THE GOOD COLLABORATION TOOLKIT: A QUICK START GUIDE

WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOLKIT?

Anyone who is involved in a collaborative endeavor can use these materials. These types of endeavors might include:

- Projects in which responsibilities are shared between two or more teams or organizations

- Programs with two or more stakeholders whose needs must be met

WHY SHOULD WE USE THIS TOOLKIT?

- **You are at the beginning** of a collaborative project and want to make sure that your collaboration is **successful and well-run**.

- **You are in the middle** of a collaboration and want to learn more about whether the way your collaboration is functioning **is effective or can be improved**.

- **You are at the end** of a collaboration and want to reflect on **what worked, what didn't, and the lessons learned for next time**.

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WHAT DOES THIS TOOLKIT CONTAIN?

Our research into the nature of collaboration found that well-run collaborations had eight elements:

Excellently Executed
Leadership Driven
Engaging for Participants
Mission Focused
Ethically Oriented
Nurtured Continuously
Time Well Spent
Solution Inspired

In order to help people learn about how to recognize and embed each of these elements in a collaboration, this toolkit includes:

16 narrative cases that describe example collaborations, some of which function well, and others that fall short or fail

35 activities, exercises that further explore each of the elements

23 key questions, overarching prompts to keep in mind as you explore the narratives and activities

GET STARTED

Step 1: Complete the **Diagnostic Checklist** to discover one or more elements that are in need of your attention.

Step 2: Based on your checklist results, read the narratives and complete the activities for the corresponding elements with your collaborators.

Step 3: Document and incorporate your learnings into the structure of your collaboration to ensure it succeeds.

DIAGNOSTIC CHECKLIST

Answer the following list of questions with your collaboration in mind.

Yes / No		Question	Element
☐	☐	1. Do you discuss the purpose of the collaboration? Is there agreement about the vision among collaborators?	*Mission Focused*
☐	☐	2. Is there a clear leadership/rotation of leadership for the collaboration?	*Leadership Driven*
☐	☐	3. Is there a documented scope of work, with an associated timeline?	*Time Well Spent*
☐	☐	4. Do you discuss goals and accountability to achieve these goals?	*Mission Focused*
☐	☐	5. Are people clear about their roles in the collaboration?	*Excellently Executed*
☐	☐	6. Do you discuss the collaborators' own interests, needs and values?	*Engaging for Participants*
☐	☐	7. Do you discuss methods of communication and decision-making?	*Excellently Executed*
☐	☐	8. Are all of the voices of the collaborators being heard?	*Ethically Oriented*
☐	☐	9. Are all collaborators invested in the work	*Engaging for Participants*
☐	☐	10. Is the work getting done?	*Time Well Spent*
☐	☐	11. Are there obstacles that need to be discussed?	*Nurtured Continuously*
☐	☐	12. Are supports communicated and shared?	*Nurtured Continuously*
☐	☐	13. Is there agreement about a "product" or outcome for the collaboration?	*Solution Inspired*

**If you answered "No" to any question,
focus your attention on the corresponding elements.**

EXCELLENTLY EXECUTED

KEY QUESTIONS

Keep these in mind as you read the narratives and complete the activities listed below.

1. What are the factors that support excellent execution?

2. What are the factors that hinder excellent execution?

3. What can you do to support excellent execution?

NARRATIVES

Read about two example collaborations: one that succeeds through excellent execution and one that struggles with excellent execution

A Case of Excellent Execution: The Importance of Perseverance

A Case of Poor Execution: Falling Through the Cracks

ACTIVITIES

Explore the meaning of excellently executed collaboration further through a variety of prompts and exercises.

Is This Collaboration Feasible?
Consider the feasibility of a proposed collaboration by taking the perspective of an outsider.

Working Together: Collaboration and Accuracy of Memory
Highlight the times when collaboration can enhance accuracy of memory and times when it can be detrimental.

Defining Roles With Responsibilities
Highlight the skills and values of each member, and to help assign roles in collaboration.

Developing a Timeline
Create a timeline for work and hold all individuals accountable for completing work when it needs to get done.

Reflection in 3's: Tips, Lessons, and Advice
Reflect individually and collectively on the process of collaboration, articulating tips, lessons, and advice.

There are numerous factors which influence the prosperity of collaborative efforts, including thorough planning, a clear mission, and an authoritative leader, but without sufficient follow-through, such a complex undertaking has little hope of sustainability. As is true of most endeavors, in order for a collaboration to be truly successful, all participants need to be steadfast in their dedication to hard work. A collaboration will only survive if everyone involved is willing to invest their "blood, sweat, and tears."

A children's museum in a small urban area of the northeastern United States was eagerly anticipating the launch of its new, innovative exhibit on the 'Science of Technology.' Thanks to consultations with leading academics in the fields of science and technology, as well as generous donations from area firms and laboratories, this modest museum was going to be able to boast an unprecedented level of interactivity and innovation. The new exhibit would offer such exceptional features as a 'Make Your Own App' station and a 'Codebreakers' demonstration.

Due to an insufficient allotment of funds for advertising and publicity, however, attendance following the launch was low, much to the disappointment of everyone involved. This exhibit presented a unique opportunity for the museum and no one involved wanted that opportunity to be squandered. As such, Leslie, the museum's Public Programs Coordinator, decided to take the initiative.

With permission from the museum's board, Leslie reached out to area elementary and secondary schools. In candid discussions with various principals and other school leaders, Leslie expressed her concern that the area's youth were not aware of the new exhibit. Much to her chagrin, many of the initial responses she received were, "I didn't know about the exhibit either!" Fortuitously, through these conversations, Leslie discerned that one of the most pressing missions of the school district at that time was to promote learning in the STEM fields.

Consequently, Leslie sought to establish a collaboration between museum leaders (the director, the curator, the museum educator, etc.) and area school leaders (principals, department heads, school board members, etc.). Her goal was to increase attendance at the exhibit while simultaneously promoting learning in the STEM fields. After this new partnership had been proposed to the various constituencies, there was an overwhelming amount of enthusiasm and support. Not long after pitching the idea, the museum hosted a dinner for the new collaboration team, with representatives from each of the various interested parties. After introductions, a delicious meal, and lively discussions, the curator led a private, behind-the-scenes tour of the exhibit.

The school leaders were blown away.

Leslie, in turn, was determined to use this positive energy to fuel actual change. She didn't want the collaboration to be "all talk." Instead of merely hosting a series of fun, but insufficiently productive, gatherings, Leslie was committed to establishing a successful, fruitful collaboration. As such, at the end of the tour, Leslie had all interested parties complete a thorough survey, which covered the waterfront from when and where the participants would like to meet, to their goals for this partnership and which aspects of the exhibit they thought would be most beneficial for students' learning.

Upon analyzing the results of the survey, Leslie discovered a common trend, even across constituencies. Initially, almost everyone suggested that the schools simply plan fieldtrips to the museum, but both the museum leaders and the school leaders unanimously expressed concern that that the students wouldn't reap the full benefits of the exhibit during the time allotted for a single fieldtrip. Moving forward, Leslie saw this as a productive topic for future discussion. And so, in the subsequent meeting, again hosted at the museum, Leslie broke the team into small groups and posed the following question: "How can we effectively, reasonably, and sustainably increase students' attendance and exposure to the exhibit?"

Unsurprisingly, this prompt yielded heated discussions, and ultimately, a plethora of possible solutions. Each group shared their ideas with the collaboration team as a whole. One of the groups proposed a plan which was of particular interest to everyone involved. Members suggested that over the course of a month, the students participate in a series of 4 day-long fieldtrips, one each week. Each visit would have a specific theme, with respect to which students would receive background information in their math and science classrooms; they would further explore this mission at the exhibit. The collaboration would culminate in a final group project (adapted according to grade-level), which would provide students the opportunity to work hands-on with the technology available at the museum.

The program was a rousing success.

Math and science teachers at each grade level, conferring with museum staff, created a month-long 'Science of Technology' curriculum. School administrators, in turn, drafted fieldtrip schedules, ensuring museum staff were never inundated with too many students. Enthusiastic parents volunteered in droves. Moreover, Leslie worked tirelessly to guarantee the program ran smoothly by confirming constant, open communication between the various parties; any issues which arose were handled immediately.

Ultimately, the students garnered a much deeper understanding and appreciation for science and technology, with many voicing requests for similar programs in the future. The program was such a success that it was even featured by several local media outlets, resulting in a significant increase in attendance. All members of the collaboration were pleased with the outcome. Echoing the students, numerous museum leaders and school leaders campaigned for the continuation of the collaboration, envisioning similar programs in the future.

Final Comments

Without a commitment to excellence, there is little hope for a collaboration to achieve tangible results. All members of the team, including Leslie, worked extremely hard, throughout the collaboration process, to ensure the success of the program. Nothing was done haphazardly, or left to chance. As a direct result of this dedication and perseverance, the collaboration worked. Both goals were achieved: the students strengthened their STEM-related skills and the museum increased attendance at the exhibit. In the end, the hard work paid off.

Reflective Questions

Was there anything else the museum could have done in this situation? How does this example connect with your own experience with collaborations?

Can you think of any ways this collaboration could have gone awry? How would you have kept the program 'on track?'

What ideas did you get from the case that broadened the way you think about collaborations?

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

Collaborations are most often born of innovative ideas and worthy intentions. These ideas bring together disparate groups presumably unified by a common goal. With thorough planning and the appointment of responsible leaders, these ideas can then serve as the foundation for an effective collaboration. Unfortunately, though, that foundation is not enough to ensure the success of a collaboration. In order for a collaboration to thrive, there also needs to be constant, open communication and a commitment to hard work.

A global public relations firm with a branch in the Northeastern United States armed a team of publicists with the task of improving the public's perception of one of their clients: an area pharmaceutical company. A study conducted by the team revealed that the majority of city residents surveyed viewed the pharmaceutical company as more invested in making a profit than in developing medical treatments that would cure diseases and alleviate ailments. The pharmaceutical company was hoping to expand in the next few years, and in order to do that, they would need the support of the surrounding businesses and residents. And so, the company was committed to rebranding for the purpose of improving the public's perception.

A series of meetings between the team of publicists from the public relations firm and a group of marketing executives from the pharmaceutical company established a mission for the rebranding: to convince the public that the firm, as an institution, was committed to improving the lives of others. With a clear goal in mind, the publicists offered to draft a plan of action and then present their ideas to the pharmaceutical executives.

After much deliberation, one of the team members suggested bringing a third party into the collaboration. The publicist suggested a world-renowned non-profit focused on raising awareness and funds in the fight against heart disease. As one of the pharmaceutical company's biggest divisions was dedicated to developing drugs for heart disease, this seemed like a match made in heaven.

The publicity firm subsequently orchestrated a conference in which representatives from the non-profit met with representatives from the pharmaceutical company. During this conference, the publicity firm pitched the idea for the first stage of the rebranding campaign: the two organizations co-hosting a 5k fundraiser run followed by a charity ball for the participants and their friends and families. The events would raise funds in the fight against heart disease while simultaneously improving the public's perception of the pharmaceutical corporation. All three parties were excited by the prospect, and the conference ended on a positive note, with everyone eager to move forward with the plan.

A lot of big ideas were thrown around in that initial meeting, such as hosting the 5k run in the neighborhood near the pharmaceutical headquarters, inviting area businesses to set up booths at the ball,

and awarding trophies not only to the top runners but also to the top fundraisers. Each team was charged with a task, with the financial burden of hosting these events placed on the pharmaceutical corporation. Notably, little infrastructure was put into place to ensure constant and open communication between all parties. Unfortunately, there had also been a lack of communication between the marketing representatives of the pharmaceutical company and the company's board of directors.

Initially the board of directors had given the marketing team free reign, promising almost unlimited funds for the purpose of rebranding the company. Unbeknownst to the marketing team, however, a large proportion of those funds had since been reallocated. And so, when the marketing team presented the already agreed-upon plan of action to the board of directors, they were aghast to discover there was no longer enough money to host both events. Instead of persevering, and putting in the time and effort necessary to come up with potential solutions, the marketing team immediately reached out to the public relations firm in a panic.

There was still enough money to host the 5k fundraiser run, so the public relations firm urged the pharmaceutical company to move forward with the event. The marketing team, however, was disheartened by the sudden lack of support from the board of directors. Likewise, the non-profit team, learning second-hand about the change in events, was wary of continuing with the collaboration. Thus, neither group invested the time and effort required to orchestrate a successful fundraiser. And so, while the run did eventually happen, attendance was poor, little money was raised, and the pharmaceutical company made little headway in improving the public's perception.

Final Comments

Regardless of how innovative an idea is or how unifying a mission is, without constant communication and a dedication to hard work, a collaboration will have little chance of thriving. Even though this situation involves two for-profit groups (one of them for hire), a breakdown of communication hindered the outcome of the joint work. In this case, each firm needed to establish clear lines of communication internally, as well as externally, with each other. Neither happened, leading to less than desirable outcome. Any collaborative endeavor will inevitably be faced with obstacles, such as a sudden change in funding, but it is in those situations that perseverance and diligence are essential.

Reflective Questions

What should the different groups involved in this collaboration done differently?

How does this example connect with your experience of collaborations?

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

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 proposed collaborative arrangement. Specifically, evaluating 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 an external funding source. You may use the questions below as guidelines; these are questions that commonly arise during funding 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.

1. Does the project span multiple areas of expertise – related or unrelated – to which the collaborators are well suited? What are those areas?

2. 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?

3. 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?

4. Are the responsibilities of each collaborating party clearly delineated? Is the leadership and governance structure appropriate for the project?

5. Could the problem or project under consideration be feasibly executed, in a timely manner, without collaboration?

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 the accuracy of our own memories; we are also relying on the accuracy of memories of others. A significant body of research has demonstrated that working in a group can promote accurate 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 enhance accuracy of memory and times when it can be detrimental.

Directions

PART A

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 – 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.

PART B

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.

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 difficulty is due in part to the fact that individuals are often quite poor at recognizing what they do best and where they fall short. 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 traits, 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).

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: _____

[Inspired by Belbin Self-Perception Inventory (SPI) (Belbin, 2012). Specific questions and scales in this activity are different than in the SPI.]

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 for 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 someone else's 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 samples[1]:

> http://www.microsoft.com/education/en-us/teachers/how-to/Pages/creating-timeline.aspx
> http://www.ojjdp.gov/grantees/sample_resrch_timeln.pdf
> **ht**tp://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:

> a. 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).

> b. 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.

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

> d. 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.

e. 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 that individuals will be more likely to stay on task.

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

ACTIVITY 5
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 helps individuals and groups to articulate tips, lessons, and advice 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.

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

2. What does it take to build a successful collaboration?

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

LEADERSHIP DRIVEN

KEY QUESTIONS

Keep these in mind as you read the narratives and complete the activities listed below.

1. What are the skills necessary to lead a collaboration?

2. How is leadership addressed in your collaboration?

3. How can individuals draw upon their own strengths to lead a collaboration?

NARRATIVES

Read about two example collaborations: one that succeeds through leadership drive and one that struggles with leadership drive

A Case of Good Leadership: The Power of One

A Case of Absent Leadership: Spinning Wheels

ACTIVITIES

Explore the meaning of leadership driven collaboration further through a variety of prompts and exercises.

The Crucial Elements of an Organization
Articulate and share crucial elements of organizations.

The Four Dimensions: Your Organization
Explore four crucial aspects of organizations: 1) culture; 2) external resources; 3) communication; and 4) the individual players.

Building a Collaboration: Considering the Four Dimensions
Learn more about how each collaborator views the collaboration, their perspectives on the four organizational dimensions as they pertain to the collaboration, and identify goals for future work.

Competition Between Collaborative Partners
Talk about the tricky issue of competition between collaborators.

Taking Stock of the Collaboration: Reflecting on the Four Dimensions
Analyze how the four dimensions are unfolding in a collaboration, reflecting on progress as well as goals for future work.

While collaboration ideally features everyone working together, there is usually one "linchpin," an essential leader. This leader needs to keep everyone motivated—by focusing on how best to achieve the compelling mission.

Olivia is Founder and Executive Director of a nonprofit organization focused on supporting public engagement with important civic issues. Her organization aims to find "common ground, [and to] move towards action and decisions" in addressing complex issues. When a Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government is released, she welcomes its call for government departments and agencies to exemplify three facets of "open" government – transparency, public participation, and collaboration.

Many of Olivia's colleagues in the field share her excitement about changes in the national conversation that may take place as a result of this memorandum. A 10-member steering committee forms, convening representatives from as many organizations, to address "public participation." Olivia looks forward to conferring with her counterparts; but she remains unsure of what to expect from a diverse group that may well envision ten different agendas and ten different courses of action. Can they in fact agree on a set of principles to engender productive public engagement in the civic sphere?

Olivia's concerns might have been confirmed, had it not been for one key individual who guided the group through an open–but carefully crafted–process, both online and off. Sometimes, effective collaboration depends on the "power of one."

How does this play out?

As Olivia recalls, the memorandum's release spurred lively exchanges among individuals in the field, yet only three members of the steering committee "were really getting stuff done." Time together was not "time well spent"—all chattered amiably but, only a few individuals took responsibility for particular tasks of the committee. The trio wondered whether the other committee members were really invested in the ultimate outcome.

Without any prompting, Zach, part of the gang of three, simply stepped up to help move the process along. He helped to create an online forum that sought to delineate individual principles of public participation. Contributors then commented on the examples—what they liked about them, and what they didn't. Zach synthesized the most compelling and most consensual ideas and comments into an initial draft of principles to which everyone in the community could react. After a second round of feedback, Zach revised the principles yet again. "He kept doing…iteration after iteration…really promoting it so that many people were going in and playing around and adding comments," remembers Olivia. Once a solid set of principles had emerged, Zach created another online platform for individuals to contribute edits and line-by-line comments to produce a penultimate version.

Zach encouraged all participants to feel ownership of the principles, a consensus that he hoped would ultimately lead to their public endorsement. Once the work of the steering committee had been completed, Zach emailed all of the major organizations in the field, asking for a representative to review the document. Many individuals responded positively. Ultimately, nearly 80 organizations endorsed the principles.

Olivia reflects on Zach's leadership qualities: "You need a leader that has a lot of motivation and clear goals… someone who's willing to push things forward, who has a way of motivating others…but at the same time they can't be too overbearing. People have to see that decisions are being made collaboratively, that they're part of the decision making process, so it's a real balance."

Final Comments

Zach found a way to engage key individuals across the country, and to maintain enthusiasm while allowing for constructive critique of each other's work. Interestingly, these exchanges took place online, a process that may have made it easier for members to be candid about their views. Though Zach stayed focused on the task at hand, he also kept an eye on the overall target: creating an agreed set of principles for "public engagement" with regard to civic issues.

Reflective Questions

What did Zach do that helped this collaboration to be successful?

What are the biggest challenges that make it difficult for strong-minded individuals and organizations to "dance together"?

How does this example connect with your experience of collaborations?

What could have gone awry? What could Zach or Olivia have done under such conditions? If Zach had not stepped up, what are some other ways the project could have been saved?

What ideas did you get from the case that broadened the way you think about collaborations?

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

Collaboration is made up of many individuals, but having a competent leader or a leadership team authorized to make decisions for the group is imperative. Otherwise, individuals spend too much time navigating obstacles, missing opportunities, and raising questions about whether the collaboration is worth it.

Four presidents from colleges close in proximity, but with disparate programs, came together to forge a formal collaboration. Their goals were to expand educational opportunities for students, facilitate faculty research and teaching across campuses, and streamline administrative functions. Since each school had its own specialized focus, the presidents believed that the collaboration would offer students, faculty, and administrative new opportunities, as well as provide cost savings for each campus.

The four presidents—the visionary leaders of the collaboration—set up periodic meetings throughout the year to touch base on various fronts. The provosts of each school also met regularly about the day-to-day tactical planning of the collaboration. However, these provosts only had authority to make decisions about the items that would affect their respective campuses. The appointed "director" of the collaboration helped to support the presidents and the provosts by planning cross-campus events and initiatives, and disseminating information and enthusiasm about the collaboration to other administrators, faculty, and students. Though many individuals brainstormed and planned various initiatives for the collaboration, there was an absence of leadership for major decisions about the collaboration, causing participants to "spin their wheels."

What does this "spinning" look like and what are the consequences?

To encourage collaboration among students and professors across the colleges, the presidents offered small grants to create opportunities for work across campuses—so that participants would get to know and respect each other, and to benefit from multiple perspectives.

Professor Backmeister submitted a grant proposal for a course in which students across the campuses would consult for local businesses. The course was specifically created for students who had expressed interests in entrepreneurship. She considered this course an ideal way to bridge the different cultures across campuses while giving students the chance to learn about each other in the "real world."

However, once the class began, the professor learned that not every institution handled course credit in equal ways. While students from one school were receiving full course credit, students from the two other schools were only receiving half course credit. The professor worried that students from one school would be less engaged because they were receiving half of the credit received by their classmates. She heard the students mumbling about the "inept leadership" that led to these glitches; some of them considered

dropping the course. Professor Backmeister didn't blame them because as she saw it, some students were "giving 100% effort [and] just getting 50% of the credit."

Professor Backmeister spent significant time lobbying for full credit for all students—partially because she wanted to be fair, but mostly because she viewed the course as a unique opportunity for students and didn't want to lose anyone. With no authoritative leadership structure in place and no designated individuals to address these kinds of problems, Professor Backmeister scrambled to find a creative solution for students who had already developed teams and built relationships with the consulting sites.

Despite reaching out for help multiple times to various individuals supposedly "in charge" at each school, Professor Backmeister was repeatedly told to contact individuals at another campus. When she did, these individuals would refer her back to the collaboration director, who was not able to help with course credit issues because, as she was told, these decisions are left up to each individual school. Without ultimate decision-making authority, the director's hands were tied. She explained, "When I applied for the grant, I had assumed structure was in place to support execution of the programs. At least at the most basic level. But they expected us to fend for ourselves. With students caught up in the middle!"

Realizing that she had to take the matter in her own hands, Professor Backmeister worked out a "solution," which was fair to the students, but not to herself. Specifically, one of the schools that could not participate in the course decided to "host" the course officially so that students could get full credit. However, this school could not pay for Professor Backmeister's salary; in the end, she accepted half-pay. Even though this was unfair from her perspective, she decided it was preferable to accept the financial loss rather than to undermine the students. After all, she remarked, "At that point, the students didn't have another option. We promised them a class and I had to find a way to deliver."

Most upsetting to Professor Backmeister was the fact that she learned, after the semester had ended, that other grant winners faced essentially identical obstacles. Professor Backmeister said, "I was speechless when I found out that colleagues were making the same endless round of calls about credit issues." Because no one had been put "in charge" of these decisions, the absence of leadership led to many others facing the same challenges. "Had someone simply connected us to each other," Professor Backmeister argued, "we could have built on our shared experiences."

Final Comments

Based on her experience, Professor Backmeister doubted the collaboration's future. She said that, without an effective leader in place, "it isn't clear to anyone what to do, where to go, or how to navigate things – there is no playbook to use." Clearly, if the colleges are going to ask faculty to come up with cross-campus projects, a system should be in place that delineates how to handle the problems that inevitably arise, or whom to consult if someone needs help. Rather than "fend for herself," Professor Backmeister could have reached out to other professors, contacted the Presidents to request a meeting, or told the director of the collaboration that the course could not be offered if the issue was not immediately settled. Because of the time pressures, all of these options seemed too difficult. Frustrated, Professor Backmeister noted that there is no problem getting faculty to see value in the collaboration or even in getting them to the table, but once they get there, "no one is leading the conversation." She wondered, "How many times will the faculty continue to show up once they realize that even the most basic infrastructure is missing? We don't have time to reinvent the wheel! The logistical impediments are just too overwhelming… I think I need at least a year to recover from it!

Reflective Questions

As Professor Backmeister, how would you have navigated the situation? What would you have said to the president of your college? Or of the other colleges?

What should the nominal director of the collaboration have done? Under what circumstances should she/he resign?

Would it have been appropriate to mobilize the students? Why or why not?

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

What role can a leader play in negotiating the inevitable obstacles that face a nascent collaboration? What traits does a collaboration leader need to have in order to be effective?

This activity is an opportunity for individuals representing particular organizations to articulate and share crucial elements of their organizations. When unclear or not known, these elements 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 the most contact:

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

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

The purpose of this activity is to articulate and share how a participant's organization operates on the four dimensions that characterize each collaboration. For each collaboration, there are four main "relevant dimensions" to successful collaboration: 1) culture (the context of the organization); 2) external resources (the people, funding, and other outside sources that provide support); 3) Communication (the approaches and structures people within an organization use to communicate); and 4) the individual players (the personal characteristics of individuals in the organization). This activity encourages individuals to become familiar with the four dimensions; 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.

<u>Culture</u>

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.

<u>External Resources</u>

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?

<u>Communication</u>

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?

<u>Individual Players</u>

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

Follow Up Questions

1. Which of these dimensions do you think will offer the most support during the collaboration? Why?

2. Are any of these dimensions particularly difficult for you and your colleagues?

3. In order for all of these dimensions to operate as smoothly as possible, what is needed? What might be avoided or changed?

The purpose of this activity is to explore the relevant dimensions of a potential collaboration (culture, external resources, communication, and the individual players). Through discussion of the dimensions, collaborators 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?

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

1. Which of these dimensions do you expect to offer the most support during the collaboration? Why?

2. Are any of these dimensions particularly difficult for you and your colleagues?

3. What do you propose in order for all of these dimensions to operate as successfully as possible? What might be avoided or changed?

This activity encourages participants to talk about the tricky issue of competition. Competition between partnering organizations can lead to a loss of focus on the goals or even to 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 possible dissolution of the collaboration.

Directions

Read the dilemma and respond to the following questions.

"Melanie's 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 outlying the work as a formal collaboration were never 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)

1. What would you do in Melanie's place? Would you tell your partners you were applying for the grant? Ask if anyone else was?

2. What are some helpful resources, strategies, and skills to employ in order to resolve this situation? Do any of these supports exist?

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

General Questions to Consider as Potential Collaborators or Active Collaborators

1. What plans are in place to accommodate a change in the course of work (by one or both organizations involved)?

2. Should transparency be the norm in collaboration, even if it is not in the best interest of one of the organizations?

3. When is it better to work individually, rather than in partnership with others?

This activity helps participants explore how the four relevant dimensions (culture, external resources, communication, and the individual players) 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?

<u>Individual Players</u>

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

1. Which of these dimensions offer the most support during the collaboration?

2. Are any of these dimensions particularly difficult for you and your colleagues?

3. What do you propose in order for all of these dimensions to operate as efficiently as possible? What can be avoided or changed?

ENGAGING FOR PARTICIPANTS

KEY QUESTIONS

Keep these in mind as you read the narratives and complete the activities listed below.

1. What helps people to get engaged in a collaboration?

2. Are you "engaged" in your collaboration? Are others? Why is "engagement" important?

3. What leads to dis-engagement in a collaboration?

NARRATIVES

Read about two example collaborations: one that succeeds through participant engagement and one that struggles with participant engagement

A Case of Genuine Engagement: Showing Up

A Case of Dis-Engagement: Acting Alone

ACTIVITIES

Explore the meaning of participant engagement further through a variety of prompts and exercises.

Investigating Professional Goals
Explore how this collaboration fits into individual professional goals.

How Important Is...?
Consider, individually and together, the intended outcomes for collaboration, and how outcomes may impact the larger world.

Finding Your Passion
Identify what you find to be the most engaging aspects of the shared work and to discuss these facets with other collaborators.

Revisit Passion and Engagement: Is it Still There?
Reflect on how the collaboration is progressing in terms of original "hopes and dreams."

Sometimes, the most important component of a successful collaboration is the ability to listen hard and well. Participants need to ask each other for feedback and input about the collaborative experience, listen to what individuals think and believe, and as much as possible incorporate this thinking into the collaboration. Even when there are facilitators, the assumption that these individuals "know best" can be crippling. To foster genuine engagement from all participants and keep the collaboration intact and energized, each participant needs to feel that her opinions matter.

A collaboration was formed among six institutions of higher education in order to expose students from each school to multiple perspectives on current critical issues. Each college—small, isolated, and structured around a particular focus (e.g. journalism, business, performing arts, engineering)—was motivated to provide students with a unique opportunity—both inside and outside of the classroom—to learn from others who have different interests and mindsets. On paper and in the press, the collaboration sounded like it was "made to order:" it occurred at a time when interdisciplinary efforts to solve societal problems were at a premium. However, cross-registration statistics and attendance numbers at cross-campus events began and remained low. Administrators became tense. If the collaboration did not yield more impressive results, funding would not be forthcoming and the collaboration was likely to collapse.

At the beginning of the last "funded" year of the collaboration, the presidents at each college came together to discuss ideas for engaging students in the collaboration. It was evident that students would not see the benefit of the collaboration unless they themselves began to actually participate in some of these cross-campus opportunities. The presidents quickly came up with an idea: they asked faculty volunteers to join a special collaboration committee, which would be responsible for designing an innovative program. The goal of the program: to foster relationships among students across campuses and encourage students to participate in the events and programs where they could share ideas about critical issues. Importantly, the presidents allocated a generous budget for this program. They knew that the viability of the overall collaboration hinged on the success of this program.

Once this decision had been made, the presidents sent out an open call for faculty volunteers. The presidents were hopeful that several faculty members from each campus might sign up and come to "own" the problem. After several weeks and additional email requests, only four faculty members had volunteered. Disappointed but realizing that time was of the essence, the presidents authorized this quartet to set a program in motion.

The members of the committee recognized that because they were a small group (and not even representative of all of the colleges in the collaboration), they could not assume they knew what kinds of activities, events, and other opportunities students might enjoy. The first task became clear: to seek

opinions from as many students as possible. They designed a very short Internet survey, asking which activities students would enjoy, what factors would lead them to attend events, and which obstacles might get in the way of joining something that would otherwise be of interest. The whole survey could be completed in less than 5 minutes and, to the committee's delight, responses came in quickly.

Looking over the data, the group discerned distinct similarities in the responses from students across campuses. What were they interested in? Most people were curious about what went on in the other schools and would like to learn more about the respective special (or flagship) programs. What would encourage them to attend? Food! For students, free food and an excuse not to eat in the dining hall was a big draw. What would get in the way? Responses varied on this point, but a common thread was inconvenience. If it was inconvenient to enroll, attend, or access the events, most people could easily find better ways to spend their time. Reliable transportation throughout the day was necessary.

Bearing this information in mind, the group designed a speaker series that, based on the survey, seemed to appeal to the greatest number of people. They designed monthly lectures, rotating among campuses, with several TED Talk-style presentations, and catered meals. Each month had a unifying theme. The group "blitz advertised" across the six campuses, using multimedia channels, including flyers, emails, Facebook, and announcements in the school newspaper.

The turnout for the first event was, not unexpectedly, small. Fifteen students attended. The organizers had everyone sign in and determined that, while most attendees came from the campus where the event was held, at least one person from each campus was present. The lively conversation and delicious menu seemed to invigorate the participants. The conversation lasted beyond the scheduled hour, with several students lingering after dessert to talk to the presenters. One of the professors on the committee had personally invited reporters from all 6 of the campus newspapers to cover the event, and the next day articles about the event appeared in each newspaper.

But one logistical detail may well have been the most important part of the evening. The group had asked everyone to list one or two topics of interest for future events; by the end of the evening, they had a list of 30 promising topics. Email addresses of the participants helped the group start a mailing list that could be used to advertise for future events. These data helped the group to think critically about building the program over time, yoked to the expressed wishes of the students.

Over the duration of the school year, the committee organized 7 more events. The second event attracted 60 attendees, roughly 10 students from each school. Again, the sign-in for the event (a faculty panel), asked students to list a few topics they wanted to hear about. The group realized that "just in time" input from the attendees was key to ensuring that the attendees remained engaged, excited about future events and, importantly, eager to tell their peers.

The events rotated campuses for each session to make attendance easiest for one group of students; a new menu of food options was featured at each one. In a natural way, friendships and relationships flowered among student participants. One particularly snowy February evening, the group had thought about canceling the event. As successful as the evening events had been, they worried that no one would come out on such a cold night – especially those who had to commute from the neighboring campuses. Resisting the instinct to cancel, the organizers were pleasantly surprised when the session filled up. According to the attendance sheet, it was the second highest turnout of the year.

Leaving campus that evening, one of the professors noticed three carloads of students piling in to ZipCars they had rented to ease the chilly commute between the schools. He later learned that students had been making arrangements via Facebook all day to coordinate transportation to the event. Furthermore, at the last event for the school year, nearly 200 students attended. In just one school year, the group had surpassed their charge from the presidents and developed a program that genuinely engaged members of the six communities.

Final Comments

The group recognizes that data collection—soliciting individuals and planning events around the most popular topics—was the key to success. By asking for input, they ensured that the sessions would be of interest to the greatest number of people. This collaborative spirit (and lack of ego) helped to attract more students to the events. The happy results led to the formation of relationships, a substantial gradual increase in cross-registration, and an overall consensus that exposure to the ethos of other campuses was a key factor in their college experience.

Reflective Questions

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

What can be learned from the group's approach that could apply to other situations?

What lessons should the Presidents have drawn from this outcome? Future funders?

What other options might the committee have considered? How could they have evaluated the success of these other options?

How can you foster engagement and buy-in for your own collaboration?

Processes, products, and ideas are almost always improved by welcoming the multiple perspectives of the individuals involved. However, quality work is not improved by a mere collection of individuals; rather it emerges when the individuals collaborate in a genuine and meaningful way—when they care about the work and feel engaged in the process and the outcomes. Sustaining participants' engagement is an important element to the process of collaboration. Without personal and professional investment in the work, collaborations can easily fall apart or equally alarming, never get off the ground.

Zoe is a community organizer in a small rural community. A former journalist, she left her position at the town newspaper because of her struggle to report objectively when she observed situations that made her uncomfortable. Instead of merely reporting on events, she wanted to create change. Zoe aspired to be a social activist.

Zoe's town recently experienced a period of renewal. Under the leadership of a well-intentioned but poorly informed new state governor, millions of tax dollars were spent on restoring, relocating, and upgrading various public institutions, including schools, libraries, the town meeting hall, and a nearby children's museum. Some individuals working for the governor felt that the newly refurbished resources were developed with little knowledge of the surrounding community; indeed, these costly renovations were ignored by residents, notably the youth. Zoe believed that not only could these spaces improve lives, but they also had the potential to create a vibrant community.

Zoe sought to find a way to get all of the major stakeholders involved. She thought a grassroots movement could motivate community members to integrate these resources into their lives. With the help of a longtime friend who worked in corporate marketing (and who had connections to local funding), Zoe drafted a strategic five-point plan about how to get others on board to share in her passion and enthusiasm. Her friend, who believed in Zoe and her ability to "get things started," was able to secure a sizeable amount of money from an "angel funder"— enough to launch a movement that would tackle the five major points in her plan.

Zoe reached out to representatives from all over town—the local government, teachers union, parent groups, the elderly, religious groups, local businesses, and the local high school and college. She wanted to talk with them to find ways to engage the community in utilizing resources and participating in civic life (e.g. supporting local artists at the museum opening, attending a scholarly lecture at the library, going to a school play, cleaning up the local playground). Much to her surprise, Zoe came to realize that this task was not easy. Of twenty people contacted, only two people returned her call and only one person responded to her email. In scheduling meetings with these three people, only one said that she was willing to work with Zoe.

Deflated and confused, Zoe called her only funder to ask for help. She was surprised by his strong recommendation, which felt more like a mandate, to drop the plan and return the money. Zoe had no choice in the matter: how could she prove that she could motivate people if they had not even returned her call? Without an adequate answer, she reluctantly surrendered her goals. Perhaps as she had time to reflect and gain more experience, she could revisit the project in the future.

Reflecting on the experience, Zoe realized that she had simply assumed that others would "buy in" to her vision statement and the five-point plan. Instead, Zoe should have asked for help in co-constructing the plan and in providing pivotal input, rather than immediately telling participants what to do. Because she had drafted the plan without asking for feedback, those she contacted had no opportunity to say what they believed needed to change and how that change could be brought about. Furthermore, because she had secured funding so easily, Zoe had assumed participants would feel energized about the work—but in fact she was wrong. Some of the participants saw this as "one more thing" to add to their already full plate of responsibilities.

Zoe has come to believe that a key factor in collaborating successfully is being "willing to spend time…truly understanding participants' goals and coming to a unified vision about what we're trying to accomplish." Without such a foundation, participants don't feel engaged in the process—they feel like outsiders, simply being called on to do extra work.

Final Comments

Despite the best of intentions, if the relevant individuals or groups have not participated in the process of articulating the goals and mission of the collaboration, it can feel "one-sided." It is essential that the participants find the effort connected to their own interests (personal and professional), meeting their own needs, worth their time. Even with generous resources and the "right" person at the head, collaboration can fail in the absence of the participation and active engagement of the individuals involved.

Reflective Questions

What could Zoe have done differently? Who could have helped her? What might they have advised the governor? Or Zoe?

How does this example connect with your experience of collaborations?

What ideas did you get from the case that broadened the way you think about collaborations?

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

Other than requesting the funds to be returned, what might the funder have said or done instead?

Participants begin to explore how this collaboration fits into 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.

1. What initially attracted you to your work?

2. What kinds of things are you trying to accomplish in your work right now?

3. What are you hoping will be the greater impact of the work you are doing currently?

4. How do you define success?

5. What direction do you see for the future of your own career?

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 shared 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 funding sources

____ 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:

1. Which category contains your ranking of "Most Important"?

2. Which category contains your ranking of "Not Important"?

3. Are there any notable patterns of how you ranked these statements according to the categories in which they are placed?

4. Talk with others about these "findings," within your own organization and with potential collaborators.

Collaborations are more enjoyable and more likely to be successful if individuals feel engaged in the work – that is, if the work they are doing is sufficiently interesting and important so as to minimize 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 rescind. This activity helps individuals to identify what they find to be the most engaging aspects of the work and to discuss these facets 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?):

A. 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?

B. 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 initial attraction to the responses to the collaboration.

C. 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 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 gives 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?)

A. Interest in the collaboration

- Have you and your colleagues 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 individuals or the collaboration as a whole do to "reignite" interest?

B. Accomplishments and Impact of the collaboration

- Do you and your colleagues 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 individuals or the collaboration as a whole do to help get the collaboration on track and individuals back "on board"?

C. Engagement

- Do you and your colleagues 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?

MISSION FOCUSED

KEY QUESTIONS

Keep these in mind as you read the narratives and complete the activities listed below.

1. How can individuals develop a common mission for a collaboration?

2. Can you describe the mission of your collaboration?

3. How would others in the collaboration describe the mission?

NARRATIVES

Read about two example collaborations: one that succeeds through mission focus and one that struggles with mission focus

Working on a Mission:
Our Collaboration

A Case of Contradictory Missions:
A Fork in the Road

ACTIVITIES

Explore the meaning of mission focus further through a variety of prompts and exercises.

How Collaborations Get off the Ground
Identify, articulate, and discuss the origins of the collaboration among participating organizations.

There's No "I" in Team
Learn what happens when one member of the team fails to contribute and apply lessons..

Debate: Excellence and Engagement
Think through individual and shared values for work.

Developing a Mission Statement
Create a mission statement for collaborative work by talking about beliefs, values, outcomes, and larger purposes of the collaboration.

Revisiting Mission in the Course of Collaboration
Reveal whether individuals and organizations are aligned about the "higher purpose" of the collaboration and whether collaborators should re-assess or re-assert their commitments.

Sometimes, individuals come together around particular ideas—a product, solution, or project they have in mind (and sometimes these collaborations work easily; other times, they are harder than one had hoped). However, there are instances when mission develops naturally over time, when like-minded individuals come together because they want to work together. Through the process of getting to know each other and talking, mutual interests can sometimes develop into powerful missions.

This case is the story of our own collaboration, working together to develop the ELEMENTS and the tools to help individuals make use of the framework in their own lives.

A few of us from the Harvard Graduate School of Education had been studying collaboration. For three years, we interviewed individuals about their own collaborative experiences so that we could learn some of the elements that contribute to good collaboration, as well as some of the warning signs that particular collaborations do not work. Our goal was to discover how we could help people to "collaborate well."

Once we had collected and analyzed the data, we felt that we had some important findings. Specifically, we learned that many collaborators do not make time for due diligence before moving ahead with collaborations. People don't feel the need to get to know one another on a personal or professional level, and they oftentimes don't carefully plan a process for collaboration nor take time to reflect on the collaboration. Not only did we need to write about these lessons; we also wanted to help people put the "theory" into "action." And so we developed a "Toolkit": a set of materials that helped people to become aware of what is important in various stages of collaboration and how to implement the suggestions.

Once we had a first-draft product, we shared it with an acquaintance, who in his work helped people to collaborate better. We asked if he would like to try out our new resource, sharing it with others who might try it and giving us some feedback. In a polite and direct manner, our collaborator told us that people found our Toolkit too dense. He asked, "Where do people begin? How do they know where to start? What activities should they chose?" We had come together with a specific mission of making our tools and materials accessible to the wider world, and while we thought our first draft was promising, it clearly needed some structure based on the feedback received.

Motivated by a mutual desire to help people collaborate in genuine and helpful ways, we began going through our own Toolkit in an effort to foster our collaboration, using the various activities and prompts to get to know each other and to see if a plan of action would naturally develop from our sessions.

Each of our meetings began with an informal check in—personal and professional. While at first, this "rolling up of sleeves" seemed to take valuable time away from working on our mission, we quickly realized

that this process helped us to form strong relationships. Because we had talked about our own traits, skills, and values with one another, we quickly assigned roles: one person kept us focused on the big picture and pushed the collaboration along; a second person took copious notes of all of our meetings so we were all on the same page; and a third person was focused on the practicality of the Toolkit—how can our process be adapted for other people who come to this for the first time, without any context? How can our tools become a user-friendly resource?

In many ways, our process of collaboration was a model that incorporated many of the ELEMENTS in this Toolkit. We thought about the pieces of our collaboration that seemed to work the best, and how these mapped on to the ideas we learned in our research. We effected connections to the materials we developed as part of the original Collaboration Toolkit. Together, we came up with the 8 essential ELEMENTS to collaboration—a simple, yet (we believed) powerful way to explain an important framework. We then worked together to write stories (based on our data) to help further define each ELEMENT and worked for many hours deciding which activities should be connected to particular ELEMENTS.

Every time we met (about once a month), we followed the same process. We spent time chatting about weekends and free time, diving into the materials, taking notes, assigning responsibilities and tasks, and holding each other accountable for our overall mission. Though we had a clear idea of what we wanted from the collaboration, we did not have a prescribed way to get there.

Final Comments

The fruit of our labor is the website and Toolkit you are reviewing. Hopefully, you will find this collaboration "successful" in aiding your own efforts to carrying out meaningful and effective collaborations.

Reflective Questions

It is often said that the only thing one can do with advice is "give it away," because one would never follow it oneself. Do you feel that we have followed our own recommendations? Could you have suggested other ways to proceed?

What role might a facilitator have played? When are facilitators essential? When might they be counterproductive?

This collaboration involved a small number of "principal players." Could it have benefited from a larger participation? Might the participants have fooled themselves? What could they have done to lessen that likelihood?

What sorts of additional collaborations might follow up this effort? Or is the collaboration described better seen as a "one off"?

In order for a collaboration between disparate groups to be productive, there needs to be a concrete, unifying mission upon which all parties can agree. Before there can be tangible results, there must first be agreement about desired results. Collaboration for collaboration's sake is not enough to sustain such a multifaceted endeavor. Instead, participants need to actively co-construct focused, congruent goals. Otherwise, decisions about each inevitable 'fork in the road' are likely to be plagued with disagreement, to the ultimate detriment of the collaboration itself.

Due to growing concerns about the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) throughout the nation, the principal at a newly-formed charter school recruited a small group of teachers, administrators, and parents. This multidisciplinary team brainstormed about areas of concern related to the CCSS, as well as possible solutions. Composed of 7 teachers (with representatives from each department), 4 administrators, and 5 parents, the team began to meet for one hour once a week.

Initially, many team members found these meetings unproductive; everyone was just airing his or her grievances. After three weeks, however, a predominant area of concern began to emerge: testing. Everyone was apprehensive about how the students, who were predominantly from low-achieving, high-needs neighborhoods, were going to perform on the upcoming battery of mandated CCSS testing. As a consequence, the team unanimously agreed to a goal, a purpose, a mission: to prepare the students for the examinations as thoroughly as possible.

The team could now focus on drafting a plan for achieving that goal. After several more weeks of deliberation, the team determined that the most effective way to promote the overarching CCSS of critical-thinking skills would be through challenging the students in innovative ways. The team subsequently drafted a proposal for a pilot interschool Academic Exploration program.

The team proposed that a small group of the charter school students and one or two supervising teachers would meet after school twice a week, along with students and teachers recruited from nearby high schools. Through challenging and exciting group activities, the students would strengthen their critical-thinking and their test-taking skills.

A science teacher and a humanities teacher from the charter school volunteered to lead the program. The principal, in turn, was able to provide a small but adequate budget to pay for the teachers' extra work, field trip expenses, and snacks. The principal also reached out to a local, partnering university which graciously provided the program free access to a lecture room. The principal hoped that the program would feel more inclusive if no one had "home court advantage"; time spent on the campus would foster excitement toward the prospect of attending college.

In response to advertising around the school, 10 students signed up for the program, at which point the principal finally began reaching out to other area high schools. The principal at a nearby high-achieving public high school immediately expressed interest: the various constituencies at her high school were also concerned about promoting the college and career readiness standards outlined by the Common Core. This school's administrators, teachers, and parents, however, were predominantly focused on strengthening students 'Speaking and Listening' skills, as these students already had a history of performing well on high-stakes testing. Consequently, unbeknownst to the charter school principal, the public school principal advertised the program as an opportunity to strengthen communication skills, sparking the interest of 2 teachers (English and History) and 8 students.

Each unaware of the other school's goals, the two pairs of lead teachers began moving forward with the program by setting up an initial Academic Exploration meeting. All parties were in accordance that the first session would be focused on community building. The evening was a complete success. The students were excited to be on a college campus, had a lot of fun with the icebreaker activities, and were already forming bonds. On his way out the door, one student even proclaimed, "I can't wait until next week!"

Striving to be fair about balancing this additional time commitment, the teachers decided that the charter school team and the public school team would alternate between planning the weekly lesson. The charter school team volunteered to plan first, and consequently, the following week's meeting, while active and engaging, was primarily focused on test-taking skills.

Both the teachers and the students from the public school were taken aback – this was not what they had expected. Upon realizing that the two schools had very different goals, the lead teachers set up a meeting with both principals present. Neither party was willing to amend its mission, but no one wanted to cancel the program, acknowledging that it would be the students who suffered. And so, the two schools acquiesced to a plan: alternating between the aims of the charter school and the public school, with the hope that both sets of students would still benefit from the program. The fate of the collaboration remained "in the air."

Final Comments

Because the charter school developed its goals and action plan before contacting area high schools, there was no discussion between parties about the mission of the collaboration. Consequently, there was a lack of understanding between lead teachers, which severely threatened the future of the initiative. In order for a collaboration to be successful, all parties must play an active role in forming a concrete, unifying mission.

Reflective Questions

How could this collaboration have been successful? What needed to change?

What should have the members of this collaboration done differently?

How does this example connect with your experience of collaborations? How does this case broaden the way you think about collaborations?

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

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

Directions

Read the following prompts and answer the questions.

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 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?

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, as well as that of the director, lighting team, dramaturge, etc. 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.

Jesse's Dilemma

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?

This dilemma has been adapted from the book *Making Good: How Young People Cope with Moral Dilemmas at Work*.

Many factors pertain to 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:

   A. You must enjoy your work to be able to do it well.

   B. 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 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?

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 itself, and the intended outcomes.

Directions

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 collaboration exist?

2. Think about responses from the questions above. Work together to develop a single statement incorporating the responses to the three questions.

The mission of our organization is:

3. Evaluate your statement (Yes, No, Somewhat) as individuals, then come together as a group to discuss individual ratings. Come to consensus about these ratings (even if they are not particularly favorable for a viable mission statement):

1. The statement is realistic. _____
2. The statement is clear and concise. _____
3. The statement reflects our values and beliefs. _____
4. The statement demonstrates a commitment to serving the public good. _____
5. The statement is powerful. _____
6. As a collaboration, we can demonstrate this statement through actions and decisions _____
7. Other individuals/organizations will understand this statement. _____

4. Based on the ratings above, are there any changes or adjustments you might want to make to the mission statement?

5. Incorporating these changes, rewrite your mission statement.

6. Three people involved with the collaboration should share this draft with three people outside of the collaboration for their comments. Be sure that each person asking for feedback includes at least one person who may not be at all familiar with your collaboration.

7. Plan a time to come together (in person, by phone, or via Skype) to discuss these outside reactions.

8. Plan next steps: Is the mission statement final? Does more work need to be done? If so, what needs to be clarified?

This suggested format comes from Minnesota Department of Health http://www.health.state.mn.us. The questions have been adapted to use with a collaboration (as opposed to an organization) and some new prompts and steps have been added.

During collaboration, many times individuals confront opportunities and obstacles that "test" the stability and reliability of a collaboration—in the process of forming as well as the process of maintaining a collaboration. For example, individuals may allocate additional funds to the collaboration; or in the less happy instance, an organization may encounter financial difficulties that pose a threat to the collaboration (e.g. change in personnel, less time to spend on collaboration). In such situations, organizations may need to go back to the basics. This activity reveals whether individuals and organizations are aligned about the "higher purpose" of the collaboration; in the process, it indicates whether collaborators should re-assess or re-assert commitment to the collaboration.

Directions

Read the dilemma and respond to the following questions.

<u>Tom's Dilemma</u>

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 in 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)

1. 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?

2. What would you do if you were Tom? Tom's mentor? An independent foundation officer who believes in Tom's mission? Tom's staff?

3. 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?

4. Is Tom violating his principles by working with the first organization? The second organization? What is he willing to risk? Is he "selling out"?

5. 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

1. What is the central mission of your potential collaboration? What is the purpose of your work together as a group, and as independent organizations? What do you want to accomplish together that you couldn't accomplish alone? How can you each benefit from this collaboration?

2. What are the most valued desired outcomes?

3. Is there anything you are willing to risk in order to achieve these desired outcomes?

4. Anything you are not willing to risk?

ETHICALLY ORIENTED

KEY QUESTIONS

Keep these in mind as you read the narratives and complete the activities listed below.

1. What do "ethics" look like in collaboration? Is your collaboration ethically oriented?

2. How can individuals create the conditions for "good" ethical behavior?

3. How can individuals avoid situations that might elicit "poor" or "bad" ethical behavior?

NARRATIVES

Read about two example collaborations: one that succeeds through ethical orientation and one that struggles with ethical orientation

A Case of Good Ethics:
It's Not All about Me

A Case of Bad Ethics:
There's No "I" in Team, But Who Cares?

ACTIVITIES

Explore the meaning of ethical orientation further through a variety of prompts and exercises.

Value Sort
Reflect upon what is most important to you personally and stimulate conversations with collaborators.

The Potential Costs of Collaborative Work
Consider challenges from an outsider's perspective.

Acknowledging Cultural Differences Among Organizations
Identify, articulate, and discuss "cultural differences" among participating organizations.

Concentric Circles of Responsibility
Explore the "concentric circles" of responsibility within a collaboration to help participants delineate individual and collective responsibilities for the collaborative work.

To solve many complex problems, collaboration is a necessity. However, choosing the right partners can pose dilemmas, including ethical ones. Some partners may enable the work to be done in a timely and productive manner, but the cost of compromising values may be high.

Tired of working long hours with limited progress in their research, a group of scientific researchers who knew of one another came together to talk about developing a collaboration that would enable important discoveries to happen more quickly. Each scientist believed that working together would enhance the work —more people might lead to more progress, and certainly working with others from different laboratories may motivate more creative thinking. As an example, working on a vaccine to treat a rare strand of flu, one that particularly affected the elderly, was not going to progress quickly enough through the traditional "silo" approach in which individual scientists or groups control findings until they are ready to patent them. Moreover, for this group of scientists, such a secretive approach was not consistent with the personal or professional values of the individual members in the group. Rather, this group wanted a collaborative laboratory, in which scientists would be sharing approaches, knowledge and findings. But this type of collaboration is costly, and ensuring its longevity was by no means a certainty. Additionally, the participants needed funding right away.

In a short period of time, the group was successful in securing grants from various sources. By pooling together connections with individual funders, the group raised about half of what they felt they needed for the collaboration to be up and running. One avenue worth further exploration featured venture capitalists, who might be interested in investing because of the potential to make a lot of money.

In discussions with the venture capitalists, the research group stressed how important it was to share their work, discoveries, data, and expertise with researchers, clinicians, and physicians around the world. The scientists felt a sense of obligation to do what they could to promote reliable and rapid solutions to this flu strain and other diseases. The venture capitalists thought this was an unusual but interesting notion.

Lawyers were hired to draw up all the agreements required to launch this collaborative laboratory. Members of the research group reviewed the agreements but learned, to their dismay, the following condition: the venture capitalists insisted that all work generated by the company would be proprietary. The idea of sharing what they developed may have met the ideals of the participating scientists but would not fly in the corporate world.

The research group faced a dilemma. The money needed to sustain their work and possibly lead to significant discoveries was within grasp. Many people had put in a lot of time and effort to come on board. Various funders had already committed to grants over the next few years. Difficult conversations occurred within the research group, taking into account the various factors at play. With this funding the group could

forge ahead with their own research, but others involved in comparable research and development efforts would not benefit.

What should the research group do?

Ultimately the group decided that they could not sign the agreements. They would forgo this amazing opportunity. The group firmly believed they were making the right decision—they could not compromise on their scientific values. Allowing their work, knowledge, and materials to be shared and used by others was not just one of their values—it was their guiding principle. They agreed that because they could find another funder who would support their mission fully, it may take more time to build a collaboration, but no one would suffer as a consequence.

Final Comments

Collaboration is a virtual necessity in today's world: particularly when the collaboration seeks to solve a complex problem. The research group brought together the right players who could contribute to the initiative in ways that each could not do alone. But in doing so they would have to bracket their fundamental values: sick people would have to wait longer for a treatment that could otherwise help them. That was not an option the scientists were prepared to choose.

Reflective Questions

Was there anything else the research group could have done in this circumstance?

How does this example connect with your experience of collaborations? Can you defend an alternative course—accepting the money with its restrictions?

What ideas did you get from the case that broadened the way you think about collaborations?

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

Collaboration offers many benefits but inevitably entails give and take. Individuals must be willing to give up some of their autonomy in order to pursue outcomes that benefit the greater community. Refusal to make any concessions means that the collaboration can be easily derailed by what might otherwise appear to be minor obstacles. Identifying and articulating these non-negotiables from the outset may prevent impediments that limit the possibility of success.

Administrators at three small local hospitals realized that the demand for mental health services outpaced the current availability at each of their institutions; they decided to work together to enhance their offerings. Not only were more patients coming to each hospital for help; because the patients' specific needs varied, the practitioners at each hospital felt that they needed to be a "jack of all trades" for mental health—experts in every area. Administrators recognized that it would not be financially feasible to hire practitioners for each of the separate mental health departments. By pooling their resources and creating specific foci for each department (e.g. one department would focus on issues pertaining to adolescents, another on depressive disorders, etc.), they could meet the patients' needs and fill in gaps across the board.

Surveys of administrators and practitioners at each hospital confirmed overwhelming interest in this plan. The administration quickly made arrangements to open access to patients from the other hospitals and to arrange transportation between them. However, after the first billing cycle, administrators encountered a challenge they had not anticipated—variations in payment.

In fact, practitioners at the various hospitals were paid varying amounts. Moreover, patients' payments for services also varied depending on insurance accepted at each hospital (if the patients even had insurance). Because one of the hospitals in a higher income neighborhood could afford to be more selective about insurance, patients who visited from poorer areas with more stipulations on their insurance were forced to pay "out of pocket" for services rendered. Furthermore, the hospital that focused on adolescent mental health issues became much busier, and although they wanted to help, the practitioners were beginning to squawk about having to work more hours, with no increase in salary. These practitioners felt they could not keep up the pace and petitioned to end the collaboration. More patients might be getting care, but it came at the expense of the practitioners, who now felt overworked and undercompensated.

Administrators across the hospitals organized a meeting to negotiate a solution. Everyone agreed at the outset that they could not lose sight of the interests of the patients or the original purpose of joining the departments across the three hospitals. After hours of heated discussion, a decision could not be reached. Administrators from each hospital had their own "non-negotiable" items, such as practitioners' maximum work hours, their travel time, and types of "acceptable" insurance. Individuals around the table tried to strategize how to accommodate these items, but every suggestion was turned down for one reason or

another. One hospital, for example, offered to exchange money to pay practitioners a "bonus" if those individuals worked more than the forty hours. Another hospital would not accept this—its reputation as "one of the 10 best institutions at which to work in the state" was not to be compromised. One of the hospitals agreed to see 20 patients a month for no charge (if they came with no insurance), but the other two hospitals asked, "What happens to the 21st patient? How do you turn down that person in need?"

As the meeting time extended beyond four hours, tensions mounted. During the breaks, administrators learned of practitioners' concerns through emails and voicemails. Administrators became wary of negative press in the local newspapers. Knowing the importance of reputation at these local hospitals, the administrators unanimously agreed to put the collaboration on hold for the time being. They figured that because the collaboration had only been in place for a week, "little damage was done" in terms of public relations in the community. Ironically, the "big damage," which no one considered at the time of the decision, was the patients in need.

Final Comments

Who suffers the consequences of this decision? Certainly, it seems that refusal to collaborate resulted in a deficit of necessary medical care for the patients who need and cannot receive timely services. In order to "save face," administrators neglected to consider the people in the community who depend on them. Rather than being able to schedule an appointment within days, patients who face mental health problems would need to wait at least a month. Because none of the three hospitals was willing to concede on any of the items that might have yielded a potential solution, the collaboration became an example of how flawed "bad ethics" can undermine a needed solution.

These institutions all saw the benefits of collaborating, but the nuts and bolts of making that happen proved to be an insurmountable obstacle. Each hospital had its own payment structure that was dictated by requirements administrators felt they could not change. Unable to compromise on these issues, they could not create a collaboration that effectively served the patients in all of the hospitals. Each member of the collaboration acted in ways that would only serve a single hospital, not the larger surrounding community.

Reflective Questions

Can you see any options that could have made this collaboration successful? Be as specific as possible, weighing the pros and cons.

Where do you draw the line when you are collaborating? How do you know if you have so many non-negotiables in place that the collaboration simply cannot succeed?

How can you detect these obstacles and diagnose problems even before starting a collaborative venture?

What role can a leader or facilitator play in negotiating the inevitable obstacles that face a nascent collaboration?

ACTIVITY 1
VALUE SORT

This activity is an opportunity to think about the values that are most important in one's work. Knowing what we value most in our work, relationships, and other commitments makes it easier to respond to opportunities and conflicts with integrity. The Value Sort is a way for individuals to reflect upon what is most important to them personally, and it is also a good way to stimulate conversations with their collaborators.

Directions

Perform the value sort online at the following link:

   https://bit.ly/2uFtigO

Follow-up Questions

1. Consider your values again. What did you rank as the 4 most important values? What about the 4 least important values?

2. 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?

3. 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?

4. Are there any values not listed? If so, what are they?

Often, collaborations are formed without any thought to the potential negative consequences that might ensue. Without consideration of factors that may produce such negative consequences, issues may emerge as organizations face internal changes during the partnership. This activity helps participants consider challenges from an outsider's perspective.

Directions

Read the dilemma and respond to the following questions.

Jim's 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)

1. What would you have done in Jim's place?

2. How could have some of the issues Jim faced be avoided? Should he have avoided the partnership in the first place?

3. What are some helpful resources, strategies, and skills to employ in order to resolve this situation? Do any of these supports exist?

4. 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

1. What measures should be taken at the start of collaboration to ensure that both organizations know the direction of the work?

2. How can changes within one organization be addressed?

3. How can an equal division of labor in the operational side of the partnership be maintained?

4. How can you exit a collaboration in the least damaging way?

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

Directions

Read the following prompt and response to the questions.

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 a kind of basic agreement about educational principles, and we certainly have [mutual] admiration, our value systems actually have some significant differences. One classic example of this is that 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 long quotes, 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 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 single 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 is key, and notice when I'm thinking, "Are they...serious? They're going 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.""

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

1. What are the particular cultures of each participating group?

2. Are there important differences in work process or organizational structure?

3. Are there differences of language or other cultural issues?

4. What is your organization's mission? Can you articulate the mission of your potential partner organization?

The purpose of this activity is to explore the "concentric circles" of responsibility within a collaboration to 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 Good Project, 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.

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.

NURTURED CONTINUOUSLY

KEY QUESTIONS

Keep these in mind as you read the narratives and complete the activities listed below.

1. What factors help individuals to feel nurtured during collaborations?

2. What makes you feel nurtured during collaborations?

NARRATIVES

Read about two example collaborations: one that succeeds through continuous nurturing and one that struggles with continuous nurturing

A Case of Good Nurturing: Checking In

A Case of Burdensome Nurturing: Setting Limits

ACTIVITIES

Explore the meaning of continuously nurtured collaboration further through a variety of prompts and exercises.

Mapping Obstacles: Where Do Ours Lie?
The purpose of this activity is to identify, articulate, and discuss obstacles that confront participating organizations.

When Change Occurs
This activity helps participants to establish that trust, which is essential to a successful collaboration.

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.

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

It is not enough to agree at the outset on the goals and processes of a collaboration. To ensure success, like delicate plants, collaborations need constant care and attention. Sometimes, circumstances change and the kind and degree of participation by the collaborators can vary. To stay on the right path, collaborations need to be nurtured carefully and regularly.

A few years ago, Laura received a promotion. As the new Associate Director of Human Resources at a large, reputable non-profit organization focused on educational research, Laura wanted to go beyond the usual imperative for collaboration: she determined to increase professional relationships among her department's twelve-person staff. Because each individual was responsible for a specific area (e.g. payroll, medical insurance, crisis management), the collection of individuals rarely worked as a whole. Indeed, some staff members confided that they didn't know others well nor have an understanding of others' daily tasks —even those who might sit in the next office. In light of many complaints that the human resources department "just doesn't get the work of the organization," resulting in inadequate services, Laura wanted to create a healthy atmosphere within the human resources department. She set out to build close working relationships, which she thought would eventually increase the quality of the services and resources that the department would provide to the organization as a whole.

If she were to facilitate her department's working as a collective whole, Laura realized that she had to create opportunities for the staff to get to know each other. She scheduled three retreats where members gathered at locations away from the office. Unsurprisingly, the staff dreaded the first meeting. Some individuals started to gripe, "Why do we need this?", "This is excessive—why not just plan a meeting for two hours?". and "What a waste of time, when we could be getting our real work done." Despite hearing the noise bubbling up in the office, Laura refused to let these complaints derail her plan.

In fact, Laura raised the ante of the meetings. Even though her budget was small, she decided to "go all out," for the first meeting. She booked a room at a new, trendy boutique hotel, and made a lunch reservation in the elegant formal dining room. She put together gift bags—consisting of personalized "HR" t-shirts, leather-bound notebooks, and fine chocolates. A positive professional tone had been set. Though they had initially arrived to the first meeting reluctantly, the workers were immediately impressed with the care Laura exhibited and felt motivated to reciprocate her effort.

During the morning of the first day, Laura asked members of the group to use the Values Sort from the Good Collaboration Toolkit. This tool is designed to help workers consider important values and ponder how these values relate to the mission, purpose, and goals of the group. After much discussion of the specific values, she asked individuals to each pick the one value (out of a list of 30) that held the most significance to them in their work. The group was pleasantly surprised that this simple instruction inspired rich discussion of how they might collectively agree on the values they might seek to promote as a

department. The day ended with time together in the hotel lounge, and a group that seemed happy. Staff feedback on the meeting was positive and Laura observed a significant shift in the staff members' outlook on their work and towards one another. Relationships were beginning to form. The first retreat had been worthwhile.

Two months later, at the start of the second meeting (held in a beautiful conference room of the city's public library), Laura presented each individual with a special stone, each etched with the value he or she had picked as most important. The individuals around the table were touched. Laura then showed the group a duplicate set made of the value stones. The second set would be mounted in a "shadow box" at the front desk of the department. This physical representation solidified the group identity and, as Laura said "shows who we are and this is how we roll…." Once again, the group was moved by her attentiveness and care. Quickly this time, with no need for a fancy lunch, the staff got down to business and made progress on future plans. Goals and timelines were established. In small working groups the members articulated issues, gave feedback and shared promising ideas – gaining further insight into each other's work, how they are interconnected, and the advantages of working together. Throughout these meetings Laura remained alert to how everyone was participating. She underscored that "if someone isn't engaged, I need to find out why and check in."

The third meeting took place in the wine cellar of a local restaurant. To facilitate conversations in the retreat sessions about what was working and what was not, Laura drew on the Revisit Passion and Engagement exercise in the Good Collaboration Toolkit. This ploy can be risky (because people can share negative sentiments). But Laura felt it was necessary for the group to have an open discussion to affirm that the time together had been worthwhile and to revisit the original goal of these meetings—to provide improved services to the organization as a whole. In her words, Laura needed to make sure that "people still feel committed to the process—an essential part of collaboration."

At the conclusion of the third meeting, the group decided unanimously to continue these retreats over the next six months. Laura joked that she would seek a bigger budget! However, one person stated that there was no need for that, "Now that we know how important it is make the time periodically to listen to each other, talk with each other, and accept all kinds of feedback, the office conference room will suffice."

Final Comments

Good collaboration needs to be carefully monitored and nurtured; it does not just simply happen on its own. For Laura, showing people how much she cared (with carefully-selected food and meeting spaces, and well-crafted etched rocks), taking the temperature of the group from time to time, and inviting both positive and negative feedback throughout the process, were all key to the process.

Reflective Questions

What did Laura do that helped this collaboration to be successful?

How does this example connect with your experience of collaborations?

What could have gone awry? What could Laura or the staff have then done to repair the situation?

What ideas did you get from the case that broadened the way you think about collaborations?

What might happen if Laura received another promotion and was no longer involved with this group?

What questions does this example raise as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

Nurturing a collaboration is a delicate balance of care for individual participants and the work at-hand, including the people who will potentially benefit from the work. Sometimes, though it seems advantageous to include the "best" partners, this model can easily become a collaboration with "centrifugal" tendencies. In other words, the central focus of the collaboration should always be the work and the potential impact of work, not the people around the table.

Sally, a high-level government official working in the Department of Education, reflects on a collaboration she had put together with several highly-esteemed corporate partners, considered the best in the country. Importantly, each flagship corporation had enough money to "pay its own way," so that the collaboration did not need any external funding.

The goal of the collaboration was to improve the quality of education offered at some of the worst schools in America—specifically, low-performing schools in underprivileged urban areas. Sally wanted the collaboration to be the mark of the federal education reform, providing teachers and students access to resources and programs that would enable them to teach and learn in innovative ways. In a one-on-one interview nearly twenty-five years later, she summarizes and reflects on this collaboration:

Sally: The operating plan was for coalition of blue chip American companies to come together to "fix" American education. We wanted to break the mold of schools—come up with ideas for schools very different in form, structure, [and] content from the currently existing ones. I reached out to some of the largest corporations. I was on good terms with the CEOs and Board Chairmans. We had all the "right" partners—a technology partner, a management partner, a creative partner, and so on. All of the partners were first-rate organizations, brand names in the United States, really good people agreeing to collaborate with us, each of them taking responsibility for a particular piece of the puzzle that we wanted to work on. In most cases, the people that they would have working with us were among their top executives and so, really good people. And it was a long-term commitment, the sort of thing you dream of when you put a collaboration together.It didn't work. I later learned that our vision for the collaboration and more importantly, the operating plan was horribly naive.

Interviewer: IT DID NOT WORK?

Sally: It did not work. Generally speaking, I think people have the view that collaboration is costless. But there is more to cost than just the financial piece. Collaboration is actually very costly, in terms of time and energy spent keeping the collaboration together. And let me just illustrate with this example.

Each of these organizations had their own objectives, either the organization as a whole or the part of the

organization with which I was working, typically led by a charismatic person who had their own vision of what needed to be done, typically capitalized in their particular area of expertise and interest. And they pulled together a group of people who shared that vision and wanted to work as a team to make it happen

I caught most of them at a point in time when their vision and our vision intersected. Didn't necessarily overlap entirely, but enough to make a collaboration worthwhile to both partners. But over time, circumstances change. It's not that anybody was of bad faith at all. I don't think that happened in this case at all. It sometimes has happened to me, but not in this case.

But needs changed as an organization; their vision evolved, and I did nothing to nurture the collaboration to meet those needs. People came and went in the organization. Sometimes that included the leadership. People to whom they reported had different aims and objectives over time. Organizations suffered various kinds of financial reverses. All kinds of things happen to an organization which force that organization in a different direction or simply lead them in a different direction. Right?

And the same was true of this collaboration. I discovered that what I had put together [was] an organization with enormous centrifugal tendencies. And you can't keep that together forever. 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.

Interviewer: COULD YOU TALK ABOUT THAT ENERGY? WHAT WERE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OR THE PIECES THAT TOOK YOU THE MOST TIME?

Sally: Well, in a literal sense, it's talking to people. I mean a few of the companies were going through their own evolutions. With one particular company, when I started out with them, they were dripping with money and the school business was a very large part of their business. And so they set up this group inside the company with, in fact, carte blanche to do whatever they wanted to by way of figuring out new things to do in schools that were neat.

But over time, things changed. Other players came in and the company got a smaller and smaller share of the market. Meanwhile other opportunities opened up, and the corporate leadership introduced different opportunities, which were not so school-friendly. And so on. And so the unit with which I was working was coming under pressure to produce results. And these guys were drowning. And the collaboration that we had wasn't going to get them where they needed to go because of the internal stresses in the organization. Working with them over the two years in which all of this was evolving took a lot of my time. That was one of about eight partners, but just illustrating that point. But this was what was happening virtually across the board. None of it was a failure of good will. For the most part they were the same good people I started out with. But that was how it was. Just piece after piece like that.

I realized I needed an organization where most of the people doing most of the work were focused on our work. And for that to work, I needed to have people who were either our employees or were under long-term consultant contracts to give us a substantial amount of their time. Otherwise, with the best will in the world, we would be flying by each other—literally and figuratively—most of the time. In that kind of arrangement, when you're working with partners who are only part of the work, have lots of other things they're engaged in, and have to worry most of all about the integrity of their own organization, you're going to spend all of your time keeping the coalition together and very little of it worrying about whether the

work is actually getting done that has to get done if your organization is going to succeed.

So, as I say, I concluded from that that I needed to strike a very different balance. You could have a few of those relationships; they have to be carefully chosen and probably more open-ended.

Final Comments

In the end, the outcome was not a complete failure. According to Sally, when she went to some of the schools throughout the country to look for changes and progress, she saw evidence that the individual partners were making a difference for teachers and students. But they were working completely independently of each other. There was no synergy from the collaboration. As she laments, "I felt really good about the quality of the resources that we had brought to these folks, because it was topnotch. But I didn't feel that we were advancing the agenda with which we had begun. We weren't changing the way the system worked at all."

Reflective Questions

Is there anything that could have been done differently? Who would have to be involved? What kinds of processes would need to be put into place? How could one monitor them?

How does this example connect with your own experience of collaborations?

How do those in charge of collaborations deal with changing conditions involving one or more of the partners?

What ideas did you get from the case that broadened the way you think about collaborations?

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

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

Directions

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

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 motivations of the people 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, and 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.

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 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.

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 and 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.

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 can lead to false expectations and unclear delineation of responsibilities. This failure in turn may lead to situations in which a partnership becomes fragile, and work in the service of the collaboration becomes extremely challenging. This activity helps participants to establish that trust, 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 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, and he was 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 (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.

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)

1. What do you think about Steve's predicament?
2. What would you do if you were Steve? An independent foundation officer who believes in Steve's mission? Steve's staff?
3. 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?
4. 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

1. 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?
2. How can you respectfully ensure that your partners are being honest in their work?
3. 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?

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

Directions

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.

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.*

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 beliefs 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.*

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?

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

Directions

Those involved in collaborative work employ a variety of methods to make their work as successful as possible. 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 and 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?" 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 with 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?

TIME WELL SPENT

KEY QUESTIONS

Keep these in mind as you read the narratives and complete the activities listed below.

1. How do you define time well spent?

2. How can you help to ensure individuals use time well during a collaboration?

3. How can collaborators intervene when time is not being used well?

NARRATIVES

Read about two example collaborations: one that succeeds because it is time well spent and one that is not perceived as time well spent

A Case of Time Well Spent:
It Takes Time to Spend Time Well

A Case of Time Badly Spent:
Match Made in Heaven?

ACTIVITIES

Explore the meaning of time well spent in collaboration further through a variety of prompts and exercises.

Timeline Revisited
This activity is intended as a reminder and a "placeholder" for collaborators to revisit the timeline that has presumably been laid out at the beginning of the collaboration.

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

Assessing Progress: Timeline Revisited
At the formal end of a collaboration, participants are encouraged to revisit the timeline.

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.

Among the many obstacles to productive collaboration, shortage of time is almost always cited. If individuals choose to engage in collaboration, they are prone to rush through the first phase of developing a "good collaboration." They do not allow enough time at the outset to carry out "due diligence" on relevant organization and individuals. And if participants don't spend enough time articulating the purpose and mission of the collaboration as well as specific short-term and long-term goals, the collaboration will suffer or even collapse. Though it may seem counterintuitive, "going slow," especially at the early stages of a collaboration, helps to ensure a more efficient and productive collaboration over the long run.

"Time Well Spent" refers not only to the effective use of time during meetings and gatherings (e.g. adhering to a set schedule), but also to the quality of the experiences for individuals—how to make the time, be it an hour or a week, meaningful for participants. For example, opportunities to get to know each other and the chance to "bond" both personally and professionally enable individuals to feel more connected to each other and to the work at hand. To be sure, technology can help in establishing and maintaining these connections, especially if people are at a distance. Still, being together in the same physical space remains the optimal way to get to know one another and to achieve shared understanding of the goals, mission, and purpose of the collaboration.

Consider a collaboration between two prominent groups in public health, one in the United States, and the other in France. These organizations were asked by a funder to co-produce a book about how their respective lines of work fit together. Each of the groups was counting on future funding from this source, so the "request" seemed more like a mandate than a mere recommendation.

The two groups, a research organization in the United States, and a community health care center in France, had admired each other's work for many years, and often referred interested individuals and parties to the other's respective workplaces. Each thought that it knew the other potential partner reasonably well. The funders thought that a book about their relationship and "best practices" would inspire health care professionals far and wide. Neither the funder, nor key members of either either organization, anticipated that this venture might be a difficult task.

The beginning stage of the mandated collaboration was bumpy. Individuals on both sides wondered whether the work was "worth" their time. Despite the perceived familiarity and mutual admiration, the process of bringing together a diverse group of people from different fields and different languages, who had varying work styles, proved more difficult than anticipated.

To be specific: There was no clear communication about the goals for the first few meetings, and minimal attention was paid to the optimal use of time. The American researchers felt that the French practitioners "never stopped talking," and wondered whether the project would progress. As a result of this frustration,

all of the participants voted to use Skype for the next meeting, a ploy which they thought would save time (and money). This decision signaled that participants did not see the time spent together in person as worthy of their resources or time.

As it turned out, "meeting" over Skype was not a good decision. Due to the time difference, some of the participants were unclear of the actual start time of the meeting; others could not get Skype running on their computers; some people were reluctant to speak out of fear that they would be interrupting a colleague. Furthermore, when some of the participants did speak, the American participants had a hard time understanding exactly what the French practitioners were trying to articulate. Some of the French participants were not particularly fluent in English and few of the Americans spoke French, and this caused an even further rift between the two groups.

How did the participants handle this situation?

The French practitioners took a risk. They asked the American researchers to start anew. They suggested that the group get together (in person) for a three day meeting in the United States. The first day and night would be devoted to a social gathering—a chance to get to know each other on a personal level—where people come from, likes and dislikes, family situations, and personal interests. If people spent informal time together, they would not only have the chance to bond, but also be more focused on the work for the following days.

The plan worked. The first day, participants toured the city together, enjoyed a picnic lunch, and went to a restaurant for dinner. One of the Americans realized that he was finally getting to know some of the participants—as he put it, not just their names and responsibilities, but "who they are," and "where they come from," and "what they value and how they think." These kinds of connections, felt by many of the participants at dinner that first night, led to progress over the next two days. Not only were participants more focused on the work; they looked forward to working together—even arguing about content—no longer feeling they might be offending one another by their remarks and responses.

Final Comments

This "trial" three-day meeting confirmed that at the beginning stage of collaboration, interpersonal elements are at least as important as the work itself. One of the participants claimed, "The thing that I learned from [our collaborators] is that quality really comes from taking time to delve deeply and really try to understand things, not to move too quickly, and to strive to embody these ideas ourselves." Ultimately, the collaboration proved productive—a book was produced and it garnered attention from both researchers and practitioners all over the world. Though none of the participants would say that it was a completely smooth collaborative process, in the end, they agreed that the group found a way to accomplish its original goal.

The key was to slow down. Efficient processes helped, but finding ways for people to connect to each other and to the work was most important. Sometimes it takes time to use time well.

Reflective Questions

What did the collaborators do that helped this collaboration to be successful?

How does this example connect with your experience of collaborations?

What could have gone awry? How can one evaluate whether time is being used well?

What ideas did you get from the case that broadened the way you think about collaborations?

Are there lessons from this international collaboration that also apply to domestic ones? What about differences?

What questions does this example raise as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

Good collaboration entails bringing together individuals and groups with diverse perspectives and expertise to accomplish a project that a single entity could not do alone. However, "good collaboration" is more than just having the "right" individuals and/or organizations in the room. There needs to be clear objectives for bringing people together—in other words, a specific purpose behind the collaboration. Sometimes, though specific individuals and organizations may seem a perfect match, without a conscious effort to work cooperatively, collaboration can feel like a "waste of time."

The Education Reform Project (ERP) was perceived as a unique opportunity. At the time, it seemed that a collaboration of the 10 leading "giants" in education—the most influential and respected individuals representing different subfields of education—might initiate momentous changes in education. Though the "right people" seemed to be involved, the participants in the end agree that the collaboration was not successful. In fact, although ERP was originally constituted to become a long-standing independent organization, the effort was ultimately abandoned.

Initially much thought and effort was put into convening this large group of people. Funding was abundant, and budgets were generous enough to provide the participants pleasant surroundings, tasty food, and sufficient travel funds. Furthermore, each participating organization received sufficient support to pay staff to help with logistics and ease daily work. Working groups were formed, and meetings schedules set. Participants recall that in the initial meetings, there was "unbelievable energy… all of us had that sense of these were important conversations that we were having."

However, after the "honeymoon stage," the excitement about the sheer importance of the collaboration came to overshadow the "how" of the collaboration. Meetings became opportunities for the "giants" to share, and sometimes lecture about their own perspectives on the state of education. Rather than taking other people's perspectives into account and seeking to generate new ideas, the participants seemed bent on espousing their own beliefs.

As an example, in one meeting the group discussed the importance of assessment in the classrooms of elementary school. One participant argued that assessment should be teacher-directed, while a second participant felt that assessment should be a reflective exercise by the student. This tension had the possibility of being a constructive discussion, which could have led the group to fashion new approaches to assessment. But in fact neither party was willing to "back down," other participants "took sides," and the discussion turned into a struggle. One participant remarks, "The tensions were intense. …we were always bumping up against each other and getting bruised in various ways."

The sheer size of the whole operation also made it difficult to break down the feeling that each person had to "stake his or her ground," and "mark his or her own turf." Though the collaboration had been developed

to come up with new ideas and approaches, none of the experts seemed willing to integrate his or her ideas with the ideas of others. In many ways, for the participants around the table, the act of "collaborating" was deemed as a threat to his or her originality, distinctiveness, and individual recognition.

How did this apparently "dream collaboration" spiral into a "waste of time?" What could have been done to "save" this collaboration?

Several alternatives might have helped ERP:

First, rather than assume that each of the participants understood the goal of the collaboration (to come up with new ideas "owned by the group"), this formulation could have been explicitly discussed. Second, assuming the goals were agreed upon, a named leader or facilitator of the collaboration could have asked participants to work in pairs or in small groups on strategies or solutions to specific problems, and then to present tentative formulations to the larger group. This approach would have encouraged (indeed, forced) participants to work together, and importantly, to take ownership of the blended ideas (a frequent result when one presents consensual materials to a larger group). The larger group could have discussed the options "on the table," rather than applauding or shooting down the idea of just one individual.

Finally, if the collaboration was still not working as originally intended, the group should have openly reflected on what was not working. Without such conversation, difficulties and conflicts got "swept under the rug." A knowledgeable and skillful facilitator could have been useful, and there were sufficient resources to bring in and empower such an individual.

Final Comments

With some collaboration expertise, including skilled facilitation, this situation may have been avoided. Spending time asking participants to come up with a mission statement for the collaboration (and articulate goals), asking participants to work in pairs and small groups to develop new ideas together, and openly talking about problems in the process of collaboration—what worked and what did not work and why—could have made a difference. This missed opportunity left the members with a negative perception of the entire effort. Though the collaboration started with much promise, in the end, it felt to too many like a "waste of time."

Reflective Questions

How might have a facilitator helped the collaboration? What are some specific strategies a facilitator could have employed to get the group working in unison? How does one counter individuals bent on protecting their turf?

Can ample resources sometimes be the enemy of effective collaboration? What about charismatic leaders?

How does this example connect with your experience of collaborations?

How does this case broaden the way you think about collaborations?

What questions does this example raise for you as you think about your past, present, and future collaborations?

ACTIVITY 1
TIMELINE REVISITED

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

Directions

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

1. 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?

2. 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?

3. 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.

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

ACTIVITY 2
VALUE SORT REVISITED

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

At the formal end of a collaboration, participants are encouraged to revisit the timeline with two main goals in mind: first, to review the schedule for work and confirm that all "assignments" and responsibilities have been completed; and second, to reflect on the process throughout the collaboration and discuss what has been helpful (or 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.

1. 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?
2. Reflect on the overall timeline for the collaboration. Assess its usefulness and accuracy throughout the duration of the collaboration.

3. 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?

4. 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.

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 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?

SOLUTION INSPIRED

KEY QUESTIONS

Keep these in mind as you read the narratives and complete the activities listed below.

1. How can individuals structure a collaboration to ensure a focus on the solutions and outcomes?

2. What is the appropriate balance of "process" and "product" for a collaboration?

3. Why is keeping a balance important?

NARRATIVES

Read about two example collaborations: one that succeeds by being solution-inspired and one that struggles with solution inspiration

A Case of Solution-Inspired Design: Addressing a "Real World" Need

Failure to Achieve a Desired Solution: Knowing Your Audience

ACTIVITIES

Explore the meaning of solution inspired collaboration further through a variety of prompts and exercises.

Word Cloud
This activity is a different way in which individuals can describe their respective organizations and show the importance or priorities of particular descriptors.

Collaboration Makes the Headlines
In crafting an article, collaborators summarize the work of the collaboration and begin to think about the impact of the collaborative work

Revisiting Engagement: What Now?
Through reflection about the collaboration, participants are asked to think about the role of engagement in the process of collaboration

Reflecting on Dimensions and Outcomes for Collaborative Success
In this activity, participants explore a working model that outlines dimensions and outcomes for collaborative success.

Some collaborations begin with individuals who want to work together, while others begin with an idea. Sometimes, individuals form collaborations to execute a particular solution to a problem or a need. In these cases, staying focused on the importance and necessity of the solution can help individuals overcome barriers inherent in the process.

The faculty of a small college in the Northeast of the United States faced a challenge. The new Dean of Academic Affairs, recently hired, introduced an innovative idea. He proposed that in order to graduate, each student would spend a semester learning outside of the classroom—applying technical skills and theoretical knowledge to the "real world." He argued that the "ivory tower of academia" does not teach students to be flexible, adaptable, or collaborative. Rather than simply relying on tuition, he asked the Office of Institutional Research to survey graduates from the past 10 years. The findings uncovered an alarming trend. On the whole, alums did not feel well-prepared for the workforce—the "real world." With the goal of creating meaningful college experiences for students (and his desire to make his "mark" on the campus), the Dean asked a group of faculty members to form a committee to work on this program. He expected that the to-be-fashioned program would eventually become a requirement for all students.

Professor Jordan, Head of the Computer Science department, chaired the committee. He was delighted to take on this assignment since he had recently been approached by a technology company with the request that he develop a student internship program. "What if," he asked, "we could design something that went beyond the typical internship and that really helps to fill the gaps our graduates have pointed out?" Professors from other departments were dubious—what could their students learn in a technology company? Professor Jordan asked professors from the Economics, English and Biology departments (the other three largest majors in the college) if they would consider joining the program. They reluctantly agreed, though they were dubious that anything would come of this idea. In a sense, they felt as if they had nothing to lose.

The first goal of the committee was to identify key areas that their program could address. Each faculty member had his and her own idea about the focus for this innovative program: the Economics professor was most interested in the team-based project experience; the English professor advocated for cross-disciplinary engagement; and the biology professor was set on problem-solving skills. Professor Jordan tried to get the group to understand how the program could address all three of the areas, but each seemed unwilling to budge.

Professor Jordan convinced the three faculty members that as a committee, they needed someone from the outside (a disinterested individual) to help the committee members reach an agreement that would satisfy the Dean's charge and would also be a positive solution for the students. With the students' needs in mind, the external facilitator suggested to the faculty that they secure information from current students as well about their perspectives of the planned program. The facilitator asked students from each department to talk about the kinds of experiences they thought would be beneficial. With this feedback, the faculty developed a plan which combined all of the interests and foci. More important, each member of the committee was confident that the plan would fill a void for students.

After a couple of months working together on the program, the committee pitched their idea to the tech company executives; these leaders embraced the concept wholeheartedly as a model of active learning from which everyone could benefit. Faculty worked closely with the company executives to develop a program that would pair two students from each of three departments (Economics, Computer Science, English, and Biology) and pose for them a challenge actually faced by the tech company. The task might draw on one or another of their disciplines, but they would have to work together and pool their collective wisdom to find a solution. Further, the challenge was intentionally ambiguous. This multi-faceted challenge was quite unlike the usual "unfulfilling" classroom tasks the students had described.

As the coordinator at the tech company explained, "We make our interns struggle at the start; we take them out of their comfort zone and take off the constraints—that's how our employees work." Faculty and students liked the idea of this ambiguity, though they also worried about how students coming from the highly structured educational environment would navigate this relatively uncharted terrain. Dr. Jordan explained that for students, the experience could be terrifying at first, but they would quickly learn to "spread their wings" and test out new ideas. He said, "It's all about getting them used to working in that uncertainty and acknowledging your limits—that's what our students need to thrive in the real world!"

After the first round of group projects, it became clear that students saw the benefits of the experience. One economics student explained, "At the beginning, it was almost like we didn't speak the same language! There was a lot of push and pull over who would be in the lead, and no one told us how to organize the group. It took a lot of negotiation just to appoint a team leader." An English major concurred, "Over the semester, we came to understand the benefit of the other disciplines and how we could best complement each other. I never would have gotten that in a group of other English majors! Plus, I now see that there is a value to the skills I bring to the table in a field I never would have thought to explore before."

Final Comments

Not only did the committee come up with a solution to their own collaborative challenges by engaging an outside facilitator to help negotiate independent interests. They worked hard to develop a positive solution to what students needed and wanted from their own education.

Reflective Questions

This program was designed with a very specific problem in mind. How did that issue shape the actions of the group?

Could this collaboration be replicated in an environment that did not identify the same issues? Would the benefits be circumscribed by replication in another context?

Where might the collaboration have broken down? What could have been done to repair the damage?

How did the outside facilitator help to bring about a positive outcome? How did the facilitator manage to bring together people representing different disciplines?

A group of highly-trained and well-intentioned doctors embarked on an international collaboration designed to teach new life-saving techniques to medical professionals in Angola. Unfortunately, the solution-driven approach failed to exert the desired influence on the doctors and nurses who participated in the program.

Dr. Rebecca Miller, a seasoned American surgeon, travelled to Angola as part of a humanitarian mission. The goal of the trip had been for surgeons to learn about the challenges faced by doctors in Angola and to share some of their own expertise. Observing treatment from the sidelines, the American doctors became increasingly concerned about the lack of modern life-saving techniques that had become commonplace in the United States. Dr. Miller was shocked when she repeatedly discerned death from preventable conditions (and in one case an unnecessary amputation) where inexpensive, alternative newer techniques could have been employed. When Dr. Miller returned home, she spoke about her concerns with doctors at her own hospital.

A fellow surgeon suggested that Dr. Miller apply for a small grant to return to one of the hospitals in Angola and to train the doctors in the needed modern techniques. Inspired by this idea, she secured funding and assembled a team of 4 other doctors and 2 nurses who were willing to devote their time to the project. This newly assembled team reached out to a large hospital in Angola that Dr. Miller had visited, and made arrangements for a 4-week training program. The team had a clear goal in mind: to teach the staff in a regular hospital specific techniques that did not require expensive equipment or supplies that might be unavailable. The American physicians wanted to give their Angolan colleagues tools to work more effectively in their environment.

The team spent four months in advance of their trip working with training-simulation dummies to develop "best practices." With the use of these dummies, the hope was the Angolan doctors could eventually teach others—a "train-the trainers" model. The team tested their program in the United States, with doctors in their own hospital and then with students from the nearby university. They learned key phrases in Portuguese, the language spoken in the Angolan hospital, so that they would not have to rely solely on translators. The team raised additional funds to purchase a training-simulation dummy that could be donated to the Angolan hospital where it could be used to train others in the region. Members compiled a manual and had it translated into Portuguese as well as Bantu, the second most popular language in the country.

The team arrived in Angola loaded with medical supplies, 100 copies of their multi-lingual training manual, and an expensive high-tech training dummy that they had purchased for the host hospital. On the first day, they assembled the team of local doctors and nurses in a small classroom to demonstrate what the training dummy could do and how they would use it as a teaching tool. However, it did not seem that the audience shared the Americans' enthusiasm.

Hands went up immediately, "Why are we working on a pretend patient? We have more patients than we can treat here already!" one doctor said through a translator. "I don't have an extra bed for him," joked one of the nurses. As Dr. Miller continued to explain how they would use the medical dummy, she watched the assembled group lose interest. She hoped that the actual simulation, planned for the next day, would elicit a more positive reception.

Alas, the next day, the idea of 'treating' the dummy continued to elicit laughter. Dr. Miller asked the Angolan doctors to watch a simulation so that they could see how this teaching tool was used. After handing out manuals, her team launched into a choreographed routine, making a series of deliberate mistakes to ensure that the dummy's alarms would sound and the audience could see how these alerts proved useful.

By the end of the second day of training, Dr. Miller and her colleagues realized their error. They had simply assumed that their high-tech training dummies and train-the-trainer materials would clearly address an important need—speak for itself, as it were. To come up with a solution to a challenge that seemed so apparent, the American team had devised a comprehensive approach that others did not feel was appropriate for their circumstances. The Angolan doctors didn't see value in the use of a "pretend man," as they called him. They felt uncomfortable with the fake skin and the alarm sounds. The shrill alert when someone made a mistake was a source of shame for doctors practicing in front of subordinates. In short, the medical dummy was simply not effective in this context.

Dr. Miller and her team spent 4 weeks in the hospital, but the dummy rarely came out of his bag. The training they did offer by working alongside the Angolan doctors was seemingly effective. However, it was nothing like what they had planned, and the training did not prove sustainable in the long-term. When the team left Angola, they packed up the dummy and all 100 carefully translated multi-lingual manuals and brought them home.

Final Comments

In retrospect, Dr. Miller realized something that she had been unable to anticipate: the tools and materials she had developed in good faith with members of her team to solve a need might not be welcome by colleagues in a different context. After painfully experiencing the reaction of these colleagues, she came to grips with the fact that her design was flawed from the outset. Her solution-driven initiative was unable to help solve the very real problem(s) that she had identified.

Reflective Questions

What ultimately derailed this project? What would have been a better solution?

Can you identify points at which an intervention would have gotten this project on track? What would that intervention be?

What role does cultural understanding play in fostering a fruitful collaboration?

How might the American team have more effectively engaged their Angolan counterparts?

A word cloud is a visual representation of text (usually in relation to 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:
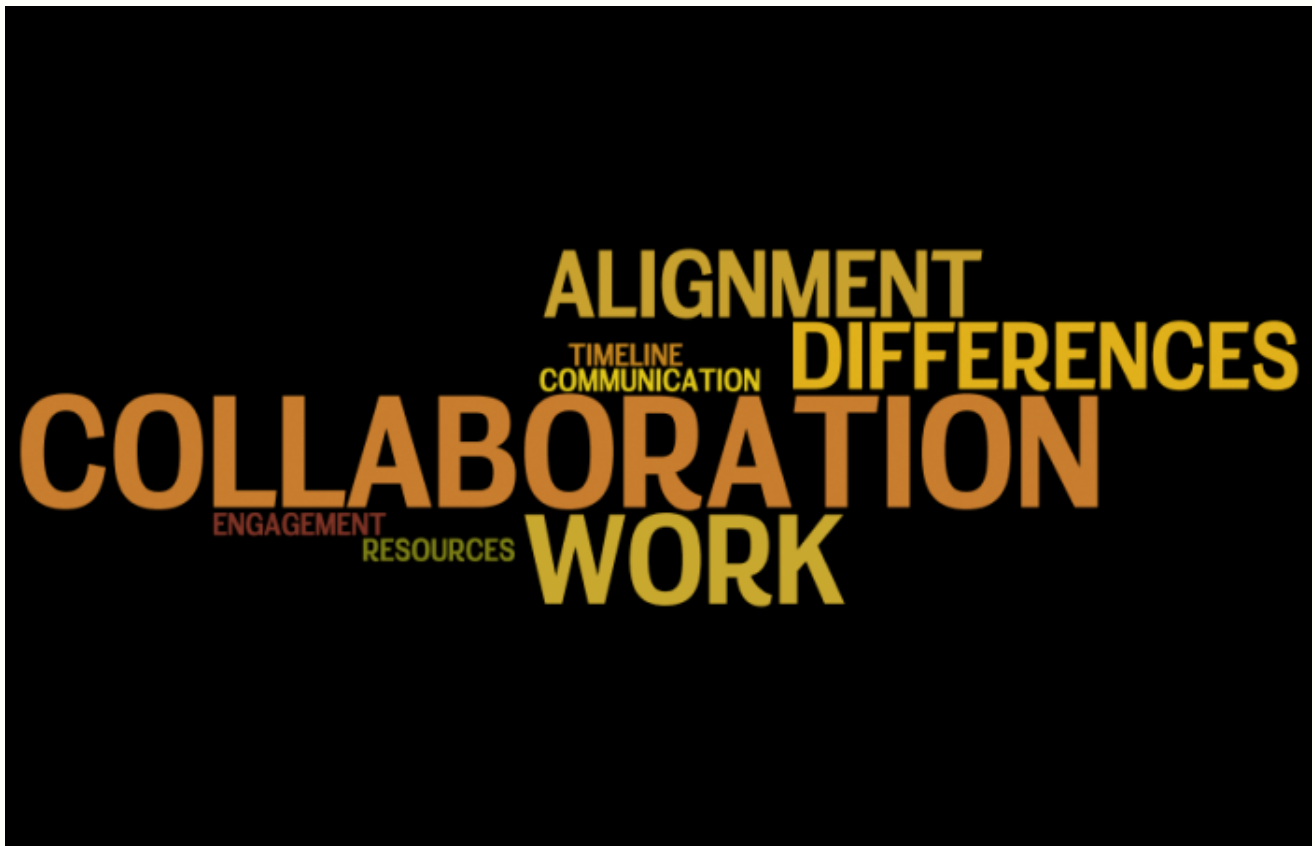
This activity is an opportunity to reflect on the progress and outcomes of the collaboration. In crafting an article, collaborators summarize the work of the collaboration and begin to think about the impact of the collaborative work. This article might eventually be used as a blog for a website, a press 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 highlights the work of your collaboration and offers the collaboration as a model of how groups can work together to create "real" change.

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?

Through reflection about the collaboration, participants are 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 was it lost along the way? Is it still there, after all of the work? Are individuals 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?
- f 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?

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

Dimensions of Collaboration: 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 understanding? 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
  1. Which of these dimensions offered the most support during the collaboration?
  2. Were any of these dimensions particularly difficult for you and your colleagues?
  3. 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, 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.
  4. Society: the work has had impact or there is potential impact on the wider world.

Follow Up Questions
  1. Are you satisfied with the category or categories that best represent your outcomes?
  2. Did you hope for something different?
  3. What might you change to arrive at a different result?
  4. 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.

  1. 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, and society?
  2. 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?