

**Intersectoral collaboration theory as a framework to assist
in developing a local government food and nutrition policy**

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Summary

The potential role of local government in NSW to address public health nutrition issues has received encouraging reports. This treatise deals with the question of whether intersectoral collaboration theory is useful to assist development of a relationship with local government to develop food and nutrition policy. Intersectoral collaboration theory describes six conditions necessary for successful action: necessity, opportunity, capacity, relationships, planned action, and sustained outcomes.

The project was a feasibility study carried out in a densely populated and multicultural local government area in Sydney's southwest during April 1998. Eight Council employees and one elected representative were interviewed using the semi-structured questionnaire to collect a range of opinions and knowledge about Council's involvement in a food and nutrition policy. Conceptual frameworks for the study included the Ottawa Charter and the food and nutrition system. Theoretical underpinning's were provided by intersectoral collaboration theory and organisational change theory.

Using intersectoral collaboration theory, analysis of the interviews revealed that participants were very concerned with conditions of necessity, opportunity and capacity to develop food and nutrition policy. Intersectoral collaboration theory correctly predicted that the action proposed would have to assist Council to achieve their core business, gain social and political support and be possible within the current economic environment and level of other resources available.

Participants were not able to identify how a food and nutrition policy would meet these conditions and be feasible within the current capacity of the organisation, and therefore did not become fully engaged in the feasibility study. The health sector needs to develop arguments for local government involvement from their perspective. Organisational change within the health sector is required to develop capacity for intersectoral partnerships, as an effective strategy to address public health nutrition issues.

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Author's contribution

The candidate was employed by the Central Sydney Area Health Service Health Promotion Unit from December 1997 to June 1998 as the project officer for a food and nutrition policy feasibility study. The data used in this treatise was drawn from the feasibility study. The study aims and methodology were determined before the candidate commenced; however he was the primary researcher and consulted with a working party during all aspects of the study. All aspects of this treatise are the work of the candidate.

Permission was received from the Council involved and the Director of the Health Promotion Unit to use the data for this treatise.

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List of abbreviations

| | |
|-------|--|
| ALGA | Australian Local Government Association |
| CSAHS | Central Sydney Area Health Service |
| EHO | Environmental Health Officer |
| HPU | Health Promotion Unit |
| LGA | Local Government Area |
| LGSA | Local Government and Shires Association of New South Wales |
| PHN | Public Health Nutrition |
| WHO | World Health Organization |