

Scoping the Territory

What the Civil Society Forum is all about

Context

Civil Society faces profound organizational and leadership challenges as we enter a new era. Government does not and cannot have all the answers. What role can Civil Society play to close the gap in the changing relationship between state and citizen?

Building a stronger civil society requires us to tackle complex problems together, and the Civil Society Forum has been set up to enable leaders to engage with these challenges and make the most of the opportunities. The Forum will provide an open, supportive space for strategy and its implementation, collaboration and innovation.

The Forum will specifically support joint strategic thinking and act as a catalyst for joint and individual action, and more resilient, sustainable partnerships. It will act cooperatively, bringing people together and not 'owning' thinking but sharing ideas and perspectives and using resources creatively.

It will tap a vast pool of experience and expertise and belong to all who participate in it. Working together we will broker different needs and interests to make the most of shared agendas and produce synergies between organizations.

Themes

- Maximising collective impact
- Achieving resilience and sustainability of services
- Doing things differently, delivering with less
- Managing redesign of services and organizations
- Collaborative working – working within and across organizational boundaries

What we want to happen

- We would like organizations to be more strategic and proactive in shaping the environment in which they operate, to articulate a bolder vision of the future, and develop their confidence and skills in embracing complexity, risk and uncertainty. What would participants need to realise this ambition? What are the insights, approaches, tools, techniques and resources that can enable change to happen?
- Enabling people to share their experience and learning with others and work together on joint initiatives across the civil society sector.

CSF Role = Making connections;

- Perceiving what is happening; surfacing pertinent things.
- Identifying the most appropriate development activities. Out of the “busyness”.
- Enabling people to get to the point of being ready to take bold action (and go beyond the point).
- Complementing and reinforcing the work of other vehicles / channels for a change in the civil society sector and across sectors.

Main focus areas:

1. Government policy – relating to Civil Society. e.g. Public service reform, Big Society, who is promoting this, what is the Cabinet view of where this is going? What are other people's views on where this is going?
2. The bigger picture: how the world works – How we address systemic issues e.g. How to sustain a local economy? Local multipliers, etc. Aspects of the benefits programme, what works and what doesn't? The advice system
3. "How to..." – strategies, skills, processes, culture
4. Subset – Governance and legal forms
5. Case studies – pulling together the above

Position Statement

One of the main reasons why the Civil Society Forum will make a distinctive contribution is that most (Western) societies have a very sketchy understanding of what constitutes effective collaborative leadership, and we are limited by our current structures and mind-sets to produce better collaboration.

Now more than ever we need to bring on a new generation of collaborative leaders who deliver on social outcomes that require high levels of public participation, and leaders to be more confident and competent in working across organizational and sector boundaries and managing the consequences.

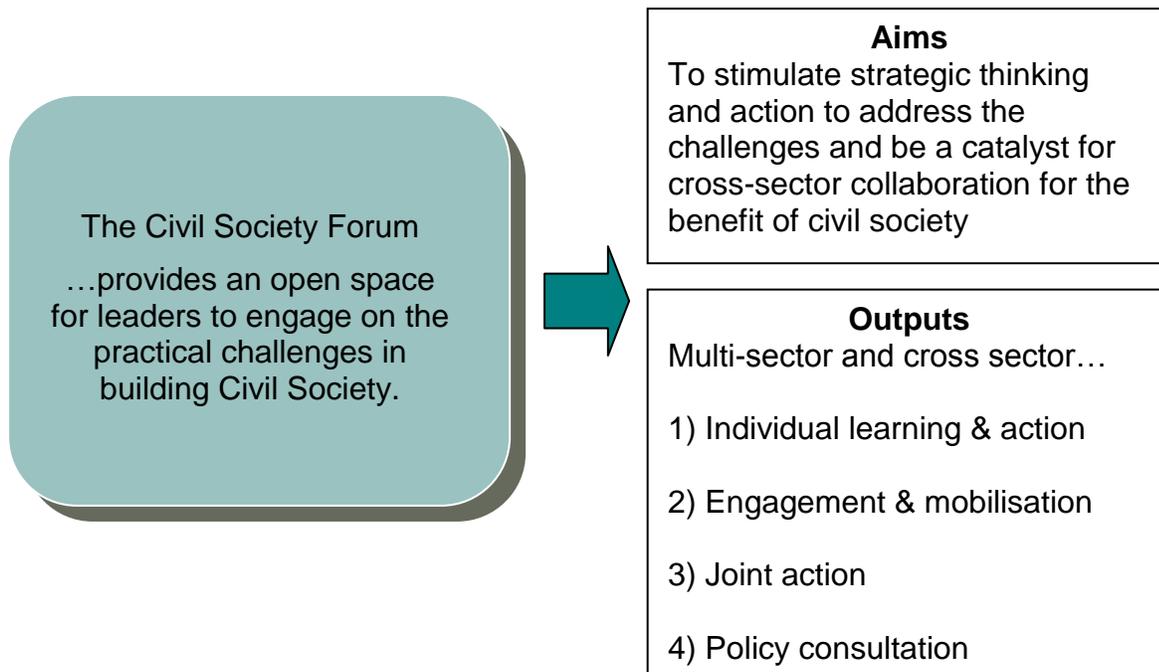
Civil society is in a unique position to demonstrate that it can act on a real social need by harnessing voluntary and paid resources and optimising a combined commitment across more than a single organization. Leadership needs to be re-thought, re-framed and refreshed so that the emphasis shifts from only fighting one's own corner and delivering on one part of the solution to synchronising one's contribution to support and improve the contribution of others. This means actively managing the complexity and risk that greater collaboration inherently generates, and receiving the support and challenge of the peer-group to deliver a sustainable transformation.

Lucian Hudson, Co-founder, 23 March 2011

Endorsements

- ❖ *"As organizations struggle with the need to transform and reconfigure themselves in the coming months... This is precisely the time when we need what you're beginning to pull together", Steve Johnson, Chief Executive Advice UK*
- ❖ *I think that the work of the Learning Network – which would have been a useful resource to share ideas and hear about the latest thinking in "normal" times – is of vital importance in these times of dramatic change, Mark Napier, Managing Director, Centre for Public Innovation.*
- ❖ *"I have really appreciated the excellent work that you've been leading... which has the potential to help transform organizational development and impact in the sector", Charlotte Gardiner, Big Lottery Fund*
- ❖ *We now have real momentum and an invaluable asset that the sector can further build on", Lucian Hudson, former Director of Communications, FCO and two other Whitehall departments., Chair of Collaborative Strategies Network, Partner and MD, Cornerstone Global Associates*

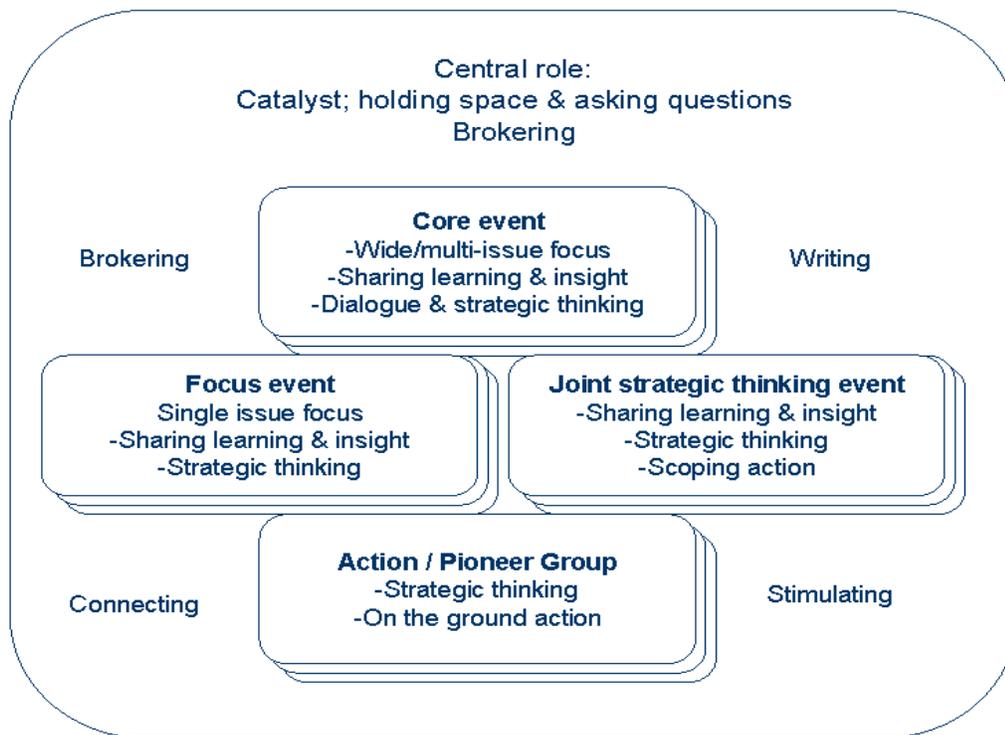
Civil Society Forum - Overview



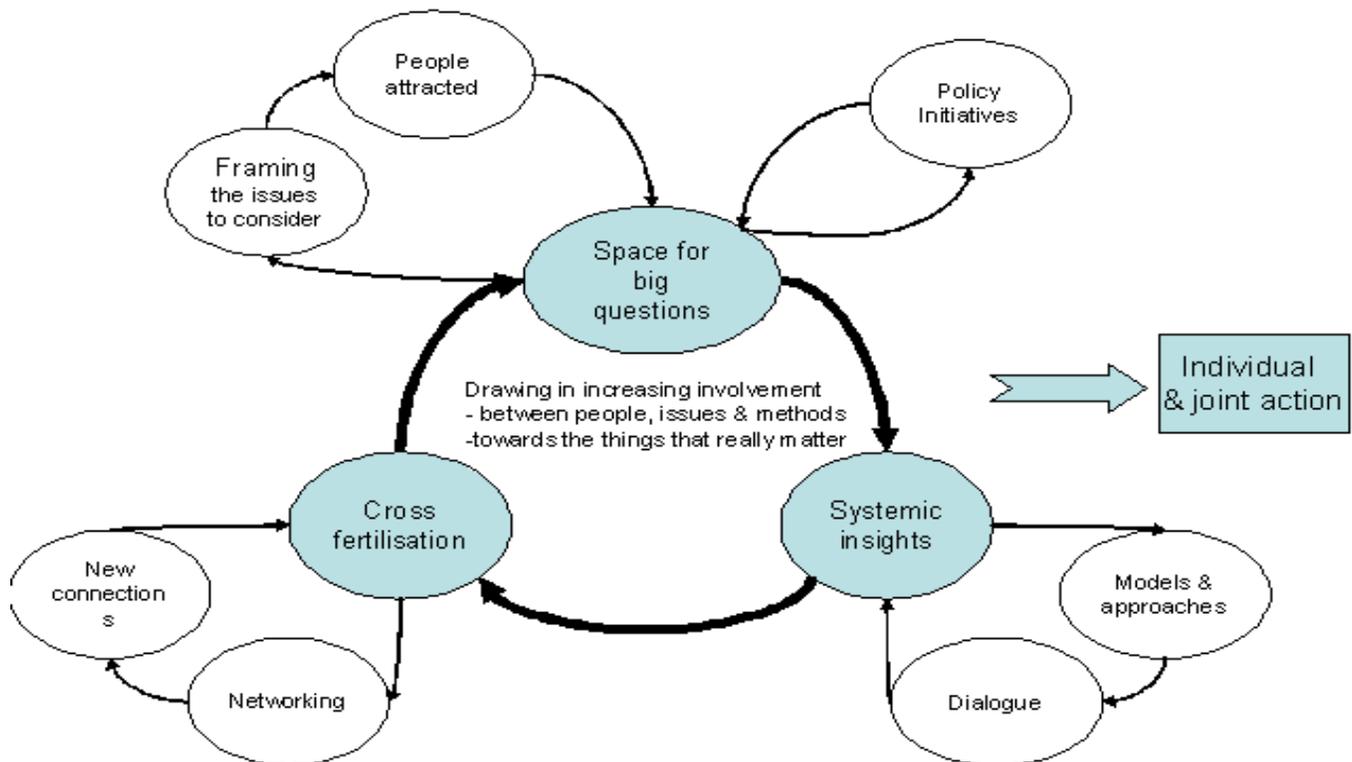
Civil Society Forum - The Gap we are seeking to address



The Civil Society Forum – Role / Fora



**Catalysing learning, strategic thinking and action
– How the Collaborative Learning Network achieves this**



Overview - Collaborative Learning Network; The forerunner to The Civil Society Forum

	Oct2010- Mar2011	Vision for CSF
Learning Network events (standard)	7	24+
Strategic thinking events	1 + 1 spin off	6+
Think tank work & policy input	Range of work	Develop
Training & other events		Develop

Speakers Lunch

Speakers & invited guests
Lunch / discussion

**Collaborative Learning Network
Core Events - Sample Programme**

Networking	30 mins
Workshop / Presentation 1 or 2	90 – 120 mins
Group discussion / strategic thinking - Small group, whole group discussion - "What now?"	45 – 90 mins
Networking / Discussion	60 – 120 mins



Outputs (& examples to date)

- 1) Individual learning & action
 Good feedback; "Helpful in addressing challenges of my job" consistently ticked.
 "Very informative", "Fresh, alive & invigorating"
- Plus, more unusually...
- 2) Engagement & mobilisation
 e.g. Speakers collaborating - in strategic thinking, writing papers & planning action on: a) 're-inventing delivery of state services', b) 'delivering with less', c) 'enabling sector & cross-sector collaboration'
- 3) Joint action
 e.g. Pioneer group – spin off collaboration between CLN members & others aimed at innovation in commissioning/investing/designing & delivering services
- 4) Policy consultation
 e.g. Commissioning Reform Paper - spin off discussion & teleconfs informing responses by CLN members & their networks

Feedback from participants:
"Very informative"
"Fresh, alive & invigorating"
"Excellent"

Previous Seminars – examples of the sort of seminar possible as part of The Forum

Massive change on virtually no money: a study in collaborative working.

Speaker: Nicholas Colloff, Head of Strategy & Innovation at Oxfam

The art of collaboration. The session will focus on how we need to work collaboratively to deliver the best outcome for the users and funders, and a good experience for the service deliverers. John will explain what makes collaboration productive – and what gets in the way - and will explore strategies for getting there. The session will draw on case studies and explain the paradigms underpinning successful collaboration.

Speaker: Professor John Carlisle, Chair of Cooperation Works (*John is a recognised authority on collaboration and organizational transformation whose work has been referenced in the International Management journal and the Harvard Business Review.*)

Managing complex delivery; An approach to designing non-hierarchical structures to organise & generate synergy within and between organizations (building on the Viable Systems Model)

Jon Walker, Consultant & Social Activist & SCiO member (Study of Complexity in Organizations)

Method in the face of Madness. An explanation of the approach used to address threats faced by Advice centres. Improving service to customers whilst reducing costs

Speaker: Stephen Johnson, Chief Executive of Advice UK

Doing more with less resource. How to go about reconciling different agendas; exploiting synergies and reducing duplication, valuing the purpose & identity of the organization whilst tapping opportunities to work with and through others.

Speaker: Lucian Hudson, ex Director of Communications, FCO and two other Whitehall departments, & Chair of Collaborative Strategies Network, Partner and MD. Cornerstone Global Associates

Responding to the smaller state. Managing the tension between public service contracting and the need for innovation.

This session will explore the shift in the vision from New Labour to the coalition government and what it means for the third sector. There has been a clear shift in direction with the new government from a managerial and hands-on approach to an emphasis on achieving outcomes with no preference as to who delivers services. This session will consider the challenge presented by the roll back of state provision and what it takes to be innovative in the face of such challenge.

Speaker: Mark Napier, Managing Director, Centre for Public Innovation (*The Centre for Public Innovation is a social enterprise which works with voluntary sector organizations who deliver a wide range of public services.*)

Collaborating for public sector delivery. This session will explore how civil society organizations can deliver with greater impact through the creation of collaborative approaches and thereby gain access to larger public sector contracts. We will explore the benefits and pitfalls for delivery organizations, give practical advice on how to approach collaborative working and explore different models to enable this.

Speaker: Michael O'Toole, Chief Executive of 3SC (*3SC is a not-for-profit partnership which was established to bid for large public sector contracts on behalf of voluntary and not-for-profit delivery organizations.*)

Rethinking services and reducing costs with 'systems thinking'. Many organizations in the public sector are using 'Systems' and 'lean' thinking to help them rethink their services and reduce costs. What exactly is it, and how could it help us?

Speaker: James Crawford, Director of Touchpoint Change, Conference Chair at the Deming Transformation Forum & previously Interim Director of Transformation at Cheshire County Council

Improving knowledge-enabled decision-making - Let's use the crisis to get to something better. Christine will present a framework to help build organizational decision making capability and help move from a reactive to a proactive mode. The approach will be demonstrated in a participative workshop session applying the model.

Speaker: Dr Christine Van Winkelen, Henley Business School

Body of Knowledge – Theme: Improving organizational, cross organizational and cross sectoral effectiveness in delivering ‘civil society’

The Forum aims to introduce thinking and approaches that will be useful in addressing the critical challenges. The table captures some of what I consider important to bring to the table:

Key activities	Strategies, methods & skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver more with less • Redesign of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodical approaches to improvement (of efficiency & effectiveness) e.g. continuous improvement & list below • Service redesign Process reengineering/ improvement/redesign, lean, continuous improvement, lean & other transformation approaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross sector redesign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced level service redesign e.g. As above, viable systems approach, whole scale change • Collaborative strategy & management Drawing on open space & systemic improvement approaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground up working, supporting empowerment in organizations & communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participative management (& improvement) practices Drawing on open space & systemic improvement approaches • Emergent leadership thinking e.g. systemic leadership, servant leadership, community building, from ‘masterplans’ to ‘organic order’/participative management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering public services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Payment by results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing outcomes & outcome-based management • Managing the tension between delivering contracts and drawing on strengths of the sector Combining best from sector; innovative, bottom up, organic working with additional strategies to support operating challenges

The approaches support localism and sustainable development. The approaches will help address the challenges faced including the pressure to adopt the business like requirements of public sector contracting and external accountability whilst helping preserve the good facets of current working.

Most of the above methods could be seen as falling under the broad heading and stable of approaches termed ‘systems thinking’. Systems thinking; broadly viewed can be is the discipline for understanding the structures that underlie complex situations and intervening in ways that are sensitive to overall ‘well-being’ and ‘wholeness’ . These can be considered ‘win-win’ approaches to business / organization. This addresses the limitations of traditional business approaches which focus attention to localised success, hence are often achieved at the expense of others and even at the expense of the wider good of the whole.

Examples:

- ❖ There is increasing take up of ‘lean systems’ in the public sector and in housing associations to design services around users, to improve the flow of work and reduce waste. This draws on the Toyota Production Systems and is also termed simply ‘lean’ or by the generic term ‘systems thinking’. Lean Sigma is another variant that has been picked up within the NHS.
- ❖ The Viable Systems approach provides a framework for designing organizational structures without the need for hierarchy hence could be hugely valuable in improving cross organizational effectiveness whilst retaining localism.

The multiplier - Big Society Barter

The Forum aims and is designed to multiply the effectiveness of all the actors involved in doing their part in enabling organizational effectiveness and enabling civil society; to serve as yeast in the dough. This has already been demonstrated in the forerunner work of the Collaborative Learning Network (see the endorsements above). A further 'multiplier' mechanism is being developed and will be iteratively evolved.

In current times money is a constraint and inhibits contribution. A process of enabling people to contribute in wider ways will not only reduce the expense of running The Forum, the costs of participating in The Forum— so enabling far wider engagement – but also multiply the contribution made.

Feedback from the launch and planning event, 20th April 2011

- ❖ *“Excellent start, very stimulating and thought provoking. I feel this is a very important vehicle for learning, influencing and hopefully action”*, Nigel Newton Sawyerr, previous the Collaboration National Support Service; the BASSAC Collaborative Benefits Programme
- ❖ *“Good open discussion. It was interesting, informative and extremely thought provoking and maybe the start of some answers!”* Karen Woolley, KLIC4 Training / Chair of Oxfordshire Rural Development Council
- ❖ *“Well done on a great event & really inspirational to be connected to other likeminded people who believe in collaborative leadership!”* Jennifer Morgan, WWF / The finance Lab
- ❖ *“Felt like I was drinking from a fire hydrant,”* Phyllis SantaMaria, Micro Finance Without Borders
- ❖ *“Good thought provoking afternoon... I believe it is the future”* Simon Edwards, social entrepreneur