

# Building and Sustaining a Successful Collaboration

*The Critical Role of Leadership: Coordinating Rural Interagency Responses to Violence Against Women*

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## Session Overview

- > Provide foundational information on collaboration.
- > Review research-tested factors for successful collaborations.
- > Outline a process for developing a collaboration built on those success factors.
- > Discuss your challenges around collaboration and promising strategies for overcoming them.
- > Apply the principles and proven-practices behind successful collaborations to a collaborative effort in your community.



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# Background and Grounding

What is collaboration?  
How does working in collaboration compare to working in other types of partnerships?  
What are your experiences with collaborations?

## What is Collaboration?

**Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals.**

## Cooperation

- > Shorter-term informal relationship
- > No clearly defined vision or structure
- > Only share info on the topic at hand
- > No shared authority
- > Low intensity

## Coordination

- > More formal relationship
- > More of an understanding of a shared purpose and more structure
- > More open communication channels between organizations
- > No shared authority, but increased risk
- > Medium intensity

## Collaboration

- > Formal and sustained relationship
- > Shared vision, mission and values
- > Agreement around operating principles and structure
- > Well-defined communication channels at different levels of each organization
- > Shared authority
- > Higher risk and intensity as resources are shared

## Discussion

- > How would you characterize your working relationships with other organizations?
- > What types of issues/change initiatives have you addressed using a collaboration?
- > How has working in collaboration been different from cooperating or coordinating?

## When to Collaborate

Collaboration shouldn't always be the goal.

Collaborate when:

- The issue you want to address lies beyond the scope of any one organization
- A single organization cannot achieve desired effect alone
- Resources exist to support a collaboration

*What issues related to domestic and sexual violence could be addressed through collaboration?*

## Benefits of Collaboration

- > You are not alone
- > Broadens the analysis of the problem and potential solutions
- > Brings together a range of complimentary expertise, talents, and resources
- > Disperses costs associated with change across multiple agencies
- > Produces greater results
  
- > *Other benefits?*



**What are the challenges to working in collaboration?**

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**Understanding Effective Collaborations**

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What can we learn from our own experiences?  
What does the research on collaboration tell us?

## Learning From Our Own Experiences

### **Think about a successful initiative you were involved in that utilized collaboration:**

- > How was this initiative and your experience on it different?
  
- > What did you accomplish?
  
- > What factors contributed to its success?

## What the Research Tells Us

### **Environment**

- > History of collaboration or cooperation
- > Seen as a legitimate leader in the community
- > Favorable political and social climate

### **Membership Characteristics**

- > Mutual respect, understanding, and trust
- > Appropriate cross section of members
- > Members see collaboration as in their self-interest
- > Ability to compromise

## Research cont'd...

### **Process and Structure**

- > Members have a stake in both the process and the outcome
- > Multiple layers of participation
- > Flexibility
- > Development of clear roles and policy guidelines
- > Adaptability
- > Appropriate pace of development

## Research cont'd...

### **Communication**

- > Open and frequent communication
- > Established informal relationships and communication links

### **Purpose**

- > Concrete, attainable goals and objectives
- > Shared vision
- > Unique purpose



## Research cont'd...

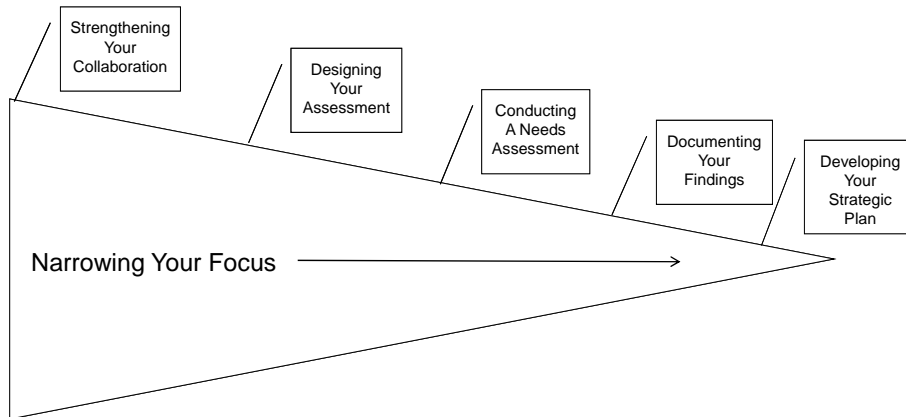
### Resources

- > Skilled funds, staff, materials and time
- > Skilled leadership

# Integrating the Ingredients of Success into Your Collaboration

Building and Strengthening Your Collaboration  
Understanding Needs  
Developing and Implementing a Plan for Change  
Relationship Nurturing

## The Process



## Get the Right Organizations Involved

- > Ideal collaboration size is between 3 – 5 partners.
- > The agencies around your collaboration table should mirror the focus of your initiative.
- > Every partner agency and representative should be able to affect change in the lives of survivors in a similar way.
- > Every partner should be able to contribute to the work of the collaboration in similar and complementary ways.

## Get The Right People Involved

- > Successful collaborations are made up of people who:
  - > Understand their organization's mission, values, programs, operations, and critical issues;
  - > Are steeped in their organizations area of expertise on the collaboration);
  - > Can make decisions for the organization and garner buy-in;
  - > Can commit time, energy, and resources to the collaboration; and;
  - > Are planners and doers.
  
- > Structure meetings to involve the right people at the right time.

## Use a Structure that Fits Your Community

- > Common collaboration structures include:
  - > Full Collaboration
  - > Core Members, Ad-Hoc Members
  - > Steering Committee, Sub-Committee
  
- > The structure depends on:
  - > Agency size, structure, and decision-making authority
  - > Knowledge, expertise, and interest of individual staff members
  - > Availability of resources (financial, time, and other)
  - > Type of work being done
  
- > The structure of the collaboration should evolve as the collaboration's work changes.

## Get to Know Each Other

### Organizations

- > How are the organizations structured, and who are the decision-makers?
- > What services and supports do the organizations provide?
- > What is the culture of each organization?
- > What are their realities – current challenges and resources?

### People

- > Why is each person at the table?
- > What does each person need to stay at the table?
- > What strengths and resources does each person bring?

## Explore Philosophical and Foundational Underpinnings

- > What philosophies guide the people and organizations around the table?
- > How do the people/organizations understand the problem the collaboration is addressing?
- > What do they think the solutions are?
- > Where is there alignment across the organizations?
- > Where are their differences?
- > What differences are okay and where does the group need to move to consensus?

## Develop a Shared Purpose

- > What is your vision and mission?
- > What are your short and long-term goals?
- > How will the group accomplish them?
- > What values will guide the group's work?

\*\* Clear, attainable goals heightens enthusiasm.

\*\* Experiencing a progression of successes, keeps people and organizations sustained.

## Agree Upon Your Work Process

- > Meeting Schedule/Style
- > Communications Approach/Agreement
  - > Internal
  - > External
- > Decision-Making
  - > Process
  - > Authority
- > Conflict Management Plan
- > Confidentiality

And...

**Write it Down!**

## Once You've Developed Your Collaboration

- > Understand the needs in your community and how to address them.
  - > Engaging survivors
  - > Talking with key stakeholders
  - > Looking outside of your community
- > Develop a concrete plan.
  - > Action steps/key activities
  - > Who is responsible
  - > Timeline
- > Implement your plan.
  - > Ongoing collaboration meetings

## On-Going Collaboration Nurturing

- > Acknowledge contributions. Celebrate successes.
- > Assess/monitor organizational and individual self-interest.
- > Assess the strength of your collaboration on an on-going basis.
  - > Collaboration Factors Inventory
- > Funnel your nurturing towards those factors needing the greatest boost.
- > End the collaboration, if needed.

## Common Challenges and Practical Solutions

## Discussion

- > What challenges have you experienced or do you anticipate experiencing around working in collaboration?
- > Why do those challenges exist?
- > What strategies have you used to overcome them?

## Questions and Reflections



## Additional Resources

- > [www.fieldstonealliance.org](http://www.fieldstonealliance.org)
- > Ray, Karen. *The Nimble Collaboration: Fine-Tuning Your Collaboration for Lasting Success*. Saint Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2002.
- > Winer, Michael, and Karen Ray. *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*. Saint Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1994.



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