HARVARD Kennedy School
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Social Innovation and Change Initiative

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RETHINKING CROSS-SECTOR SOCIAL INNOVATION
CALL FOR PAPERS/ABSTRACTS
April 6-7, 2018

There is increasing recognition that the largest and most intractable social problems in the world today require solutions that engage multiple sectors. For more than 20 years, since the 1992 Rio World Summit, the international community has called for more cross-sectoral efforts to foster sustainable development. Billions of dollars are invested in public-private partnerships to tackle problems that range from infrastructure development to complex challenges such as disease prevention and treatment. The promise of cross-sector work is the creation of more effective solutions that could not have been achieved if action only occurred within the traditional boundaries of any one sector.

Cross-sector work is however, difficult to organize and sustain as the norms and regulations that shape each sector (be it the public, for-profit, not-for-profit or social enterprise sector) often stand in the way. Thus, while activities such as governmental contracting, and community development projects involving both corporate and nonprofit sectors have become mainstream, research has identified several obstacles to making cross-sector work effective. For instance, different sectors have different missions, values and goals, and are accountable to different constituencies, and so alignment of the diverse cross-sectorial interests is a challenge. A recent review by Bryson and colleagues (2006, p52) concludes: "The normal expectation ought to be that success will be very difficult to achieve in cross-sector collaborations." Indeed, the performance of cross-sectoral work often disappoints.

While practitioners across sectors are increasingly trying to figure out ways to effectively address some of the world's most acute social problems, research still occurs within sectorial silos. Our goal is to address this gap and begin developing a body of knowledge on how to engage effectively in cross-sector work. The time is ripe for such a conversation because contemporary societies are struggling with reforming deeply rooted systems--such as financial, educational and health care--where effective cross-sector work holds promise.

Located at the intersection of the public, not-for-profit, for-profit and social enterprise sectors, Harvard Kennedy School has a history of offering systematic analyses of how various sectors and actors interact to create positive social change. The Social Innovation and Change Initiative (SICI), which will host this conference at HKS, is building on this cross-sector approach to social change in order to achieve its mission of developing research, pedagogical content, and educational programs that help social innovators navigate the challenges of social change initiation and implementation.

We are explicitly looking for papers that aim to show how research on cross-sector work can both be scientifically rigorous and also provide contributions to practice. We aim to reignite scholarly

interest in the phenomenon and build knowledge to inform decision making and policy. Some possible areas of inquiry include:

- **The enabling conditions for cross-sector work.** In particular, papers may address the following questions: What are the conditions that facilitate the initiation of cross-sector collaboration? These might include public policies at the national and/or regional levels; variance in how different actors perceive cross-sector opportunities; the characteristics of boundary-spanning leadership; and the role of prior cross-sector interactions and relationships.
- **The processes and structures underlying cross-sector work and their associated outcomes.** In particular, papers may address the following questions: How is cross-sector work governed and how to create alignment around incentives to achieve the intended social innovation goals? What are the various configurations of cross-sector work? What kind of organizational and personal competencies and experiences (including experiences across sectors) are required to govern effectively? What are the performance outcomes associated with these configurations?
- **The development of novel organizational forms to address social problems that transcend sector boundaries.** We are witnessing the rise of hybrid organizations that combine aspects of multiple sectors, such as social enterprises that combine aspects of the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors. In particular, papers may address the following questions: Where and when are these organizations most effective? How stable are they over time? How can they successfully and sustainably achieve the multiple objectives that they pursue?
- **The relationships between the parties involved in cross-sector work.** In particular, papers may address the following questions: How do conflicts and tensions arise and how are they managed? For example, how should the tension between private and collective benefits or between autonomy and interdependence be addressed? What are the dynamics of trust over the lifespan of cross-sector work?
- **The performance and impact of cross-sector work.** In particular, papers may address the following questions: How can we evaluate cross-sector performance and impact? How are benefits shared across partners and sectors? What are realistic timescales? What determines the scalability of cross-sector work when it comes to addressing social problems?
- **The role of policy making and struggles in implementing reforms at the state and global levels that involve private and social sectors**. For example, papers may consider how do organizations and social movements influence political processes, and what effect does this have on the structure of markets and organizations? What are the implications of the rise of multinational corporations on the transnational political stage?

We are also open to other topics that examine other elements of cross-sector social innovation more generally. We encourage methodological and theoretical diversity including quantitative and qualitative studies as well as studies that take a multi-level approach connecting organizational processes with the broader institutional environment.

Deadlines
- Abstract submission (approximately 500 words): November 1, 2017 (Please send submissions to sici@hks.harvard.edu)
- Notification of acceptance: January 15, 2018
- Submission of full paper (maximum 8,000 words): March 15, 2018

Organizers

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References

Bryson, J.M., Crosby, B.C., Stone, M.M. (2006) The design and implementation of cross-sector collaborations: Propositions from the literature. Public Administration Review, 44-55.