

Megacommunities To Solve Thorny Problems

TODAY'S PROBLEMS OFTEN FEEL PARTICULARLY COMPLEX. OFTEN, they're simply too large for any one authority, group or sector to solve alone. That's where megacommunities come in.

A megacommunity is a network of organizations, drawn from the public, private, and civil sectors, collaborating to solve a compelling problem of mutual interest. It's not a static partnership with a hierarchical structure but a flexible, living network that is scalable and adaptable for current and future members. Megacommunities draw on all network members in order to catalyze growing interest and to find sustainable, workable solutions.

Consulting firm Booz Allen has developed a set of practices and principles that make it easier for megacommunities to achieve measurable results and sustain effective collaboration. In this framework, participants are interdependent. Though participants might not see or describe their mutual challenge or situation in the same way, their common interest compels them to work together, exploring perspectives and solutions that may not otherwise have been developed.

D.C. Youth Success is one example of a megacommunity in formation. America's Promise, Booz Allen, and the Smithsonian will serve as co-convening partners focused on promoting the success of Washington, DC's young people in school, work, and life. The goal of the partnership will be to bring together organizations from all three sectors and provide a framework that supports long-term, sustainable, and results-focused collaboration in this sphere.

Today's increasingly interconnected world calls for a new type of tri-sector leadership in which business, government and not-for-profit organizations work together in a state of permanent negotiation directed toward a common goal. It's not easy, but to be effective long-term, leaders increasingly find they need megacommunities to reach across historical boundaries and divisions.