Sustaining Cross-Sectoral Leveraging Partnership in the Post-Event Era: A Case Study of a Canadian Provincial Parasport Collective

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The formation of cross-sectoral partnerships is essential for developing positive social benefits as a result of staging sporting events (Kellett, Hede, & Chalip, 2008; Misener, Lu, & Carlisi, 2020). Prior research has produced insights into the formation, collaborative dynamics, and processes of leveraging/legacy-related partnerships in the pre- and during-Games stages (Kellett et al., 2008; Misener et al., 2020; O'Brien, 2007). However, much less is known about the evolution and governance of these partnerships in the post-event era. Building and sustaining a leveraging partnership contributes to cultivating lasting impacts that “extend beyond a single event” (Bell & Gallimore, 2015, p.725). Recent scholars (e.g., Bell & Gallimore, 2015; Misener et al., 2020) have also called for more research to investigate “what happens to legacy/leveraging partnerships post-games and how long-term impacts can be sustained” (Christie & Gibb, 2015, p.874). To address this gap, this study investigates a post-Games iteration of a cross-sector leveraging partnership group - a Canadian Provincial Parasport Collective (CPPC). The CPPC is chosen as the focal case as it provides insight into how such a collaborative continued to sustain a strategic alliance to increase opportunities for persons with disabilities after the 2015 Pan/Parapan Games. This study builds on prior literature on event leveraging/legacy-related partnerships and Bryson, Crosby, and Stone's (2015) systematic cross-sector collaboration framework. More specifically, this study focuses on investigating 1) the factors contributing to post-event collaboration, 2) what structures, strategies, and leadership mechanisms are adopted to facilitate this collaboration, 3) and what challenges partners may encounter in the post-event era.

We adopt a qualitative case study approach to our research. Our core data include 1) interviews with key representatives of the CPPC, and 2) organizational documents related to CPPC’s practices, strategies, and structures from 2015 to 2020. Interviews opened with questions regarding the formation of the OPC group. These were followed by probes to understand the collaborative processes, structures, and leadership of the OPC, and the challenges the group faces. We employed a deductive coding schema, to identify the factors that led to post-event collaboration. These codes were based on Bryson et al.’s (2015) collaboration framework (e.g., institutional environment, initial drivers). We then coded inductively to determine new areas of collaborative processes.

Our results show that both institutional environmental factors (i.e., field level - government mandates that encourage a collaborative approach, organizational level - leveraging collaborative opportunities) and initial drivers (e.g., expanding existing relationships, formal agreements on collaborative objectives) led to CPPC enduring post-event collaboration. After the CPPC had committed to continuous work, the Collective focused on building a new shared vision for working together, building mutual understanding among partners, and engaging in formal planning. The main structure of the group is composed of pillar leads, pillar working groups, and supporting members. In the following growth stage, the Collective also spent efforts formalizing collaborative structures and maintaining momentum among partners. We expect that the findings of this study will shed light on cross-sector partnership sustainability and provide practical implications on how to build enduring event leveraging relationships.