

COLLABORATION

No person can do everything on their own. Sometimes in communities, however, this fact is forgotten as individuals and groups try to do things by themselves, instead of collaborating with one another. While this may work some of the time, it will not work all of the time. People need others. In order for a neighborhood association, an organization, or a community to reach its full potential, it must be willing to look outside of itself and collaborate. The potential for successful collaboration exists almost everywhere you look in a neighborhood: youth talking with adults about what is important to them; residents stepping outside of their comfort zones in order to have a conversation with someone different from them; and organizations working with other neighborhood stakeholders. Neighborhoods that are able to harness this potential and build upon it are unstoppable.

What's Covered

- What is Collaboration?
- Types of Collaboration
- Collaborative Structures
- How to Get Started in Building a Community Collaboration
- Who are Stakeholders?
- Stakeholder Mapping

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WHAT IS COLLABORATION?

By collaborating to address public concerns, citizens can and do develop a different kind of civic culture that makes their communities and regions stronger and more effective.
David Chrislip

Collaboration is both a process and a relationship.

“It is the process of bringing the appropriate people together, to work in constructive ways and with good information, so they can create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of a community, an organization, etc.” (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 14).

Appropriate people means including people reflective of all the perspectives involved in the issue, not just those of the traditional “usual suspects”.

Usual suspects are those persons who are always at the table or already have an agenda related to the issue. It is very important to include all neighborhood stakeholders when forming community collaboration, as each person will bring something different to the collaboration. Without his or her contribution, the collaboration will not be as strong. Constructive ways means a facilitated process protected by ground rules and rooted in ABCD principles.

It is also a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more parties to achieve common goals they are more likely to achieve together than alone.

The relationship includes a commitment to:

- shared goals
- a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility
- mutual authority and accountability for success
- sharing of resources, risk, and reward

Note: From Collaboration: What makes it work, by P. W. Mattessich, M. Murray-Close, & B. R. Monsey, 2007, St. Paul: Fieldstone Alliance. Reproduced with permission.



TYPES OF COLLABORATION

There are several types or levels of collaboration. Each has its own purpose, structure, and process. The intensity of collaboration can be as basic as networking with other individuals at a conference or as intense as a complex, multi-year project involving many different stakeholders and community partners. Each type is valuable and needed in community work.

The level or structure is determined by many different factors including the identified need and purpose of the collaboration, the commitment of all parties involved to the collaboration, the given environment the collaboration will work in, available resources, and the level communication among partners. The levels of collaboration, in order of increasing intensity, along with an example of each level, are as follows:

NETWORKING

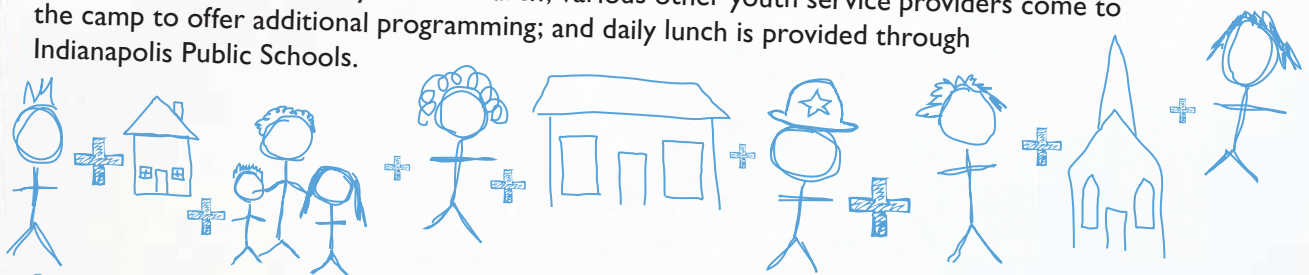
Example: Sharing information and resources with other people at a neighborhood meeting. Networking often is the foundation for future interaction and collaboration between people.

COOPERATION OR ALLIANCE

Example: The Alliance for Nonprofit Management is the professional association of individuals and organizations devoted to improving the management and governance capacity of nonprofits - to assist nonprofits in fulfilling their mission. The Alliance is a learning community that promotes quality in nonprofit capacity building.

COORDINATION OR PARTNERSHIP

Example: A daily summer camp for youth is a partnership. In order to maximize available resources and keep cost at a minimum to parents, the sponsoring organization works with many other organizations to offer summer programming. The local park is used for recreation and a site for swimming; transportation is provided by a local church; various other youth service providers come to the camp to offer additional programming; and daily lunch is provided through Indianapolis Public Schools.



COALITION

Example: The Family Strengthening Coalition in Indianapolis is a collaborative of many partners dedicated to raising awareness of and access to the means of creating stronger, capable and more connected families. The partners work with other stakeholders in the community to assist Indianapolis families to become financially secure and connected to one another and the community.

COLLABORATION

Example: Great Indy Neighborhoods is collaboration between stakeholders in the neighborhoods of Indianapolis supported by LISC, INRC, the City of Indianapolis, and Steering Committee. Great Indy Neighborhoods is a renewed approach to community development activities across the city that promotes neighborhood-driven improvements.

Level	Purpose	Structure	Process
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue and common understanding • Clearinghouse for information • Create base of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-hierarchical • Loose/flexible link • Roles loosely defined • Community action is primary link among members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low key leadership • Minimal decision making • Little conflict • Informal communication
Cooperation or Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match needs and provide coordination • Limit duplication of services • Ensure tasks are done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter-term, informal relationship • Central body of people as communication hub • Semi-formal links • Roles somewhat defined • Links are advisory • Group leverages/raises money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitative leaders • Complex decision making • Some conflict • Formal communications within the central group
Coordination or Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share resources to address common issues • Merge resource base to create something new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer-term effort around an issue • Central body of people consist of decision makers • Links formalized • Roles defined • Group develops some shared resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomous leadership but focus in on issue • Group decision making in central and sub groups • Some conflict • Communication is frequent and clear
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share ideas and be willing to pull resources from existing systems • Develop commitment for a minimum of three years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer-term effort around a project or task • All members involved in decision making • Links formal with written agreement • Roles and time defined • Group develops new resources and joint budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared leadership • Decision making formal with all members • More conflict • Communication is common and prioritized
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomplish shared vision and impact benchmarks • Build interdependent system to address issues and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More durable and integrated relationship • Consensus used in shared decision making • Links are formal and written in work assignments • Roles, time and evaluation formalized • Group develops new resources and joint budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership high, trust level high, productivity high • Ideas and decisions equally shared • Most conflict • Highly developed communication

Note: From *Community based collaborations: Wellness multiplied*, by T. Hogue, 1994, Oregon: Center for Community Leadership. Adapted with permission.

HOW DO YOU BUILD A COMMUNITY COLLABORATION?

START WITH A UNIFYING PURPOSE

The purpose may be broad or more specific, depending upon the collaboration, in order to attract the appropriate people to become involved. For example, a neighborhood may be interested in working on the issues of youth in the community but may not know what the issues are right now. Another neighborhood may already have done some mapping of the community, and know that an issue affecting youth is a lack of public gathering spaces. By coming together to collectively work on the issues affecting the youth in the whole community, rather than trying to do it alone, the two neighborhoods are much more likely to have a greater and more far reaching impact than they would have by themselves.

BRING STAKEHOLDERS TOGETHER

Stakeholders are anyone in a community with an interest or stake in an issue. Stakeholders are originally identified by their interest, perspective, or knowledge of the issue. They will work together to develop a collective vision, goals, and work plan to achieve identified desired results.

BUILD TRUST/RELATIONSHIPS

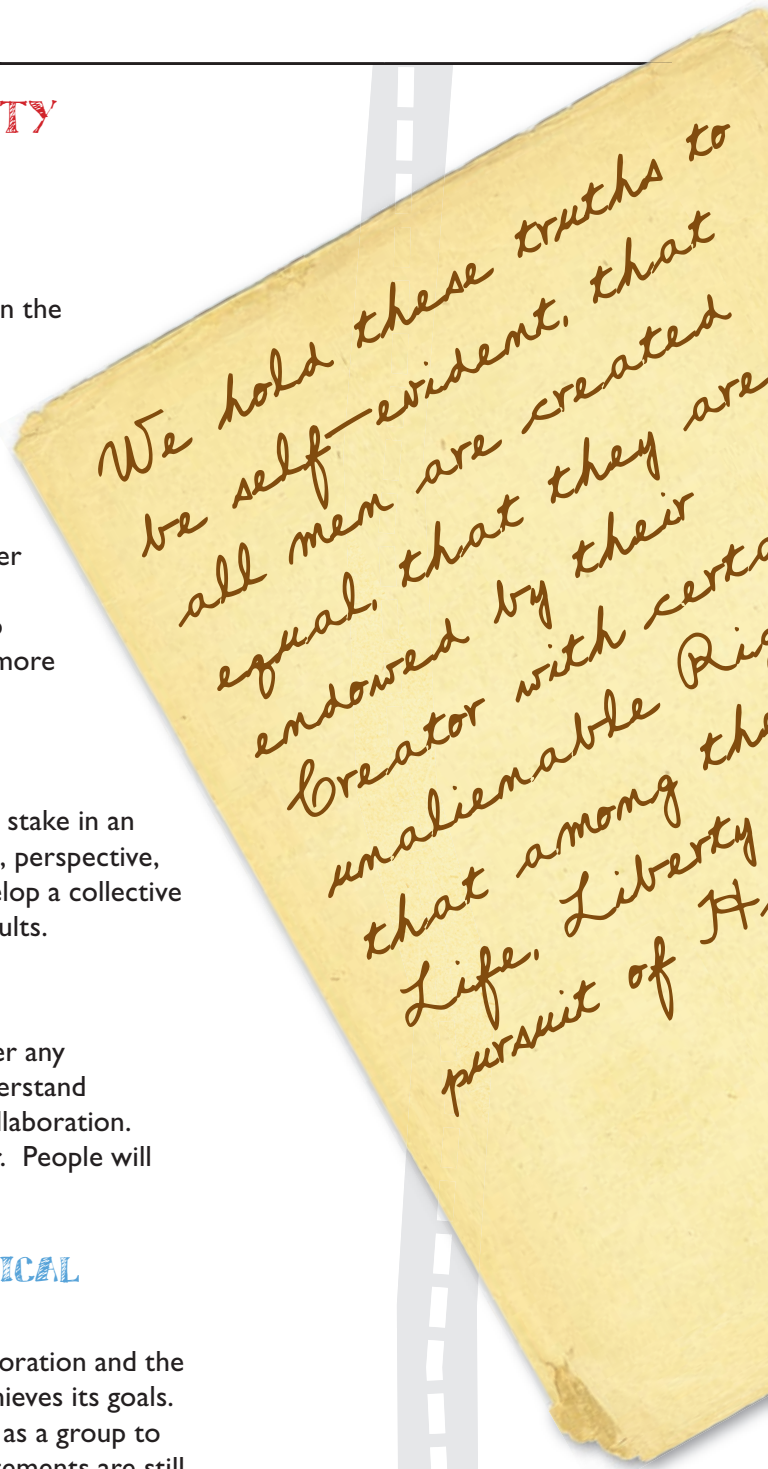
Building trust is crucial and if it does not occur, it will hamper any partnership. Allow time for people to get to know and understand the issues, needs, and passions of all the members of the collaboration. Encourage members to build relationships with one another. People will not open up and share until they trust each other.

CREATE, MAINTAIN, AND UPDATE PRACTICAL MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

These statements should describe the purpose of the collaboration and the ideal conditions that would exist when the collaboration achieves its goals. Do this by consensus. Periodically review these statements as a group to ensure that the collaboration stays focused and that the statements are still reflective of the goals.

COORDINATE AND ORGANIZE: OBTAIN NEEDED SUPPORT

It may be necessary for stakeholders to gain support from different levels in order for the collaboration to be successful. Examples may include city government, community councils, law enforcement, neighborhood associations, community organizations, etc. Allow time to obtain this support during the initial phase of the collaboration.



DEVELOP A WORKING AGREEMENT/COLLABORATION CHARTER: STRUCTURE, ROLES, RESOURCES

It is important to discuss and put in writing how the group is going to work together. This should include the mission and vision of the collaboration, a timeline and milestones for the collaboration, a description of members and their roles, policies about competition or conflict of interest, and group norms. This agreement should be developed during the planning stage of a collaboration and revisited annually to ensure that it is still applicable.

SET GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are what you want to accomplish, and objectives are how you are going to reach your goals. Goals need to be measurable and observable and should include specific achievable objectives. Always document baselines for each goal so you can more effectively measure your progress. Include immediate, short and long-term goals.

(Please refer to the Evaluation section of this workbook for more information.)

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

This is one of the most important components of collaboration. Everyone's opinion is important and needs to be heard. Use common language. When meeting, use words and phrases that all people will understand. Avoid acronyms. Sometimes people don't feel comfortable sharing in a large group, so it is important to take time to solicit ideas one on one or in smaller group settings.

Promote and encourage open dialogue among members. Maintain strong and consistent communication with stakeholders outside of the collaboration.

RESOLVE CONFLICTS

In any group there are going to be conflicts. If left unresolved, they can create resentment and even more conflict. That is precisely why, if at all possible, it is important to discuss how conflicts will be resolved before they occur. The group must be willing to allow for mistakes. In addition, individuals' must be willing to let go and forgive. It is often helpful to have a set process for conflict resolution that is developed by the group and may include seeking outside mediation.

BE OPEN-MINDED, SHARE OWNERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP, EMPOWER OTHERS

Collaboration is not one person or organization; it is a group of individuals. This thought should be kept at the forefront and reiterated when needed. Every person is important and should be empowered.

STICK WITH IT...PERSEVERE

Building collaboration is not easy; in fact, it is hard work. There will be many times when you will want to give up and throw in the towel. Keep going!

EVALUATE

In order to know if the collaboration is successful you will need to evaluate your efforts. Evaluation should be done throughout the collaboration, not just at the end, so that you can improve and adjust depending on the feedback received to achieve your desired results.

(Please refer to the Evaluation section of this workbook which can help you think through the process in a more detailed manner)

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

It is VERY important to celebrate the success of the collaboration regularly along the way. People need to know that their time and efforts matter. Also, public celebration is a great way to let people and groups that are not yet involved in the collaboration know about the achievements of the collaboration and may encourage them to become engaged.



WHO ARE STAKEHOLDERS?



Stakeholders include anyone having interest or stake in the issue. They come from all over the community. Some are considered influential, some are not considered to have influence. Some are those who are usually called upon and listened to, some are rarely called upon or listened to.

Stakeholders are originally identified by perspective and interest, not by name, including:

- people who have responsibilities related to the problem or issue
- people who are affected by the issue as it is, or who will be affected by the potential solutions
- people whose perspective or knowledge is needed in order to understand the issue and to develop good solutions or strategies
- people who have the ability, power or resources to choose to implement solutions or strategies or to block solutions or strategies

Stakeholders need to be identified, recruited, welcomed, and included. It is the stakeholders who must agree to work together within the process to define the problem or vision, the goals, and the solutions.

TRY IT!

Stakeholder/Partner Mapping

As you think about who the stakeholders are in your community, it will be very helpful to map those individuals and organizations, along with their possible interests, roles, and responsibilities in the collaboration. Use the following table to begin identifying your community stakeholders. Some examples have been filled in for you.

	Stakeholders/Potential Stakeholders	Description of Partnership (interest, role, responsibility)
Business Community	"Mom and Pop's Diner"	Want to initiate a business association in the neighborhood
Cultural and Ethnic Groups		
Elected Officials		
Employment Agencies		
Faith-Based Organizations	"ABCD" Church	Provides free faith-based counseling; interest in youth programming
Government Agencies		
Health Care (Mental/Physical)		
Housing		
Intergenerational Groups		
Libraries		
Law Enforcement/Fire Dept.		
Media	"Collaborative Neighborhood" Radio Station	Can provide coverage of collaboration and highlights successes on weekly program
Non-Profit Organizations		
Schools and Universities		
Youth Organizations		

REAL LIFE SCENARIO

The West Indianapolis community is rich with assets. Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center has been a vital part of the neighborhood since 1911, providing programming and services to assist individuals and families in overcoming barriers and reaching their full potential. West Indianapolis Development Corporation (WIDC) has been assisting residents in combating decay and deterioration in the residential area since 1993. West Indianapolis Neighborhood Congress (WINC), the neighborhood association for West Indy, works to engage residents in the life of the community and to represent the area in civic or government issues. The West Indianapolis Library branch, located across the street from Mary Rigg, provides the neighborhood with a safe place to gather and learn. In addition to these institutions, there are 30 churches, 4 schools, 4 parks, and approximately 10,000 residents that are also community assets.

To celebrate the community's assets and develop a collective vision for the future, West Indianapolis held a Community Day in June 2007. A planning committee with representatives from Mary Rigg, WIDC, the library, several neighborhood churches and schools, and other neighborhood residents, met over the course of several months to plan this important day. They were very intentional about working to include people and groups from all sectors of the community to be involved in the event. Although Community Day had occurred in previous years, the focus of the event had never been on discovering all of the assets in the community, nor had as many partners been included in the planning and implementation of the event.

The result of many months of planning and organizing was a wonderful day with the most participation by local churches, neighborhood groups, and residents in the history of the event. Six churches had a booth at the event, and a Spanish language choir from a Hispanic congregation in the community became an instant crowd favorite as they performed on the stage. Residents were able to record family or personal stories and histories through a partnership with StoryCorps (www.storycorps.net). Mary Rigg provided free hotdogs and soda to all attendees. Throughout the day, residents were encouraged to discuss what they saw as the assets in West Indianapolis and what they would like to see in the future in the neighborhood. At the end of the day, the votes of residents were tallied and it was announced that people agreed West Indy was, more than anything else, a community of families. Community Day 2008 was another great success and West Indianapolis stakeholders are looking forward to Community Day 2009.



TIPS

- ① One size does not fit all; neither does one type of collaboration.
- ② Appreciate and help the group to realize that collaboration takes time and effort from all involved.
- ③ Ensure that all stakeholders in the community are engaged in the collaboration from the beginning. It is much more difficult to add people after the fact. If you do need to do this, or you need to update someone who has not been engaged with the collaboration for an extended period of time, it is helpful to appoint 1 or 2 people as the point persons charged with the task of bringing people up to speed.
- ④ Emphasize the importance of both process and product/ results.
- ⑤ Expect the best from those with whom you are working. People will often surprise you!
- ⑥ Be willing to learn from failure.
- ⑦ As a group, establish short- and long-term goals in order to build momentum and excitement.
- ⑧ Assume the role yourself, or appoint someone to be responsible for facilitating, moderating, and managing meetings and discussion.
- ⑨ Continuously cultivate leadership in others, as true collaboration requires shared leadership.
- ⑩ As an organizer, be supportive, consistent, and dependable in your interactions with people.