

Bridge
Communities for Effective Practice

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Introduction	3
Part One: Definition and Rationale of Bridge’s Communities for Effective Practice.....	3
1. Rationale	3
2. Definition.....	4
3. Differentiation	5
4. Objectives and outcomes.....	5
4.1 Contribution to the whole (systems view)	6
4.2 Creating common purpose, peer support and trust among stakeholders.....	7
4.3 Maximising resources.....	7
4.4 Spread of effective practice (horizontal integration).....	8
4.5 Vertical integration	9
5. Measurement	10
Part Two: Approach.....	13
1. Convening, ownership and attendance	13
2. Focus areas.....	16
2.1 Level of education system	16
2.2 Educational themes.....	17
2.3 Geographic spread	17
3. Methodology	18
3.1 Facilitation principles and overarching methodological framework	18
3.2 Specific facilitation approaches to achieve Bridge’s objectives	19
3.2.1 The contribution of the community to the whole system	19
3.2.2 Creating common purpose, peer support and trust among stakeholders.....	20
3.2.3 The maximising of resources by the community	21
3.2.4 The spread of effective practice (horizontal integration).....	23
3.2.5 The vertical integration of policy and practice	24
4. Order, structure and rhythm of meetings.....	25
5. Roles.....	30
6. Communication	31
7. Logistics and planning.....	32
8. Summary	32
9. Case Study.....	32

Introduction

This document is divided into two parts; first a definition and rationale for Bridge's work with communities for effective practice and second a description of the approach and methodologies used by Bridge with regard to these communities.

Part One: Definition and Rationale of Bridge's Communities for Effective Practice

1. Rationale

The mission of Bridge is to link key leverage areas in the education system with working practice, and where necessary to create working practice, in a way that optimises diversity, values and differences so that the whole is bigger than the sum of the parts. Where no innovation exists around key leverage points, Bridge will facilitate multi-sectoral innovation to create optimal solutions. Innovation in the context of Bridge is not necessarily the creation of something new, but can also mean deepening, recombining and scaling. Thus, innovation is both scaling and relational.

A key objective of Bridge is, thus, to create linkages and to spread successful practice. In order to do this, Bridge creates organising units with specific objectives that can link and spread successful practice. Bridge's strategy in this regard is the use of a **community for effective practice** approach to spread successful practice and to ensure links between policy and practice, thus ensuring both horizontal and vertical integration in the education system.

2. Definition

Bridge defines a community for effective practice as an inclusive¹, multi-stakeholder² and diverse group that is facilitated using a methodological approach³, is organised around a common set of objectives⁴, and is ultimately self-organising and self-sustaining. It is continuous⁵ in terms of relationship-building, learnings and outcomes, and its successes and outcomes are measurable. Part of its role is to define its alignment and contribution to the national education sector plan⁶ and other national and provincial strategic frameworks.

Bridge's model of scale is about connecting and spreading multiple points of successful practice through understanding and connecting their collective impact on the education system as a whole. This differs from, but is complementary to, traditional models of scale, which focus on finding particular models, and scaling them or driving scale through large policy-driven interventions.

1 Inclusive: Involvement in a multi-stakeholder engagement which aims to shift complex social problems should include those people most affected by a situation, for example, learners, parents, teachers, principals, and yet we tend to create a solution at a distance from them, thus disempowering and rendering them helpless. While the concept of inclusivity has been bought into by the development world and within donor and political agendas, it has been bastardised and blended with consultation. Consultation involves asking those affected by a problem what the solution is, but all too often leads to creating and implementing a solution independently of them. Indeed, consultation often takes place after the fact for the purposes of buy-in to an already thought-out solution. Inclusivity, on the other hand, is an ongoing process that involves the constant engagement of those affected by a problem in the solution-finding, its implementation and thus in the shifting of a social problem. Similarly, it is vital to employ a longer-term perspective in attempts to effect systemic change. It is often quicker to implement a solution, but this embracing of efficiency becomes in itself a blockage in the process. A long-term perspective which involves inclusivity and capacity-building at grass-roots level brings about levels of ownership and skill that sustain stakeholders. Failure to do this can cause projects not to live up to their potential.

2 Multi-stakeholder: If you have a complex problem, you need the views of diverse stakeholders in order to solve it. Multi-stakeholder in the education sector suggests an inclusive range of stake-holder groupings, specifically civil society, academics, business, funders, teachers, learners, principals, parents, research organisations, unions, government, etc. With Bridge, provincial government has thus far proved to be easier to access than national, and the resistance of government to be involved seems to be related to the historical tendency on the part of business to tell government what to do. Similarly, unions tend to be highly political and suspicious of traps. The Western Cape communities for effective practice have demonstrated the need for a community to have collective power in order to be listened to by government. Nevertheless, in education there seems to be an increasing awareness that all stakeholders have a role to play, and timely work has been done by civil society in the manner in which they engage government.

3 Methodological approach: There are so many dialogues and conversations happening in education, so Bridge's practice distinguishes it and Bridge needs to keep refining it and making it excellent. Bridge uses defined methodological frameworks in facilitating communities for effective practice. In addition, these methodological frameworks are expanded and refined through constant learning. These frameworks, and the refining of them, constitute the practice of Bridge.

4 A common set of objectives: This entails working with a group to be defined about objectives. A lot of civil society assumes that they can test their project, present it to government, and take it to scale. That has proven to be a myth, but it may not be a myth if collaboration takes place. Objectives need to be explicit and need to be agreed on and, if necessary, co-created by the collaborative group. It is also important that objectives go beyond a broad vision and mission, and are as defined and measurable as possible.

5 Continuous: This means that they are not one-off engagements. Bridge's approach is not a one-off meeting or dialogue, but a series of consecutive dialogues that build on each other to achieve greater impact.

6 National education sector plan and other national and provincial strategic frameworks: It is important for the community to understand how it contributes to the frameworks that are there. This is a different model of scale which involves connecting multiple things in order to bring about change. No single model is the correct one. Thus, working in collaborative communities is a different form of scale, and part of Bridge's understanding of scale is to understand how the work of communities for effective practice contributes to an overall objective.

3. Differentiation

Bridge is premised on the fact that there are numerous examples of small-scale and large-scale successful practice in the South African Education System and important conferences and dialogue sessions, as well as other processes, have taken place. These are delivered by multiple practitioners both within and outside the formal (government) system. It is important that this work continues, and Bridge seeks to partner with such conveners.

Bridge has, however, distinguished itself from other conveners of communities for effective practice, dialogues and national conferences by hosting communities for effective practice that are not one-offs, are constantly changing and alive, where there is an investment in process, and where continuity and outcomes are key. Bridge does not hold once-off dialogue processes, but has a continuous investment in process with the following features:

- Bridge communities for effective practice have defined outcomes for collaborative processes, which are measured and tracked.
- The communities are multi-stakeholder and provide a facilitative platform which has government and institutional buy-in.
- The communities operate nationally, at a district level and provincially, with linkages established among those levels. Linking different levels of the system is key to creating links between policy and practice.
- The communities are co-created and co-owned, by Bridge and members of the collaboration. Ownership ultimately shifts to members of the community itself.
- Community for effective practice facilitation follows a particular methodological approach and a structured framework and is carried out by trained process facilitators.
- Bridge is methodologically agnostic and uses and borrows from a range of methodologies and processes.

4. Objectives and outcomes

Each community has its own set of educational outcomes, for example a community for effective practice on maths and science may have an educational outcome that relates to the best practice in training maths and science teachers. A school leadership one may have an educational outcome relating to the best practice on the mentorship of school principals. There are, however, outcomes that will be consistent across the communities for effective practice and which arise by virtue of collaboration. These are:

- The contribution of the community to the whole system;
- Creating common purpose, peer support and trust among stakeholders;
- The maximising of resources by the community;
- The spread of effective practice within the community and its associated stakeholders (horizontal integration); and

- The vertical integration of policy and practice.

The key pieces of information collected by Bridge in its communities for effective practice are based on these outcomes.

4.1 Contribution to the whole (systems view)

This relates to (a) understanding how multiple players in multiple communities for effective practice interrelate and (b) helping to facilitate the creation of change at a systemic level.

1. Scaling through understanding and maximising systemic contribution, understanding reach, and aligning reach and systemic contribution with common purpose

Understanding and maximising systemic contribution

This involves understanding what level of the education system a project is working at, what particular lever of change is being worked on, and what impact is being sought or is possible. For example, a project may be providing direct services (e.g. it tutors learners on a Saturday), or it may use a particular model or methodology (e.g. it deliberately targets middle-level learners), or it may be focusing on systems change and how to strengthen the system (e.g. a systems change intervention by government when changing the curriculum). Every direct service, methodology and model has an impact on the system and understanding the levels at which projects are intervening and the change they want to bring about is vital.

Understanding reach

This involves understanding how the reach and impact of a community contribute to the national sector plan and how the community contributes to the whole education system. The information collected by the community should focus on recording the numbers of learners, teachers, principals and schools reached by the group in order to establish the reach of the particular community and then to aggregate the reach of multiple communities so as to understand in quantitative terms what the reach of communities relative to a particular goal in the national education sector plan can be.

Aligning reach and systemic contribution with common purpose

Common purpose relates to how a community for effective practice contributes to the national education sector plan, and defining and measuring both (1) alignment

to the plan and (2) contribution in terms of reach and systemic change to the education sector plan and other national and provincial strategic frameworks.

2. Understanding and reducing systemic challenges and unintended consequences

This involves documenting, being aware of and finding solutions to systemic challenges and the unintended consequences that arise from an intervention. When you intervene at one point in a system, it is logical that there may be consequences elsewhere in the system. This works like the story of the dyke; putting your hand in the dyke to stop up the hole and prevent a flood can cause a crack further along in the wall. Unintended consequences may include the unintentional propping up of the system by a community, or changes in the behaviour of the agents in the system. The SSIP programme in Gauteng has seen an example of this with the good performance of its teachers sometimes being accompanied by a deterioration of their performance in their mainstream jobs. Another example relates to the problems associated with learners on Saturday School programmes returning to school knowing more than their mainstream teachers.

It is important to be clear about the level of system the projects are working in, to be aware of the ripples that will emanate from these interventions, as well as not to be surprised by the projects' impact in the system.

4.2 Creating common purpose, peer support and trust among stakeholders

This relates to stakeholders in a community for effective practice working together in a collaborative, supportive and empathetic way. It can be seen through the following, which can be measured and tracked qualitatively:

A reduction in competition, an increase in sharing, an increase in confidence, people feeling less alone and more supported, an understanding and tolerance of different perspectives, and an understanding and reduction in power dynamics in the sector.

4.3 Maximising resources

The members of a community for effective practice will be able to achieve more with the same resources. The information collected will focus on recording:

- **Instances where there is a reduction in duplication.** An example of this is in the Western Cape's community for effective practice focused on "After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town's Township Communities", where participating community members agreed not to continue working with the

same schools in the same townships, and instead to reduce instances where they were duplicating each other's efforts. In the same group, growing collaboration between stakeholders has seen government agree to use the tutors of civil society organisations providing after-hours tuition to township learners.

- **Instances where there are effective partnerships.** Partnerships allow for the maximising of resources. Sometimes organisations working with different levers of change collaborate with each other and thereby provide a more holistic intervention. An example is the way in which bursary providers have combined with the organisations testing maths and science learners in the Western Cape. Sometimes, new partnerships are formed in a community for effective practice and this furthers educational outcomes. An example of how this is being promoted is the agreement by the Gauteng Saturday School forum to share database information focusing not only on the details of their programmes but also on the resources that their programmes need or are willing to share.
- **Instances where there is expansion of reach.** The Western Cape's community for effective practice focused on "After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town's Township Communities" saw evidence of this in the sharing of a database and information spreadsheet, which has been completed by members of the community, with the curriculum managers of the districts of the Western Cape. Through the information-collection process, the group was able to identify its reach and geographical spread, and consider how to expand on this and allow for more even distribution of activity. For example, many members of the group are working in the Metro South District while other areas have considerably less representation. This knowledge assists members to decide which areas to expand into, to understand why its members are clustering more in some districts than in others, and to approach district officers about meeting with other NGOs working in their districts.

4.4 Spread of effective practice (horizontal integration)

This point focuses on expanding what is working. It gets to the essence of practice and focuses more on what makes a project successful, rather than on what a project does. The information collected will focus on recording:

- **Learnings and approaches of the community for effective practice.** This sharing allows for more effective practice across all stakeholders. An example is the decision by the Western Cape’s community for effective practice focused on “After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town’s Township Communities” to charge for its tutoring. Charging per learner for after-hours tutoring has allowed for a better record of who is attending classes, improved learner attendance and retention, and the generating of funding for the employment of more tutors.
- **Monitoring and evaluation of particular approaches and how outputs and impact can be measured.** The Maths and Science Learner Support Community for Effective Practice in Gauteng has started to spread successful practice by holding colloquia to get a better understanding of how to evaluate in a development context. An example of this was the colloquium held on applications of M&E to the SciBono Sasol Inzalo Foundation Saturday school. A critical lesson from this colloquium had to do with the role of the funder in development. What this meant for the group in its different roles was, funders need to be flexible and engaged at all levels of the intervention as well as perform as partners and not just funders; civil society need to ensure that they build this into their design; academics need to research the impact of such relationships; and policy-makers need to ensure this is built into the implementation of their policy.

4.5 Vertical integration

This means utilising the communities for effective practice to create a link between practice on the ground and provincial and national policy creation and implementation. This will be created as follows:

- **Sharing the work of a community for effective practice at a provincial and national level and with other provinces.** This spreads effective practice and creates a link between policy creation, policy implementation and practice. The learnings need to include educational content and best practice learnings as well as systemic learnings relating to unintended consequences as well as giving government ideas on how it can maximise its resources through partnering. An example is that the national School Leadership Community for Effective Practice, and its sub-group focusing on mentorship for school principals, has engaged Palesa Tyobeka, DDG Teachers, Education Human Resources and Institutional Development, Department of Basic Education, and is working collaboratively with her to ensure national engagement around planning for school leadership. It also, however, includes provincial representation from MGSL and the Gauteng City Region Academy.
- **Learning from each other to create more effective processes to co-create policy and collaboratively implement and plan.** In the Western Cape’s

community for effective practice focused on “After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town’s Township Communities”, showcasing the value of engagement between the districts and Bridge community members has led to several curriculum managers choosing to continue this process as part of their practice in their districts. They now initiate engagement and collaboration with NPOs and other services providers working in their districts and are looking at how they can work together.

- **The creation of collective power around what is working in order to ensure adoption of what is working.** The above example applies. The community’s engagement process will be taken further in 2011 through a meeting originated by the districts with WCED head office. The aim of this meeting will be to state the value and need for community, district and NPO collaboration in the Western Cape. Bridge community members and curriculum managers will jointly create the agenda for this meeting and both will be represented on the day. This follows on from, and is testimony to the collective power of, the ongoing engagement of the community and the districts’ curriculum managers.

5. Measurement

Measurement is central to sustainability and in providing rhythm and energy to the community for effective practice. Celebrating and reflecting on successes ensures continued attendance. Measurement is, however, complex and in many instances relates to the stories and experiences of community members, thus requiring extrapolation and matching to outcomes. It is sometimes difficult to attribute improvements in learner performance to the changes generated by the community for effective practice. This is particularly the case in that these changes are often long-term and the result of multiple factors. It is, however, important to extrapolate the potential contribution to learner performance by a community for effective practice even if evidence-based attribution is impossible. The outcomes and measurement processes are indicated in the table below:

Outcomes	Measurements
<u>Reach:</u> To have stakeholders reaching x schools and y learners involved in the community for effective practice.	Quantitative measurement of the reach involved in the community for effective practice.
<u>Multi-stakeholder:</u> To have critical educational stakeholders	Quantitative measurement of

from unions, government, civil society, etc. involved and supportive of the community for effective practice.	attendance.
<u>Alignment with the Education Sector Plan:</u> To understand the alignment between the various interventions and the education sector plan so that each stakeholder in the community for effective practice can understand their contribution to the whole.	Qualitative analysis of alignment of various approaches with education sector plan and the impact of various projects.
<u>Share learnings and create more effective practice:</u> To facilitate and track shifts in practice based on learnings and how these shifts are implemented in schools and the impact thereof.	Qualitative analysis of changes in practice and impact thereof.
<u>Reduce Duplication and Maximise Resources:</u> To facilitate sharings by stakeholders in terms of geographic and content focus areas and track any reduction in duplication and maximisation of resources.	Quantitative analysis of maximisation of resources and reduction in duplication.
<u>Link Between Policy and Practice:</u> Analysis of learning in the context of policy and feedback into national processes. At a provincial level the collective nature of the community for effective practice will facilitate effective engagement with provincial government processes around four focus areas.	Qualitative analysis of policy and practice adoption.
<u>Confidence and Peer Support:</u> To network stakeholders in the	Qualitative analysis of the mindset of

community for effective practice with each other and other education stakeholders to enhance confidence and peer support.	educational stakeholders and shifts in behaviour.
<u>Systemic Issues:</u> To understand and share the views of the community for effective practice on unintended consequences and systemic issues and creating space for learnings and innovation.	Qualitative analysis on outcomes of systemic issues and tracking issues as they enter the policy debate.
<u>Partnerships:</u> To create necessary partnerships between stakeholders involved in a community for effective practice	Partnerships tracked and recorded.
<u>Learnings:</u> To use learnings to focus research and share nationally.	Learnings recorded and disseminated appropriately.
<u>Knowledge</u>	Input into research processes.

Part Two: Approach

Bridge is constantly refining its approach to facilitating communities for effective practice in order to have optimal positive impact on the education system. This approach is detailed below:

1. Convening, ownership and attendance

Convening

- Bridge normally chooses a convenor or champion who is well-established in a particular area of education and partners with them. The champion needs to be well-established and credible in the sector.
- Members of Bridge's communities for effective practice are drawn from stakeholders in the education sector. The rationale is to generate collective wisdom by having stakeholders with diverse perspectives. The community is multi-stakeholder in makeup, which is to say that it includes representatives from the various stakeholder groupings in the education sector. Thus, it involves an inclusive range of stakeholders, specifically civil society, academics, business, funders, teachers, learners, principals, parents, research organisations, unions, government, etc.
- **First convening:** In terms of getting stakeholders from government, civil society, business, etc. it is important to create a safe environment with Bridge playing as neutral a facilitation role as is possible. In ensuring participation from government and unions in particular, we have utilised existing relationships, and communicated with both government and unions that Bridge provides a collaborative approach as opposed to a suspicious, competitive and political environment. We have found government attendance at a provincial level easier to secure and we have often found that establishing a community of key stakeholders without government eventually creates a collective power for drawing government in. It helps to have research to share with the community as the outcomes of the research process attract people in, but stakeholder engagement in terms of understanding needs and building relationships before the first convening is also vital.
- In terms of **on-going convening**, credibility with stakeholders is built on rhythm, frequency, dissemination of information, the achievement and measurement of outcomes, as well as creating a trusting environment. You need to be persistent.
- Bridge defines **partners** in a particular focus area with whom to convene and with whom to fund the community. The convening partner would typically be a

player in the educational sector that has an interest and involvement in a particular focus area. The partner should have a level of legitimacy. The funding partner may be the same organisation, or it may be a partner interested in funding a particular focus area. Bridge's role with the convening and funding partners should be that of a neutral, credible facilitator and convenor.

- **Convening and funding partners** will help Bridge identify key stakeholders in a particular focus area. A part of the ensuing process is a series of deep dialogue interviews, which include carrying out content research, discovering what practitioners do, what assets they bring, what gaps they have discovered, and what works and what does not work. At the process level, the questions for the interview focus on the outcomes of the communities for effective practice. Issues for discussion include establishing if there is a way stakeholders can work together, why collaboration is important, what the stakeholders imagine can be gained by the collaboration, as well as what they can bring to the collaboration, who should be part of the collaborative process, how the collaboration can shift educational outcomes, how much time stakeholders would be prepared to contribute, what the blockages to collaboration are, and what concrete outcomes are desirable.
- The outcomes of the **research stage** would be to have a clear idea of the challenges and the patterns, as well as the enablers, in the focus area in question, as well as clarity on what would be expected of the community for effective practice (this as input to how Bridge structures the meetings of the community for effective practice), the establishment of support for the community for effective practice, and so on. The research process should include a desk research synopsis, and the output of the research would typically be a conversation starter or reflection document. In this, it would be appropriate to share Bridge's methodologies and approach.
- **Identifying key stakeholders** Stakeholders should be identified in a particular area, such as school leadership, with the purpose of the identification being to ensure representation from all stakeholder groupings. Stakeholders include national government, trade unions, teacher associations such as SACE, businesses, CSI and donor organisations, principal associations, academics, teachers, learners, etc.
- **Sending out invitations**
The invitations should distinguish Bridge's community for effective practice from normal dialogues as the critical feature of the invitation.
- **Convening the community's meetings**
It is vital to ensure that there are critical stakeholders in the first meeting of the community so that key stakeholders are compelled to attend. Thereafter, it is important constantly to bring in other powerful stakeholders. The convening will

involve the sharing of information, facilitation, documenting, and tracking of outcomes, etc. It typically needs to happen in the afternoons after school, to allow for people drifting in and out, and to set realistic expectations. Finally, it should allow for and include personal reflection.

- **Ownership**

The community for effective practice is generally initiated by Bridge, in partnership with other organisations. Bridge is generally seen to play a secretariat and facilitation role with regards to the community for effective practice. Although communities for effective practice are generally owned by all participants, Bridge's experience has been that the energising or secretariat role of Bridge, as well as the emerging champion role played by stakeholders, gives these parties a greater level of ownership. Also, although objectives are set by each community for effective practice, these objectives fit within Bridge's overarching objectives. Champions, and indeed all stakeholders, all have their own objectives and agendas in joining a Bridge community for effective practice. In this sense, there is a greater spread of ownership. It is further important to note that ownership comes with responsibility.

- **Attendance**

A community for effective practice in general has about 8-30 participants at a meetings. The community can be considerably larger though. In general there will be a core group of participants who attend most meetings, about 10 members, and a periphery group who attend more sporadically. Together they may be over 100 members, and unless there is a very important meeting or key event taking place one is not likely to have all members attend at one time. Do not underestimate the value of the periphery group. They are often the most vocal about the community outside of it.

In the traditional definition of a community for effective practice, the community is generally self-defining in terms of its focus, outcomes, and ownership. In the case of Bridge, Bridge will be using multiple communities for effective practice to create larger scale change, in other words the communities will be within and across focus areas. This requires a certain uniformity in objectives and approach. Bridge will, therefore, play a strong role in organising and facilitating communities as well as measuring their outcomes. Where communities for effective practice have started with their own agendas and approach, it will be important for Bridge to establish a nuanced approach to collaborating with these communities. Where Bridge establishes the community, it needs to ensure that participating stakeholders buy into the measurement of selected outcomes as well as the concept of spreading effective practice, i.e. they need to be willingly contributing to a bigger whole. Ownership will therefore be shared with Bridge.

2. Focus areas

2.1 Level of education system

Bridge operates nationally, at a district level and provincially, with linkages established among those levels. One of the challenges in ensuring the spread of successful practice is to create a link between policy and practice (vertical integration) as well as a link between practitioners working in a particular geographic area on a particular issue (horizontal integration). Bridge, therefore, facilitates both national and provincial/local communities for effective practice.

National

National processes typically incorporate key national decision-makers from government, national union representatives, major civil society organisations working in multiple provinces, research organisations, academic organisations, business representatives and, in order to be inclusive and to create the link between policy and practice, some practitioners from schools and civil society organisations as well as limited provincial representation. These national convenings will be less frequent than local or provincial ones and should consist of a maximum of four meetings a year.

Although one may wish to call these dialogues, it is important to note that they need to be a continuous process of engagement and have clearly defined outcomes. This is key for Bridge's competitive differentiation. Typically, national processes will be more involved in policy input and have more leverage in scaling effective practice through multiple providers. In addition, national processes will also play a greater role in facilitating power relationships and common purpose. The methodological steps of a national process will, however, be fairly similar to those of a provincial/local process.

Provincial/local

When a district or local community for effective practice is convened in a major urban area or capital, there will be provincial spill-over. Convenings in the major urban centres or capital of a province will have representatives from a particular district, for example the Cape metropole, as well as provincial representatives. Similarly, when one convenes in Johannesburg or Pretoria, one will in all likelihood have provincial representation as well as district representation.

These communities will focus more on provincial outcomes and the geographic spread and adoption of effective practice. They should also involve many pragmatic

partnerships. They will consist of the same stakeholder groupings as above but from a provincial level.

District

Where there are convenings that are not in major urban areas or capitals, they will be mainly focused at a district level with little or no provincial or national involvement. Bridge will however facilitate these linkages in order to ensure that the vertical integration of its communities for effective practice approach can be achieved.

2.2 Educational themes

In looking at the national education sector plan and other strategic frameworks, Bridge identified five key leverage points that cut across all frameworks. These are:

- School Management and Leadership
- Teacher Development, Evaluation, Support and Accountability
- Learner Support and the socio-economic conditions of learning
- Quality of Materials Used
- Early Childhood Development

However, where there is energy and a major educational issue, Bridge will also establish communities for effective practice, but will do so in the context of showing how they relate to the key focus areas and the national education sector plan. Specific examples of this are the maths and science learner support programmes community, which developed in Gauteng late in 2010, and the Western Cape's community for effective practice focused on "After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town's Township Communities" developed in 2009.

2.3 Geographic spread

Bridge is currently operating in Gauteng, the Western Cape, and will be expanding to KwaZulu Natal, North-West Province and the Eastern Cape during 2011-12. Bridge works at different levels of the education system, across different themes and in different geographical areas. It is important for facilitators to be aware of this and to integrate learnings across these levels and areas. An example of this is that participants from the Western Cape community for effective practice on after-hours programmes are participating in Gauteng communities and vice versa. Salient information is collected and shared across communities.

3. Methodology

When convening communities for effective practice, Bridge follows a particular methodological approach and a structured framework and is facilitated by trained process facilitators.

3.1 Facilitation principles and overarching methodological framework

For communities for effective practice to work, stakeholder dynamics in the room will need to be effectively facilitated. The complexities between stakeholders will include competitiveness, different agendas, racial diversity, power, dialogue fatigue/cynicism, etc. Many meetings/dialogues are simply held in the same way as traditional meetings without surfacing any of these dynamics. They therefore do not make any progress in the longer-term. In addition, stakeholders are also incredibly busy and whilst they may want to commit to working collaboratively, this desire may not translate into reality.

Bridge follows a methodological approach that utilises process work, the U process, and the Bridging Leadership framework.

In essence, what this means is that there has to be learning and seeing in a different and deeper way, and stakeholders have to take personal/organisational accountability for their own patterns around collaboration and the expansion of successful practice. Only then can a community move towards a collective vision and common purpose. Only once there is that individual accountability and common purpose can there be movement towards collective action. Examples of this would be that, in identifying patterns or stuck areas, participants are taken much deeper in terms of root cause analysis.

Methodologies used in systems thinking approach are central, the core of which is about understanding linkages, unintended consequences, root causes, leverage points and bottle necks, as well as power dynamics. It is long-term and is about understanding things from different perspectives, utilising collective wisdom and optimising diversity. It is therefore important that each convening held by Bridge has elements of the above approaches and methodological frameworks. For example, each session should have some level of reflection and learning before moving forward. This approach will be part of Bridge's key competitive differentiator.

Finally, Bridge's meetings of communities for effective practice should have an agenda and a facilitator guide.

3.2 Specific facilitation approaches to achieve Bridge's objectives

3.2.1 The contribution of the community to the whole system

As a facilitator guiding a session around this objective, it is important to get participants to shift from understanding their particular intervention to understanding the impact of the intervention, both positive and negative, on the system as a whole. It is important to give examples of both positive and negative consequences. It is also important to ground each intervention in terms of the objectives of the system, namely those articulated in the national education sector plan. Systems work can be complex, so it is suggested that it is facilitated using visual aids.

Facilitator Guideline

Key questions to facilitate systems thinking are:

1. What educational challenge is your project trying to address? Why is this a challenge? Why? Why? So, the real challenge is...?
2. What level of the education sector does your project fit in?
3. If we look at the national education sector plan, how do you think your project contributes to it?
4. Given that we are solving a particular issue, what are the unintended consequences? What are the ripples?

Tools/Process

1. 5 Whys or hippo/iceberg to understand the true root causes to the challenges your intervention is trying to address (use Ken Wilbur framework, or example)
2. Map your level of interventions in the system.
3. Map your contribution to the national sector plan.
4. Define unintended consequences and give examples.

Other notes

We always have unintended consequences. There are bad ones and there are good ones. The choice as facilitator is to give input on both. Then give the exercise. Richness will come from this.

How do you debrief this exercise? The debrief and what you capture and track would be: how can we all think through using this for a greater systemic impact? You

want it to go into policy, design, measurement. You would encourage sharing. In the debrief, a reflection on what it means and how this will be used is vital.

Measurement and Tracking: This Community for effective practice is trying to address the challenge of low maths and science marks through providing extra tuition to learners with potential. Some ideas on the real challenge were x, y and z. Some of the actions we do as a community are.... (examples from direct service, models, and systems examples). We contribute to national sector plan as follows. The reach in this community is... We have looked at unintended consequences, and have some examples of this, which are.... The impacts on the system of these consequences are... and we have decided to communicate them to the following stakeholders....

Facilitators: Summarise at the end of each section, which helps documenters. Sharing success has a knock-on effect. Documenting is to motivate the community, sustain funding and to feed into a broader circle.

3.2.2 Creating common purpose, peer support and trust among stakeholders

Facilitator guideline

From a facilitator's perspective, it is critical to create a safe, collaborative environment in which participants support each other and understand their common purpose in trying to improve educational outcomes for learners in South Africa. Elements of this will need to be integrated into all of the community for effective practice sessions, and it will be an ongoing outcome.

Key principles are that it is important to take individual and collective accountability in order to create a safe environment.

Questions are:

1. What is your personal purpose in doing the work that you do?
2. What are your individual values?
3. What is our collective purpose in working in the education sector?
4. How does the community for effective practice contribute to this purpose?
5. What values do we wish to hold each other accountable to in working in the community for effective practice?
6. What challenges do we face?
7. How can we better support each other?

Tools and processes

- The Bridging Leadership Framework:
 - Leadership Lifeline
 - What assets do you have and what can you bring?

- Peeling the onion – defining personal purpose
 - A value tool
 - Ideal design (for collective purpose) – using visual materials
 - Prouds and sorrys – what are stakeholders proud of and what are they sorry about in terms of collaboration (this builds accountability and transparency)
 - Power game

Measurement (narrative)

Our community for effective practice is trying to spread effective practice around maths and science. We initially struggled to do this as we were competitive with each other and we did not necessarily understand the perspective of different stakeholders. We now understand much more clearly our individual purpose in working in the sector and how many others have a similar purpose to me, irrespective of what stakeholder grouping they come from. This has enabled us to form trusting relationships, for example government would not necessarily have responded to an approach from civil society historically, and now we have various government members in the community and we are sharing resources. There is also peer support, for example, I was not sure that the project I was working on was achieving enough, and felt burned-out and stressed. I have discovered others who feel similarly, and for example x, y, and z have now stated that they feel more confident and support each other. We also now clearly understand our common purpose, which we have described as a, b and c.

3.2.3 The maximising of resources by the community

This outcome will be ongoing and will in all likelihood span consecutive communities.

Facilitator guideline

One of the reasons you want to work with each other is to maximise resources. Give the example of the WC, where government wanted to use tutors and started to train their own, but there was already a pool of tutors. In order to facilitate this, we need to understand what resources we have, what materials can be leveraged and where we can reduce duplication by working in different areas, etc.

Questions are:

1. Where are you working, including geographical reach?
2. What do you bring? What are the assets of your work that you could share? What do you want to share?

3. What do you need? What kinds of partners are you looking for? Materials? Expansion of project?
4. Mapping.
5. How are you going forward? How can Bridge, as an enabler, support you in this?
6. Check out

Tools and processes

Getting everyone to share is important.

World Café, speed dating, presentations, journaling, marketplace are all tools that can be used.

In the Western Cape's community for effective practice focused on "After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town's Township Communities", after-hours tuition providers are now partnering with bursary organisations. It is about understanding what people have to offer and what people need. It is about probing what people in a community have to offer and what they would like to receive.

It is also quite a good ice-breaker and a way to get trust going. Collective tasks happen more quickly once you have trust. It may be a good objective to start with as it is less threatening than some of the other Bridge objectives.

- In every session you will have more in-depth sharing. The processes should therefore be different and deeper as you go.
- Use the Bridge portal or social network for questions and preparation of an electronic wall. We need to know who is in the community for effective practice and the portal/social network can fulfil that function. This can then be incremental and organic.
- Ask participants to prepare PPT slides (x2) of the work and needs and assets they have.

Then facilitate using this.

Measurement or narrative: in the Community for effective practice, we have maximised resources by understanding what tools, materials and processes we have that we can share with each other. Examples are x, y and z, which has enabled a, b and c. We have found we have been able to expand our reach and geographical spread. Examples are x, y and z. This in turn has resulted in expansion of reach as follows. Some of these tools are now available as open source tools on our portal, and they are a, b and c. We have also found that projects have been able to expand by partnerships. An example of this is x.

You update the examples from session to session. The report will be what we learnt and what we did, but **not in minute form**. Therefore you tell the unfolding story. The story of the day feeds into a bigger community story. It is an unfolding story.

3.2.4 The spread of effective practice (horizontal integration)

Facilitator guideline

It is sometimes difficult to separate this from the maximising resources. This focuses on doing what works. People often start from scratch rather than learning what has been done before. How can we ensure building on what is working on the ground in a pragmatic way? This is about trying to understand the essence of practice. You don't want them here to say what the project does, but rather what makes my project successful.

1. What is success? How do you define success for your project? Examples may be improved maths and science results, etc. Allow for a maximum of 3.
2. What really works in getting you there? When do you know you have been successful?
3. What have you learnt?
4. What are our lessons from this as:
 - a. funders
 - b. civil society
 - c. government and policy-makers
 - d. academic and research institutions?
5. Are your lessons contextual? Are they situational?
6. How will you sustain your impact?
7. What is your key leverage point in making your project successful?
8. What is your practice around sharing your lessons?
9. Share evaluations and evaluation techniques and lessons.
10. What are you learning from each other and what are you taking away from this session?

Tools and processes

These are group questions in general. There could be a personal reflection process or journaling for the first question, but the rest require group work.

Note: Question 9 should be done in plenary.

Measurement

This story is difficult to capture. In this community for effective practice, we have spread successful practice by understanding what successes we are trying to achieve in An example of this is x. In trying to achieve this success, there are critical lessons for all of us, and some examples are x, y and z. What these lessons reflect is that a key leverage area in is x (this leverage area may not always be obviously linked to the key focus of

the community). There is a particular practice to support this. An example of practice that works in x, y and z. What this means for us in our different roles is, as funders we need to..., as civil society we need to ensure that we build this into our design, as academics we need to research x, as policy-makers, we need to ensure this is built into the implementation of our policy.

3.2.5 The vertical integration of policy and practice

Facilitator guideline

The most obvious one is the link between policy and practice but it is also about the link between the development and implementation of policy and practice. Give example to group of where this has worked.

Questions

1. How do we work effectively with government and how do we share lessons?
2. How do we integrate what we do into the education system, which is owned by government?
3. Scale - where and how do we tap into the system? How do we maximise our impact in the system?
4. How do we utilise the collective in ensuring the adoption of working practice in the system?

Tools and processes

Case studies

Prouds and sorrys

Role plays (act out lessons)

Identifying points/opportunities of interaction, with policy, planning and interaction. Ideally do a concrete exercise.

Designing an ideal collaborative process.

Measurement

Example story:

In the Western Cape's community for effective practice focused on "After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town's Township Communities", participants have shared information with input from government on how to work effectively with government. This has shifted the practice of the organisations in the community, several of whom are now working more closely with government at a district level. In addition, there was no

sharing between provincial government and civil society organisations working with after-hours programmes when the community started in 2009. In implementing its policy, government is now drawing on the tutors who work for civil society organisations and the curriculum managers of the Western Cape districts are now starting to build collaborative practice into their work. Thus, the community has, through its collective power and documentation of lessons, been able to influence the creation of policy with regard to after-hours maths and science learner support.

Provincial

Provincial communities are like national ones, but with provincial representation.

Local

Local communities for effective practice are less defined around the focus areas, but nevertheless all communities for effective practice will have some dimension of that focus in their work and will be contributing to the National educational sector plan with their work. Thus, local communities are less rigid than national and provincial ones, but Bridge's mandate is to help them align their work with the education sector plan. Bridge also has to look where the energy is in a focus area and part of the selection of stakeholders has to do with where work that can be built on is being done. Similarly, it is important for Bridge to follow the energy in knowledge management as this is the micro level where change will be most evident. These include changes in learner and teacher performance.

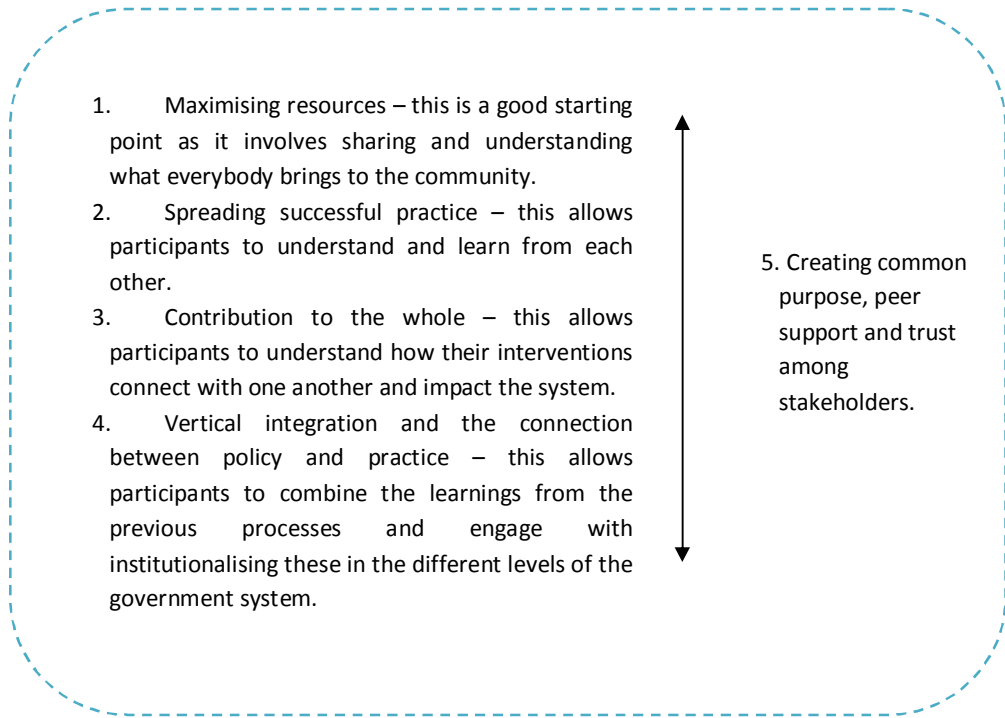
It is vital to discuss the issues of attribution and contribution in the local community as well as the focus on collective power and engagement. The needs of a community at a local level are the ability to influence, the requirement to learn and adopt, peer support and confidence, evidence of positive impact, and stories of collective success, as that breeds success.

The frequency of local communities for effective practice depends on the community, but generally should occur about 6 times a year.

4. Order, structure and rhythm of meetings

Order

The community for effective practice meetings, in terms of achieving Bridge's objectives, should be ordered around core objectives, as follows:



Although the core objectives and order should be held as a guideline for facilitating communities for effective practice, the reality is that there is a lot of overlap between the objectives and within various community meetings. In addition, the communities have their own objectives and develop elements of their own order.

In reality, we have experienced the flow of our communities for effective practice as follows:

Session One

Session One would see Bridge sharing its vision for communities for effective practice as well as the outcomes it hopes to achieve. Its purpose would also be to establish relationships amongst stakeholders, set objectives for this specific community and determine the values of the community and start to get a sense of what participants are bringing in terms of their interventions and what they are hoping to receive. This is also about sharing convening research. Typically what happens in the first community is that educational focus areas are identified by the group. In the Gauteng maths and science learner support community for effective practice, for example, the research carried out by Bridge in advance of the first community meeting determined the direction of the meeting.

The discussion and value of this kind of sharing will start to develop a sense of trust. There should not be any sense of competition in the community and any that arises needs to be dealt with by the facilitator. If there is any tension, this needs to be voiced and the concerns addressed. The facilitator need to be able to bring these to light and

safely deal with them. Once the core trust has been established, any new members joining the group very quickly establish a sense of trust almost immediately.

Community members have commented that trust is fundamental and that, in instances when trust-building was overlooked, tasks were not completed. The Western Cape's community for effective practice focused on "After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town's Township Communities" learnt that it needed to go back and build on developing trust before it could proceed with the early tasks agreed on by community members.

Session Two

Session Two continues to build the focus of the community and moves to share deeper learnings and the essence of practice. In addition, what tends to happen in this session is that the focus groups that have broken out of the community for effective practice and which tend to be task-driven feed back their progress and learnings. This can be used to start the discussions on deepening practice. In terms of building trust, it is important at this session to understand some of the priorities of the different stakeholder groupings.

Session Three

It is important at this session to start to ground the work of this community in the broader education system and understand the alignment to the national education sector plan. Typically our experience has been that, by this stage, there is a greater level of trust and an ability to move beyond tasks.

Session Four

It is typical at this stage for a community to want to ensure government and union participation. The group needs to define what learning they wish to share, how this sharing should take place, and also what guidance they wish to receive. In the Western Cape's community for effective practice focused on "After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town's Township Communities", getting government to participate became a priority after a period.

It is important to note there will be strong pressure from participants to move to very defined tasks. Our experience has clearly shown that sharing learnings and building trust are where time-investment should lie.

Subsequent sessions

Thereafter, the community should meet three or four times a year to continue learning, reflecting, etc. in an iterative fashion. Bridge's role is both as facilitator and knowledge manager, as well as to feed input from communities for effective practice at grassroots level into this group, thus ensuring vertical sharing. Similarly, Bridge will disseminate the national community's learnings to grassroots innovators.

Bridge's activities are to summarise the outcomes of the engagement, ensure that they are circulated and put on the portal and social network. Findings should be linked into

provincial communities, added to existing research, and leads should be followed up. This is Bridge's knowledge management role, a purpose of which is to keep alive the energy after session one. Additionally, Bridge needs to send out action steps, connect with key stakeholders mentioned who were not there, give feedback to government representatives who were not there, and monitor progress. Part of the action steps is likely to be the identification of focus areas, the establishment of focus groups, identified by the community and mandated to take forward key areas of concern and discussion into innovative working groups. Next steps for the focus groups would be agreed.

Structure

Check In

The structure of all the community meetings begins with a 'check in' and ends with a 'check-out'. A check-in is fundamentally about allowing for community participants to become fully present at a community meeting. In addition a check in allows all participants to speak and introduce themselves, as well as allowing space to understand their current state of mind and requirements from the meeting. It can also give an opportunity to understand what has been happening with the community in between the face-to-face meetings. In the first few meetings this will take a considerable amount of time, however the check-in time decreases as the community meetings goes on, it also shifts to not only be about introducing oneself but to answering a leading question that is used in information gathering. The name tags are also an important structure to the community for effective practice, these can be printed or tags given to each member to write their names on. The name tags provide a sense of equality amongst members and remove the sense of hierarchy and also help the members learn each other's names. Can do table check ins, but someone at each table needs to report back themes from their table into the room.

Setting the context and giving feedback from the previous meeting

This is about explaining where the members of the Community for effective practice is in terms of their own and Bridge's stated objectives, and how this community will build on the progress of previous meetings. It will also introduce the programme of the day.

Content

This relates to the particular focus of the session and generally takes 60-70% of the session time.

Check out

This is used to get a sense from the room as to what worked for them, and what did not, and what they are taking away from the community.

A possible time allocation for communities would be:

45 mins for a check in and contextualising of the day

1 hour and 45 mins for the content session

30 min for the check out and summary

Rhythm

It is important to establish a rhythm for the communities for effective practice. This rhythm creates certainty and allows for participants to plan in advance.

The community will set its own rhythm, but it works best to hold face-to-face meetings every six weeks. Dove-tailing meetings outside of the scheduled community meetings must be encouraged. These 'in-between meetings' occur between a few members of the community who are meeting to collaborate with each other outside of the main community for effective practice meetings. Feedback from these dove-tailing meetings should be fed back to the larger community. The community may change the rhythm as the need arises. Emergency meetings around a crisis in the field may accelerate the rhythm; alternatively a busy period of work or holiday season will decrease it. The community must be flexible about these changes. Ideally the meetings for the year should be set at the beginning of the year (if the community has had more than 3 prior meetings). This is so that the time of the meetings can be diarised early to avoid work conflict.

A community for effective practice face-to-face meeting usually takes between two to three hours. Remain aware of the occupations of your members and attempt to coordinate the meetings around times that will be least problematic for them. Mostly keep the times of the meeting the same from one meeting to the next.

Please note the importance of time-keeping. Part of the process of the rhythm is the importance of time-keeping and the credibility and trust it communicates to members when communities start and end on time.

Participant Numbers

Ideally, there should be a maximum number of no more than 30 people in a community for effective practice meeting. The participants should include enthusiastic champions, around whom the energy of the group will constellate, an organiser, and central facilitation (to be taken over by the group over time).

Communities become self-sustaining at a particular point, but Bridge will always play an active role in the communities. There are specific roles that community members can play. This is dealt with in the roles section below.

5. Roles

These roles are filled by Bridge and members of the community for effective practice. Some examples of how these roles have been filled in communities for effective practice and their focus groups are as follows:

Leadership

Stable, solid Leadership for a community for effective Practice is vital for the first six months. The leader need not be the champion or the facilitator – however, this is generally the case. The leadership role shifts as the community evolves or the leader can be appointed by the community at the first meeting. The initial role of the leader is to chair meetings, assist in creating the agenda, facilitate the roles, actions, outcomes, direction and relationship-building of the members and act as a key representative of the community. After the community has formed a sense of identity, the leadership or chairing role can be shared or transferred to other regularly-participating members of the community who understand the ways and outcomes of the community.

Design

This need not be a separate role from a facilitator, but involves the facilitator and leader/chair working closely together to ensure that the agenda and facilitator guideline maximise the ability of the community for effective practice to achieve its own and Bridge's outcomes.

Integration

The integrator needs to ensure that the learnings from aligned communities for effective practice within the Bridge network, and in terms of Bridge's research, are being shared into the community for effective practice.

Facilitator

The facilitator role is very often linked to the leadership role. However, they do not need to be the same people. An external facilitator can be beneficial to assisting the community to establish itself and get over a difficult period where communication within the group has stalled. However a facilitator from the community is often more easily accepted. The facilitator and leader role are very interlinked and it may be that the facilitator takes over a leadership role or vice versa.

The facilitator needs to understand how communities for effective practice operate. Bridge offers facilitator training to its facilitators of the communities for effective practice. This is so that the facilitators can have a full understanding of the Bridge objectives and can assist in the development of strategic outcomes for the community.

Champion

The champion has a very strong initial catalysing role in the community. The champion needs to be the rally point that others move around and must therefore be known and respected within the community and have a solid working knowledge of the field that the community members are drawn from. If champions are not well known in their own community, the group will not move forward. The champion knows who needs to be in the room and be a part of the initial conversations. Over time, the role of the champion can shift to being a member of the community only.

Convener/logistics

This person generally coordinates the logistics of the community of effective practice.

This includes:

- booking the venue
- creating the meeting agenda in collaboration with the community's leader and/or facilitator
- printing needed for the meeting
- setting up the venues of the meetings
- arranging refreshments
- making sure any multi-media and logistical requirements are organised
- sending out the invitations
- reminding members of the community meetings
- receiving the acceptance and apologies for the meetings
- keeping a record of meeting attendees and their contact information
- providing name tags for the meetings
- sharing information when they have it and having this information available to the community at the meetings.

This person also provides the administrator with any new member details, and meeting attendance details.

Documentation/administration

This role is often merged with the convener role, but it need not be. The leader and the champion will need an administrator to assist them with the administration of the community. This member will be responsible for:

- taking the minutes for the first meeting
- assisting in creating a registration sheet and a database of members contact information
- documenting the successes, quick wins, partnerships and actions of the group
- formatting and emailing participants the reports of meetings
- tracking attendance
- keeping communication (face-to-face and online) open with all members.

6. Communication

There are three main information streams that should be maintained:

1. Quick wins

These are any positive influences that have come from forming the community for effective practice. They are any small changes that occur. Examples of these are sharing documents, resources and research or partnerships that form. The recordings of quick wins include what the outcome is and how it has impacted on the work that the members do. Records should include measurable quantitative and qualitative data reflecting changes in impact and reach as much as possible.

2. Database of members, a register, and attendance record

These need to be updated and available to the community at all time. The database should contain contact and basic information about the members. The Bridge social network offers an online platform that can hold this information and keep it available to the whole community at all times. The convener of meetings has to have access to this information as well in order to ensure new members are invited to following meetings.

3. Multimedia

Photographs and short video footage of the meetings, brief interview with members etc can give the group more life and cohesion. This media can also be stored and shared on the Bridge social network.

7. Logistics and planning

See separate planning checklist.

8. Summary

To summarise, events for their own sake seldom get anywhere. So too research for its own sake. Thus, the possibility of linking practitioners to one another as well as to broader processes of influencing is what makes distinguishes Bridge. Within that is the potential that Bridge holds to link innovators to one another in ways that transform their specific and unique experience into more broadly applicable knowledge.

9. Case Study

Bridge's Community for Effective Practice: After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town's Township Communities

The Bridge community for effective practice that focuses on After-Hours Tutoring to Learners from Cape Town's Township Communities started as a LEAP Science and Maths School initiative in May 2009. Participating organisations share a common goal to serve better the learners of Cape Town's township communities. Thirty organisations providing after-hours tutoring in Cape Town's township communities are actively engaged in this forum. This has increased from nineteen organisations in December 2009. There are nine other organisations (two funding organisations, five primary

schools, one high school and one community for effective practice support organisation) which also actively participate in the community. All organisations listed on the database receive minutes and information of each meeting and have access to shared resources and the community's communication platforms.

Bridge joined the forum in August 2009, originally as a participant and observer. Bridge now provides assistance with the maintenance, logistics, communication platforms, tracking and evaluation of this community.

The community reaches about 4190 learners in 145 schools in the Western Cape. It has created working groups and identified champions in key focus areas: consolidate organisation information and identify dove-tailing opportunities; engage with higher education institutions to identify opportunities and improve connectivity; use technology to share resources and materials; and psycho-social context.

A notable shift in behaviour and increase in effectiveness that the collaboration amongst the participating organisations has brought about is the charging per learner for after-hours tutoring. The results of this shift have been that a better record of who is attending classes has been possible, learner attendance and retention have improved, and funding has been generated for the employment of more tutors. Additionally, there has been a reduction in duplication as the community is recording and circulating examples which constitute opportunities for collaboration as well as information about areas that are not currently being served.

The collective voice of the community has also been evident in its engagement with the Western Cape Education Department. In its meeting of June 2011, it was evident that this community is secure enough to openly engage with government. Previously such an engagement would have been fraught with tensions – especially after the embargo imposed by the WCED head office on NPO service providers working in schools. Now WCED officials are seen as members of the Bridge community and use the space for learning, sharing and collaboration. In that meeting, the maximising of resources was evident in the sharing of the database and information spreadsheet, which had been completed by members of the community, with the curriculum managers. Through the information-collection process, the group was able to identify its reach and geographical spread, and view how it can expand on this; for example many members are working in the Metro South District while other areas have considerably less representation. This knowledge could assist members when deciding on which areas to expand into. In the meeting, members were encouraged to share what resources they had which could be of value to the WCED in order to facilitate collaboration and reduce duplication. Additionally, in the meeting, the community spread successful practice by showcasing the value in the engagement between districts and Bridge community members. Several curriculum managers spoke of how they would like to continue this process as part of their practice in the districts. This means that they will initiate engagement and collaboration with NPOs and other services providers working in their districts and look at how they could work together to maximise resources, share learnings, reduce duplication and create common purpose. This engagement process, which is being

taken on by the district officials, will be taken further with a meeting originated by the districts with WCED head office. The aim of this meeting will be to state the value and need for community, district and NPO collaboration. Bridge community members and curriculum managers will jointly create the agenda for this meeting and both will be represented on the day.