

Building Networks: The Role of Collaboration, Partnerships and Participatory Decision Making

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Objectives

Participants will...

1. determine the appropriate level of working together to pursue, in a given situation based on an evaluation, the advantages and disadvantages of each approach to working together;
2. explain and give an example of the building blocks for working together successfully;
3. explain ways to overcome barriers to working together in given situations.

Total Time Required

1 hour

Equipment and Materials Needed

- PowerPoints or overhead slides
 - ❖ *Levels of Working Together*
- Handouts
 - ❖ *Working Together for a Common Good*
 - ❖ *Managing Turf Issues When Working Together*

Directions and Training Tips

Working together sounds like a great idea in this time of growing problems and limited resources, but what does this really mean? How do we work together?

What do you see as the ways in which we work together?

Levels of Working Together		
Hi	Level of Interdependence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Collaboration - creating new systems ❖ Coalition - sharing systems of support ❖ Partnership - sharing resources
Lo	Level of Risk In relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Cooperation - sharing activities ❖ Networking - sharing information

The goal is not to reach the maximum level of interdependence or complexity in the relationship but to find the level of working together that best fits the situation and the capacity of the participating groups

Can we think about situations that would be appropriate for each type of working together? Or, can we think of situations where that type of working together would not be appropriate at all?

While we know it is good to work together, it is also true that it is hard to do. In other words, there are many factors that make it difficult to work together at any level.

Based on your own experience, what make it difficult to work together?

- Institutional/structural problems
 - ❖ Perceived inequalities in power or decision-making influence
 - ❖ Overlapping organizational goals
 - ❖ Fear of diversion of resources
 - ❖ Changing political landscape
- Attitude/perception problems
 - ❖ Lack of knowledge of other participants
 - ❖ Lack of trust in other participants
 - ❖ Personal conflicts
- Process problems
 - ❖ Incompatible action strategies or strategies that mitigate organizational effectiveness
 - ❖ Blurring of organizational identity
 - ❖ Loss of individual organizational respect/recognition

The best way to overcome the turf problems and other issues that beset collaborative efforts is to go into them with open eyes, aware of potential problems and with clarity of purpose and roles. How can this be accomplished?

The most effective approach is to first discuss why each participant believes that working together is an advantageous way to address the issue that has brought you together at this moment in time. Thoughtful and open discussion can help you to determine what level of working together (if any at all) is most effective for this issue. The following illustrates a way to stimulate deliberation about the prospects for working together.

First, we need to compare and contrast the perspectives, interests, concerns and resources of those considering working together. The following questions encourage thoughtful deliberation about the potential relationship.

1. What do we each see as the issue(s) that brings us together? How urgent is the issue we are concerned about?



2. Do we represent the diversity of this community?
3. Do we have a broad range of skills represented?
4. How would we rate the efficiency and effectiveness of our organizations?
5. What skills, knowledge, prior experiences, understandings or resources do we each have that would help us to build and sustain a collaborative effort? If any have had prior experiences with collaborative efforts, what have we learned from those experiences that will help us here?
6. What forces might work against a successful collaboration?
7. How do we feel the rest of the community will view this collaboration?
8. What would be our measures of progress for the effectiveness of our collaboration? What are our expectations for how the collaboration will function? What are our expectations for the roles/responsibilities of each of us working together?
9. What are our expectations for our individual benefits from the collaboration? What will the collaboration enable us to do differently? How will it be different?
10. What might be costs of the collaboration to us as individual members? What costs are we willing to bear before we feel we can no longer participate? Will the collaboration jeopardize any existing commitments?
11. What are our expectations for the joint benefits from the collaboration?
12. What might the collaboration cost the community? What costs do we feel are acceptable balanced against the benefits?
13. Will this collaboration offer or provide to the community opportunities or conditions that do not now exist?

The next set of questions help us to clarify the specific contributions that participants might bring to working together.

If we visualize our collaboration as a wheel moving us toward a shared goal, each of the participants in the collaboration have a share of the wheel. Then imagine that each share of the wheel has concentric arcs, and each arc comprises a factor in thinking about the collaboration.

1. What is our common ground with other members of the collaboration?
2. What are we willing to share in support of the collaboration?
3. What do we bring that is unique to the collaboration?



Going Further - Activities for Participants to Do

Use the survey questions with the other participants in a collaboration that you are currently involved in. Compile the answers without attribution. Discuss the similarities and differences in the answers. How do the answers reflect participants' perspectives on the functioning of the collaboration?

Have each participating partner write the headline and first paragraph of the story they hope the local newspaper will run about this collaboration in three years.

Brainstorm who ought to be at the initial discussions on working together in the following scenarios.

Scenario One

There is a feeling that the community needs to address the serious lack of recreational facilities and activities for youth. The county park is really just an open field with one backstop, and the local school ball field is where the few organized youth baseball teams play, often ending their games because of darkness for the lack of lights.

You have decided to call together a group to see if it is possible to work together to address this situation. Who might you invite to the first meeting? For each one you are thinking of inviting, briefly identify the following:

1. What is the common ground they might share with others?
2. What might be interests they share with others?
3. What unique qualities and/or resources might they bring to the effort?

Scenario Two

There is a growing interest in the community to expand the tourism industry, but people are not sure of what to do or how to get the effort going. There is a recently abandoned school that with some work could be developed into a tourist information center. There are many craftsmen and artisans in the community, and some believe that their home businesses could expand if they had someplace to display and sell their items.

You have decided to call together a group to see if it is possible to work together to address this situation. Who might you invite to the first meeting? For each one you are thinking of inviting, briefly identify the following:

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Scenario Three

You live in a rural community that is experiencing a considerable amount of spillover residential growth from a nearby urban center. Because your community does not have land use planning or zoning and the surrounding counties do, there has been a lot of incompatible and unsightly growth occurring. People move in and build a \$300,000 country estate, and a year later someone moves a single wide trailer onto the property next door or opens up an automobile junk yard. All the new homes are on septic systems, but the truth is that many have straight pipes because of the terrain. Developers from outside the county are coming in and putting up houses on a narrow road and leaving. But then the people who live on that road demand that the county take over the roads and upgrade them so the school buses and fire engines can go down them. There is a feeling that the community needs to act now to adopt comprehensive land use planning and zoning ordinances if there is going to be any chance to save what most people value about this place.

You have decided to call together a group to see if it is possible to work together to address this situation. Who might you invite to the first meeting? For each one you are thinking of inviting, briefly identify the following:

1. What is the common ground they might share with others?
2. What might be the interests they share with others?
3. What unique qualities and/or resources might they bring to the effort?

Now go back and for each scenario think about what factors might make working together difficult. Identify at least two of these and think about how to mitigate these factors.

Additional Background Reading

Hogue, Teresa and Jeff Miller. (2000). *Effective Collaboration: Strategies for Pursuing Common Goals*. Longmont, CO: Rocky Mountain Press.

Kaner, Sam. (1996). *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.



