



Working Together for Change: Building Bridges from Service to Justice

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Working Together: Challenging Realities for Collaborative Partnerships

The ongoing devolution of public responsibility to lower levels of government without adequate resources to solve problems created the widespread promotion and public and private funding requirements for working together, generically called “collaboration.”

The continuing abdication of public responsibility for basic human needs often creates inappropriate expectations for partnership efforts, i.e., that such partnerships can significantly reduce, and even resolve, major societal disparities and inequities.



Challenging Realities

Most partnerships work within a doing-more-with-less framework; this often includes an over-promising of results that damages trust, fosters incompetence based on over-extension, and reduces capacity to produce quality outcomes.

Partnerships working within a doing-more-with-less framework have very limited capacity to meaningfully change communities and systems because they are rarely able to take successful demonstrations and innovations to scale.

The full potential of community and systems change collaboration requires a sustained, mutually reinforcing transformation of existing power relations and the policies and practices that support them.



Strategic Choices in Working Together

The term “collaboration” is often used as a generic description of working together in partnership efforts; however, using more precise definitions of working together strategies offers choices better reflecting particular time, trust, and turf circumstances.

None of the working together strategies should be viewed as better than another. Each strategy should be considered equally valid depending on an assessment of its relationship to time, trust, and turf.

Each strategy forms the basis for next and, as a result, the strategies reinforce each along a developmental continuum.



Working Together Strategies

Networking: Exchanging information for mutual benefit

Coordinating: Exchanging information for mutual benefit and altering activities for a common purpose

Cooperating: Exchanging information for mutual benefit, and altering activities and sharing resources for a common purpose

Collaborating: Exchanging information for mutual benefit, and altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing each other's capacity for a common purpose

Time, Trust, and Turf

When determining the appropriateness of a particular working together strategy, it is useful to consider:

- ◆ How much time is available for common actions?
- ◆ How much trust exists among partners?
- ◆ How much turf (resources) will be shared?





Networking

Exchanging information for mutual benefit

Example: Organizations exchange information about cancer prevention programs available in their community

Time: Little time required

Trust: Only minimal levels necessary

Turf: No shared turf



Coordinating

Exchanging information for mutual benefit and altering activities for a common purpose

Example: Organizations exchange information about cancer prevention programs and alter programs to make access to them more user-friendly for those seeking program services

Time: Moderate levels

Trust: Moderate levels

Turf: No turf shared



Cooperating

Exchanging information for mutual benefit, altering activities, and sharing resources for a common purpose

Example: Organizations share information about cancer prevention programs, alter them to make them more user-friendly for those seeking program services, and share media resources to increase program participation

Time: Often considerable

Trust: High levels

Turf: Significant turf shared

Collaborating

Exchanging information for mutual benefit, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing each other's capacity for a common purpose

Example: Organizations exchange information about cancer prevention programs, alter programs to make them more user-friendly for those seeking program services, share media resources to increase program participation, and provide extensive mutual inter-agency staff training to ensure optimal efficacy within all organizations working together for cancer prevention

Time: Often very extensive

Trust: Very high levels

Turf: Very substantial shared turf



Collaboration Requires Sharing

Risks

Responsibilities

Resources

Rewards





Three Basic Goals of Partnerships

To conduct needs/resources assessments of existing conditions and share findings among partners to create a basis for common action

To demonstrate innovative change strategies to resolve challenges and issues identified through needs/resources assessments

To advocate for policy and system change to increase the likelihood that demonstrated innovations will be long-term and sustainable



Collaboration and Power

Working collaboratively requires us to move away from viewing power in the hierarchical sense as the **ability to dominate and control.**

When working collaboratively, power is better defined as the **capacity to produce intended results.**

Using this perspective, collaborative power can result in more capacity to produce intended results without seeking the domination and control of others.



Decision-making Power Collaborative Betterment and Collaborative Empowerment

Collaborative Betterment

Institutionally driven collaboration involving the primary intended beneficiaries as objects of action and as advisors with little decision-making authority; usually results in little or no change in existing power relations, nor significant sustainability in community settings.

Collaborative Empowerment

Community driven collaboration involving the primary intended beneficiaries as subjects of action and as partners with equal decision-making authority; often results in significant change in existing power relations, and substantial sustainability in community settings.



Mutuality as a Guiding Principle for Working Together

Mutual Respect

Mutual Learning

Mutual Accountability



Mutual Respect

A basic requirement for working together

Necessary for revealing and healing conflicts fostered by oppressive biases, prejudices, arrogance, and ignorance that produce human indignities

Without mutual respect, working with others can not reach its potential for achieving the results desired



Mutual Learning

Recognizes that everyone participating in a partnership has something to teach and something to learn

It emphasizes active listening for how others may use “different ways of knowing” to discover the data, information, knowledge, and wisdom vitally important for shared efforts



Mutual Accountability

Hierarchical

Those with power and control determine how others will be accountable to them for the use of resources

Used extensively by both public and philanthropic funding organizations

Collaborative

Power is fully shared among all partners

All those participating in a common effort hold each other accountable for the use of shared resources

Each partner makes it clear to other partners how their work toward common goals can be assessed, and how they will use what they learn from assessments to improve their contributions to a partnership



Leadership and Collaboration

Leadership has no inherent positive or negative value; it is an “empty vessel”

Its qualities include the vision, values, passion, courage, savvy, and knowledge necessary to significantly change or transform existing conditions

It has at least three basic forms: expert, positional, and collaborative



Collaborative Leadership Defined

Facilitating mutual enhancement among those working for a common purpose

- Demonstrating commitments to improve common circumstances by walking the talk of stated values and beliefs
- Fostering trust and encouraging mutual respect, learning, and accountability
- Moving discussions from problem stating to problem solving
- Facilitating the sharing of risks, responsibilities, resources, and rewards



Tikkun Olam

To repair,

to heal, and

to transform the world

**May Tikkun Olam guide our common efforts
to build bridges from service to justice**