

**THE GOOD COLLABORATION TOOLKIT:
AN APPROACH TO BUILDING, SUSTAINING, AND CARRYING
OUT SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION**

**THE GOOD PROJECT
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Introduction

The Good Collaboration Toolkit is a set of materials aimed to help individuals collaborate well and build successful collaborations. Through a series of activities, participants will be asked to consider questions, dilemmas, and cases involved with all aspects of the collaboration, most especially the *process* of collaboration. Rather than contribute yet another article explaining theories and suggested steps to “good” collaboration, this Toolkit provides participants with an opportunity to work through exercises, as persons and in groups, which can be useful to the collaborative process.

Over and over again in our own study of “good collaboration,”¹ we heard from participants that they need further and deeper communication with potential and current collaborators. Participants lament missed opportunities to engage in discussion about short and long term goals, purpose, and intended outcomes. Furthermore, collaborators often struggle with different institutional cultures across organizations as well as interpersonal challenges, such as dishonesty, power issues, poor communication skills, and lack of firm and competent leadership.

Goals and Objectives

This Toolkit serves as an approach to help individuals conceptualize and pursue productive collaborations. The four major objectives of this Toolkit are to help individuals:

- 1) identify and evaluate individual motivations, goals and values for collaboration;
- 2) engage in discussion with *potential* collaborators about whether and how to initiate a productive collaboration;
- 3) talk candidly and productively with *current* collaborators when confronted with obstacles and roadblocks; and
- 4) debrief after a collaboration, with unguarded discussions about positive and negative outcomes.

Layout

The Toolkit is organized into four major sections. These sections are not to be confused with a taxonomy, rather, they simply represent the natural progression of a collaboration: 1) Identify and Evaluate; 2) Engage with Potential Collaborators; 3) Nurture Relationships with Active Collaborators; and 4) Debrief and Reflect. It goes

¹ For more information, see thegoodproject.org. We are grateful for generous funding from John Abele and the Argosy Foundation.

without saying that we believe all of these “stages” are important in establishing productive and successful collaboration.

How to Use this Toolkit

This Toolkit is not meant to be a prescribed curriculum; rather it is a set of materials on which one can draw as appropriate. Depending on context, some of the activities may seem more relevant than others or some may fit best for a particular group of collaborators. We have suggested an order (described above), but users of the Toolkit should work with activities as they see fit, in any combination. We have tried to provide a mix of prompts that will appeal to all types of learners and workers, including deep reflective questions, organizational tools, opportunities for discussion, and case studies.

It may be helpful to enlist a third party facilitator to guide participants through the exercises, but it is not a necessity. Each activity is prefaced by a stated purpose and includes explicit directions. These directions are meant to provide some structure and guidance, but certainly participants should feel free to adjust or adapt the materials as appropriate.

Who Should Use the Toolkit?

Anyone interested in developing and sustaining “good collaboration” is an appropriate user of these materials. The materials are meant to be flexible so that the topics and approaches will resonate with professionals representing different domains. It is also possible that students can use these materials, for group projects or extra-curricular work.

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IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE

Is This Collaboration Feasible?

This activity encourages participants to consider the feasibility of a proposed collaboration. By taking the perspective of an outsider, participants are asked to explore how a potential funder may view the possibility of the collaboration and understand the proposed work. Considering collaboration from a funder's point of view can efficiently itemize the pros and cons of the collaborative arrangement. Specifically, evaluating your collaboration in this way is an easy and efficient way to determine if collaboration is necessary and beneficial for all parties involved.

Directions:

Independently, you and your collaborators each write *brief* proposals explaining why collaboration is necessary, as if it were going to be reviewed by a grantor or other funding agency. You may use the questions below as guidelines; these are questions that commonly arise during grant review, but this is by no means a comprehensive list. Then, you review one other's answers *as if you were the one making a funding decision*.

- Does the project span multiple areas of expertise – related or unrelated – to which the collaborators are well suited? What are those areas?
- Does the project require additional experience and training for any of the collaborating individuals or agencies? If so, what is the nature of that additional training? Will that additional training continue to benefit the trainees outside the scope of the project?
- Do the collaborators have complementary knowledge and skills, or is there significant overlap in collaborator's knowledge and skills? If there is significant overlap, will collaboration produce a cumulative effect, or is that knowledge redundant?
- Are the responsibilities of each collaborating party clearly delineated? Is the leadership and governance structure appropriate for the project?
- Could the problem or project under consideration be feasibly executed, in a timely manner, without collaboration?

Investigating Professional Goals

This activity will give participants a structured approach to thinking about the goals for work. In other words, participants can begin to explore how this collaboration fits into their individual professional goals.

Directions:

Interview one another with these questions. You may want to go back and forth between questions (switching between the roles of interviewer and interviewee) or take turns in these roles (one person asks all the questions, once done, switch). Document as necessary; the responses may be helpful to capture. After you are done, discuss some highlights with the whole group.

- What initially attracted you to your work?
- What kinds of things are you trying to accomplish in your work right now?
- What are you hoping will be the greater impact of the work you are doing currently?
- How do you define success?
- What direction do you see for the future of your own career?

Value Sort

This activity gives participants an opportunity to think about the values that are most important to them in work. Originally, this was a research tool on the GoodWork study—a way to document quantitative data to supplement our qualitative data. However, we have found that this activity is also a favorite among professionals who use the GoodWork Toolkit. It is a valuable (and challenging) exercise to force the selection of particular values.

(This activity can be done with cards or on-line at thegoodproject.org)

Directions:

Please sort these 30 cards/values in terms of relative importance to you and your organization. You must follow the grid below so only the allotted number of cards can be placed in a particular category.

		(10 cards)		
	(6 cards)		(6 cards)	
(4 cards)				(4 cards)
least important		relatively neutral		most important

BROAD INTERESTS
CHALLENGE
COURAGE, RISK TAKING
CREATING BALANCE IN ONE'S LIFE (moderation)
CREATIVITY, PIONEERING (originality, imaginativeness)
CURIOSITY
EFFICIENT WORK HABITS
FAITH
FAME, SUCCESS
HARD WORK AND COMMITMENT
HONESTY AND INTEGRITY
INDEPENDENCE
ENJOYMENT OF THE ACTIVITY ITSELF
OPENNESS (being receptive to new ideas or multiple perspectives)
PERSONAL GROWTH AND LEARNING
POWER, INFLUENCE
PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT
PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
QUALITY (excellent, thorough, accurate, or careful work)
RECOGNITION FROM ONE'S FIELD
REWARDING AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (with family, friends, colleagues)
SEARCHING FOR KNOWLEDGE, UNCOVERING WHAT IS TRUE
SELF-EXAMINATION, SELF-CRITICISM, SELF-UNDERSTANDING
SOCIAL CONCERNS (pursuing the common good; avoiding harm; caring about future generations)
SOLITUDE, CONTEMPLATION
SPIRITUALITY
TEACHING, MENTORING
UNDERSTANDING, HELPING, OR SERVING OTHERS
VISION (anticipating future directions, seeing the big picture)
WEALTH, MATERIAL WELL-BEING

Follow-up questions:

- Consider these values again. What are the 4 most important values? What are the 4 least important values?
- How do these most important values give insight into your organization? What do they tell you about your mission, staff, and what you might want out of your work?
- Are there values that are important to you personally that you have sorted differently because you are thinking of your work? Do you see any conflict as a result of these differences?
- Are there any values not listed? If so, what are they?

The Crucial Elements of an Organization

This activity is an opportunity for individuals representing particular organizations to articulate and share crucial elements of their organizations. Sometimes, these elements, when unclear or not known, can pose challenges to others in the midst of collaboration. This exercise is a way to get individuals talking about the “ins and outs” of their respective organizations.

Directions:

Complete the following sheet to share and discuss with potential collaborators. Some of this information may be found in a standard organization description, but it is helpful for individuals to share the most updated information. The process of completing this form may also spark questions for the other collaborating organization(s).

Name of Organization:

Founded (date, by whom):

Funded By:

History of this funding (e.g. why a particular type of funding and not another):

List and briefly describe any major transitions within the organization that have changed the original mission of the organization (e.g. a name change, a merging, a change in leadership):

Other collaborations:

How and why were these formed? For what purpose(s) did your organization want to collaborate?

How do individuals most often communicate in your organization (e.g. meetings, email, phone)?

Are there any “rules,” “philosophies,” or “mottos,” that describe how your organization operates (e.g. “we never let an email go unanswered for more than 24 hours”):

My role in the organization can best be described as:

The people in my organization with whom I have most contact:

The people outside of my organization with whom I have most contact:

Three “quirks” about my organization that would be helpful to know:

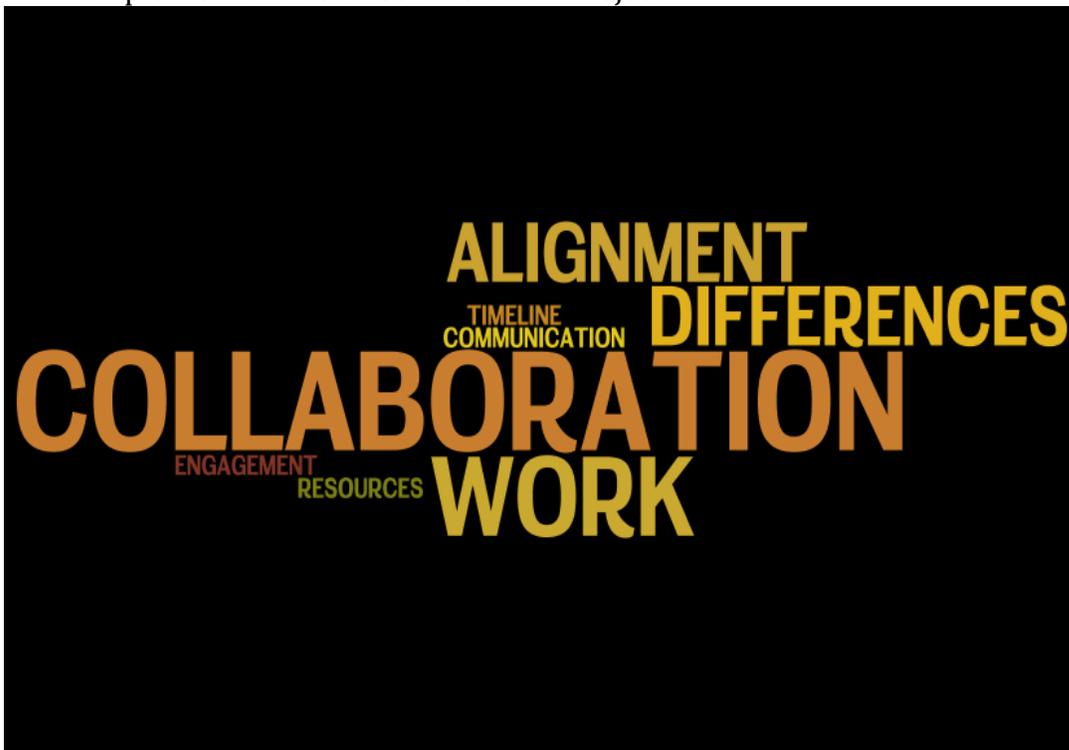
Word Cloud

A word cloud is a visual representation of text (usually a concept, person, or group). Words that describe the concept are usually single words, and the importance is shown by font size or color. This activity is a different way in which individuals can describe their respective organizations, and show the importance or priorities of particular descriptors.

Directions:

Create a word cloud for your organization. See www.wordle.net for directions. Please note, you may need to download a current version of Java Script.

An Example from the Good Collaboration Project:



The Potential Costs of Collaborative Work

Oftentimes, collaborations are formed without any thought to potential negative consequences that could occur as a result. Without consideration to factors that may produce such negative consequences, issues may emerge as organizations face internal changes during the partnership. This activity will help participants consider these issues from an outsider's view.

Directions:

Read the dilemma and answer the questions that follow.

Dilemma:

Jim is the president of Education for Quality, an organization that researches the nation's best education practices to help all schools attain excellence. A few years ago, EfQ was given the opportunity to work with EdFirst, a leading organization in education reform that specializes in helping schools use technology innovatively. Jim did not hesitate, as EdFirst was known as a very forward-thinking and powerful group and partnering with them would help EfQ work with a much wider scope of schools and have more monetary support. They went into a partnership without any particular direction or a clear division of labor, and no clear articulation of the goals of working together. As a result, Jim spent a lot of his energy simply working to hold the partnership together. He explains:

These are all forces that take collaborators in divergent directions. And what I discovered was that what I had put together was an organization with enormous centripetal tendencies ... if you follow me. And you can keep that together for awhile. It takes an enormous amount of energy, which I tried to do, and the more energy I put into that, the less energy I had available to pay attention to the people we were trying to help.

EdFirst was evolving as an organization during the collaboration, growing quickly and working in new locations and at different levels, which added in unforeseen challenges, including shifting budgets and manpower. Once engaged in the partnership, Jim was reluctant to let go, as the opportunities it provided for impact were large. He strived to make the relationship work. Eventually, EfQ and EdFirst had to part ways as Jim could not find a balance between keeping the partnership running and focusing on his own work:

Generally speaking, I think people have the view that collaboration is costless. The more of it you have, the better, with no downside. And that's not true. Collaboration is actually very costly.

Follow-Up Questions (to discuss together):

- What would you have done in Jim's place?
- How could have some of the issues Jim faced be avoided? Should he have avoided the partnership in the first place?
- What are some helpful resources, strategies, and skills to employ in order to resolve this situation? Do any of these supports exist?
- When should Jim have drawn the line between his own work and keeping the partnership moving?

General Questions to Consider as Potential Collaborators or Active Collaborators:

- What measures should be taken at the start of collaboration to ensure that both organizations know the direction of the work?
- How can changes within one organization be addressed?
- How can an equal division of labor in the operational side of the partnership be maintained?
- How can you exit a collaboration in the least damaging way?

Acknowledging Cultural Differences Among Organizations

The purpose of this activity is to identify, articulate, and discuss “cultural differences” among participating organizations.

Many collaborators speak about “cultural differences” between organizations. For example, one participant describes his work with an international group as manifesting differences on many levels—different values around research, aesthetics of a written product, and how to use and manage time together. He explains:

While we share kind of basic agreement about educational principles, and we certainly have [mutual] admiration, our value systems actually have some significant differences. One sort of best and classic example from this, when we were producing the book—it was written and it was being designed, and they were designing it—they would send us a package of five different versions of the cover. I would look at that and literally couldn't tell you what the differences were. Some shade of blue, something about the font size made different. To them, this was the kind of thing that you send to your colleagues because you don't want to make a decision between this one and this one without their knowing. Meanwhile, they would send us back pages in which we had indented because it was a long quote and they didn't like the way that looked, so they took it out...So we would have heart attacks about one set of things. They'd have heart attacks about other things. They thought we were being nut cases. We thought they were being nut cases. We can kind of laugh about it now, but it was not easy.

They thought we were just incredibly interesting because we would establish an agenda for a meeting, and we would try to follow it. They thought it was kind of cute. I think at first they found it annoying, and then they found it interesting, and then they sort of said, “Do that thing, with the agenda.” But you can see even like how we spend two hours together, especially if it's high-pressure like somebody flew across the ocean to get there and we have a day and a half or we have a day, or we have whatever we have, and we've got to make the most of the time. Your idea of making the most of this time and my idea of making the most of this time are wildly different where you need to talk about the history of something for an hour while I want to say, ‘Can you just give me the capsule?’ If I say that, we might as well stop meeting because I have just insulted you basically. So trying to listen and feel, notice when I'm thinking, are they...serious? They're going to like really tell us the entire history of this thing in great detail, and this is just the warm-up. She's not just about to finish. And then we're going to hear from everyone. We're going to do this till lunch. And this is half of our day.

Directions:

With your potential partners, think together about the organizations to which you belong:

- What are the particular cultures of each participating group?
- Are there important differences in work process or organizational structure?
- Are there differences of language or other cultural issues?
- What is your organization's mission? Can you articulate the mission of your potential partner organization?

The Four Dimensions: Your Organization

The purpose of this activity is to articulate and share how a participant's respective organization operates on the four dimensions that characterize each collaboration. For each collaboration, there are four main "relevant dimensions" to successful collaboration (described further in this Toolkit). This activity will be helpful in that it will help individuals to become familiar with the four dimensions (and introduce a terminology that can be used throughout the collaboration) and it is another way for potential collaborators to get to know the organization(s) with which they may be collaborating.

Directions:

Think about each of these dimensions and how they relate to your organization. If there are other individuals involved with the potential collaboration within your organization, work together to describe how each dimension unfolds at your organization. Some guiding questions are included below. These guiding questions can be used for discussion with particular collaborators about their respective organizations once all collaborators have completed this activity.

The Dimensions:

- *Culture: The context of the organization*
- *External Resources: The people, funding, and other outside sources that provide support*
- *Communication: The approaches and structures people within an organization use to communicate*
- *Individual Players: The personal characteristics of individuals in the organization.*

Questions

- **Culture**

Describe the culture of your organization. Specifically, what is the general tone and mode of operation? Do individuals work in the office with rigid schedules, or is flexibility an option? Do people get together outside of work—how friendly is the staff? Is your organization a "meeting crazy" organization, or do individuals try to eliminate as many meetings as possible? These are some specifics, but there are many more questions to discuss.

- External Resources

What are the external resources that are most important to your organization? Consider individuals, funding, other material resources, physical space, issues of time management. Are understandings about these resources clear? Might these resources change over time?

- Communication

How do people most often communicate within your organization? By email? Phone? In person? What are some structures that are in place that help with smooth (and not overwhelming amounts of) communication? Do you and your colleagues formalize or make less formal the process of communication? Why or why not?

- Individual Players

Consider the individuals within your organization. Are there particular traits or qualities that are typical of these individuals, that help to define your organization?

Follow Up Questions:

- Which of these dimensions do you think will offer the most support during the collaboration? Why?
- Are any of these dimensions particularly difficult for you and your colleagues?
- In order for all of these dimensions to operate as smoothly as possible, what is needed? What might be avoided or changed?

ENGAGE WITH POTENTIAL COLLABORATORS

How Collaborations Get off the Ground

The purpose of this activity is to identify, articulate, and discuss the origins of the collaboration among participating organizations.

Collaborations are formed in a variety of ways, for a variety of reasons. How and why individuals and organizations come together will have a major impact on the success of their shared work. Below we offer three examples of how a collaboration may originate.

1) A supervisor brings about the collaboration:

I was asked by the superintendent, when I worked for the [large city] public schools to coordinate a project called School-Based Management, which is basically participatory management where you devolve some of the decision-making to the school away from the central administration. I thought it was folly. But when your boss says you're going to do something, you figure out how you're going to make it work ... I knew I didn't have the knowledge or skill set about how you would help schools take on this kind of decision-making, because it wasn't their skill set either. Administrators had largely been trained to be in control, not to share decision-making.

2) A foundation brings about the collaboration:

The XXX Foundation caused a marriage of five organizations and tried to manage it, [not one] of which had been prepared to be married to each other. But [we were] brought together for extremely good reasons.

3) The collaboration comes about via suggestion or word of mouth:

People said, "Why don't you just partner with XXX organization?" And so we partnered; I wrote [a curriculum] for their organization and our staff did the training. And it worked out great.

Consider your own collaborative work.

- How have you been brought together with your partners?
- What are the overt reasons you have come to work together?
- Are there additional factors that are behind this collaborative relationship?
- Is there a history between the individuals or organizations involved in this collaboration?
- How might these various details impact the success of the collaborative work ahead?

How Important Is...

Participants often report that before a collaboration begins, they do not take the time to think and articulate intended outcomes for the collaboration—it “just happens.” In addition, when individuals and organizations are in alignment with collaborators, the inherent obstacles to collaborative work are not as challenging. Put another way, obstacles do not get in the way if collaborators are working together towards larger purpose goals. This activity is an opportunity for collaborators to explore, individually and together, the intended outcomes for collaboration, and how these outcomes may impact the larger world.

Directions:

Rank order the following statements in terms of their relative importance to the work of the collaboration. Use the following scale 1-4.

4- Most important (use this just ONCE in your ranking)

3- Very important

2- Important

1- Not important

___ Enjoying individuals involved with the collaboration on an interpersonal level

___ Enjoying the opportunity to work with like-minded individuals

___ Being challenged to think further about the topic at-hand

___ Intellectual challenge

___ Gaining recognition for the work by others in the field

___ Contributing scholarly knowledge to the academy

___ Creating and growing something new for your organization or company

___ Providing salaries and income for those with whom you work

___ Opportunity for future funding, additional grants

| ___ Developing a personal understanding of a “problem space” and working towards strategies about how to “fix” the problem

___ Improving operations and systems in the field (e.g. how to consolidate schools that are not performing, how to assess teachers, etc.)

___ Improvements for the “clients,” or audience (e.g. students, teachers, administrators; creating programs that will help kids learn to read, etc.)

___ Foster connections, future partnerships and lasting relationships between you and others who are working in the same domain

___ Publishing a paper, article, book that will be read and cited by many individuals

___ Opportunity to integrate different perspectives in the field to address a specific problem or need; opportunity to be creative

___ Knowledge about how collaborations work; how to work with others; gaining new skills

___ Inspirational ideas from others involved in the collaboration (ideas may or may not directly relate to the particular collaboration at-hand)

___ Development of tools, materials, or measures that people in the field can use to improve their own work

Each of the above statements is a *potential* outcome of a collaboration—results can impact a variety of individuals and audiences, including:

- The self (a particular person involved with the collaboration)
- Organization/Company
- Field or Domain
- Society

Using the above four categories, place each of the potential outcomes under one of these headings. Certainly, any one of the above statements may have impact in more than one area. For example, publishing an article may be impactful for the self, but may also impact an organization, the field, or society. In your categorization, choose the PRIMARY level of impact of each statement.

Look at your ranking of these statements and review the categories in which they fall. Consider the following questions:

- Which category contains your ranking of “Most Important”?
- Which category contains your ranking of “Not Important”?
- Are there any notable patterns of how you ranked these statements according to the categories in which they are placed?
- Talk with others about these “findings,” within your own organization and with potential collaborators.

Working Together: Collaboration and Memory

Any project requires successful learning and retrieval of new information, such as deadlines, strategies and project details. When collaborating with others, we are not only relying on our own memory, and subject to our own memory failures, but we are also relying on the memories of others. A significant body of research has demonstrated that working in a group can promote memory in some cases, but can actually lead to confusion and false recall in others. This activity is designed to highlight the times when collaboration can benefit memory and times when it can be detrimental.

Activity 1

You will need one standard deck of 52 playing cards. This task is designed for two groups of three people, but can be amended to include more.

1. Shuffle the cards well, and deal out 26 of them in a pile face-down. Set the other 26 cards aside.
2. One at a time, and out of view of the other group members, each person should spend ***thirty seconds*** silently studying the 26 cards that were dealt. Each person should use whatever strategy he or she is most comfortable with to try and memorize the cards. Do not write them down, or discuss them with others in the group. After thirty seconds, turn them over, and the next person should study them.
3. After all six members have studied the cards, take a break of at least half an hour. The longer, the better – you can even complete the rest of the task the next day or after several days, if time permits.
4. After the delay, three group members should separately – and without sharing their responses with anyone else – take ***three minutes*** to write down as many of the cards as they remember seeing. The remaining three group members should take three minutes and ***work together*** to list as many cards as they remember seeing.
5. Total up the number of unique responses from the three members who worked **separately** (e.g., if Person A remembered the king of clubs, four of hearts, and jack of diamonds and Person B remembered the king of clubs, four of hearts, and five of diamonds their total would be **four** unique responses).
6. Compare that total to the total number of cards that the collaborative group remembered.

Though your results may vary, many times the “sum of the parts” of individuals working separately will be greater than that of the group who worked together. This is a well-established effect called *collaborative inhibition*: when people must work together to recall information in this way, working in a group often hinders memory. Each person has their own idiosyncratic strategy for recalling information; Person D might visualize the cards organized by number and suit, for example, while Person E might think of what types of poker hands they could make from the cards.

When Person D and Person E both start naming items, their strategies interfere with one another, and disrupt information retrieval. This effect will become even more apparent when there is a longer delay between study and test. Also, make a note of how many cards the individuals versus the group *incorrectly* recall having studied – again, research indicates that groups are more likely to falsely recall more unstudied items (e.g., saying that the seven of spades was studied when it really wasn't) than individuals are.

Activity 2

You will once again need a deck of 52 cards, with 26 dealt out and 26 set aside.

1. Repeat steps 1-3 from Activity 1: everyone should take turns spending thirty seconds studying the 26 dealt cards, and then take a break of at least half an hour.
2. Put all of the cards back into the deck (one person who is not participating in the activity should make a note of what they are, so he or she can check everyone's answers at the end).
3. Three individuals will now test their recognition memory *by themselves*: flip over one card at a time, and write down whether that card is OLD, meaning it was one of the 26 previously studied, or NEW, meaning that it was one of the 26 unstudied cards.
4. The other three individuals will test their recognition memory *in a group*: flip over one card at a time, and discuss as a group whether each card is OLD or NEW. Keep the discussion brief, and arrive at a consensus.
5. Compare the accuracy of each individual to the accuracy of the group.

Again, your results may vary, but typically the group will be more accurate at differentiating old and new cards than the individuals are. On tests like this, where information just needs to be *recognized* as previously encountered, working in a group facilitates memory by weeding out errors. Though it is easy for an individual to incorrectly identify an OLD card as unstudied, members of the group would *all* need to incorrectly identify the OLD card as unstudied to make an error. All it takes is one person to be able to jog everyone else's memory to weed out that error. This is called *error pruning*.

Together, these two activities should help develop effective strategies for tasks like brainstorming sessions. Think about how collaborative inhibition might affect a situation where collaborators are discussing details about a project to try and develop a strategy to move forward, especially when those details may have been learned days, weeks, or months before. Then think about how recognition facilitation might be used advantageously to prune out impractical ideas or incorrect information. One effective strategy might be to have collaborators brainstorm *separately*, when they will not be subject to the effects of collaborative inhibition. Then, after members have brainstormed separately, they can share their ideas in a group to help prune out thoughts or ideas based on incorrect information.

Concentric Circles of Responsibility

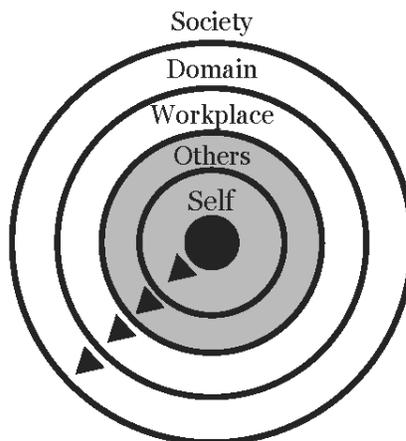
The purpose of this activity is to explore the “concentric circles” of responsibility within a collaboration, which will help participants delineate individual and collective responsibilities for the collaborative work.

Directions:

Read the explanation of concentric circles and respond to the following questions.

Based on research conducted by the GoodProject, as individuals develop ethical reasoning and ethical decision-making skills, rings of responsibility widen. In other words, as individuals become more concerned with others around them, they develop more responsibility, and act on these responsibilities to make sound ethical decisions not only for themselves, but for others they care about, and for people and societies they may never know. In work, there are five major responsibilities: responsibility to the self; responsibility to others (including family, peers, colleagues); responsibility to the workplace, responsibility to the field or domain (e.g. education, public health, the arts); and responsibility to society. These responsibilities become even more complicated when projects are a collaborative process.

Rings of Responsibility



Consider your work in this collaborative project:

- In this work, to whom or what are you responsible?
- In this work, to whom or what are your partners responsible?
- In this work, which responsibilities are shared by all collaborative partners?
- Look at these varying levels of responsibility. Can you imagine an instance where you might feel torn between conflicting responsibilities? Describe this situation and brainstorm options with colleagues.

Defining Roles Within Collaboration

Sometimes it can be difficult to determine what roles each individual should assume in a collaboration (e.g., meeting leader, archivist, contact person, etc.). This is due in part to the fact that we are often quite poor at recognizing that which we do best. This activity is meant to highlight the skills and values of each member, and to help assign roles in collaboration.

Directions:

Read through the following list of traits², and for each item, rate yourself on a 1 – 7 scale (1 = “Does not describe me at all”; 4 = “Neither describes nor doesn’t describe me”; 7 = “Describes me extremely well”). After the scoring, discuss the results with the group as they relate to the different responsibilities within the collaboration.

1. I don't like having to offer the first opinion.
2. I excel at identifying and using the strengths of others.
3. I don't hesitate to speak up to help the group make the right choice.
4. I excel at weighing the pros and cons of different courses of action.
5. I facilitate projects by clarifying procedures and verifying information.
6. I find that ideas are best communicated in a "free-flowing" way; stopping to take notes hinders my thought process.
7. I don't believe in pressuring others to make decisions or act quickly; people work best at their own pace.
8. I am good at "thinking outside the box".
9. Once a project is underway, I don't like having to train new people to bring them up to speed.
10. I excel at "boiling down" ideas so that they are understandable for everyone.
11. If others seem committed to an idea, I don't like to "rock the boat" and offer a dissenting opinion.
12. I believe that precision and high standards are key to success.
13. I am easily distracted by my thoughts or other work.
14. I like coming up with creative solutions that others might not think of.
15. I ensure that my work is completed thoroughly and on time.
16. I thrive on working under pressure.
17. I don't like being the person who brings others to consensus.
18. I believe that hard deadlines can create undue stress for group members.
19. I believe that work should speak for itself; it's better to be thorough than to reach a wide audience.

Scoring

For questions 1, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 17, 18, and 19, subtract your score from eight. For example, if you gave yourself a “3” for question 19, your score should be “5” (8 – 3 = 5).

² Adapted from Belbin Self-Perception Inventory (Belbin, 2012).

We have delineated the following common “roles” in a collaborative group. Add up your scores (including the scores that you just reverse-coded) for each of the following traits to get a sense for where your strengths may fall.

Facilitator (Q1, Q3, Q4, Q8, Q11): You have no problem speaking your mind in a group, and getting others to share ideas. You are happy to start discussion, and generally have a clear sense for what needs to be decided to reach objectives.

Score: _____

Communicator (Q4, Q5, Q9, Q10, Q19): You prioritize being able to reduce information into a form that is accessible to many people. Although you believe in the importance of the work you do, you believe that it is equally important to be able to communicate that work to others. You are willing to talk to members of other groups, and bring them up to speed on project currents when necessary.

Score: _____

Note-taker (Q5, Q6, Q12, Q13, Q15): You prioritize organization, and believe that the most efficient way to approach a task is to be diligent and thorough in handling of information. You are willing to fact-check as necessary to help eliminate false information from meetings and records.

Score: _____

Meeting manager (Q1, Q2, Q4, Q8, Q11): You believe in keeping everybody on-task and keeping the group’s goals in the forefront of everyone’s mind. You will delegate tasks as necessary, but can also come up with novel solutions on your own when necessary.

Score: _____

Archivist (Q5, Q6, Q12, Q13, Q15): You are timely and organized, and you place an emphasis on accuracy and completeness. Like the note-taker, you have no problem being the person who keeps track of things the group discusses and important materials that the group uses. You make sure that people meet their deadlines.

Score: _____

Timekeeper/Objective Organizer (Q7, Q12, Q15, Q16, Q18): You understand the value of having set deadlines and work well within time constraints. You will keep the group on-task and try and use the group’s time in the most optimal way possible. You can see the “big picture” and understand what incremental goals need to be set and met in order to achieve the group’s objectives.

Score: _____

There's No "I" in Team

A successful collaborative process allows very little room for individuals to operate without consideration of the others on the team. Individuals and organizations involved in collaborations are dependent upon one another in multiple ways. In the world of theater, for example, the collaborative process is not an option; it is a necessity. Actors cannot work without the support and energy of one another. In the following activity, it is clear what happens when one member of the team fails to contribute. Lessons learned from this example may be easily applied to the wider world of collaborative work.

Directions:

Read the dilemma and respond to the following questions.

Dilemma: (Adapted from *Making Good: How Young People Cope with Moral Dilemmas at Work*.) A young actor named Jesse has been deeply involved with theater since the age of ten. His parents warmly welcomed his inclination—indeed, his father was an actor, then a director and then a producer. Jesse's parents helped him pursue his passion for a theater career in every way they could. As a result of his father's personal involvement in the business, his parents' financial support, and the experience of growing up in theater-rich New York City, Jesse is an astute actor. He knows what it takes to become a successful professional.

Through his own experiences at selective summer theater programs, in theater workshops outside of school, and at a famed high school of music and performing arts, Jesse learned first-hand not only about methods and skills, but also about the value of collaboration—the importance of working together as a team. He singles out collaboration as one of the most intriguing and rewarding aspects of theater:

I love [theater] so much. Theater is the most collaborative art. You have a set designer, a costume designer, a lighting designer, a director; you have a composer and lyricist. ... And then you have all of these actors, and you are all working towards a common goal, but you are all fitting your pieces together.

He explains further: "So if there's any kind of tension or hostility in that, it's really difficult. And that's why I think you have to be nice in the business. And that's something like they try to teach you as well. You have to be competitive, but you have to be kind."

Jesse experiences enormous tension between competitiveness and collaboration. In high school, he and his fellow students spent three years working together—honing their skills, learning different philosophies and methods, and developing characters through their work on collaborative scenes. Not until senior year do they have the opportunity to audition for a show. This process, Jesse explains, is purposeful. At the end of their senior year, when the students are learning whether they have been

admitted to colleges or conservatories and whether they will be entering theater professionally, LaGuardia hosts an annual Spring Drama Festival—three plays in repertoire, for which everyone auditions. The stakes are high in these auditions: these are the only productions a student has a chance to be in during his entire high school career, and professional agents come to the festival to scout actors. Jesse describes this intensity:

The irony is that senior year, all of a sudden you're having to be really competitive. ... Everybody auditions for that and goes through callback processes together, and all of a sudden it's not, you know, the same as working in your studio acting class, where everybody has a scene and everybody is going to have equal time. And not everybody gets into [a show]. [The directors] actually choose the people they want to show to the industry. ... That kind of changes the environment.... You are up against people, and really up against them. Like they could really get this part over you, that you thought you were, like, way better than freshman year.

Jesse views this process as preparation for the real world of theater; he knows that the issues of competition and collaboration with peers will pervade the professional sphere. In addition, he understands that once cast in a show, he needs to display cooperation, loyalty, and dedication to the collaborative effort. Jesse relates one particular situation in which a peer confronted him for his lack of effort. It is a confrontation that nearly caused the failure of the entire production.

In the Spring Drama Festival, Jesse was fortunate to be cast in two different shows—a striking affirmation of his talent. His first show was a draining experience. Although he loved the script and the director, the time he devoted to the production was exhausting. Because the show was so complicated technically, rehearsals took twelve hours every day. Jesse did not mind. He looked forward to going to rehearsals every day, and tells us that “it was one of the best experiences I ever had,” mostly due to the director. But the second show he was involved in was not of the same caliber. Jesse became involved in the second show right after finishing the first, and two months after the second had begun rehearsals. He says that the new play was “less successful” for him, in large part because of the director, “I had to work too hard to make the material work, because ... I didn't understand where she wanted it to go. And I didn't understand what she was trying to accomplish. Her vision wasn't clear, except to make it funny. ... But that's not enough.”

Jesse was tired, both physically and emotionally.

They were just about to start their hell time, which I had just finished. So I am going from like three, four weeks of hell time into three, four weeks of hell time. And I really didn't want to be

there. And so for the first week I just watched and I would say like really negative things about it.

Jesse did not want to participate in this second show for two reasons: first, sheer exhaustion; and second, fear that the show would not come together and might ultimately tarnish his reputation as an actor. A few weeks into rehearsal, one of the actors, who was a close friend, approached Jesse and said that the whole cast felt a “negative vibe” since he joined. She admitted, “We know that we have a lot to work on ... and we know that it’s not the best thing in the world, but the only thing we have going for us is our spirit. And we feel like since you’ve gotten here, there’s been a very tense atmosphere.” Jesse explains that this confrontation “really hit me.” He didn’t realize that his behavior was having such a negative impact on people, or that his lack of energy and his indifference were affecting the rest of the cast:

No one will ever have to tell me that again. Because I now see—because people and actors are very sensitive anyway, so even if you think ...you’re hiding your feelings you are probably not, because everybody is ultrasensitive anyway...You have to be...very in tune to the environment, and what’s around you.... It was a very awakening experience because it made me think, ‘If this was professional and they were feeling that, I probably would have been fired already.’

Jesse realized how completely others were dependent upon his contributions.

Follow-Up Questions (to discuss together):

- Think about this situation from the perspectives of: Jesse, another actor in the cast, the director. What are the goals of each of these parties?
- What conflicts do you see between these goals?
- Why do you think Jesse was able to respond to these comments in a positive way?
- Have you ever been confronted by someone who said something that might have been “hard to hear,” but in the end was helpful to know? What are the most difficult elements of these situations? What support mechanisms were helpful, if any?

General Questions to Consider as Potential Collaborators or Active Collaborators:

- What measures should be taken at the start of collaboration to ensure that open and honest communication is possible?
- How might issues of competition come into play with respect to the collaboration process? Are these issues on an individual level? An organizational level? Both?

Debate: Excellence and Engagement

There are many factors involved in both individual and shared values about work. What are the standards by which quality is measured? How is success achieved? What are the organization's responsibilities to its stakeholders? To its employees? Perhaps a less obvious factor involves whether or not the individuals doing the work are engaged in what they do. In this activity, collaborators think through individual and shared values for work.

Directions:

1. Divide into groups, each taking one of two positions:
 - You must enjoy your work to be able to do it well.
 - Whether you enjoy your work has nothing to do with how well you do it.

2. Come up with an argument to support your position. Consider what your opponent's argument might be and try to disprove it. Consider the following questions and statement as you formulate your opinion.
 - Is passion for work the same thing as enjoyment of work?
 - Are there any dangers to being truly passionate about your work? If so, what are they?
 - What are the factors that determine the quality of someone's work? What makes some individuals "good workers," others average workers, and still others poor workers?
 - Think of a collaboration that you enjoyed. Do you believe the end result was of a higher or lesser quality as a result of how you felt about the work?
 - Think of a collaboration that you disliked. How was the quality of your work affected by your feelings about the process?

Developing a Mission Statement

This activity gives participants the opportunity to develop a mission statement for their collaborative work. Through this process, participants will talk about beliefs, values, larger purposes of the collaboration, and intended outcomes.

Directions³:

1. Use the answers to the following questions as a guide for drafting an appropriate mission statement for your organization.

- **What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your efforts?**
- **How do you plan to accomplish these goals?**
- **For whose benefit does your organization exist?**

2. Weave together your responses from these questions into a single statement:

The mission of our organization is:

3. Evaluate your statement (Yes, No, Somewhat):

- a. The statement is realistic. _____
- b. The statement is clear and concise. _____
- c. The statement reflects our values and beliefs. _____
- d. The statement demonstrates a commitment to serving the public good. _____
- e. The statement is powerful. _____

4. Based on your evaluation of the statement, jot down possible changes that you can make.

³ This suggested format comes from Minnesota Department of Health
<http://www.health.state.mn.us>

5. Now, rewrite your statement based on those changes.

The mission of our organization is:

6. Share this draft with three people outside your organization for their comments. Be sure to include at least one person who may not be at all familiar with your issues.

List possible candidates below.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Developing a Timeline

In any project, developing a timeline is important and essential. It is useful in terms of organizing the work that lies ahead, but it is also helpful to hold all individuals and parties (in this case collaborators) accountable to completing work when it needs to get done. Far too often, individuals complain that their collaborators are not doing the work in a timely fashion. Sometimes, these individuals lament that as a result, they take on the work and resent the supposed “collaboration.”

Directions:

1. Consult different sources and websites to consider a format for your timeline. There are many different formats for timelines, and different kind of organizing systems are easily found online. For this activity, you may want to peruse some of the following suggestions and samples⁴:

- <http://www.microsoft.com/education/en-us/teachers/how-to/Pages/creating-timeline.aspx>
- http://www.ojjdp.gov/grantees/sample_resrch_timeln.pdf
- <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline/>
- <http://www.vertex42.com/ExcelTemplates/timeline.html>

2. In addition to these sites, consider these other timeline tips:

- Start by establishing a larger purpose goal of the collaboration (other activities in this Toolkit help you do this include How Important Is..., Concentric Circles of Responsibility, Developing a Mission Statement) and then develop some goals that can be achieved in smaller periods of time (weeks, months, a year, depending on the total expected duration of the collaboration).
- Work backwards. Assign a deadline for the larger purpose goal. With this date in mind, think about the smaller goals and what needs to be achieved in order for the smaller achievements to lead to overall success of the collaboration. Assign dates for these smaller scale goals, again working backwards.
- As a group, discuss who will be responsible for the particular pieces of work, leading to the achievement of the smaller goals. Work can be divided in any way that

⁴ Please note, we are not advocating, advertising, or supporting any of these particular sites, these are simply suggestions for further exploration.

is most appropriate for the given collaboration (this may depend upon distance between collaborators, for example).

- With these deadlines in mind, assign meeting and check-in times. Sometimes, it is beneficial to assign a weekly check-in (even if this is by phone or Skype) to make sure that all collaborators are on the same page and working toward their own deadlines. This weekly check-in meeting may only take 10 minutes, but knowing that the meeting will take place is a good way to ensure that everyone stays on task.
- Designate a “task master,” someone who will keep track of the timeline and progress that is made. If someone is responsible for the keeping of the timeline, chances are individuals will be more likely to stay on task.

Finding Your Passion

Collaborations are more enjoyable and more likely to be successful if individuals feel engaged in the work and if the work they are doing is more interesting and important than any of the nagging challenges usually inherent with collaboration (e.g. difficulty communicating with others at a distance or in a different working culture, more individuals make the work harder to coordinate, etc.). When the work is truly engaging to collaborators, the daily challenges of collaboration do not provide obstacles to achieving successful collaboration. This activity will help individuals identify what they find to be the most engaging aspects of the work and provides an opportunity to discuss this with other collaborators.

Directions:

Consider and respond to the following individual and group questions.

Individual Questions:

- What initially attracted you to this collaboration?
- What kinds of things would you most like to accomplish with this collaboration?
- How would you define success as it relates to this collaboration?
- What are you hoping will be the greater impact of the work accomplished in this collaboration?

Group Questions (How do your responses compare to others in the group?):

- Initial attraction to the collaboration
 - If similar, how does this help the collaboration?
 - If different, how do these various perspectives help the collaboration? How may different perspectives hinder the collaboration?
- Accomplishments and Impact of the collaboration
 - How are the responses to accomplishments similar? Different? If different, discuss how these differences may impact overall goals with the collaboration? Are the goals still aligned with hopes for overall accomplishments?
 - How do the responses to greater impact of the collaboration compare across individuals? How are they similar? Different? Explore the differences.
 - Do people agree on what they “really, really, really want from the collaboration”? Talk about the similarities and the differences.
 - Compare the responses to the responses to the initial attraction to the collaboration.

- Engagement
 - How do you define “engagement” as it relates to this work? As individuals?
As a group?
 - How will this collaboration keep you most engaged? What is most important?
 - Is there anything else to add in terms of “engagement” that is important for others to know?

The Four Dimensions: Our Collaboration

The purpose of this activity is to explore the relevant dimensions in terms of the potential collaboration. Through discussion of the dimensions, collaborators will be able to learn more about how each collaborator views the collaboration, their perspectives on the dimensions as they pertain to the collaboration, and to identify goals for future work.

For successful collaborative work, there are four main “relevant dimensions.”

- 1) Culture: the context of the particular organizations involved in the collaboration.
- 2) External Resources: the people, funding, and other outside sources that can be brought to a collaboration.
- 3) Communication: the approaches and structures people in a collaboration use to communicate.
- 4) Individual Players: the personal characteristics of individuals involved in a collaboration.

Directions:

Think together about these dimensions and talk about the definitions of each for the nascent collaboration. Describe how you would like each dimension to unfold. Some guiding questions are included to begin the conversation.

- Culture

How might the particular cultures of participating groups involved influence the organizational structure of the collaboration? Are there cultural issues that may impact the collaborative process (for example, school culture, museum culture)? How might these cultural differences influence the outcome of the work?

- External Resources

What are the external resources that can be brought to this collaboration? Consider individuals, funding, other material resources, physical space, issues of time. How can understandings about these resources be made as clear as possible? Might these resources change over time?

- Communication

How can communication be most clear and efficient? What are some structures that should be in place in order to help with smooth (and not overwhelming amounts of) communication? Should you or your colleagues formalize or make less formal the process of communication? Why or why not?

- Individual Players

Consider the individuals involved in the collaboration. Are there particular traits or qualities that you might point to that may make the process run smoothly (e.g. being very organized) or pose particular challenges (e.g. always running late, not checking email)? Be honest. Are these attributes that you and others might learn from and either emulate or avoid in the future?

Follow Up Questions:

- Which of these dimensions do you think will offer the most support during the collaboration? Why?
- Are any of these dimensions particularly difficult for you and your colleagues?
- What do you propose in order for all of these dimensions to operate as successfully as possible? What might be avoided or changed?

**NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ACTIVE
COLLABORATORS**

Timeline Revisited

This activity is intended as a reminder and a “placeholder” for collaborators to revisit the timeline developed at the beginning of the collaboration. Sometimes timelines are developed and not maintained. In order to keep on track and hold all collaborators responsible for timely work, it is beneficial to periodically revisit the timeline.

Directions:

Revisit the timeline developed in the early stages of the collaboration.

- Review progress of work to date. Look at the time that has elapsed and discuss whether individual and group goals have been reached.
 - Has everyone been doing the work to which they have committed?
 - Has the work been completed on time?
 - Are there other supports (e.g. technology) or strategies (e.g. communication) that may help work to get done within a more efficient timeframe?
 - Do you still believe that achievement of smaller goals will lead to success with the larger purpose goal of the collaboration?

- Look at the months and year(s) that lie ahead. Given your current work with the collaboration, what adjustments might you make to the timeline?
 - Do schedules of timelines need to be adjusted?
 - Do individual and group goals need to be tailored?
 - Do assignments of responsibilities need to be readdressed?
 - What may make achievement of these goals possible? Impossible?

- Make any suggested changes to the timeline and be sure that everyone receives a copy (hard copy or online). If you haven't already, you may want to assign a “task master” so that someone is responsible for keeping the timeline up-to-date and also checking progress.

- Assign another date to revisit the timeline. Depending on the duration of the collaboration, this might be an activity to complete every few months.

Revisiting Mission in the Course of Collaboration

During collaboration, many times individuals confront opportunities and obstacles that “test” the stability and reliability of a collaboration—both in the process of forming and in the process of maintaining a collaboration. For example, individuals may allocate additional funds to the collaboration or on the contrary, an organization may encounter financial difficulties that may pose a threat to the collaboration (e.g. change in personnel, limited time to spend on collaboration). In such situations, organizations may need to go back to the basics. This activity can reveal whether they are aligned about the “higher purpose” of the collaboration and determine whether to re-assess or re-assert their commitment to the collaboration.

Directions:

Read the dilemma and respond to the following questions.

Dilemma: Tom is the executive director of an organization advocating for fair access to higher education for young students. For the past five years, he has been convening foundations, experts in the field, and pre-collegiate and higher education leaders to work with him on these important issues. He has been offered a large grant by a well-known institution in the field, which he takes because he feels that the money will help reach his goals of fairness and equity for all students.

The collaboration with this organization is complicated on two levels. First, the public image of this organization is not favorable—it is a for-profit organization and is believed to work against the values Tom is trying to re-instill. Tom knows that to this group, the collaboration is beneficial because it may help rebuild a favorable image. Many supporters (who have given money over the years) disagree. Tom describes a recent meeting:

I was at a meeting [trying to garner support of potential partners]...And one guy just stood up and yelled at me. And that was really a hard thing to take. And he did that publicly. He said, "You're selling out. Where's your credibility?" Blah-blah-blah. And I had to learn, I just sat there. I was numb. And a lot of people came up to me and said he was out of line. So, there's a perception out there.

The second complicating factor inherent in this collaboration is that the current funding organization does not want Tom to collaborate with any other organizations that could potentially “compete” for its member base. However, at the moment, Tom has applied for a grant that, if it comes to fruition and is successful, may create a similar service that the organization he currently collaborates with already provides. To pursue his personal and professional mission, Tom would like to keep both collaborations. He rationalizes:

And I've made the decision. This is what we're going to try to do and I'm going to try to push it as hard as I can. And I think we're

able to do more good this way. It depends on the final outcome, the final product. Right?

Follow-Up Questions (to discuss together):

- What do you think about Tom's predicament? What does this situation tell you about how Tom thinks about the purpose of these particular collaborations?
- What would you do if you were Tom? Tom's mentor? An independent foundation officer who believes in Tom's mission? Tom's staff?
- What would be helpful resources, strategies, and skills to employ in order to resolve this situation? Do any of these supports exist? Is it possible for Tom to reach a resolution?
- Is Tom violating his principles by working with the first organization? The second organization? What is he willing to risk? Is he "selling out"?
- What is more important, the process of collaboration (following the guidelines set by particular collaborators) or the product of the collaborations (changing the institutional behavior so that the system is more equitable and fair)?

General Questions to Consider as Potential or Active Collaborators:

- What is the central mission of our potential collaboration? What is the purpose of our work together as a group, and as independent organizations? What do we want to accomplish together that we couldn't accomplish alone? How can we each benefit from this collaboration?
- What are the most valued desired outcomes?
- Is there anything we are willing to risk in order to achieve these desired outcomes?
- Anything we are not willing to risk?

Mapping Obstacles: Where Do Ours Lie?

The purpose of this activity is to identify, articulate, and discuss obstacles among participating organizations.

There are many obstacles that have the potential to derail the collaborative process. Below, we offer several types of challenges, explained further with examples from actual practitioners.

1) Mission Clarity and Alignment of Goals

Issues of misalignment can appear at any point during collaboration. Attention to goals at the outset will help to ensure that those involved in the collaboration are in agreement as they begin their work together. But what about in the midst of the process? Sometimes, over time, organizations develop different foci, perhaps as the result of new funding, or change in staff or leadership. As one individual explains:

The motivations that got certain people excited to be involved in certain aspects of the collaboration were not necessarily the same people that were the ones who would be the key players later on, because of different interests and motivations of different people. So, in a sense, the work got transformed into something that was a different animal, which means that different people come in, there's different leadership in different organizations. You can have an institution that has a collaboration, but those institutions are dynamic and the external forces are dynamic and the work is dynamic.

2) Cross-Cultural Issues

“Cultural differences” may refer to issues as specific as variance in how groups approach work, or preferred means of communication. Even when groups within the same discipline (e.g. education) are working within the same country (e.g. the U.S.), there is tremendous potential for differences in approach to work. These differences can prove just as difficult as collaboration between organizations that literally speak different languages. Here are a few examples.

Even at the our graduate school of education there are different cultures. Literally, we're in three different buildings, and the cultures of each building are different...they're different programs. [one building] is teacher ed and curriculum instruction. This is the organization and leadership. And then [there] is human development. And first of all the disciplines are different and then the cultures are different.

Until you recognize and name those culture gaps, you can't really work well together. So I remember sitting in my office ... and having the school where I'd been working call up and say, "We have broken windows in the gym. Can we use your facilities for graduation tomorrow?" And you say, "We make a plan two years in advance for how every room is used, so it seems fairly unlikely."

The funder's timeline is not at all the way time works in the real world and certainly in Italy, the time that they take doesn't match what we do in this country.

3) Limited Resources (time, money, experience, logistics)

Lack of time is frequently mentioned as an obstacle to good collaboration. When the collaboration is seen as something "additional," an add-on to regular work responsibilities, the process becomes even more vexed. The fiscal health of the various organizations involved in the collaborative work is also clearly important, as are the other types of resources available to bring to the table. Some examples to further illustrate these ideas:

It takes an enormous amount of energy, which I tried to do, and the more energy I put into that, the less energy I had available to pay attention to the people we were trying to help.

Another place where I think there's been – there are potentially problems and tension is when the money runs out. Often you're in a situation where the money runs out and you really need to get the stuff done and you want to get it done and you're depending on people's good will. Some people are a lot more willing to put in their time, pro bono time, than others.

What obstacles are present for you in this collaboration? What obstacles are present for your collaborative partners? Below, in addition to the obstacles highlighted above, we list several other potential challenges to good collaboration. Please check every item that you find difficult in your collaborative work:

- Mission Clarity and Alignment of Goals
- Cross-Cultural Issues
- Limited Resources (time, money, experience, logistics)
- Leadership Issues
- Power Struggles (politics, issues of respect, institutional hierarchy)
- Honesty and Trust
- Personal Traits and Interpersonal Issues
- Poor Communication

Choose one of these obstacles, and, in small groups, brainstorm a potential strategy for dealing with this issue.

When Change Occurs

Open and honest communication at the start of collaboration is imperative to ensure a culture of trust between the organizations working together. Many times, lack of communication in a collaboration can lead to false expectations and unclear delineation of responsibilities. This may lead to situations in which a partnership becomes nearly impossible, and work towards the purpose of the collaboration becomes extremely challenging. This activity will help participants to establish trust at the start of a partnership, which is essential to a successful collaboration.

Directions:

Read the dilemma and respond to the following questions.

Dilemma: Steve is the CEO of ChildCare, a nonprofit dedicated to children's academic and social development. A few years ago, they were funded to work with education reform groups to implement their community and culture building programs in schools. The first organization ChildCare worked with was an education reform group, School Action Plan, with development programs in place in many schools. Steve and his colleagues knew and respected Paul, the CEO of SAP. Paul was immediately very receptive and open to the idea of collaboration, and seemed genuinely excited about using their program in the classroom. He even appointed a member of his SAP, Cindy, to specifically work with Steve and his staff to help things run smoothly and efficiently.

Although the collaboration started off on a promising note, shortly after the partnership began, Paul left for a one year fellowship, putting Bob, his second in command, in charge. Although Steve and Cindy worked very well together and were equally enthusiastic about the program, Bob never got on board. He did not trust what was going on. Steve explains:

Well, we spent a lot of time with the new fellow [Paul] had assigned to work with us, and that fellow and we really hit it off and established a great relationship, and what we thought and he thought was a great plan. But [Bob] never bought in, the guy who was running the show and then did continue to run the show even, I guess, when [Paul] [came] back... [Bob] never bought in. He never trusted. He thought that somehow, we learned this later, that somehow we had co-opted the new guy. And I think what he was really afraid of was that if he let us into his schools, we might get the credit for the work, for whatever the fruits would be of our joint labors.

Matters were made even more complicated when Steve and his colleagues started working in schools where programs established by SAP were supposed to be in place. In fact, in many cases there were no such programs established. Because the new, shared reforms were designed to build off of these existing programs, implementation became impossible.

We didn't quite know what to do when we found this, how to report it back to them, the developers, or what we should do in the circumstances. In any case, with School Development Program, things became very awkward, very awkward.

Steve did not know if the collaboration was salvageable, or if he should pull the plug and return the money to the funders.

Follow-Up Questions (to discuss together):

- What do you think about Steve's predicament?
- What would you do if you were Steve? An independent foundation officer who believes in Steve's mission? Steve's staff?
- What are some helpful resources, strategies, and skills to employ in order to resolve this situation? Do any of these supports exist? Is it possible for Steve to reach a resolution?
- How could this situation have been prevented? What are Steve's responsibilities in this situation? What are Paul's responsibilities?

General Questions to Consider as Potential Collaborators or Active Collaborators:

- How can trust be established at the beginning of a collaboration? Why is it important to set clear expectations from the beginning? What factors should be considered in setting these expectations?
- How can you respectfully ensure that your partners are being honest in their work?
- What are possible methods that hold both sides accountable for their responsibilities in collaboration? How might this be sustained throughout the duration of the collaboration?

Competition Between Collaborative Partners

Competition between partnering organizations can lead to a loss of focus on the goals or even the disintegration of collaboration. When opportunities arise that may change the course of a partnership, transparency and open communication must be maintained to prevent animosity and the dissolution of the collaboration.

Directions:

Read the dilemma and respond to the following questions.

Dilemma: Melanie works for YouthConnect, a nonprofit organization that helps prepare underserved youth for college and careers. They were leading an initiative, Heads Up, to help high school students connect with colleges. This initiative involved several other partner organizations, with YouthConnect at the center. The partner organizations were located all over the country and all had an interest in helping high school students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to connect with universities. While all the organizations were working together, clear terms outlining the work as a formal collaboration were ever established.

A few years into this initiative, an opportunity arose for non-profits to write a proposal for a large grant, serving as an intermediary in a new initiative that would scale up the high school-college work being done. Without informing the other partner organizations working in the initial initiative, Melanie applied on behalf of YouthConnect to serve as the intermediary. She did so without informing others as she knew it would be a competitive grant. She soon realized many of the partner organizations that had also been working on Heads Up also applied for the grant. During the application process, several other partner organizations contacted YouthConnect asking them if they wanted to partner on writing a grant for the funding. Melanie explains:

So, I had to manage these phone calls, where people were calling around and saying, "Well, will you partner with us?" And we were saying, well, we don't think we want to. And finally we had to have a few phone calls in which we said, "Look, folks, we knew this moment would come; we're both collaborators and competitors, so let's just do this in the most cordial way we can." And I still don't know if they put their proposals in. We put ours in without any partner.

In the end, YouthConnect was offered the grant and coinciding role of intermediary, ending their partnerships with the other schools involved in Heads Up.

Follow-Up Questions (to discuss together):

- What would you have done in Melanie's place? Would you have told your partners you were applying for the grant? Asked if anyone else was?
- What are some helpful resources, strategies, and skills to employ in order to resolve this situation? Do any of these supports exist?

- Was competition inevitable in this case? Were there viable alternatives to dissolving the collaboration?

General Questions to Consider as Potential Collaborators or Active Collaborators:

- What plans are in place to accommodate a change in the course of work (by one or both organizations involved)?
- Should transparency be the norm in collaboration, even if it is not in the best interest of one of the organizations?
- When is it better to work individually, rather than in partnership with others?

Mapping Supports: Where Do Yours Lie?

The purpose of this activity is to identify, articulate, and discuss the various types of supports that may help the collaborative process.

There are as many supports to good collaboration as there are obstacles that get in the way of the process. Below, we lay out several types of supportive categories, made more vivid by examples from those involved in collaborative work.

1) Communication (includes having a voice, feeling “heard”)

Good communication is crucial to the success of the shared work. Highly valued characteristics include a willingness and ability to work through difficulty, honesty, sensitivity to others, and good listening skills. Here are two examples from our data:

I sense that these guys really listen to me, and I really listen to them, and we influence each other so that sort of mantra, “listen, learn and change” is really there. I feel like already my thinking has changed ... I consider that short, small, but already a successful collaboration.

It’s always been astonishing to me...how people don’t tell the truth because they think it’s to their advantage to tell a different story. And when you don’t tell the truth and it becomes known that you failed to tell the truth, you lose trust and it is virtually impossible to ever regain trust or work again in a collaborative environment with that individual, or pretty soon with any other individual or groups, if you are known to fail to tell the truth.

2) Engagement (feelings of unity, buy-in of participants, sense of purpose behind the work, unified vision, unity of purpose)

Engagement in the work itself is crucial to keeping the collaborative effort moving forward. It is achieved when there is a shared understanding about the purpose of the collaboration, common beliefs about the value of the work, or about the ways in which the work can be carried out.

[To have] people from different home bases who are united with something that they’re idealistic and passionate about ... framed in a way that doesn’t have the usual, not just personal, but institutional ego boundaries and then the energy is about the mission and the purpose, that is very rare.

I think inspiration is important in all of this – that you both need to feel very committed to your work, to the collaboration, to what you can do together that you can’t do apart. But you also need to feel inspired by each other and challenged.

3) Strong Relationships and Partnerships

Healthy relationships are key to keeping a collaboration running smoothly. Sometimes individuals are familiar to one another prior to the collaboration, sometimes they are just meeting one another for the first time. In either situation, the building of these relationships takes time and regular maintenance. Three very different examples all point to the value of building strong relationships with collaborative partners.

I think I'm sort of a more cognitively, intellectually-oriented type, and so I always think if the ideas are good and if people have good intentions, whatever. I don't want to spent time chitchatting and forming the relationships. I'm really bad at the chitchat. But I think it is very important and will sustain a collaboration even when things become problematic which they always will, no matter how successful the collaboration.

Even if I'm doing three-quarters of the work and you're doing one-quarter of the work, but the work that we are both doing is informed by and strengthened by our interactions with each other, that seems to be what's important.

[A colleague] said to me, "I'm not going to work with people I don't like anymore." I think that what she meant by that was she didn't want to be engaged in collaborations where all of the energy went into managing the relationship. I don't think you have to love everybody you work with. I do think you have to respect them. And I do think that you have to be able to separate out the interpersonal stuff in some sense from the work.

What supports are present for you in this collaboration? What supports are present for your collaborative partners? Below, in addition to the supports highlighted above, we list several other potential supports for good collaboration. Please check every item that supports you in your collaborative work:

- Communication (includes having a voice, feeling “heard”)
- Engagement (feelings of unity, buy-in of participants, sense of purpose behind the work, unified vision, unity of purpose)
- Strong Relationships and Partnerships
- Adequate Resources (structure, explicit planning, funding)
- Respect and Trust
- Problem Solving Strategies
- Feeling Valued, Equality Between Collaborators
- Successfully Navigating Culture (national differences, including languages, or organizational cultures)
- Strong Leadership

Look at the above list, select one of the items that you have checked, and discuss it with others in a small group. Offer examples of how this support has enhanced your collaboration.

Choose one item that you have *not* selected. Can you imagine any way that you might change the nature of your collaboration so that this type of support might be more present in your work?

Exploring Strategies

The purpose of this activity is to identify, articulate, and discuss potential strategies to improve the collaborative process among participating organizations.

Those involved in collaborative work employ a variety of methods to make their work as successful as possible. We have already discussed the importance of identifying obstacles (or things that get in the way of good collaboration) and identifying supports (the various elements that help the collaborative effort). In addition, there are many strategies that professionals employ to improve collaborative working conditions.

1) Team Building

How do you build a team? What are the best practices involved in bringing together a potentially diverse group of individuals? How is it possible to make them feel part of a shared project? In part, building a team has to do with acknowledging the individual contributions of each player. For example:

Whenever we collaborate, it is extremely important to understand the source of identity of somebody who's collaborating with us. You know, what the roots of the person's identity are. And have that flourish rather than have that ... challenged. I think what that looks like in practice is ongoing recognition of what the person has to contribute and ongoing recognition of how the person is illuminating the problem. That is very, very helpful, particularly in diverse groups.

2) Negotiation and Compromise

In the midst of a collaboration, there may be problems that are easily solved. If communication isn't going well, for example, strategies for improving methods (weekly meetings, clear note-taking) can be identified and agreed upon. Sometimes, however, larger changes, involving negotiation and potential compromise, are necessary to improve the process:

We have agreed to sit down and just step back for half a day over the next couple of months and literally talk about the state of the partnership ... what's the actual value that we are looking for from this partnership, and does that match the value that they are looking to add in the partnership? I would imagine that we are going to discover that we have some expectation mismatches as it relates to [the] structural dimensions of our relationship. And I think it would be good to get that out on the table.

3) External Support and Advice

Sometimes, those in the midst of a partnership may no longer be able to be objective, may be so immersed in the work that they lose sight of the larger picture,

or are unable to see alternative perspectives. At times like these, it becomes helpful to seek external advice. Here are two examples:

We needed [an outside expert] to say, "this is how it works. They'll say one thing, but this is what they really mean." So, we needed that translator, someone who can basically live in both cultures and go back and forth.

I even asked another one of my colleagues to join us on the phone call so that she could check me. And I said to her, "Is he saying something different than he said last time or am I mishearing it or whatever?" And she said to me, "I think it's a little bit of both" which was a good check for me to make sure that I wasn't just listening in a hopeful way or sort of my own biases or that kind of thing.

Consider your own collaborative work.

-Have you ever used any of the above strategies?

-If so, would you consider your efforts successful? Why or why not?

-What are some additional strategies that you have used to improve your collaborative work? Would you recommend these strategies to others? Why or why not?

Passion and Engagement: Is it Still There?

The purpose of this activity is to revisit the notion of engagement. Is the original intent of the collaboration (the ideas, the people, the potential impact) still appealing? If not, it is a good time to think about what is getting in the way, and how collaborators can bring the original excitement back into the work. Research shows that engagement helps individuals overcome nagging obstacles. With this in mind, this activity will give participants an opportunity to reflect on how the collaboration is progressing in terms of original “hopes and dreams.”

Directions:

Consider the following questions.

Individual Questions:

- Has the work of the collaboration kept you as interested as you had initially hoped it would?
- Do you think the collaboration is on track to accomplish your original goals?
- Do you believe “success” is possible?
- At this point, what do you realistically think will be the greater impact of the work accomplished in this collaboration?

Group Questions (How do your responses compare to others in the group?):

- Interest in the collaboration
 - Have collaborators been able to maintain interest in the work?
 - What has contributed to this sustained engagement?
 - What gets in the way?
 - If there is a loss of interest, what can collaborators or the collaboration as a whole do to “reignite” interest?
- Accomplishments and Impact of the collaboration
 - Do collaborators still believe in the intended outcomes of the collaboration?
 - What has contributed to this agreement and commitment to vision?
 - What gets in the way?
 - If there is a loss of commitment, what can collaborators or the collaboration as a whole do to help get the collaboration on track and people back “on board”?

- Engagement
 - Do people feel “engaged” in the work as individuals? As a group?
 - How has this collaboration kept you most engaged? What has been most important?
 - Is there anything to add in terms of “engagement”? Anything that is important for others to know?

The Four Dimensions: Taking Stock

This activity will help participants explore how the relevant dimensions are unfolding in the collaboration. Through discussion of the dimensions, collaborators will reflect on the progress of the collaboration as well as identify goals for future work.

Dimensions of Collaboration (to review): For each collaboration there are four main “relevant dimensions” to successful collaboration.

- 1) Culture: the context of the particular organizations involved in the collaboration.
- 2) External Resources: the people, funding, and other outside sources that can be brought to a collaboration.
- 3) Communication: the approaches and structures people in a collaboration use to communicate.
- 4) Individual Players: the personal characteristics of individuals involved in a collaboration.

Directions:

Think together about these dimensions and talk about the definitions of each for your shared work. Describe how each dimension is currently unfolding in your collaboration. Some guiding questions are included to begin the conversation.

- Culture

How have the particular cultures of the participating groups involved in the collaboration influenced the process of collaboration? The organizational structure? Are there additional cultural issues that impact the collaborative process (for example, school culture, museum culture)?

- External Resources

What are the external resources brought to this collaboration? Consider individuals, funding, other material resources, physical space, issues of time management. Who contributes what to the collaboration, and are the understandings about these resources always clear? Have the resources change over time?

- Communication

Describe the process of communication during this collaboration. Does communication work well during the project? Should you or your colleagues formalize or make less formal the process of communication? Why or why not?

- Individual Players

Consider the individuals involved in the collaboration. Are there particular traits or qualities that you might point to that make the process run smoothly or pose particular challenges? Are there attributes that you and others might learn from and either emulate or avoid in the future?

Follow Up Questions:

- Which of these dimensions offer the most support during the collaboration?
- Are any of these dimensions particularly difficult for you and your colleagues?
- What do you propose in order for all of these dimensions to operate as efficiently as possible? What can be avoided or changed?

Value Sort Revisited

This activity gives participants an opportunity to think together about the values that are most important to them in work.

Directions:

1. As an individual, from the list that follows, pick the 10 values that stand out to you as important in your collaborative work.
2. As a group, select four “shared values.” Discuss which four are the most important for your work. How do these values give you insight into your collaboration?

VALUES

BROAD INTERESTS

CHALLENGE

COURAGE, RISK TAKING

CREATING BALANCE IN ONE’S LIFE (moderation)

CREATIVITY, PIONEERING (originality, imaginativeness)

CURIOSITY

EFFICIENT WORK HABITS

FAITH

FAME, SUCCESS

HARD WORK AND COMMITMENT

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

INDEPENDENCE

ENJOYMENT OF THE ACTIVITY ITSELF

OPENNESS (being receptive to new ideas or multiple perspectives)

PERSONAL GROWTH AND LEARNING

POWER, INFLUENCE

PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

QUALITY (excellent, thorough, accurate, or careful work)

RECOGNITION FROM ONE’S FIELD

REWARDING AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (with family, friends, colleagues)

SEARCHING FOR KNOWLEDGE, UNCOVERING WHAT IS TRUE

SELF-EXAMINATION, SELF-CRITICISM, SELF-UNDERSTANDING

SOCIAL CONCERNS (pursuing the common good; avoiding harm; caring about future generations)

SOLITUDE, CONTEMPLATION

SPIRITUALITY

TEACHING, MENTORING

UNDERSTANDING, HELPING, OR SERVING OTHERS

VISION (anticipating future directions, seeing the big picture)

WEALTH, MATERIAL WELL-BEING

DEBRIEF AND REFLECT

Collaboration Makes the Headlines

This activity is an opportunity to reflect on the progress and outcomes of the collaboration. In crafting an article, collaborators will summarize the work of the collaboration and begin to think about the impact of the collaborative work. This article might eventually be used as a blog for a website, a press release, an op ed column, or be the beginning of a research paper or publication for an academic journal.

Directions:

Imagine that you are a reporter for the New York Times and have the opportunity to write an article for the Education Section. The article will highlight the work of your collaboration and offer the collaboration as a model of how groups can work together to create “real” change in education.

Some questions to consider:

- What were the origins of the collaboration—how did the collaborators come together? Did this process play a role in the overall progress of the collaboration?
- What are the highlights of the collaboration? Cite two or three specific ways the collaboration has had an impact.
- What are some of the traditional and innovative strategies you have used to counter challenges in your collaborative work?
- What have been helpful supports (e.g. external resources, technology, the Collaboration Toolkit (!), etc.)?
- How do the goals set out at the beginning of the collaboration align with the outcomes?
- What are some future plans for the collaboration? Will the work continue in some capacity?

Assessing Progress: Timeline Revisited

At the official end of a collaboration, participants are encouraged to revisit the timeline with two main goals in mind: first, review the schedule for work and confirm that all “assignments” and responsibilities were completed; and second, reflect on the process throughout the collaboration and discuss what was helpful (and maybe not helpful) in terms of keeping on schedule.

Directions:

Revisit the timeline developed in the early stages of the collaboration and at the last check-in and reflect on its usefulness.

- Review progress of work to date. Look at the time that has elapsed and discuss whether individual and group goals have been reached since the last check-in.
 - Has everyone been doing the work to which they have committed?
 - Has the work been completed on time?
 - Are there other supports (e.g. technology) or strategies (e.g. communication) that may help work to get done within a more efficient timeframe?
 - Do you still believe that achievement of smaller goals will lead to success with the large purpose goal of the collaboration?

- Reflect on the overall timeline for the collaboration. Assess its usefulness and accuracy throughout the duration of the collaboration.

Next time, in setting up a collaboration (or in continuing work for this collaboration), what might you do differently? Consider:

- Were the deadlines and schedules realistic?
 - Were individual and group goals met? What could have been more helpful?
 - Did individuals take ownership of their particular responsibilities?
 - What was the usefulness of regular group check-ins? How might you organize this differently the next time?
-
- Document the discussion (as much as possible) for reference for future collaborations. Think about a list of tips or advice that you might offer to someone who is about to embark on a collaboration.

Reflection in 3's: Tips, Lessons, and Advice

This activity is an opportunity to reflect individually and then collectively on the process of collaboration. As participants have just experienced, building, organizing, and operating "successful" collaborations is not always easy. This reflection will be helpful for individuals and groups to articulate tips, lessons, and advice that are drawn from their recent collaborative experiences. Documentation of this discussion might help others who are just embarking on their own collaborations.

Directions:

Consider the following questions first as individuals, and then compare responses as a group and use the questions to guide your collective discussion. Document your responses as much as desired.

- What are three pieces of advice you would give to someone who was about to enter into a collaboration?

- What does it take to build a successful collaboration?

- What are three "red flags" or warning signs that a collaboration is not working?

An Exit Interview:

Once the work of a collaboration is complete, this interview is part of the process of debriefing. This activity provides some useful reflective opportunities for individuals and collaborative partners.

Directions:

Collaborators divide into pairs and interview one another.

1. Consider the collaborative project you have just completed.
 - a) How did the collaboration come about?
 - b) What was the purpose of the collaboration at the outset? Did the purpose change at all over time?
 - c) What, if any, were the products of the collaboration?
 - d) How have individuals and groups profited from the collaboration? How have they changed?
2. Would you consider this collaboration a “successful” collaboration, and why? How do you define “successful” collaboration?
 - a) Is it important that the various groups like one another, or are comfortable with one another? Is it important that they have similar cultures?
 - b) What are the short term and long term signs of success that can be assessed? Is success measured differently over time—e.g. in the middle of a collaboration, at the immediate end of a collaboration, five or ten years later?
3. (If no to the above) Would you consider this collaboration an “unsuccessful” collaboration?
 - a) What did not seem to work/go well?
 - b) What, if anything, might have made it more successful?
 - c) Were there any open conversations with collaborators, during the process, addressing these issues? If no, why not?
 - d) Would you still consider the experience worthwhile? Was any of it time well spent? Why or why not?
 - e) If you could have terminated the collaboration, would you have done so? How? What would have been the negative consequences of a unilateral termination? A bilateral one?
4. Is it important that all participants in a collaboration have the same understanding of success?
5. What are the benefits of working collaboratively?
6. What are the drawbacks of working collaboratively?
7. How important is shared mission to a successful collaboration?

8. Is good collaboration a skill?

a) If you're a more experienced collaborator, does this make you better at the process of collaboration?

b) If your collaborations have been less successful, might your experience make you less able to collaborate well?

Revisiting Engagement: What Now?

Through reflection about the collaboration, participants will be asked to think about the role of engagement in the process of collaboration. How did engagement in the ideas happen? Where did engagement come from? Where did you lose it along the way? Is it still there, after all of the work? Are you now more engaged in and committed to the work or the ideas behind the work?

Directions:

Consider the following questions.

Individual Questions:

- Did the work of the collaboration keep you as interested as you may have hoped?
- Did the collaboration accomplish what you had originally hoped it might?
- What will be the greater impact of the work accomplished in this collaboration?

Group Questions (How do your responses compare to others in the group?):

- Interest in the collaboration
 - Did collaborators maintain interest in the work?
 - What contributed to this sustained engagement?
 - What got in the way?
 - If there was a loss of interest, what might collaborators have done to “reignite” interest?
- Accomplishments and Impact of the collaboration
 - Do collaborators believe there will be beneficial outcomes of the collaboration?
 - What helped the commitment to vision?
 - What got in the way?
 - If there was a loss of commitment, what might collaborators have done to help get the collaboration on track and people “on board”?
- Engagement
 - Did people feel “engaged” in the work as individuals? As a group?
 - How did the collaboration keep you most engaged? What was most important?
 - Is there anything to add in terms of “engagement” that is important for others to know?

Reflecting on Dimensions and Outcomes for Collaborative Success

In this activity, participants will explore a working model that outlines dimensions and outcomes for collaborative success.

Dimensions of Collaboration (to review): This model describes four dimensions of collaboration, each of which characterizes a particular collaborative experience. For each collaboration there are four main “relevant dimensions” to a successful collaborative process.

- 1) Culture: the context of the particular organizations involved in the collaboration.
- 2) External Resources: the people, funding, and other outside sources that can be brought to a collaboration.
- 3) Communication: the approaches and structures people in a collaboration use to communicate.
- 4) Individual Players: the personal characteristics of individuals involved in a collaboration.

Directions:

Think together about these dimensions and talk about the definitions of each for your shared work. Upon reflection, describe how each dimension unfolded during your collaboration. Some guiding questions are included to begin the conversation.

- Culture

What are the particular cultures of the participating groups involved in the collaboration? Are there differences in organizational structure? Differences of language or understandings? Are there additional cultural issues that impact the collaborative process (for example, school culture, museum culture)?

- External Resources

What are the external resources brought to this collaboration? Consider individuals, funding, other material resources, physical space, issues of time management. Who contributed what to the collaboration, and were the understandings about these resources always clear? Did the resources change over time?

- Communication

How was the process of communication established during this collaboration? Did communication work well during the project? Upon reflection, would you or your colleagues formalize or make less formal the process of communication? Why or why not?

- Individual Players

Consider the individuals involved in the collaboration. Are there particular traits or qualities that you might point to that made the process run smoothly or posed particular challenges? Are there attributes that you and others might learn from and either emulate or avoid in the future?

Follow Up Questions:

- Which of these dimensions offered the most support during the collaboration?
- Were any of these dimensions particularly difficult for you and your colleagues?
- Next time, what would you propose in order for all of these dimensions to operate as efficiently as possible? What could have been avoided or changed?

Outcomes of Collaboration: “Intended Outcomes” also define a collaboration. Intended outcomes are the desired results of the collaboration that impact the individual, the organization, the field (of education), and society.

Consider the impact or potential impact of the work that resulted from your collaboration. In which category or categories can it best be placed?

- 1) The Self: the work has had impact or there is potential impact on you personally.
- 2) Organization/Company: the work has had impact or there is potential impact on the organizations involved in the collaboration.
- 3) Field/Domain: the work has had impact or there is potential impact on the field of education.
- 4) Society: the work has had impact or there is potential impact on the wider world.

Follow Up Questions:

- Are you satisfied with the category or categories that best represent your outcomes?
- Did you hope for something different?
- What might you change to arrive at a different result?
- If you are pleased with the result, how did you achieve this success?

Dimensions and Outcomes Considered Together:

Consider the four dimensions of collaboration in conjunction with the outcomes of your collaborative work.

- Think of each dimension with respect to “intended outcomes.” For example, how do the cultures of the organizations involved have impact on the self, organization, field (education) and society?
- What is the main outcome of your collaboration? Where is its greatest impact? What do the various dimensions of collaboration tell you about the process involved in achieving this outcome?

Literature Review on Collaboration in Education

Collaboration Literature Review

Scope and Strategy

Whether an organization succeeds in its efforts – and ultimately whether it endures - is increasingly dependent upon its ability to collaborate effectively (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Lank, 2006). This trend is reflected in a sharp increase in the number of collaborative partnerships during the past three decades and concomitant efforts to understand the limits and possibilities of inter-organizational collaboration. The result of both trends is a vast literature about collaboration that spans domains and disciplines.

There is clear consensus about the reasons why more organizations are engaging in collaborative efforts and doing so with increased frequency. Contemporary social problems are complex, involve multiple stakeholders, and demand the perspective and power of varied constituencies. Simultaneously, organizations are encountering resource limitations, recognizing the strategic value of aligning with both allies and competitors, and facing expectations from funders who encourage collaborative work. Although scholars studying collaboration continue to refine its definition (Axelsson & Axelsson, 2006; Lang, 2002; Thomson, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991), “collaboration” typically refers to “...a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals”. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and a sharing of resources and rewards” (Mattesich et al, 2001, p 4).

Many scholars who research the “what and why” of collaboration as a way of doing business take a rather grim tone. Lang (2002) notes, “Where adequate resources – whether financial, physical, or human – are available, inter-institutional cooperation presumably would not be undertaken.” (pg. 154) Huxham and Vangen (2005) are more direct in their advice: “Don’t do it unless you have to!” (pg. 37) The resulting, minced adage may be: “If you want something done you have to work with others to do it, even if it would be a heck of a lot easier to do it yourself.” Chrislip and Larson’s (1994) perspective on what motivates organizations to collaborate stood out as decidedly different from others. They state, “There is a fundamental premise – we call it the collaborative premise – that undergirds these efforts: there is a belief that if you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organization or community.” (Chrislip & Larson, pg. 14).

The following review summarizes a sampling of management literature, research studies, and “how-to” guides from various sectors including not-for-profit, government/public administration, health care, and education. It identifies theories and researchers that inform contemporary research and practice and ways that collaboration has been studied within the field of education. The document is organized to summarize

theories and findings relevant to the research questions guiding GoodWork's nascent study.

Literature specifically addressing collaboration in education has focused primarily on school community partnerships and collaborations between K-12 and higher education. The latter partnerships include teacher education programs, instructional improvement efforts, and action research. Additionally, a few examples of cross-sector initiatives involving schools were embedded in the management literature. Notably, the word "partnership" seems preferable in educational research and is used interchangeably with "collaboration".

This stage of the review focused on collaborations between researchers (in universities and professional organizations) and schools and excluded studies on school-community partnerships. In a recent review of 36 partnerships in K-20 education, Clifford, et al (2008) noted that previous studies had not integrated scholarship from other fields, relied predominately upon single-case studies and were largely descriptive: that is, they did not explore how educational collaborations accomplished their tasks nor did they offer models that may describe collaborative outcomes. A sampling of articles exploring collaborative, interdisciplinary research projects is included here as well; these neither addressed educational objectives nor were targeted toward understanding the educational programs or operations but nevertheless offered valuable insights into the general workings of inter-organizational partnerships.

How will we measure a "successful" collaboration? Are products/outcomes necessary to success, or is success determined by the perceptions of the various participants?

It is easy to find articles and books that summarize factors that explain collaborative "success" but it is terribly unclear what it means to say that a collaboration is successful (Selsky, 2005). Clifford, et al. note that varied definitions of success makes synthesizing the vast literature about collaboration a challenge: "...the researchers identified partnership features that they, or others, believed were associated with success, as they variously defined it" (pg 8). Ultimately, the meaning of "success" remains to be inferred and seems to be "the resolution or mitigation of a problem and/or advancement of a program or agenda."

There are indications of why it is difficult to define and measure the success of collaborative efforts. For example, effective collaborative ventures are said to feature "mutuality" - they tend to "succeed" if the organizations involved are each achieving their individual objectives even as they are working together toward shared goals. Although the following sections include additional information about mutuality, the concept intimates the multiple perspectives from which success can be assessed. For example, Huxham and Vangen encourage thinking about objectives at the individual, organizational, and collaboration level. Whether such goals are articulated explicitly, much less measured, suggests why there often may be no one, simple answer to the question: "Was the collaboration successful?"

As partnerships become de rigueur it is difficult to distinguish between collaboration as an ends and a means (Axelsson & Axelsson, 1006; Trubowitz & Longo, 1997) and most authors argue that partnerships need to be evaluated both in terms of their process and their product. Measuring the success of work processes is challenging and a later section of this summary highlights challenges particular to collaborative work. Examining success in terms of products is no less difficult, however. Partnerships may pursue tangible or intangible outcomes, or both (Bammer; Chrislip & Larson; Huxham & Vangen). Additionally, organizations are often motivated to come together to improve human life and community experiences. In his analysis of three interdisciplinary collaboratives (the Manhattan Project, the World Commission on Dams, and the Human Genome project), Bammer (2008) observes: "...it is not clear what a fair expectation of impact is when the goals (of a partnership) are political and aim to rectify long-standing inequalities" (pg 10).

What conditions are most likely to result in a successful collaboration?

A great deal of effort has been invested toward identifying factors that undergird successful collaboration (despite the variable and contextual meaning of "success"). Toward this end, several authors (*cf.* Chrislip & Larson, Huxham & Vangen, Lank; Mattesich, et al, 2001; Winer & Ray, 1994) have synthesized themes across their own research ventures and/or reviewed the research of others. The present review integrates their summative insights with complementary studies and theories to identify preconditions (e.g. trust, mutuality, resource availability, legitimacy), process dimensions (e.g. governance, administration, trust), and leadership traits and functions (e.g. deliberative, distributed, process oriented) that seem to explain successful collaborations.

What preconditions seem to increase the likelihood that a collaboration will succeed?

Shared Purpose / Common Definition of Problem

Research consistently affirms what may seem obvious - collaborations in which partners define the problem similarly and share a common purpose tend to be most successful (Badiali, et al, 2000; Bingham & O'Leary, 2006; Clifford; Huxham & Vangen). However, articulating collective vision is itself a consuming and nuanced process whether parties are defining the scope of a research agenda (Bammer), negotiating competing interests on a community problem (Chrislip & Larson; Gray), or prioritizing action on a complex organizational or social issue (Trubowitz & Longo; Winer & Ray). For example, Gray (1989) distinguishes between "problem setting" and "direction setting" (i.e. articulating a common vision), stating that the former is prerequisite for the latter. Chrislip and Larson argue that, regardless of history, collaborative participants need to go about "aggressively articulating" common purpose - a process of differentiating individual needs and integrating common aims - so that "individual self-interests are seen as obtainable through the achievement of the group's goals". They state that "This shift is a profound one, and it marks a turning point in the life of a collaborative initiative" (pg. 101). Lank also differentiates between strategic

goals that frame the purpose of the venture and operational goals that guide the work that is to be done.

Trust

The importance of trust to any inter-organizational partnership is indisputable (Bingham & O’Leary; Huxham & Vangen; Lank; Chrislip; Winer & Ray). Although most authors agree that organizations must trust one another before embarking on a collaborative effort, there is not consensus that trust is a *precondition* for collaboration. Vangen and Huxham (2003) argue it is not a prerequisite but, rather, that organizations need only enough motivation to exceed any risks and distrust that exist at the outset. Thereafter a cyclical loop of trust building is sufficient for the collaboration to endure and/or succeed.

Identifying and Involving Stakeholders

The use of the word “stakeholders” is pervasive in the literature on collaboration in the public and non-profit sectors. In these worlds, the membership of a collaboration can offer political support and legitimacy and decisions about inclusion and exclusion may diffuse potential conflict (Chrislip & Larson; Gray; Lank). Additionally, when collaboration is motivated by the need to address community problems or multi-party disputes, progress can be made or broken by inviting the right colleagues to the table. However, Huxham and Vangen note a tradeoff that organizations must consider: involving more groups in a partnership increases the resources available but diffuses the collective agenda and decreases efficiency.

In educational literature the word “partner” is used to reflect those involved in collaborative ventures. Although this is consonant with education’s use of “partnership” (versus collaboration), it presumably reflects a unique educational circumstance: primary stakeholders (i.e. students and their families) often are not involved in coordinating efforts to collaborate in order to understand and improve educational programs, research, and policy.

Whether the way a collaboration comes about affects its long-term success is not clear based upon the studies reviewed thus far. The role a convener plays in collaborations assembled to address multi-party problems has been examined to understand how legitimacy and neutrality matter to the negotiating process (Gray, 1989; Wood & Gray, 1991). However, further review – and possibly future research – is necessary to understand the effect that a collaboration’s origin has on its process and outcomes when the partnership is not motivated by entrenched conflict.

Ensuring Resource Availability

Collaborative work can tax human, financial and material resources. Because collaborative processes are typically less efficient than solitary efforts, partners are wise to consider the time investment required to work together effectively (Badiali, et al.;

Huxham; Lank; Winer & Ray). Huxham (1996) distinguishes between two ways that time taxes collaborative efforts: actual time (time spent establishing common purpose, and negotiating features of the collaborative process) and lapsed time (time spent coping with accountability issues and intra-organizational demands outside of the collaboration). Additionally, the management of shared resources places demands upon collaborative governance and administration and may affect participants' perceptions of trust and equity (more on these process features, below). Winer and Ray note that when the need for resources – particularly money – is the primary motivator for collaboration, competition for those resources may ultimately make or break the joint venture. The literature reviewed thus far did not address the role or effects of funders in initiating or facilitating collaborative ventures.

What features of collaborative process can “make or break” a collaboration and what do we know about them?

The ongoing, day-to-day process of working together is perhaps the most challenging and least understood aspect of inter-organizational collaboration. Although some authors have articulated “phases” of collaborative work (*cf* Lank; Winer & Ray), these elements are at best iterative and indiscrete (Huxham & Vangen; Lank; Thomson & Perry; Winer & Ray). Two features of collaborative process – its culture and structure – are useful dimensions to parse what is understood about the “black box” through which organizations pass between coming together for a common purpose and examining the outcomes of their endeavor (Gray & Wood; Thomson & Perry).

Collaborative structures

Every partnership needs mechanisms for making decisions and acting upon them. Bingham & O’Leary distinguish between governance and administration: the former is concerned with making decisions about the purpose and tasks of the collaboration and the latter with how the work will be coordinated and executed. Both types of structures are essential to collaborative work and seem to rely upon deliberative processes (Bingham & O’Leary; Clifford) that need time to evolve and require negotiated compromise to endure (Huxham and Vangen). Lank notes that organizations involving individuals who have prior experience in collaborative ventures are most likely to have success in establishing norms for governance and administration.

Again, however, the nature of collaborative partnerships makes both decision-making and action particularly challenging. By definition, constituent organizations are autonomous and their involvement and participation in the joint venture is voluntary (Gray, 2000; Huxham & Vangen). Axelsson and Axelsson note that integrating differentiated functions to accomplish prescribed work is challenging within a single organization; collaborating organizations come together to maximize difference and must therefore harness intra-organizational resources even as they integrate inter-organizational diversity. As a result, both collaborative governance and administrative mechanisms need to be both flexible and consistent. They need to fit the constituent intra-organizational cultures and administrative structures, adapt to changes in membership

and context, and provide consistency when leadership changes and goals are revisited (Badiali, et al; Mattesich; Trubow & Longo). Additionally, the timing of decisions and actions must accommodate the self-interests & mutual interests of the organizations involved (Huxham & Vangen; Thomson & Perry).

Balancing clarity and flexibility is important to efficiency and also sustains and builds trust among constituent groups. Bickell and Hatstrup's analysis of a partnership between teachers and a research group suggests that centralizing administrative functions – which is often necessary due to the location of human and financial resources – can easily shift perceptions of power and equity among partners in a collaboration. Specifically, the locus of administrative actions may be perceived as having more power and communication may – unwittingly – be locked in local administrative networks.

Collaboration and Cognition

Whether we are working alone or in a collaborative group, it is critical that we can *remember* information and events accurately. Aside from adages that “many hands make light work,” our general intuition is that we can learn and remember information better when working in a collaborative group than when we work by ourselves (Dixon, Gagnon, & Crow, 1998). However, substantial laboratory research has indicated that this is not always the case, and that collaboration can actually hinder successful remembering and impede collaboration (Basden et al., 1997; Blumen & Rajaram, 2008; Weldon & Bellinger, 1997; see Rajaram, 2011, for review).

In a typical laboratory experiment, individuals study lists of items – 30 unrelated words, for example – and then have their memory tested for those words either individually or in a collaborative group with one, two, or three other strangers who have studied the same list (e.g., Weldon & Bellinger, 1997). Generally, the collaborative group will remember more items than any one individual – the collaborative group may remember twenty items, for example, while the individual only remembers fifteen items. However, the relevant comparison is not the performance of the collaborative group to the performance of a single individual, but rather the performance of the collaborative group to an *equal* number of individuals (e.g., if the collaborative group has three people, their performance should be compared to the combined, non-overlapping memory of three individuals). In this case, performance of the collaborative group lags behind that of the combined individuals: whereas a collaborative group may remember 20 out of 30 items, three individuals combined might remember a total of 25 out of 30 items. This phenomenon, in which the whole is less than the sum of the parts, has been termed “collaborative inhibition” (Weldon & Bellinger, 1997; see review Rajaram and Pereira-Pasarin, 2010, for evidence of the robustness of collaborative inhibition). Interestingly – and perhaps contrary to our intuition – this inhibition does not arise from one or more individuals not doing their part (“social loafing”; see Weldon, 2001, for evidence). Collaborative inhibition is observed even when everyone is doing an equal share of work. Rather, there are several, more subtle, cognitive mechanisms that lead to group memory impairment.

The first mechanism, described by Basden et al. (1997), is “retrieval disruption”. In short, retrieval disruption is the idea that your train of thought derails mine. Individuals typically have their own strategies and methods – both conscious and unconscious – of retrieving information from memory. When another person verbalizes their thought process, or even just verbalizes information that they remember, it disrupts the retrieval strategies of others in the group and makes it more difficult for those members to access their own thoughts and information. One implication of retrieval disruption is that “brainstorming” sessions may not always be as effective as they are perceived to be. Brainstorming involves, at least in part, thinking back to past projects or collaborations and remembering what was effective and what was not. The laboratory evidence suggests that it might be more effective for group members to brainstorm individually, when they can recall past strategies and projects alone and without being subject to retrieval disruption. Then, they can share their ideas with one another *after* the memorial process is over and when working in a group is less likely to disrupt cognition.

A second way in which collaboration can inhibit memory is through a process called “social contagion” (Roediger, Meade, & Bergman, 2001). Although collaboration can impede the recall of correct information through retrieval disruption, it can also *facilitate recall of false information*. Social contagion of memory occurs when one member of the group introduces incorrect or misleading information, and other group members incorporate that information into their own memory as being true. As an example, imagine that Group A and Group B are collaborating on a project, and want to invite members of Group C to join. After much back-and-forth, the groups decide that a representative from Group B will reach out to Group C. Later, members from Group B meet, and the group wonders what had been decided in regards to contacting Group C. One member of Group B incorrectly recalls that it was decided that Group A would initiate contact, and the other members of Group B – finding this to be plausible – agree. Later on, members of Group B may very confidently – albeit incorrectly – remember that at the group meeting, Group A had volunteered to be the contact. The incorrect member from Group B has inserted erroneous information into the memories of his collaborators via social contagion. Social contagion is most likely to occur when all group members’ memory for an event is relatively weak, when the “contagious” information fits plausibly with other veridical events or information, or when the contagious information is offered by a person who is trusted by the group (e.g., a group leader or other authority figure).

Why, then, do people collaborate or brainstorm together? To this point, the evidence would seem to suggest collaboration does more harm than good when it comes to project planning or information sharing. However, we have primarily discussed the effects of collaboration on *recall* memory – memory for which no cue is provided, and individuals or groups must generate relevant information on their own. While collaboration does indeed impede this type of memory, working in a group has been shown to *facilitate* recognition memory. Unlike recall memory, recognition memory is accessed when memory cues are provided. These would be cases where individuals or groups are presented with information, and must determine if it is true or false, or if it is information that had been previously encountered or not. Groups are very good at making these types of judgments together, and collaborative recognition performance typically

bests that of an equal number of individuals working by themselves (Pereiria-Pasarin & Rajaram, 2007; Ross et al., 2004; Ross et al., 2008; reviewed by Rajaram & Pereira-Pasarin, 2010). One mechanism by which collaboration facilitates recognition memory is through “error pruning”: an individual working by him or herself might incorrectly judge false information to be “true”, but in a group, some critical mass of group members must *all* make that same incorrect judgment for the group to accept it. More likely, one member may incorrectly judge false information to be true, but the other group members will correct that error to arrive at the appropriate judgment.

Knowing how collaboration affects individual and group cognition can be exploited to maximize group productivity. One potentially effective strategy might be for group members to generate project ideas or strategies *individually*, wherein they can make use of their own idiosyncratic recall strategies without disruption from other group members. Then, after all ideas have been generated and the recall process is over, members can come together and share their ideas in a group setting that will facilitate error pruning (e.g., weeding out unfeasible ideas, or strategies that were generated based on incorrect information).

Collaborative Culture

Just as collaborative partnerships create systems to support their governance and administration while aligning with systems of their constituent organizations, they develop their own unique cultures that must be conducive to shared work will having resonance with their member groups. The literature on collaboration makes casual reference to the importance of inter-organizational alignment in terms of values, ideologies, and cultures. However, indicators or manifestations of organizational values and culture remain unidentified and it is not clear how they may affect the preconditions, structure, process, or leadership of collaborative efforts. Prior research does address cultural elements more broadly, including simple etiquette (avoiding organizational or professional jargon, for example) to complex and indiscrete features such as communication, trust, equity, flexibility, and diversity.

Communication mechanisms are a structural feature and monitoring communication is a leadership function (see below). These structures and supports can foster informal relationships among individuals and establish norms that guide the initiation, execution, and tracking of partners’ interactions and effort (Mattesich). Whether and how decision-making and action-initiating procedures are used to involve and update members may “make or break” their perceptions of trust, equity, and progress. For example, the importance of communicating and celebrating interim successes (Badiali, et al; Chrislip & Larson; Huxham & Vangen) appears important to sustaining organizations’ commitment and trust.

The nuances of developing consistent and reliable communication norms also hint at the challenge of developing and sustaining trust and equity among collaborative partners (Bickel & Hatrup, 1995; Huxham & Vangen; Winer and Ray). Trubowitz and Longo observe that risks are not always shared equally among collaborative

organizations. In their case study of a partnership between a college of education and a middle school, the risk was disproportionately carried by teachers whose performance was gauged immediately by parents and administrators; faculty researchers enjoyed greater autonomy and the latitude to explore and learn from interventions that failed to return immediate results. Similarly, Bammer notes that some organizations allocate rewards and credit commensurate with individuals' contributions to a project. Celebrating small accomplishments and highlighting progress of organization's self-interested goals poses the risk of alienating or slighting other partners – but not communicating such achievements may be counterproductive as well. These examples intimate how challenging it can be to integrate cultural differences when establishing one positive and generative norm – celebrating successes of the joint venture.

Conflict is endemic to interpersonal work and inevitable in collaborative partnerships. Bammer notes that partnerships involve “relevant” differences (complementary resources, abilities, and knowledge that brought organizations together) which need to be harnessed and maximized but also include “incidental” arising from individual differences that can decrease productivity and disrupt collaborative process. Axelsson and Axelsson observed interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts that occasionally resulted from individuals involved in multi-disciplinary health care partnerships. They note that individuals involved in collaborative work can feel torn between their allegiance to their profession, their organization, and the collaborative group. Ultimately, conflicts over purpose, process, and individual preferences require tapping expertise in related fields (*cf.* Angelica, 1999; Winer & Ray).

What is the role of leadership within collaborative ventures? What makes a good leader in collaborative settings? What are the differences between leadership and management and how are these relevant?

The roles and functions of collaborative leaders are typically defined in contrast to traditional leadership models. In collaborations, responsibility is distributed among individual representatives of autonomous organizations and there is typically not one, formal authority to hold a group accountable. Instead, collaborative leaders are typically peers who earn respect by demonstrating ability to focus on the process and not the problem (Chrislip & Larson; Gray): the perception that they are fair may be more important than their neutrality (Bingham & O'Leary). Collaborative leaders generally do not build credibility and legitimacy through their expertise or experience in a particular area - the nature of projects and problems that motivate collaborative work suggest that content authority cannot be vested in one individual. Nor do they not operate in hierarchical systems and cannot draw upon tactical insight (Axelsson & Axelsson; Chrislip & Larson): collaborative governance is deliberative (Bingham & O'Leary) and Lank notes that if one partner has the final say on a matter, then it really isn't a collaborative effort!

Ultimately, the function of collaborative leadership is to facilitate governance and administration and leaders' roles may vary as partners establish a vision, develop norms, and experience conflict (Axelsson & Axelsson). Protecting the process involves

maintaining relationships and communication while attending to issues of power and ensuring reciprocity is maintained (Bingham & O’Leary; Chrislip & Larson). Chrislip and Larson examined numerous cross-sector collaborations and identified the following functions to guide collaborative leaders: promote and safeguard process; inspire commitment and action (bring people together help them work and keep them together); lead as a peer problem solver; build broad-based involvement; and sustain hope and participation.

What factors serve as warning signs—either before a proposed collaboration or after one has been launched—that the collaboration is not proceeding satisfactorily?

The literature did not address “warning signs” directly although numerous case studies are ripe with examples of how collaborative processes broke down or failed to coalesce. Of course, that collaboration is challenging goes without saying. Huxham & Vangen’s simple advice to those considering a collaborative opportunity is “Don’t do it unless you have to.” They cite the facts that many collaborations dissolve without achieving their potential and most are slow in achieving results as evidence of “collaborative inertia” (Huxham & Vangen, pg. 3) In this spirit, clues to answering “Why is collaboration so darn difficult?” are abundant in existing scholarship.

Pragmatically, collaborations exist because of difference: organizations pool their varied resources in order to accomplish what they cannot achieve working in isolation. Collaborations are ongoing efforts to harness diversity while minimizing well-intentioned but unavoidable conflicts and inefficiencies that are by-products of integration. Furthermore, the problems and opportunities that motivate collaborative work are poorly structured. The first hurdle partners must clear may often be the most significant – deciding where to draw boundaries and how to frame a manageable shared vision. The communication that occurs at this early stage of the process is effective lays a foundation for future work and poor communication easily results in unlevel or rocky ground upon which ongoing efforts must build.

Finally, collaborations are a dynamic system. Inevitably the involvement and participation of organizations and individuals within them will wax and wane (Badiali, et al; Trubowitz & Longo) due to demands outside of the collaborative and “partnership fatigue” (Huxham and Vangen). Focusing on the purpose of the collaboration seems to sustain collaborations when energy and commitment is low: the purpose of collaboration may be enduring and yet the goals that drive and guide routine work typically evolve (Mattesich, et al; Trubowitz & Longo). Trubowitz and Longo caution against reactivity during normal cycles of progress and rest: “What must be avoided is, on the one hand, a rigid approach that seeks to replace ambiguity with an illusory certainty and, on the other hand, the opposite extreme of conducting a project whose participants have no coherent sense of purpose or direction” (pg. 44).

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