Enns, J. E., Brownell, M., Casidsid, H. J., Hunter, M., Durksen, A., Turnbull, L. A., ... & Sinclair, S. (2023). The full SPECTRUM: Developing a tripartite partnership between community, government and academia for collaborative social policy research. Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement, 16(1), 1-13.

Enns et al. (2023) describe the creation of the partnership between community organizations, government, and academia to understand their process of the collaborative approach. Stressing that policy development is usually not collaborative, the SPECTRUM (Social Policy Evaluation Collaborative Team Research with Universities in Manitoba) partnership between community organizations, government, and academia hopes to ensure that policies have the desired outcomes. This is not academics telling government officials how to create or change social policy. It is a collaboration of all partners to devise social policy solutions.

While the SPECTRUM partnership studies social needs and whether the solution is effective for the social policy’s goals, this report explains the formation of the collaborative teams. Researchers at MCHP invited collaborators from their colleague network, developed three teams, and secured grant funding. The teams expanded and now contain diverse individuals, including representatives from social service organizations, cultural leaders, government officials, academic researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, and community members. Enns et al. stress a non-hierarchical approach that distributes and coordinates tasks by areas of knowledge and experience. Groups developed their relationships in workshops designed to identify team missions, values, and interpersonal relationship practices. The partnership conducts social policy research but also evaluates partner participation in the research process, looking at the communication network and closeness of relationships.

Enns et al. (2023) present a comprehensive study on the SPECTRUM project, showcasing a pioneering approach to tackling societal challenges in Canada. Initiated in 2018, the SPECTRUM Partnership addresses the fragmented nature of social services, which often suffer from a lack of coordination and evaluation, leading to suboptimal outcomes and resource wastage (Enns et al. 2023). This tripartite model, comprising community organizations, government, and academia, transcends traditional hierarchical frameworks, favoring a more egalitarian, knowledge-sharing approach (Enns et al. 2023). By integrating diverse perspectives and expertise, SPECTRUM effectively navigates the intricacies of public policy, social services, and systems (Enns et al. 2023). The partnership emphasizes community-driven research, leveraging existing data to fill knowledge gaps in social programs (Enns et al. 2023). Their findings are transformed into practical policy proposals, aligning with governmental priorities and offering tangible solutions to complex social issues (Enns et al. 2023). This collaborative model not only fosters holistic solutions but also ensures their relevance and effectiveness in addressing the real-world complexities of the problems at hand, demonstrating a viable path for optimizing public policy development in a collaborative, evidence-based manner (Enns et al. 2023).