Why is this so hard?
A guide to developing effective collaboration

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The Collaboration Mandate

• Public Health problems are complex and multifaceted

• Public Health problems require the efforts of many different systems working together to be resolved

• Collaboration extends your reach

• Other views help strengthen the end product

• Collaboration is more efficient
# Lifecycle of Collaboration – Developing a Shared Meaning

(Houge, 1993; Gadja, 2004; & Frey, et al., 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-existence</th>
<th>Networking</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Coordination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Both groups exist but do not interact.</td>
<td>1. Aware of each other</td>
<td>1. Provide info. to each other</td>
<td>1. Share info. &amp; rsc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Loosely defined roles</td>
<td>2. Somewhat defined roles</td>
<td>2. Defined roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. All decisions made independently</td>
<td>4. All decisions made independently</td>
<td>4. Some shared decision making</td>
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- **Coalition**
  1. Share ideas
  2. Share resources
  3. Frequent & prioritized comm.
  4. All members have a vote in decision making

- **Collaboration**
  1. Members belong to one system
  2. Frequent communication characterized by mutual trust
  3. Consensus on all decisions
Our Vision of Collaboration

Cartoon By Jordan Reck
The Collaboration Literature

• Mostly retrospective
  – Groups perceived as effective based on results
  – Interviews after the group has dissolved (sometimes years later)
• More on Structural, Less on Interpersonal
• Global Measures
  – Mix structural and relational factors
  – Don’t identify individual factors between individuals
The Collaboration Literature

- While important factors are identified, little is provided about how you actually develop these factors within a group
- Some of the tools that exist are not specific enough to provide guidance for developing these factors
How Do We Build Collaboration?
Building Structural Factors
Credibility or Openness of Process

• Honest about the process
• Respectful discussion of views (this does not mean avoid conflict)
• If each agency/person does not have the same power or influence on the project- discuss this early on in the process
• If you ask for input or feedback, you need to use it or address why not
Success

• Quick Successes
• Interim Successes
• Celebrate Milestones
• Develop Rituals
• Leader must be intentional about this process
• What were some successes in the mystery exercise?
Shared Vision

• Initially get the group together and talk about your vision (Gadja, 2004)
  – What do you hope to get done as a result of working together?
  – How will decisions be made?
  – What are the strategies and tasks?
• Motivational Interviewing
• Group agrees on the goals
  – Work together to craft
  – Ownership over nuance
• Integration between individual goals and group goals
• Not about memorizing goals, but true ownership
• Revisit vision from time to time
Concrete, Attainable Goals and Objectives

• SMART goals
• Do not develop goals for group if they are unachievable
• Assign personal responsibility for goals to individuals
  – Identify responsibility by name
  – Responsibility agreed to publicly
  – Mutual accountability
Appropriate Cross-Section of Members

• Collaboration doesn’t float and it doesn’t trickle down (Gardner, 2007)

• Representatives from
  – Upper management
  – Middle management
  – Front-line workers
  – Consumers

• Need the buy-in from all levels to promote it
View that is Collaboration Beneficial

• Discuss limits of what a single agency can do to address a situation
  – What did you each bring to the mystery exercise?

• Discuss experiences with past collaboration

• Identify times when collaboration leads to change

• “Collaboration makes me better at my job”
Sufficient Time, Staff, Materials, and Funds

- Truly collaborative groups will be able to develop these internally if they have ownership.
- Collaboration requires time to build.
- Dedicated staff is helpful, but not necessary.
- Of these, money is the least necessary.
Building Relational Factors
Open And Frequent Communication

• Check-in
• Not about the number of times you talk, it is about the quality of talk
  – Connect on personal level as well as work-related level
  – Activities to learn about person outside of work environment
• Helps establish trust
Establishing Relationships

• How
  – Stress Similarities
  – Keep To The Rules In A Conversation
  – Realize That Violating Someone’s Expectations Weigh Heavily
  – Get Others To Talk
    • Don’t start on time
  – Be Altruistic – Assisting Other
  – Recognize Other’s Contributions
Establishing Relationships

• Why
  – Needed For Trust & Having the Hard Conversations
  – Will Sustain the Group Through Times of Disagreement and Conflict
Maintaining Relationships

• How
  – Be Reliable
  – Engage In Symbolic Contact
    • Call to check in
  – Celebrate Milestones
    • Leader needs to point out successes regularly
  – Rituals And Anti-rituals

• Why
Maintaining Relationships

• How fits in our model
  – Quick successes
  – Builds Trust
  – Communication
  – Builds Appreciation for Org Culture
Flexibility/Willingness To Compromise

• Open discussions about the differences between systems
  – Systemic rewards and punishments
  – Open discussions around needs

• Revisiting the vision and reminding that the group vision may take precedence over individuals goals
Appreciation of Organizational Culture

• Discuss structure of organization
  – World view
  – Goals
  – Decision making processes
  – Systemic rewards and punishers

• Discussion of services/product

• Identify when organizational culture is a barrier to collaborative efforts
Trust

• Trust Is Critical to the Success of Cross Agency Collaboration (Lee et al., 2011)

• Trust Necessary for Sharing
  – Trust of individual
  – Confidence in skill set

• Many of the Above Factors Help to Build Trust
  – Credibility and openness of process
  – Establishing and maintaining relationships
  – Shared Vision
  – Appreciation of Organizational Culture
Signs Things Are Going Well (or Not)
Conflict

• Good Sign
  – You Will Have Conflict Because You Need Each Other
    • Real or perceived conflicting goals
    • Scarce resources
    • Differing organizational cultures
  – It Is Okay Not To Agree On Everything. What Is Necessary To Move Forward
  – Shows investment
Conflict

• How To Have Constructive Conflict
  – Address the conflict
  – Be flexible
  – State your view of reality and ask clarifying questions to understand theirs.
  – If make a complaint, focus on behavior (with “I” statements)
  – May need 3rd party to help you step “outside” of the process and view the situation from a different view
  – Revisit common goals
Conflict

• How Conflict Fits In Our Model (if it’s done well)
  – Communication
  – Trust
  – Altruism
  – Willingness to Compromise
Scan Your Environment For Clues

• The Incredible Shrinking Group
  – People stop coming
  – Delegation of representation

• They Won’t Go Home
  – Hang out after group to talk

• Collaboration Spin-Offs
  – Partners do mini collaborations
When Not To Collaborate

• One Partner Manipulates or Dominates
• Lack of Clear Purpose
• Unrealistic Goals
• Fundamental Differences in Philosophy
• Lack of Communication
• Unequal/Unacceptable Balance of Power
• Key Interests Missing from Partnership
• Hidden Agendas
• Financial/Time Commitments Outweighs Benefits
Take Home

• Understand That The Term Collaboration May Mean Something Different For Everyone

• Be Intentional About Balancing Structure And Relational Pieces


• Be Intentional When Brining In New Members To Provide Background And Work On Relational Piece With Them
Take Home

• If Someone Is Resistant, Determine Their Goals And How Being Part Of The Group Can Help Meet Their Goals
• Take Time To Understand Other Members’ Organizational Culture
• Come Up With Easy, Early Success
• Celebrate Success
Testing Our Model

• Working on model since 2008
• Actively worked with communities to build collaboration
• Have collected prospective and retrospective data
  • Focus groups
  • Surveys
  • Phone calls with members
Testing Our Model

• Group types
  – Front-line staff from multiple systems
  – Supervisors from early childhood and public health
  – Providers from health clinics
  – Key decision makers from the state departments and nonprofits
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Reading List


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