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Performance Management in Collaborative Governance: A Review of the Literature and Synthesis of the Challenges

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ABSTRACT

When public, private, and nonprofit organizations work together to solve complex social problems, questions emerge regarding how their collaborative performance can be managed. In this article, we review and synthesize findings from existing research on performance management in collaborative governance. We find that recent research has started exploring the rationales for, dynamics, and impact of collaborative performance management. We also identify salient collaborative performance management challenges and organize them into three categories: substantive problem-solving, collaborative process, and multi-relational accountability challenges. We describe several ways to address these challenges from the existing literature. As critical knowledge gaps remain, we identify key avenues for future research, including investigating the impact of collaborative performance management practices on collaborative outcomes, studying the dynamics of different performance management regimes through quasi-experimental action research and design methodologies, and analyzing the performance of collaborations at the team level from a behavioral perspective.

KEYWORDS

accountability; collaborative governance; collaborative performance management; performance management; problem-solving

Introduction

In 2006, dissatisfied with the existing approach to fighting human trafficking, the Dutch Public Prosecutor's Service developed and deployed a novel approach to tackle the problem. Instead of focusing on investigation and prosecution, it engaged a variety of public and private sector organizations in the process of detecting and deterring sexual exploitation and forced labor, including prostitution in hotels. Together with the police, other law enforcement agencies, and the local authorities, the Public Prosecutor's Service first trained hotels to recognize and report signs of human trafficking and then tested if these hotels caught suspicious activity and notified the

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concerned agencies and authorities, in order for them to undertake additional prevention and repression activities (Waardenburg et al., 2018).

The success of this approach depended on the careful orchestration by the Public Prosecutor's Service of the efforts of organizations whose primary objectives were not fighting human trafficking. The fact that they cared about the issues enough to participate in the work did not mean that their working processes, organizational goals, and key performance indicators were aligned. As the collaboration proceeded, through trial and error, questions arose regarding how success should be defined, and how performance might be managed. For instance, the Prosecutor's Service and the police were accustomed to measuring performance by the number of arrests, prosecutions and convictions, whereas for hotels, the business's bottom line was paramount, making customer satisfaction and a good reputation critical.

As questions were posed about the effectiveness of the novel approach, not only by the collaborators themselves but also by high-ranking officials within the various engaged organizations as well as by the media, the collaboration faced the challenge of developing shared goals and common metrics in spite of diverging perspectives and interests on the problem and its resolution. The collaboration also struggled to manage its collaborative performance, beyond simply stapling together performance data from the individual organizations involved, and without clear lines of authority or explicit reporting obligations (Waardenburg et al., 2018).

The challenges faced by this collaboration are emblematic of efforts to engage in problem-oriented, performance-driven governance across various policy areas, including economic development, public health, environmental management, and disaster response, amongst others (Mayne et al., 2020). Managing the performance of collaborative problem-solving efforts seems to require a different approach than managing the performance of individual organizations responsible for a defined task or process with a straightforward principal-agent relationship (Moynihan et al., 2011; Stoker, 2006).

Instead, it appears that collaborations first need to agree upon common goals and a theory of change, define measures of collective success, find a way to evaluate performance and facilitate learning for continuous improvement, manage accountability relationships within multiple authorizing environments, and reflect on—and adapt where needed—their collaborative approach along the way (Bianchi, 2022; Douglas & Ansell, 2021; 2023; Kroll, 2023; Lee & Ospina, 2022; Nakashima, 2023; Xavier & Bianchi, 2020). In this article, we refer to this process s as *collaborative performance management*.

The approach taken to collaborative performance management is far from uniform. Indeed, it can manifest itself in a variety of ways. Some collaborations may reflect on progress and learn from successes and

failures throughout the process, while others may operate within more explicitly defined accountability structures that shape behaviors through incentives, sanctions, and rewards. In some cases, performance measurement may happen ad hoc, with the process adjusting to the latest need of the collaboration; in other cases, it may be part of a more carefully planned and formally defined process (Douglas & Ansell, 2021; Moynihan et al., 2011). Whether performance management is self-initiated by collaborating parties or imposed by authorizers and whether it is to some extent formalized or not, the key characteristic of collaborative performance management is that a group of organizations aims to learn from—and is held accountable for—collective rather than individual performance (Behn, 2010).

As an object of study, collaborative performance management is situated at the intersection of the literatures on performance management and collaborative governance. It exhibits many of the characteristics and challenges of performance management in single organizations (Behn, 2010; Heinrich, 2002; Moynihan et al., 2011; Ryan & Walsh, 2004), and it combines these with the characteristics and challenges of collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015a; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). The unique challenge for those involved in managing the performance of collaborations is understanding both phenomena and tackling both sets of challenges simultaneously.

While the complexity of performance management in collaborative governance settings has been recognized (Douglas & Ansell, 2021; Kroll, 2023; Moynihan et al., 2011), there has not yet been a systematic review of the literature on performance management in collaborative settings, nor a comprehensive synthesis that bridges the extant literatures on performance management and collaborative governance. As a result, we lack an overview of what we already know at the intersection of these literatures, notably in terms of rationales, process, outcomes, and challenges. This hampers the progress we can make in both understanding and managing the complexity that comes with collaborative performance management.

This article thus aims to accomplish two things: to consolidate and deepen our understanding of the of collaborative performance management and to lay a solid foundation for future research. First, it reviews findings from the existing literature with a focus on rationales, processes, and impact. We ask the following questions: *What are the rationales for performance management in collaborative governance settings? What does the process of managing collaborative performance look like? And, finally, what is known about the impact of collaborative performance management on outcomes?* Second, the article synthesizes the challenges of collaborative performance management in practice, as identified by existing research, and identifies possible ways to address these challenges to the extent the

literature has offered solutions. We ask the following questions: *What challenges do those involved in managing collaborative performance face? How might they deal with these challenges?*

In the next section, we describe our research strategy, in particular the process used to search, select, review and synthesize the literature based on the guidelines of the PRISMA framework (Page et al., 2021). This framework ensures consistency and transparency across systematic literature reviews with respect to methodology. We subsequently provide descriptive statistics of the studies examined and review them in terms of *rationales* for, and *process* and *impact* of performance management in collaborative settings. In the section after that, we proceed by synthesizing the literature in terms of the salient challenges in *collaborative* performance management (as opposed to performance management in *single* organizations). We conclude by summarizing key findings, remaining knowledge gaps, and potential avenues for future academic research and experimentation in practice.

Research strategy

Identification of relevant literature

We conducted an extensive thematic search for relevant literature in Web of Science and Google Scholar by casting a wide net. We used a list of search terms ordered by specific themes to ensure broad coverage, accounting for different nomenclature and terminology used by different authors writing on what we have referred to as collaborative performance management. Because the term as such is not widely used in the literature, our search included various combinations of terms with meanings similar to performance management and collaborative governance and the combination thereof.

Our search strategies for the two databases were slightly divergent, given the different nature and search results produced by both. In Web of Science, we filtered articles pertaining to public administration and publication dates between 1990 and 2024. We limited the search to the field of public administration to ensure we would surface findings on performance management unique to collaborative governance arrangements in the public sphere. We selected 1990 as the cutoff year because we were looking for academic studies primarily in the tradition of new public governance, which first emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Afterward, we considered all references returned by the search terms, which produced a long list of 3,275 references, with 1,739 references being unique after considering overlap.

We used a different strategy for Google Scholar because the returned references sometimes reached millions. Through iteration, we discovered that most of the important references could be found within the first 50 hits. To be conservative, we thus decided to include the first 100 references

in our long list, filtering for references between 1990 and 2024. This strategy yielded 3,400 references, including 2,200 unique references. The full list of search terms and number of returned references per database can be found in Appendix A.

In literature reviews like these, the parameters must be drawn somewhere to get useful results for the field of study, which may result in excluding potentially insightful research. For example, limiting Web of Science findings to the field of public administration narrowed the returned references. This may have excluded some relevant works pertaining to public collaborations in, for instance, environmental management or public health. To partially address this limitation, we also included additional relevant works that were discovered independently. In total, we identified 63 additional references through this snowballing technique.

Screening, eligibility, and inclusion of publications

Using the strategy described above, we consulted the titles and abstracts of more than 4,056 references across the two databases. This approach resulted in a list of 269 unique references that were potentially relevant considering our research questions. Next, we examined the sources in this list in more detail, including their introductions, conclusions, and main bodies, to determine their relevance. We included publications that deal specifically with performance management or performance measurement in collaborative settings, notably including networks. We also included publications that address a variety of new governance arrangements, including multiple public, private, and/or nonprofit actors, and that discuss the performance management or performance measurement dimension.

This elaborate process enabled us to select the 104 references most relevant to the topic at hand, even though it may still be that the screening of titles and abstracts did not surface nested relevant materials in articles that would have warranted inclusion. All the publications' texts were fully assessed, allowing us to make a comprehensive synthesis, identify pertinent knowledge gaps, and determine promising research avenues. The full process is illustrated in the PRISMA framework in Figure 1.

Coding method

We used an iterative and inductive coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). By examining a first set of studies that comprehensively covered the topic of performance management in collaborative governance, we inductively identified certain themes that emerged in different studies. The construction of categories emerged from multiple rounds of review and individual coding by authors, followed by intercoder deliberation and

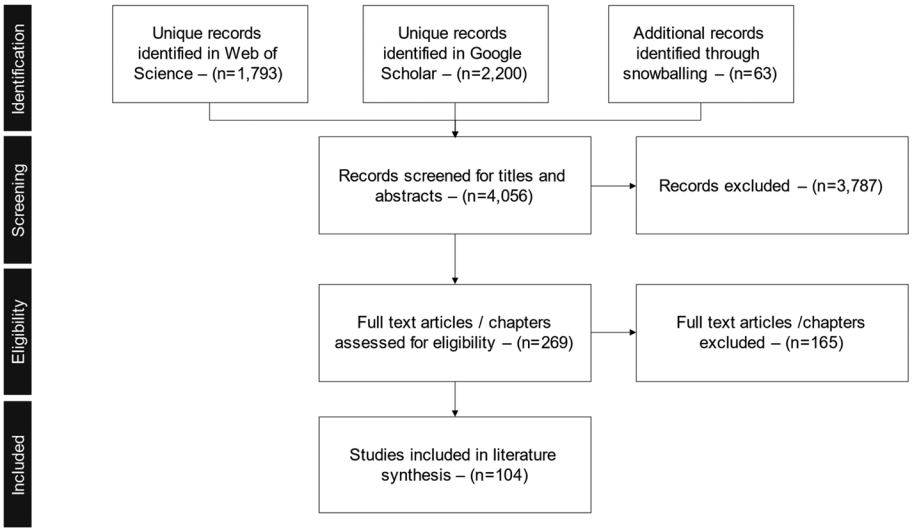

Figure 1. Selection process of studies.

reconciliation. This process strengthened inter-coder reliability in subsequent rounds of review and coding. We collected all the following categories in our coding database for each of the references included:

- General data on author, affiliation, publication outlet, and year of publication
- General characterization, including the field of study, definition of performance management in collaborative settings, unit of analysis, methodology, domain of study, and country
- Rationales for collaborative performance management
- Process of collaborative performance management
- Impact of collaborative performance management
- Challenges of collaborative performance management
- Potential strategies to deal with challenges
- Knowledge gaps identified

Initial data were collected by the primary author across all articles. For themes that required further interpretation, the coauthors performed an iteration to ensure further inter-coder reliability. In this process, the three categories of challenges and potential ways to deal with them emerged as areas where a synthesis was critical. Current research on these categories revealed varying interpretations, different ways to structure challenges, and often strategies that were disconnected from addressing challenges.

The logic involved in uncovering the challenges was more abductive than inductive, as it required alternating between the available literature and our emerging structure (Van Hulst & Visser, 2024). In practice, this

meant coding the challenges observed in the articles and drafting individual coding memos assigning categories to each, followed by several inter-coder alignment sessions to derive an aggregated set of challenges. We then reexamined each article to categorize the observed challenges and refine our challenge categories, resulting in the three categories specified later in the article.

Descriptive statistics

To begin with, we specifically gathered some basic metrics like publication outlet, year of publication, field of study, definition of performance management in collaborative settings, unit of analysis, methodology used, domain of study, and country focus. Table 1 describes the descriptive statistics across the 104 studies on collaborative performance management examined. These descriptive statistics were chosen based on the same emergent coding methodology as described above.

The primary journals of publication were *Public Administration Review* (13x), *Public Management Review* (12x), *Public Performance and Management Review* (12x), *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* (7x), *Public Administration* (5x) and *Public Money & Management* (5x). This synthesis also considered other references beyond articles, but no single source or book was featured more than once. Approximately 40–45 references were obtained from the decades 2000–2010 and 2010–2020 each. The pace of studies on this topic continued into the 2020s with 18 relevant references through 2024. We included only one reference from the period before 2000, indicating that interest in the topic did not begin to emerge until after the turn of the millennium.

Most studies directly pertained to performance management in collaborative governance settings (62x). In contrast, some studies focused on collaborative governance in general (30x) or performance management in the public sector in general (12x) and contained a section on performance management in collaborative governance settings. The lack of discussion of collaborative performance management identified in the existing literature on performance management in the public sector indicates that, while collaborative governance is now commonly accepted as a practice and area of study in public management and governance, the unique performance management process and challenges of collaborations are as yet under-considered in the more general literature focused on the public sector.

Performance management definitions differed widely and varied to the extent they were explicit across studies. Most early studies entailed a narrower definition of performance measurement and accountability (43x), focused more strictly on measurement and reporting. Some studies entailed a broader definition that included the development of the theory of change

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Across Studies Examined.

	PUBLICATION OUTLET	YEAR OF PUBLI-CATION	FIELD OF STUDY	DEFINITION OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	UNIT OF ANALYSIS	METHODOLOGY USED	DOMAIN OF STUDY	COUNTRY FOCUS
	Public Administration Review (13x)	2010–2020 (45x)	Performance management in collaborative governance (62x)	Comprehensive (46x)	Collaboration (81x)	Theoretical article (38x)	Non-specific / general (44x)	USA (30x)
	Public Performance and Management Review (12x)	2000–2010 (40x)	Collaborative governance in general (30x)	Narrow (43x)	Public sector organization (21x)	Case study—multiple cases (31x)	Health and social services (16x)	Europe (20x)
COUNTS	*Public Management Review (12x)*	>2020 (18x)	Performance management in public sector (12x)	Broad (15x)	Public sector employee (2x)	Case study—single case (26x)	Economic development (12x)	Canada, Australia, New Zealand (9x)
	Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory (7x)	<2000 (1x)				Statistical survey based (8x)	Environmental management (8x)	
	Public Administration (5x)					Meta-study (1x)	Urban management (7x)	
	Public Money & Management (5x)						Law enforcement (5x)	

to define the performance measures and recommended activities to drive performance (15x). Interestingly, 46 articles from the last decade and a half of shortlisted publications (later than 2010) had a comprehensive definition that included the entire performance management cycle, including management of the collaborative activities, the process of performance management, and the feedback loop to performance measurement. For example, Behn (2010) derives the concept of CollaborationStat, with a fully comprehensive performance management cycle necessary to drive toward tangible collaborative results and a constructive performance dialogue.

This increasingly comprehensive notion of performance management in collaborative settings, with a focus on the dynamic nature of collaborative performance management, the interaction between collaborators, and its evolution over time, including its actual impact, is a trend that several authors addressed (Bianchi, 2022, Bryson et al., 2015, Douglas & Ansell, 2021; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015b, McGuire & Agranoff, 2011). Furthermore, almost all studies (81x) took the collaboration itself as the main unit of analysis, rather than the perspective of a public sector or partner organization within these collaborations (21x) or the public sector employee (2x).

Most studies were theoretical or non-empirical in nature (38x), followed by multiple and/or comparative case studies (31x), and single case studies (26x). There were only 8 quantitative studies, and all these were based on survey data. We did not find any natural, field, or randomized experiments. We identified more empirical case studies in recent publications, with authors expressing a desire to test theory in practice. Most of the case studies focused on economic development and health and social services, while urban governance, law enforcement, and environmental management were also recurrent themes. Most studies discussed these in the context of what are referred to as "wicked problems," which are "complex, unpredictable, open-ended and intractable" (Head & Alford, 2015, p. 712), where collaborative performance management may take precedence over bureaucratic accountability.

Based on our analysis, 30 studies focused on the United States, followed by 20 on Europe, and 9 on Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, with most other studies excluding geographical focus. This pattern represents much of the current geographic trends in the literature on new public governance and public value in general. Yet, studies over the last decade have demonstrated an increasing interest in research outside these geographic locations.

Review: Rationales, process and impact of performance management in collaborative settings

Moving beyond these descriptive statistics, we review existing research on the rationales, process, and impact of collaborative performance management. Table 2 details the emerging themes and evolution of the studies examined.

Table 2. Synthesis of Rationales, Process, and Impact of Collaborative Performance Management Across Studies Examined (Selection).

Theme	Author(s)	Key findings	Key contribution
Rationales for collaborative performance management	Behn (2003)	Proposes framework of eight specific reasons to measure performance observed across collaborations and organizations that fall into three categories: accountability, learning, and motivation	Three exemplary frameworks to categorize reasons for performance management—exemplary for focus of earlier works on describing rather than unfolding the process of arriving at these reasons
	Page (2004)	Identifies four reasons for implementing collaborative performance management: "external authorization, internal inclusion, results measurement, and managing for results" (p. 593)	
	Moore and Braga (2003)	Identifies three reasons for "CompStat": Accountability, oral duty to show performance, shifting the strategy of the organization—learning for higher performance	
	Torfing and Triantafillou (2013)	Describe the process of aligning purposes in the collaborative arena, including "empowered participation," and "bringing together public and private actors in continued dialogue" (p. 15)	Exemplary for more recent studies' greater focus on the process of sense-making and consensus-seeking around collaborative performance goals; rather than the static concept of the reasons per se. Authors show how reasons are defined in a collaborative arena, influenced by individual motivations, and evolve over time
	Bianchi (2022)	Focuses on "adopting collaborative and consensus building performance governance methods aimed at challenging stakeholders' mental models" (p. 412) to facilitate the learning and objective consensus-seeking process	
	Kroll (2023)	Defines four uses of performance information by individuals in collaborations, including "purposeful ('to improve'), political ('to argue'), passive ('to report'), and perverse ('to game')" (p. 107)	
Process of collaborative performance management	Behn (2010)	Describes CollaborationStat as a system: "An ongoing series of regular, frequent, integrated meetings during which the leaders of this collaborative use current data to analyze specific, previously defined aspects of the past performance of each collaborating agency and of the entire collaborative; to provide feedback on recent progress compared with targets; to follow-up on previous decisions and commitments to produce results; to examine and learn from each agency's efforts to improve performance; to identify and solve performance-deficit problems; and to set and achieve the next performance targets" (p. 433)	Identified broadly three (non-sequential) steps in the performance management life cycle across authors (two examples given here): defining the theory of change and reasons for performance management, operationalizing the performance measurement process, and incorporating and using the performance data
	Voets et al. (2008)	Propose "three dimensions of policy network performance (production, process, and regime)," (p. 773) and show how these dimensions evolve and can be assessed over the lifetime of the network	
	Torfing and Triantafillou (2013)	Describe concept of meta-governance in the collaborative arena: a "reflexive, strategic, and inherently political mode of governance that aims to sponsor and frame interactive policy processes, bring actors together, facilitate collaboration, mediate conflict, support decision making, and ensure implementation of negotiated solutions." (p. 20)	Design research focuses on reorientation of recent authors to how collaborative performance management regimes can be dynamically facilitated through deliberate meta-governance and performance summits
	Douglas and Ansell (2021)	Illustrate how collaborative performance regime work dynamically, with collaborative "performance summits" at the heart of the process	
Impact of collaborative performance management	Douglas and Ansell (2023)	Examine the impact of "performance summits" on 18 collaborations across a longitudinal study based on survey data and other evidence gathered, and find that the impact of the summits is positive but primarily in that the stakeholders use it to learn and gain a comprehensive understanding of issues and solutions	Only study identified with a quantitative assessment of the impact of a collaborative performance management regime across more collaborations in a longitudinal study
	Xavier & Bianchi (2020)	Carry out a case study of a Delivery Performance Unit focused on crime control in Malaysia, concluding that performance management does have an impact on collaborative success, if it considers dynamic nature of feedback loops	Example of recent case studies that explore dynamic process of collaborative performance management and find a(n) (positive) impact of such processes on collaborative outcomes, while exploring pathways / mechanisms of how this impact is achieved

Without trying to be exhaustive, it shows a selection of some of the most relevant studies that influenced the evolution of insights into these categories. An overarching theme is a change in focus from merely describing the aspects of collaborative performance management as a static concept to studying the dynamic nature of the sense-making, consensus-seeking, and relational processes involved and their impact as well as the design of collaborative performance management approaches at a meta-level.

Rationales

To decide what to measure, collaborators must first determine and articulate the *purpose* of measuring and managing performance. Performance management systems can serve a variety of purposes for collaborations and different studies have focused on different purposes. According to the studies examined, rationales for performance management fall into three broad categories: rendering account, learning what works, and motivating individual employees and collaboration partners (Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015a; Moynihan et al., 2011).

Early studies tend to focus primarily on rendering account and evaluating performance in multi-organization environments. They note that accountability is both critical, given the importance of the issues, and complex, given the many stakeholders with often competing definitions of success (Bryson et al., 2006; Moynihan et al., 2011, Page, 2004). For instance, Page (2004) studies the capacity of collaborations to account for results, noting the criticality of this, as "results of any public significance are beyond the capacity of any single agency. […] Attempts, however well-meaning, to hold individual agencies exclusively accountable for achieving broad outcomes, […] risk setting those agencies up for failure" (p. 602–603). In these earlier works focused on accountability and evaluation, several authors develop frameworks for success indicators in collaborative settings, including the Public Value Scorecard, the 3Cs framework, and the Key Predictors of Effectiveness of Network Governance Forms framework (Mandell & Keast, 2007; Moore, 2003; Provan & Kenis, 2008).

Later studies develop notions of performance management that shift focus to learning and motivation, in addition to accountability, as key purposes. Behn (2010) already notes that what he calls "CollaborationStat" is a conscious leadership strategy focused on actively discussing results on a continuous basis and adapting on that basis. Note that the Performance Summits they set out to study primarily have an impact on collaborations through learning and the insights they generate. Similarly, Xavier and Bianchi (2020) study the dynamism of collaborative performance management, with the feedback cycle being the primary reason and driver for improved results for crime control in the case they study.

Recent studies also explore the dynamics of setting objectives in more depth, especially when working collaboratively. The process for setting performance management objectives in collaboration is neither linear nor clearly defined. Often, there is no singular purpose, but rather a myriad of instrumental and more political purposes for performance management systems, resulting from the various perspectives and interests among collaboration partners. For instance, Kroll (2023) defines four possible purposes of performance information by individuals in collaborations, including "to report", "to improve", "to argue", and "to game" (p. 107).

The messy process of aligning these purposes is done in the "collaborative arena" (Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013), but navigating through this messiness is essential to avoid over-simplification (Moynihan, 2008). In fact, overly simplistic objectives may lead to dysfunctional performance management regimes that steer collaborators to simplistic output measures, leading to system gaming or dysfunctional conflict in collaborations (Willems & Van Dooren, 2011, Ji & Hong, 2025). As a result, recent studies elevate the process of sense-making and consensus-seeking around objectives for collaborating to the same level of importance as the objective reasons for pursuing performance management (Bianchi, 2022). Ji and Hong (2025) also stress that performance systems should seek to balance short- and long-term objectives and adapt to changing external contexts. Yet, exactly how collaborations (can) deal with the non-linear, ambiguous, and often contentious nature of collectively establishing purpose remains underexplored in the literature. We will return to the resultant challenges in the synthesis section.

Process

The above discussion highlights the literature's evolution toward examining the dynamic processes underlying performance management in collaborative governance. At least partially, the dynamic nature makes the collaborative performance management process different from performance management in a single public sector organization. As the collaboration progresses through its life cycle, performance management systems tend to evolve as well. Although the number and descriptions of steps differ per study, we identified three steps in the performance management life cycle: defining the reasons for performance management, operationalizing the performance measurement process, and incorporating and using the performance data (Behn, 2010; Moynihan, 2008; Voets et al., 2008).

These three steps are not different from those in single organization settings per se, but they require significantly more alignment: converging stakeholders through collaborative dialogue and effective leadership. Collaborators do not necessarily experience the steps sequentially but

through iterative development. Many authors stress the need for collaborators to engage in constructive dialogue about the meaning of the data (Behn, 2010; Moynihan, 2008; Stoker, 2006; Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013). Oftentimes, performance data is subject to divergent legitimate interpretations by stakeholders which require reconciliation through dialogue about perspectives on causal chains and alternative explanations (Moynihan et al., 2011).

Therefore, Behn (2010) calls for an "ongoing series of regular, frequent, integrated meetings during which the leaders of [a] collaborative use current data to analyze […] defined aspects of the past performance of […] the collaborative" as a way of providing feedback, following up, and learning (p. 431). These are quite similar to the "performance summits" suggested by Douglas and Ansell (2021) that we elaborate on in the synthesis section as a possible 'way out' of challenges concerning the collaborative process.

To manage collaborative dialogue, public managers must lead the process and provide their support (Moynihan et al., 2011). Effective collaborative performance management is only achieved through committed leadership and strong stakeholder investment. In this sense, performance management may be a leadership or organizational strategy to influence behaviors as much as a technical measurement process (Behn, 2014).

Like the discussion about *rationales* for collaborative performance management, we see how the *process* of collectively managing performance conjures up a set of unique challenges that will be addressed further in the synthesis section.

Impact

Before focusing on challenges, we discuss the prevailing research on the impact of collaborative performance management. While there is a significant literature on "collective impact" (Ennis & Tofa, 2020; Kania & Kramer, 2011), there is not much research on the effect of performance management on the outcomes of collaborations. Many authors discuss the rationales and process of collaborative performance management, but few have attempted to determine its impact on collaborative outcomes. Out of 104 studies examined, only 18 discussed the impact of performance management and in all cases, it positively impacted the overall performance of the collaborations. Remarkably, 8 out of the 18 studies investigating the impact of performance management on collaborative performance are from or after 2020, suggesting a greater concern with real impact and improvement of performance management regimes by testing them in practice.

One of the complexities in understanding the impact of performance management on collaborative outcomes is that intended outcomes may

differ wildly between collaborations and—indeed—may be contended by individual collaborators. The handful of early studies that do discuss the impact of collaborative performance regimes ask the question whether it leads to better outcomes on the problem a collaboration is trying to resolve and only formulate a proposition to this effect (Bryson et al., 2006) or find this to be the case based on case studies (e.g., Behn, 2010).

Later studies focus more on how performance management is adapted to the intended outcomes of collaborations by capturing the different intents. For instance, Moynihan et al. (2011) explore how performance regimes adapt to the governance complexity of collaborations to secure an intended impact. Douglas and Ansell (2023) examine the effect of "performance summits" on 18 collaborations across a longitudinal study based on survey data and other evidence gathered and find that the impact of the summits is positive. However, the impact is primarily positive if stakeholders use the summits to learn and gain a comprehensive understanding of issues and solutions. Similarly, based on their study of a Delivery Performance Unit in Malaysia focused on crime control, Xavier & Bianchi (2020) conclude that performance management does have an impact on collaborative success, if it considers the dynamic nature of feedback loops.

The low prevalence of research focused on examining the impact of collaborative performance management echoes the methodological challenge of performing assessments of collaborations at a meta-level, especially in a quantitative manner. No study attempted to formally connect the impact of performance regimes to their design and suggest how the data on the "performance of the performance regime" can help collaborations improve performance management systems. The lack of such research demonstrates a significant research gap, which we will return to in the conclusion of this article. It also highlights a challenge for collaborations to design a performance management system that is adapted to their needs and helps to measure and improve their performance. We turn to this and other challenges in the next section.

Synthesis: Challenges and ways to address them

Our review of the evolution of research on the rationales, process, and impact of collaborative performance management shows an increasing understanding of the dynamic, inter-relational nature of such practices. It raises several important questions about how to design collaborative performance management systems, including setting objectives, developing a collaborative process, and defining an accountability framework. We now turn our attention to these closely related challenges and potential ways to deal with them.

Our iterative and integrative coding process of the literature yielded three categories of challenges: substantive problem-solving challenges, collaborative process challenges, and multi-relational accountability challenges. Where these surfaced in the literature, we also discuss possible ways to deal with the identified challenges. Rather than simply summarizing the findings of the literature review and coding process, we synthesize the challenges and 'ways out' of these challenges: we aim to present the synthesis as a logical next step toward understanding the real-life dynamics of collaborative performance management and offer a conceptual framework for empirical inquiry and design of practice. The challenges and possible strategies for addressing them are presented in Table 3.

Substantive problem-solving challenges

Like any other problem-oriented, performance-driven efforts, collaborations face a host of problem-solving challenges related to defining the problem at hand, developing a collective approach, and designing performance measures to measure this approach's success. First, for collaborations, defining the problem they want to solve can be more challenging given that they are often established to deal with intractable, multi-dimensional problems (Head & Alford, 2015), characterized by cognitive, normative, and strategic uncertainty. For example, crime problems such as the one described at the beginning of this article are extremely hard to define, as their nature and scope are often unknown, exacerbated by the multiplicity of perspectives and interests. Yet, it is exactly for this reason that a collaboration is required to deal with them.

Second, once a problem has been defined, at least tentatively, a sound theory of change must be developed to find solutions. Yet again, this tends to be more difficult for collaborations than for single organizations. Developing the causal links in a theory of change to tackle a wicked problem is notoriously difficult, given that one of the defining features of such problems is that their causes are poorly understood and multi-faceted (Weber & Khademian, 2008). Further complicating the process, collaborative partners have different resources in their toolbox and come from diverse institutional settings and organizational backgrounds. In this context, it is often difficult to develop a collective theory of change based on the full spectrum of means at the disposal of all collaboration partners (Huxham & Vangen, 2013).

Finally, collaborations also face new challenges related to measuring their performance against their theory of change. Deciding which performance information to use is complicated by the intricate nature of the problems, the collaborative character of the work, and the relationship between both (Nakashima, 2023). In terms of what to measure, collaborations in the public

Table 3. Synthesis of Collaborative Performance Management Challenges and Possible Ways to Address Them.

Challenge category	Description	Number of publications that discuss category	Possible ways out as discussed in the literature
Substantive problem-solving challenges	• Diagnosing and defining the wicked problem for which the collaboration is established • Developing a sound theory of change to solve the wicked problem and create public value • Defining measurable, attributable, and relevant indicators against theory of change in a messy policy context, with a greater focus on process and outcome indicators	57	• Identify "critical points of control" in "unfolding chronology" (Sparrow, 2008) • Use "intermediate outcome measures" as "outcome proxies" to signal movements in the larger problem (Waardenburg et al., 2018) • Use pre-structured performance frameworks adjusted to the context of collaborative governance (Avoyan et al., 2024; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015b; Moore, 2003; Page et al., 2015; Provan & Kenis, 2008)
Collaborative process challenges	• Generating commitment to the process of joint performance management • Reaching a shared understanding of goals and approach, even within complex governance settings of collaborations • Developing effective social interactions—formalized or informal—where performance data can be used, discussed, and learned from	54	• Exercise different kinds of leadership to encourage learning, including "executive leadership" and "shared leadership" (Agranoff, 2005; Lahat & Sabah, 2021) • Use a "learning facilitator" (Binachi, 2021) • Establish "performance summits" and/or "learning forums" (Bianchi, 2022; Castelo & Gomes, 2024; Douglas & Ansell, 2023; Waardenburg et al., 2020a; Xavier & Bianchi, 2020)
Multi-relational accountability challenges	• Accounting to collaboration partners • Accounting to (new) external channels of accountability • Managing tension with parent organization accountability	63	• Spend time on defining what and to whom the collaboration is responsible (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015b) • Develop accountability framework with performance indicators that speak to the reporting needs and interests of all stakeholders involved (Avoyan et al., 2024; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015b; Wise, 2022) • Encourage collaborator discretion and a both/and mindset (Lee & Ospina, 2022; Waardenburg et al., 2020b)

sector are often expected to monitor a wider range of performance standards than traditional organizational units (Rogers & Weber, 2010). This is because desired outcomes and the outputs needed to generate them can be complex, interdependent, and contended (Waardenburg et al., 2018). As a result, no single output or outcome measure can neatly define impact. As described earlier in this article, collaborative governance calls for an increasing focus on outcome indicators that go beyond simple input and activity measures (Avoyan et al., 2024), which is coincidentally contrary to what most collaborations measure. Lacey et al. (2012) and Minassians (2015) have a similar finding, the prior noting that 78% of measures across collaborations were input and process measures, and the latter identified only 11% of indicators as outcome measures across the collaborative performance schemes they studied. These findings are most likely due to the difficulty inherent in their measurement.

In addition, most collaborations exist outside traditional formal governance relationships or formal alliances. To judge whether the collaboration is perceived as generating its desired outcomes, collaborations must attempt to measure the extent to which their efforts are (politically and/or publicly) supported and seen as (democratically) legitimate, as well as whether the stakeholders in the collaboration are collaborating effectively (Page et al., 2015). This introduces two new sets of performance measures beyond achievement of the intended purpose for which the collaboration was originally developed.

Ways out—The examined literature refers to various ways to deal with the above challenges. We describe three below: outcome proxies, adjustments to theory of change frameworks, and generic performance measurement frameworks for collaborations. To start with, some authors have suggested ways of dissecting wicked problems. For instance, in law enforcement, Sparrow (2008) proposes ways of selecting and analyzing problems to work on. He suggests using an "unfolding chronology" to make clear how harm comes to the fore at a certain moment in time. This chronology helps determine a moment within the unfolding chronology to intervene (ideally at some "critical point of control" or "clean point of access"), an object on which to focus, and a method for intervention. Waardenburg et al. (2018) applied this logic to collaborative work by identifying "outcome proxies." They define these proxies as "intermediate outcome measures related to the ultimate impact that one is trying to gauge that signal movements in a subproblem of the overall problem that one is trying to solve" (p. 316). Waardenburg et al. suggest such proxies can be a useful tool to measure progress without firm outcome evidence for collaborations tackling wicked problems.

Furthermore, not different from any other problem-oriented, performance-driven effort, collaborators must use a range of indicators to define success and carefully distinguish between inputs, outputs, and

outcomes in their theory of change. But what makes this process unique for collaborations is that extra care must be given to defining these measures to avoid ambiguity in what needs to happen inside a collaboration and outside of it, unclarity on which partners are responsible for improving what indicators, and gaming and trading of outputs and outcomes measures to appear more successful (Koontz & Thomas, 2012). These indicators may and should change over time. Poocharoen and Wong (2016) find that hard, quantifiable indicators tend to be more often used in the initial stages of collaborations when accountability to public funders is paramount. Still, as the collaboration solidifies, intangible indicators of trust, respect, and professionalism become more prevalent in how they measure their success to allow for more effective learning.

In addition to these general process methods, there are a number of initial beginnings of generic performance measurement frameworks designed specifically for public sector collaborations, but not necessarily customized to the particular public value problems they are dealing with (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015b; Moore, 2003; Page et al., 2015; Provan & Kenis, 2008). Emerson and Nabatchi (2015b), among others, created a "performance matrix" specific to the context of collaborative governance, suggesting measures at the intersection of three performance levels—action and outputs, outcomes, and long-term adaptation—and three units of analysis—the participant organization, the collaborative governance regime, and the ultimate target goals.

While such frameworks can be useful, Skelcher and Sullivan (2008) cautioned against solely using metric-driven approaches in favor of theory-driven approaches that rely on *a priori* models of the causal relationships between different elements of a theory of change. They argue that only the latter can accurately reflect the multi-faceted performance of collaborative action. Building on this, Avoyan et al. (2024) used the performance matrix by Emerson and Nabatchi (2015b), but defined the underlying actual metrics through a logic model, allowing them to measure the outcomes of flood risk governance projects. In this, they caution that a blind application of a framework not customized to the unique context a collaboration aims to resolve may lead to sub-optimal results.

Collaborative process challenges

From the outset, collaborative process challenges may not look like performance management challenges, but the 46 authors with a more comprehensive notion of collaborative performance management highlight this as a critical part of the system. These challenges pertain to the dialogue and interaction between members, during which progress is discussed,

and learning occurs. Dealing with these challenges is key to channeling performance in the right direction, and the dialogue between members is often an important engine of achievement. After all, it is only by committing to mutually beneficial goals and approaches, undertaking joint activities, and reviewing their progress against this, that collaborations can ever hope to perform (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). We find challenges along the process from defining the reasons for performance management, operationalizing the performance management process, and incorporating and using the performance data.

In the first step of defining the reasons for performance management, the literature points out that collaborators should attempt to generate a common commitment to the collaborations' targets, which can be quite difficult amid competing commitments with, for instance, the parent organizations (Waardenburg et al., 2020b). Stakeholders will only commit if there is enough respect for their perspectives and interests (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In addition, there must be a meaningful prospect of mutual gain for all stakeholders (Bryson et al., 2006). Often, there is misalignment over these mutual goals or targets. Moynihan et al. (2011) argue: "In complex governance settings, the greater heterogeneity of influential actors is likely to result in more marked battles about the definition of performance" (p. 152). Provan and Kenis (2008) conclude that the difficulty of reaching a shared understanding is correlated with the density of the network of collaborators. Yet, it is only in a context of such shared understanding and interdependency that collaborators can be expected to "abide by the results of deliberation, even if they should go in the direction that a stakeholder does not fully support" (Ansell & Gash, 2008, p. 559).

Reaching a common understanding of the target is complicated, yet the next step of operationalizing the performance management process may be even tougher. Many collaborations struggle to formalize a performance management process at all, as it looks like an extra burden on their time (Waardenburg et al., 2020b). In fact, collaborations often emerge bottom-up rather than top-down, lacking a clearly defined contractual or principal-agent relationship. It speaks to the inherent value of performance management that many collaborators still seek to establish any system under those conditions (Kroll, 2022). Yet, due to the complexity of actors involved, ambiguity on accountability, and continued dialogue on what constitutes success, it can take a long time until a performance management process is defined and followed consistently (Waardenburg et al., 2020b).

Once established, a performance management process cycle can be more or less formal—from merely discussing progress ad hoc in joint meetings, to more structured performance dialogues that happen at regular intervals with each other and superiors. Recent studies have explored the social interactions underlying performance data and argue that "social

mechanisms" are key to understanding the extent of their use in collaborations (Kroll, 2023; Nakashima, 2023). Such mechanisms may include sense-making through discourse amongst actors, deliberation routines, and the extent to which there is room for healthy dissent (Kroll, 2023), suggesting that one of the challenges for collaborative performance management is establishing the right level of such mechanisms. In addition, Satheesh et al. (2023) find that collaborations differ with regards to the extent to which they engage in boundary-spanning activities. Such boundary-spanning activities between the collaboration and its external environment, like "information exchange and knowledge sharing" (p. 424), can help collaborations assimilate, sort and synthesize performance information.

Ways out—Having discussed some of the challenges along the collaborative performance management process, we turn next to some of the ways out suggested. Although there are many potential pathways to foster the collaborative process, we focus on strategies for the unique, dynamic context of collaborative performance management, including facilitative leadership, design processes, and relational mechanisms. First, facilitative leadership can be instrumental to the commitment of the collaboration partners to joint goals and targets. In their study on collaborative performance management of social services, Lahat and Sabah (2021) find evidence that "shared leadership" works as a "bridge facilitating" collaboration and learning within collaborations. Bianchi (2022) studies dynamic performance management and finds that a "learning facilitator" can help to challenge mental models and move the learning process along. Christensen (2024) concludes that the effectiveness of such leadership may be contingent on institutional design: for instance, the ability of a leader to mediate divergent voices and set a common vision for desired outcomes may be challenged when the number of parties to be aligned is too large.

Beyond facilitative leadership, a recent trend has been a focus on design processes to help facilitate the performance management cycle within the dynamic complexity of collaborations. As mentioned above, Douglas and Ansell (2023) introduce the concept of "performance summits," an "interactive dialogue routine where collaborative governance partners meet to exchange performance information, examine their progress, and explore potential improvements" (p. 1109). They find that these summits are especially helpful in engendering and stimulating the learning process. Bianchi (2022) refers to these as "learning forums," and Castelo and Gomes (2024) similarly find that "performance measurement processes alone will hardly improve organizational performance levels." Still, there is a need for "performance management processes that encourage discussion of action plans among all internal stakeholders of the organization, provide a shared view, vocabulary, and focus on common problems and critical success factors" (Castelo & Gomes, 2024, p. 5).

Indeed, Waardenburg et al. (2020a) highlight that the process of collaborative performance management can be facilitated through "scaffolding," where the entire process of collaborative problem-solving through the discussion of outcomes is facilitated in a kind of policy lab setting, an environment for experimentation, learning, and innovation. Xavier and Bianchi (2020) show how this idea was formalized in a "delivery unit" in Malaysia, which served as a "disciplined facilitator, [ensuring] collaboration and performance management through a dedicated institutional structure" (p. 1102). Underlying all these concepts is a recognition of the dynamic nature in combination with the belief that it is possible—or even necessary—to facilitate the performance management process to achieve better outcomes.

Finally, we should also examine the relational mechanisms underlying whether and how to use performance data. As mentioned above, Kroll (2023) offers three social mechanisms that may have an important impact on the extent of performance data use, including system sense-making, deliberation routines, and dissent-conflict balancing. His work suggests a focus on how to activate these mechanisms, including describing some of the antecedents that may amplify or reduce the intensity of these social mechanisms—such as "connectedness, power imbalance, expertise configurations, and distributed leadership" (p. 106). Nakashima (2023) finds that performance data will be used more frequently the more often two network members interact within collaborations, reaffirming that facilitating frequent interaction is critical.

Thus, these authors further reinforce the need to cope with the dynamic nature of collaborative performance management by facilitating the social interaction process. This raises an obvious research question on how understanding these relational mechanisms could further enhance the design processes mentioned.

Multi-relational accountability challenges

Ultimately, the collaborative process leads to results for which the collaboration needs to account (Bryson et al., 2015). When one thinks of collaborative performance management challenges, accountability challenges may come to mind first, as the very nature of collaboration opens new channels of accountability and brings tensions with the old channels that exist within organizations (Gains & Stoker, 2009; Page et al., 2015; Ryan & Walsh, 2004). There are two new channels of accountability: Toward collaboration partners themselves and the authorizing environment.

The first new channel of accountability is toward collaboration partners, which may raise various tensions. Who is accountable to whom and for what is often unclear (Bardach & Lesser, 1996; Page, 2004). Collaboration

"creates complex lines of accountability making attribution of blame or credit for collaborative actions difficult" (Page et al., 2015, p. 3). Some collaborators may resist being held accountable by other organizations, fearing that "they will not perform well—either because they doubt their own capacity, or because circumstances beyond their control may influence the results they are asked to achieve" (Page, 2004, p. 591).

In addition, in the more blurred network of accountability, collaborators may attempt to game the collaborative performance management system (De Bruijn, 2007). For example, an individual collaborator's performance may be judged based on a mix of that collaborator's inputs, as well as the outputs and outcomes of the entire collaboration. In this system, individual collaborators may steer their effort such that they contribute the minimum required input and take credit for the entire collaboration's achievement. This free-rider behavior is sometimes observed in collaborative governance efforts (Waardenburg et al., 2020b).

In addition to intra-collaborative accountability, collaborations may face new channels of accountability toward their authorizing environment. The new collaborative governance model assumes that professionals take increasing discretion to coordinate with partners and generate (publicly valuable) outcomes beyond their traditional role descriptions (Moore & Hartley, 2008). Given the increased discretion required to interpret policies and to move beyond traditional professional roles, the results of collaborative governance efforts must be defended in the democratic arena (O'Flynn, 2007). As a result, collaborators "find themselves more frequently being held to account publicly yet possibly for policies they do not own" (Gains & Stoker, 2009, p. 448). New channels of accountability may include shorter reporting lines to top management or politicians and direct communication with citizens (Gains & Stoker, 2009; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). Wise (2022) brings this challenge to life for collaborations protecting federal land against wildfires, who must render account to their parent organization and partners, the federal government, and the public.

There is a tension between increased discretion and accountability toward other stakeholders and traditional channels of accountability (Moynihan et al., 2011). Collaborators may be unable to account for time spent on collaborative work to their parent organizations or they may find it hard to explain why they prioritized collaborative work over routine tasks to their superiors. In fact, "existing accountability mechanisms are designed for vertical accountability relationships […]. These are inadequate for horizontal or 'networked' accountability across government agencies" (Ryan & Walsh, 2004, p. 621).

Responsibility is often shared in networked governance, and performance cannot be attributed to one person. Traditional accountability systems do not have the capacity to deal with such complexity (Kettl, 2000). To resolve

this tension, a "complete mental reorientation" (Behn, 2002, p. 9) of public managers and their authorizing environment is required (Page, 2004). Yet, every organization in a collaboration will continue to have its own mandates and reporting requirements. As a result, the accountability relations of the collaboration itself must take shape in the wider context of existing accountability structures (Page et al., 2015).

Ways out—The literature proposes several ways to deal with multi-relational accountability challenges. First of all, many authors suggest that it must be explicit for what (to the extent that this is possible to capture) and to whom a collaboration and collaborators are accountable, as well as how they are represented. As we saw above, this could be the collaborators themselves, their parent organizations, or even the public at large. Such clarity is essential in shaping healthy accountability relations (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015b).

Once it is clear to whom collaborations should account, several authors suggest that rather than having single-level performance metrics, an accountability framework with performance indicators should be designed that speaks to the reporting needs and interests of all accountability relationships (Avoyan et al., 2024; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015b). This will, in turn, require multi-level metric reporting systems, with performance indicators that report on different levels of the collaboration and governance (Wise, 2022)—e.g., from the individual actor level, to the network level, and the public (see also Provan & Milward, 2001).

The next step of the process is to review and discuss the collaborations' performance regularly and consistently with all critical stakeholders involved. According to Behn (2014), an organization's leadership should be committed to monitoring and steering the performance of subordinates continuously to ensure an impact on their approach, especially in collaborative settings. The performance summits, learning forums, and more or less formalized processes to discuss progress (explored in the section on collaborative process challenges) have a dual purpose in managing the collaborative process challenges related to performance management, as well as helping to account effectively to leadership and other stakeholders on the actual progress of the collaborative efforts (Bianchi, 2022; Castelo & Gomes, 2024; Douglas & Ansell, 2023).

A final requirement for effective multi-relational accountability raised by the literature is from the study of public managers' behavioral responses to the competing commitments introduced by collaborative governance. While leaders must continuously monitor and review a collaboration's performance, paradoxically, they must also give increasing discretion. According to Agranoff (2005, p. 34), "Leaders must go beyond lip service to facilitate an internal atmosphere that generates participation, sharing of information, joint learning, and participative decision making." This

entails not oversteering on precise inputs, processes, and outputs and providing the conditions under which "distributed strategic capacity" can thrive (De Jong et al., 2023). If these conditions are not in place, one can have the perfect multi-relational accountability framework—complete with transparency on who to report to, multi-level metrics, and a consistent process—but still find that individual collaborators fail to care or account for their progress.

In line with the findings of Waardenburg et al. (2020b) and building on them, Lee and Ospina (2022) find that "to address possible accountability deficits associated with paradoxical tensions in the accountability process, collaborative governance participants must adopt a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' mindset" (p. 72). Yet, how to engender such a 'both/and' mindset" remains an open question. In the conclusion, we will turn to these and other knowledge gaps raised throughout the article.

Conclusion

This article summarized and synthesized the literature on collaborative performance management. In doing so, it has shown how and why performance management in collaborative settings differs from performance management in single organizations. It has also shown how and why introducing performance management in collaborative governance settings creates challenges and opportunities for strengthening collaborations, as we already saw in the case of the collaboration fighting human trafficking in the Netherlands in the introduction. Using the PRISMA framework, we provided an overview of research findings organized by *rationales* for, and *process* and *impact* of performance management in collaborations. Based on this literature review, we presented a synthesis of challenges and possible solutions to the extent that the literature offered these.

One overarching finding is that collaborators responsible for collaborative performance management need to simultaneously navigate the inherent complexities of collaborative governance *and* the typical challenges of performance management in single organizations. Both sets of challenges are significant on their own, let alone combined, and more research is needed to develop evidence-based guidance navigating them. This raised the question of how to conceptualize these challenges in a way that is helpful to practice and further academic inquiry. To help advance the inquiry on the subject, we synthesized existing authors' work into three broad categories of challenges that are distinct for performance in collective governance settings—*substantive problem-solving* challenges, *collaborative process* challenges, and *multi-relational accountability* challenges.

We also mapped strategies to address these challenges to the extent the literature offered insights. For instance, performance summits (Douglas &

Ansell, 2023), scaffolding (Waardenburg et al., 2020a), or delivery units (Xavier & Bianchi, 2020) can facilitate the process of collaborative performance management. Across all of these, it is evident that understanding and acknowledging the dynamic nature of collaborative governance and its inevitable challenges can help find ways to overcome performance management challenges (De Jong et al., 2023).

Remaining knowledge gaps

Significant knowledge gaps remain and present opportunities for future research. Based on the literature review and synthesis of the challenges, we see three critical knowledge gaps. First, we know more about the rationales for and process of collaborative performance management than its actual impact. Little is known about the degree to which performance management regimes effectively create the desired results, including better performance, more accountability, etc. Very few studies to date have paid attention to this critical question (Xavier & Bianchi, 2020; Douglas & Ansell, 2023), or at how collaborations can learn from impact (or lack thereof), adjust their approach and adapt their performance management practices (Pulido-Gómez et al., 2025). Some studies (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015b; Moore, 2003; Page et al., 2015; Provan & Kenis, 2008) explore the application of standardized performance measurement metrices and scorecards derived from single public organization or private sector settings. However, these studies typically feature single case studies with limited generalizability and are not necessarily customized for the unique problem-solving context in which cross-sector collaborations operate.

Second, from our synthesis on collaborative performance management challenges, it is evident that the origins and effects of the challenges associated with collaborative performance management are still imperfectly understood, and the remedies to address them are insufficiently tested. There is plenty of insight into the substantive problem-solving challenges, and each collaborative performance management challenge has accompanying potential ways out as suggested by several studies. However, only recently studies have started to dive deeper into the dynamic nature of collaborative performance management, underlying relational mechanisms, and associated design processes (Avoyan et al., 2024; Bianchi, 2022; Douglas & Ansell, 2023; Kroll, 2022; Lee & Ospina, 2022). The underlying causes and drivers of performance management challenges have yet to be explored from this new (longitudinal) lens, and ways out must be adapted and redesigned with this new dynamic understanding of causes and drivers in mind.

Finally, one of the main cross-cutting findings of this article is the need to understand and acknowledge the dynamic nature of collaborative governance to define the rationales, process, impact, and challenges of

collaborative performance management. Even though several studies (Kroll, 2023) have shifted the focus to sense-making, consensus-seeking, and real-life dynamics in this process, many questions remain. For instance, few studies explore how collaborations (can) deal with the non-linear, ambiguous, and often contentious nature of managing collaborative performance. In particular, there seems to be a discrepancy between the stylized, structured multi-step frameworks describing the collaborative performance management process from earlier research (Behn, 2010; Moynihan, 2008; Voets et al., 2008), and applying these frameworks to the messy, real-life dynamics of emergent problem-oriented collaborations recognized and explored by later research (Lee & Ospina, 2022; Waardenburg et al., 2020b). The nature of these dynamics seems to overlap with the literature on cross-boundary teams and effective teaming practices (Edmondson & Harvey, 2018), begging the question of whether intersecting these two literatures allows us to learn more. This is a cross-cutting knowledge gap warranting further research.

Suggestions for future research

Based on the above knowledge gaps, we propose three potential avenues for future research. First, large(r) scale empirical research on the actual impact of collaborative performance management. Leveraging the conceptual and exploratory work to date, a more systematic study of collaborative performance management practices may generate findings that can be generalized beyond specific contexts and provide more robust answers to questions about the design and management of performance management practices that can positively impact collaborative outcomes. In particular, the meta-question of the performance of collaborative performance management mechanisms should be explored, including how learnings on what works (and under what conditions) can feed back into the collaborative performance management process.

Second, action-oriented (quasi) experimental research on collaborative performance management challenges can help to further improve our understanding of the drivers and effects of these. Given the fact that not only the study of collaborative performance management but the phenomenon itself is still in a nascent stage (there are no proven practices or widely accepted professional standards across domains and contexts), there is an opportunity for action-oriented experimentation in practice and focused research to learn from it. Leveraging longitudinal, quasi-experimental design and action research methodologies, practitioners and scholars can work together to craft new practices, evaluate, and iterate them, and produce knowledge through learning-while-doing. Eventually, if knowledge of possible effective collaborative performance management strategies has matured, such interventions could be tested at a larger scale using field experiments.

Finally, pertaining to the cross-cutting knowledge gap on the interaction between sense-making, consensus-seeking, and the real-life dynamics of collaborative performance management, systematic inquiry into social and behavioral mechanisms driving collaborative performance management may be a useful path for further research. Recent literature has begun highlighting the social mechanisms and behavioral drivers underlying collaborative performance management processes. A key idea from the knowledge gaps described above is the link between cross-boundary teaming and collaborative governance and its relationship to performance management.

There are multiple relationships to explore here. First, how cross-boundary teams can construct effective and meaningful mechanisms to manage their performance and hold themselves accountable. Second, how they can use these mechanisms to manage accountability relationships with their respective authorizing environments to secure legitimacy and support. And finally, how collaborative performance management regimes help or hinder cross-boundary teams on their problem-solving journey. Insights and research designs from the broader literature on teams and effective teaming practices may provide a deeper understanding and generate higher validity results.

Collaborative governance has emerged as an important phenomenon in practice and as an object of study in the field of public management and governance over the past decades. Performance management in these settings, both as a practice and as an object of study, is only in its infancy. This article has provided insight into the intersection of the existing literatures on collaborative governance and performance management. It has formulated questions that are yet to be answered and suggested how future research might help. Pursuing the avenues for the inquiry mentioned above can move the field of study closer to a theory of collaborative performance management that is empirically grounded, analytically sound, and practically useful.

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Appendix A

The below illustrates the search terms that were deployed to obtain references for this literature review article.

Web of Sciences References.

Search term	Further specifications	# of results
Performance management governance	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	856
Performance measurement governance	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	168
Performance regime governance	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	118
Performance management network	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	627
Performance measurement network	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	73
Performance regime network	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	29
"Public value" management	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	320
"Public value" measurement	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	23
"Public value" governance	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	144
Manage "public value"	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	63
Measure "public value"	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	52
Collaborative performance management	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	295
Collaborative performance measurement	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	29
Collaborative performance regime	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	16
Collaboration performance management	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	406
Collaboration performance measurement	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	40
Collaboration performance regime	Refined for public administration; 1990–2024	16
Total articles found incl. overlap	3,275	
Total articles found excl. overlap	1,739	

Google Scholar References.

Search term	Further specifications	# of results
Performance management governance	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Performance measurement governance	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Performance regime governance	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Performance management networked government	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Performance measurement networked government	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Performance regime networked government	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
"Public value" management	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
"Public value" measurement	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
"Public value" governance	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Manage "public value"	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Measure "public value"	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Collaborative governance performance management	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Collaborative governance performance measurement	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Collaborative governance performance regime	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Inter-agency collaboration performance management	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Inter-agency collaboration performance measurement	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Inter-agency collaboration performance regime	1990–2020; 2020–2024 (ran two searches)	200
Total articles found incl. overlap	3,400	
Total articles found excl. overlap	2,200	