



Collaborations and Partnerships

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Collaboration is the process of joining forces with others to leverage collective resources and strength for a common purpose. Methods for collaborating exist in a wide range and include meeting informally to exchange information to partnering to develop strategic alliances that go beyond the scope of any one organization. According to Robert Harrington, who is an organizational consultant with over 30 years of vast expertise in mergers and other forms of organizational restructuring, “real collaboration has the potential to reduce duplication, decrease competition, and enhance problem solving”. In addition, “real collaboration takes time, is difficult to achieve, and cannot be created by funders”. Many nonprofit organizations recognize that the complexity of issues facing communities cannot be solved by any one organization and have begun forming partnerships and collaborations to create a greater impact based on shared resources.

In 2005, CDC funded 31 Capacity Building Assistance (CBA) providers to provide CBA services to HIV prevention planning groups, community-based organizations, health departments, and other HIV prevention stakeholders. CBA Providers were assigned service areas as follows:

- Organizational and infrastructure development
- Strengthening effective HIV Prevention interventions
- Increasing access to and utilization of HIV prevention and risk-reduction services
- Increasing the capacity of community planning groups and health departments

While each of the CDC funded CBA providers deliver services as per their individual workplans and have their own areas of expertise, assigned ethnic populations and geographic service regions, providers oftentimes come across community based organizations (CBOs) with a need that falls outside of their purview of service. This situation presents a possible opportunity for the CBA provider to collaborate with another fellow provider. The nature of the work propels CBA providers to proactively seek opportunities for service delivery and strive to share resources by forming structured collaborations. Through this effort, collaboration seeks to enhance service delivery and provides the most significant impact.

PROCEED's National Center for Training, Support, and Technical Assistance has fortunately been involved in a plethora of successful collaborative projects with fellow CBA providers, Departments of Health, and community based organizations alike. Through these experiences, PROCEED has

identified several factors that are key when developing a collaborative project. They include the following:

- Designated Leadership
- Clear Purpose
- Partner Compatibility
- Competence
- Accountability
- Identified Risk Factors
- Expected Outcomes

Each of the aforementioned factors must be addressed, in detail, to successfully undertake and complete the collaborative project.

Stages of Collaboration

Inspiration

This is the initial stage of collaborative development. It is an unstructured stage where organizations come together because they perceive a potential opportunity to partner and strategize to achieve a common goal. This stage is characterized by creativity and experimentation.

Formalization

During this stage, collaborative meetings become more frequent and the organizations recognize that establishing a formal partnership is critical in achieving the common goals and will be of benefit to the target population. At this point, a Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement (MOU/A) is created.

Operation

This is the phase in the collaboration where the activities that were agreed upon in the formalization stage, or as stated in the MOU/A, are implemented.

Termination or Institutionalization

At this stage, either all activities of the collaboration have been completed or the involved organizations no longer find value in the continuance of the collaboration.

Quote: “Real Collaboration is voluntary and should not be inspired by a grant opportunity”, by Robert Harrington