

- What works best?
- Does governance change throughout the partnership lifecycle? Beginning, middle, and end.
  - How is governance adaptable / negotiable?
  - Describe a feedback loop mechanism that allows for ‘real time’ change that would increase the likelihood for a positive outcome for the partnership.
- Gaps that you see

#### **How is governance used to satisfy multiple stakeholders? Explain the difference between the uses of governance on an internal vs. external basis?**

- Decision-making
- Goal Alignment
- Conflict Resolution / Competing priorities
- Reporting (GRI Standards)
- Metrics

#### **How does corporate governance influence partnership and/or project governance?**

- Senior Leadership Support
- Constraints
- Other

#### **How do you build and sustain trust in a partnership?**

- How do you build trust in individual relationships, internally and externally? Balance between time vs. efficiency? Can you give me some examples?

#### **Power levers: Financial, Legitimacy, Strategic Allies, Other**

- How do you use governance mechanisms to manage the potential imbalance of power? Can you give me some examples?

**Time Permitting**

**Describe any differences between ‘documented’ and ‘actual’ governance? Tell me more**

**How does governance add to the sustainability of the partnership/project?**

**What are the primary contributors to partnership failure? Lack of or too much governance? Can you give me some examples?**

## **Appendix C: Research Project Proposal**

## Research Project Proposal

### Project Information

<b>Name of Organization</b>	<b>Pepperdine University</b> Graziadio School of Business and Management
<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Cross-Sector Social Partnerships (CSSP)</b> Study of Project Governance
<b>Project Summary</b>	Data Collection for this Research Project is required in connection with earning a Masters of Science Degree in Organization Development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data will be collected from interviews, company sustainability report, and company and partner websites.</li> <li>• Data will be coded and analyzed for the purpose of generating theory. The theory will be developed inductively from the data collected.</li> </ul> <p>The final Research Project Report will be provided to participants.</p>
<b>Time Required</b>  thirty (30)	Eight (8) hours maximum Participant: one-hour initial interview, possible minute follow-up Q&A
<b>Number of Participants</b>	Three (3)– Five (5) employees
<b>Project Time Frame</b>	Three (3) months (includes initial interview and potential follow up Q&A session)
<b>Prepared By</b>	Lizbeth Landon MSOD Candidate, 2016
<b>Attached Documentation</b>	Interview Protocol and Questions Optional Partner Survey Research Concept Map
<b>Project Contact</b>	Lizbeth Landon LLandon58@gmail.com (949) 922-9998

### **Project Background and Summary**

The study began with the extensive review of Cross-Sector Social Partnership (CSSP) governance that appeared in research literature over the past three decades. Although there was substantial information on corporate and partnership governance there was little research done that highlighted the point of view of the corporate partner. This gap in the literature influenced the decision to use qualitative analysis and the design of the interview protocol seeking to understand how the corporate partner uses governance to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

There will be a minimum of three participant companies with three – five individual participants from each organization. Companies will be selected from different industries to increase the likelihood of determining consistent best practices. Prospective companies have the following characteristics:

- Headquartered in the USA or Europe,
- Majority are public corporations,
- 175,000 employees (average),
- 125 years old (average)
- 145 countries of operation (average).

Interview candidates will come from multiple levels within the organization focusing on the influence that corporate and partnership governance has on the project level. Ideal interview candidates will include a sustainability executive, two (2) partnership managers, and two (2) project managers.

### **Research Questions**

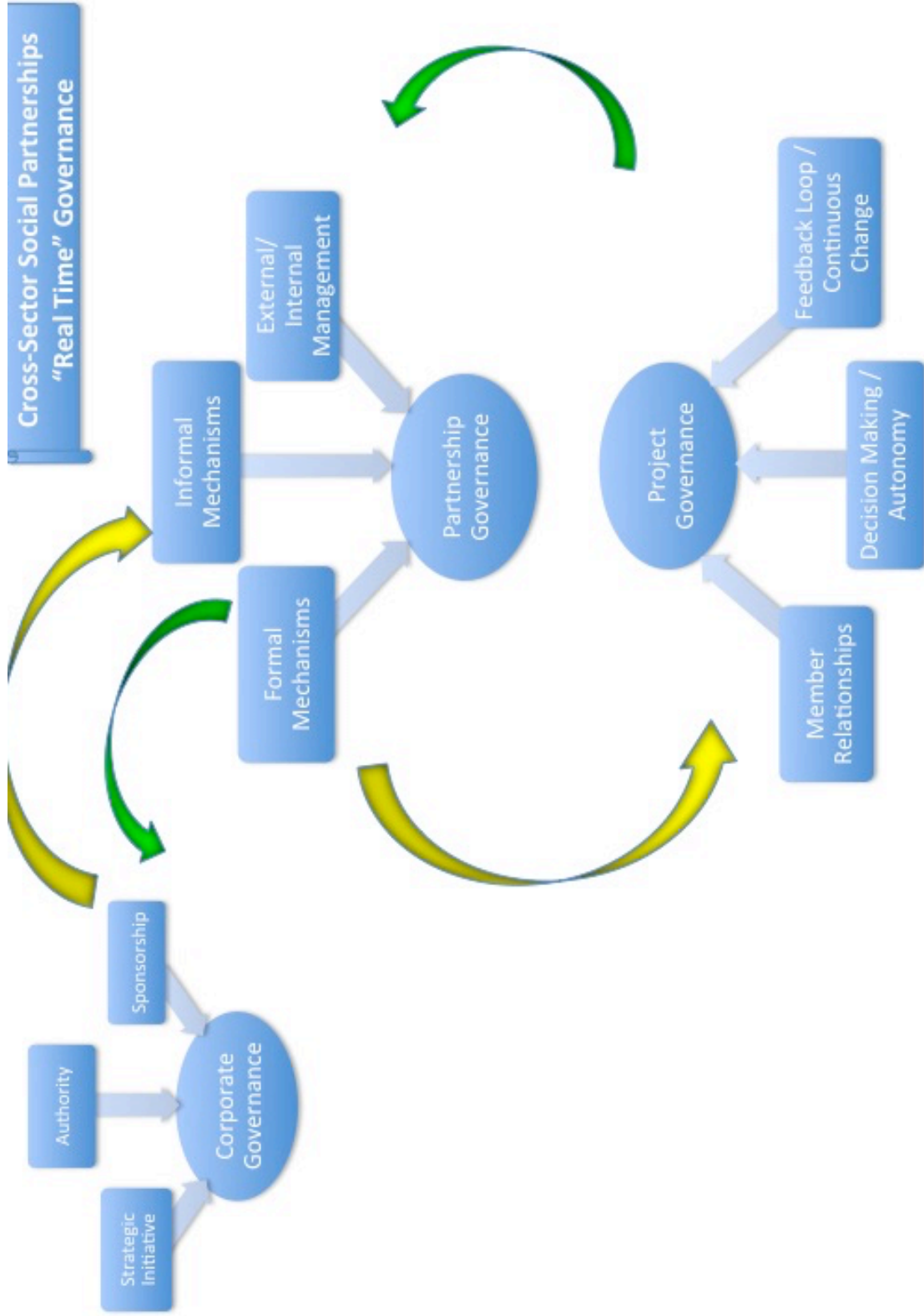
- Are their consistent best practices in CSSP partnership governance?
  - What governance practices work best?
  - How do project governance practices change during partnership lifecycle?
  - How does governance manage the potential tensions inherent in CSSPs?

### **Confidentiality**

All participant responses will be kept confidential being reported in aggregate. Questions are designed to identify themes and consistent actions used in project governance. The data and audio recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer in the principal investigator's place of residence. The information will be stored for a minimum of three years, after which all of it will be destroyed. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. Following professional transcription multiple researchers will test inter-rater reliability by reading the interviews and performing a line-by-line analysis highlighting key concepts, practices, or descriptors. The concepts will be put into an excel spreadsheet to allow for easy manipulation and analysis of the data. The code list will be destroyed upon completion of the project. An abstract of study results will be provided to participants for their use.



**Appendix D: CSSP Concept Map**



**Appendix E: Participant Cover Letter and Participant Consent Form**

### Participant Cover Letter

Dear Participant,

As you may know, corporations today have evolved to be a major influence in our lives. For example, of the 100 largest economies in the world 51 are corporations while only 49 are countries, based on a comparison of corporate sales and country GDPs. Right or wrong, social movements routinely take aim at corporations. Targeting companies for such things as environmental degradation or violation of animal rights. Despite power and controversy, business and society are inextricably linked – in the long term neither can thrive without the strength of the other.

In the 1960s the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerged starting the discussion of the legal and moral obligations of corporations to society at large. Over time CSR and sustainability has evolved to define a pattern through which companies aim to achieve enhanced international principals and a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives addressing global concerns and expectations.

I am seeking your participation in an important research project to explore the role of project governance in Cross-Sector Social Partnerships (CSSP) throughout the partnership lifecycle. Knowledge gained from this study will help me determine if there are consistent best practices in project governance that lead to higher rates of partnership sustainability.

Your participation will involve a telephone interview with me that should last no longer than 1-hour. The interview questions will focus on your experiences related to project management of CSSPs. Additionally, there may be a 30-minute follow-up Q&A session for clarification or additional information that is needed to complete my research.

All responses are kept confidential. Only aggregate data will be reported in the thesis. Interview data will be password-protected on my personal computer for a three-year period, after which all of it will be destroyed.

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty. You have the option to answer only the questions you feel comfortable responding to in the interview process.

If you have any questions regarding the study or interview process, please call Liz Landon at (949) 922-9998. This study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Pepperdine University and meets all requirements regarding the university's procedures.

Thank you for your participation and support!

Appreciatively,

Liz Landon

Candidate, Masters of Science in Organization Development  
Pepperdine University

**Participant Consent Form**  
**PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY**  
**GRAZIADIO SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT**

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

**Cross Sector Social Partnerships  
Study of Project Governance**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by **Lizbeth Landon, MSOD Candidate, 2016** and **Dr. Ann Feyerherm, Faculty Advisor** at Pepperdine University, because you are **an employee of a multinational corporation that operates in emerging markets. Also, you are involved either directly or indirectly in the management of cross-sector social partnerships and are intimately familiar with the role of governance in managing individual projects.** Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research study is to determine if there are consistent best practices in cross-sector social partnership specifically in the area of project governance. The questions are designed to identify themes and consistent actions. Key practices will be put in an easily understandable framework highlighting different phases of project governance and commonalities across industries. This study is conducted by and for Pepperdine University. All research conducted is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science in Organization Development.

**STUDY PROCEDURES**

If you decide to volunteer in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews with the researcher. The first interview will last approximately one hour. You will be asked questions about your experiences related to managing cross-sector social partnerships focusing on different aspects of project governance. The interview will be done via WebEx with the researcher taking notes and recording the interview. There is a possibility of a second interview lasting approximately thirty minutes for a question and answer session if the researcher needs clarification or additional information. The research will take place over a three-month period. All tape recordings will be stored in a secure place during the research and then destroyed. No names will be used to identify anyone who takes part in the interviews. Your responses will be pooled with others and summarized only in an attempt to see themes, trends, and/or patterns. Only summarized information will be reported. No comments will be attributed to any individual.

Additionally, each participant will be asked if they are willing to have at least one partner fill out an anonymous five-question survey that will be returned to him/her. Questions are related to project governance requesting an answer of disagree, agree, or strongly agree. Responses can be given to the researcher either verbally or in writing. *This is voluntary and not a condition of the study.*

### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no apparent risks, costs, or financial incentives now or in the future to participate in this study.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to society which include:

- The findings of this study hopes to provide corporations with additional understanding of the phases of project governance providing insights on how to effectively leverage governance in the beginning, middle and end of a project.
- The results of the study also aspire to create a “living “ framework that is flexible and adaptable resulting in “real time governance” that is able to meet the rapidly changing needs of project participants.
- The study hopes to clarify the competing priorities of participants from different sectors and how project managers can significantly improve partnership outcomes.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I will keep your records for this study *confidential* as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Pepperdine’s University’s Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

All participant responses will be kept confidential being reported in aggregate. Questions are designed to identify themes and consistent actions used in project governance. The data and audio recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer in the principal investigator’s place of residence. The information will be stored for a minimum of three years following the study, after which all of it will be destroyed. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. Following professional transcription multiple researchers will test inter-rater reliability by reading the interviews and performing a line-by-line analysis highlighting key concepts, practices, or descriptors. The concepts will be put into an excel spreadsheet to allow for easy manipulation and analysis of the data. The code list will be destroyed upon completion of the project. An abstract of study results will be provided to participants for their use.

### **ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION**

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items, which you feel comfortable. Your relationship with your employer will not be affected whether you participate or not in this study.

### **INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact **Liz Landon at LLandon58@ gmail.com or Dr. Ann Feyerherm at Ann.Feyerherm@pepperdine.edu** if I have any other questions or concerns about this research. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Dr. Thelma Bryant-Davis, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional School Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB) at Pepperdine University, via email at [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu) or at 310-568-5753.

### **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Thelma Bryant-Davis, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional School Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

### **SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

### **AUDIO-RECORDED**

- I agree to be audio-recorded*
- I do not want to be audio-recorded*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my judgment the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntarily and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

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Liz Landon

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Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

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Date