Cooperative Extension

# Evaluating Collaboratives

## *Reaching the Potential*

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Program Development and Evaluation
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Cooperative Extension
Madison, Wisconsin

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# PREFACE

Work that resulted in this manual began in 1995 when family living agents of the University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension began asking questions about how to evaluate the work of coalitions and collaboratives. They found themselves increasingly involved in these partnerships and saw them as a new type of programming. Their traditional way of evaluating did not seem appropriate. A work group was established to explore the issue and delve into the literature. Over the first year, we held a series of workshops and gained insight from interactions with Extension faculty and other practitioners working with community groups of all types. We were excited by the amount of literature we found, principally in the field of family development and substance abuse prevention, and by the evolving thinking in the field of evaluation relevant to the developmental nature of collaboratives.

This manual grew out of those ideas and discussions. It is a 'work in progress', since each day our appreciation and understanding of collaboratives increases. We believe in the purpose and philosophy of collaboratives and systems thinking. Our approach to evaluation is based on the value of learning to improve understanding and performance. We do not want collaboratives to become another 'bandwagon' approach that misses its potential because of unrealistic expectations and inadequate support.

Readers looking for a 'cookbook' or 'best method' for evaluating collaboratives will be disappointed. Our purpose is to provide a compendium of ideas and research for you to think about and choose from as you help your collaborative reach its potential.

## Use of the Manual

As you work with the manual, we would appreciate your feedback and comments. Please direct these comments to Ellen Taylor-Powell, Rm 609 Extension Building, 432 N. Lake St., Madison, WI 53711. Phone: 608-262-2169. FAX: 608-262-9166

# Acknowledgments

We have talked with many people and read and used numerous resources. Many of the insights and perspectives we gained have become part of our thinking so that now it is difficult to remember where we got some ideas. We have tried to include references without burdening the reader. We regret any unintentional oversights. The bibliography includes the many resources we found helpful.

Of particular note are a number of people, documents and research studies that we relied on greatly including David Chavis's workshop, "Evaluation of Community Collaborations", the Evaluation Institute, 1996; Florin, Mitchell and Stevenson's work at the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies, Brown University; conversations with John Stevenson, the University of Rhode Island; the United Way manual, Measuring Program Outcomes; Goodman, Wandersman, Chinman, Imm and Morrissey's writings on the ecological assessment of collaboratives; and Michael Patton's developmental evaluation approach. From the broader literature on collaboration we were especially aided by Winer and Ray's manual, Barbara Gray's book and the work of the Cooperative Extension National Network on Collaboration. Special appreciation goes to the original University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension work team of David Sprehn, Robin Shepard, Bob Bright, Linda Kustka, Peg Thomas, and the late Bob Dick. They provided early conceptual guidance and support.

The experience of Wisconsin Extension faculty and staff who participated in workshops and seminars around the state grounded the manual in the realities of collaborative work and provided material for the case examples in Sections 4, 5, 6, and 7. Additional momentum and insight came from the Family Living Program area theme group on community partnerships chaired by Mary Fran Lepeska and Ann McLean. This committee requested and helped shape the evaluation process and survey instruments used to evaluate process and outcomes of collaboratives. Experience of its members, Linda Boelter, Mary Gruenewald, Sue Futterer, Karen Hintz, Mary Fran Lepeska, Peggy Nordgren, Pat Rychter and Ann McLean, highlighted the dynamics and issues of community-based collaboratives.

Particular thanks and appreciation goes to Ann McLean whose social work background, familiarity with community partnerships and evaluation and moral support were invaluable. Her technical assistance contract with the state's Family Preservation and Support Program provided endless opportunities and insights.

Mary Ann Haselow-Dulin provided important editorial assistance that moved us forward. Finally, Carol Bracewell of Flying Pig Productions quietly nudged us to completion and somehow turned scribbled-up pages into a finished product. She really took over in the final days providing necessary editing, design, and production expertise—many thanks.

# Glossary of Selected Terms

**Assumptions** - beliefs upon which programs, evaluations and relationships are built.

**Collaboration** – a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can explore constructively their differences and search for (and implement) solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible.

**Collaborative** – the structure or group working together to achieve a shared vision.

**Communication** – a process based on the exchange of information and meaning.

**Contribution** – provision of some of the resources and support needed to reach independent goals.

**Cooperation** – a process where parties with similar interests plan together, negotiate mutual roles and share resources to achieve joint goals but maintain separate identities.

**Coordination** – a process of communication, planning, sharing of resources, risks and rewards for purposes of efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the complementary goals of the parties involved.

**Diversity** - differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and other human differences.

**Evaluation** - systematic inquiry to inform decision-making, judgements and learning. Systematic implies that the evaluation is a thoughtful process of asking critical questions, collecting appropriate information, and then analyzing and interpreting the information for a specific use and purpose.

**Impact** - the ultimate social, economic and /or environmental effects or consequences of the collaborative. Impacts tend to be more comprehensive and longer-term achievements. They may be positive, negative and/or neutral.

**Indicator** - an expression of what is/will be measured or described; evidence which signals achievements, what you wish to measure. Answers the question, "how will I know it?"

**Input** - resources, including staff, time, materials, money, equipment, facilities, volunteer time etc. that go into a collaborative or its programs. Resources include investments made by an organization, the community, governmental unit, staff, volunteers, collaborative members, and/or participants.

**Outputs** - what comes out of a collaborative or its programs. The activities, events, services, relationships, products generated by the collaborative.

**Outcomes** - the end results; the effects of the collaborative effort. Outcomes answer the question "so what?" what difference has the collaborative made in people's lives? whose lives? Outcomes may be intended or unintended; positive and negative. Outcomes fall along a continuum from immediate to intermediate to final outcomes, often synonymous with impact.

# Introduction

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*

– Margaret Mead

Collaboration receives universal recommendation as a mechanism for leveraging resources, dealing with scarcities, eliminating duplication, capitalizing on individual strengths, and building internal capacities. Collaboration also offers the possibility for increasing participation and ownership strengthened by the potential for synergy and greater impact. We find collaborative initiatives everywhere, either mandated by funding sources or arising spontaneously. We find them forming among and within government agencies, service providers, work groups; between providers and recipients; and across public, private and nonprofit sectors. Membership may be largely voluntary or comprised of paid personnel who represent various constituencies.

Much of the renewed interest in collaboration has resulted from an appreciation of the multiple factors that shape issues and the impact of dwindling resources. These initiatives, however, seem to be different from previous efforts of coordination and cooperation. In fact, they represent a **"new way of doing business,"** where the urgency and expectations of resolving social and economic concerns have never been greater.

We increasingly find ourselves involved in collaborative work, playing unfamiliar roles or interacting in new situations with new players. At the same time, concerns are raised about evaluating these efforts. Familiar evaluation practices—ones largely built on a discrete or distinct program delivered by one agency—don't seem to work. Field staff have begun raising a variety of questions which indicate the following evaluation challenges:

- How can we set realistic outcomes when other collaborators are involved?
- How can we measure outcomes when collaboration is often long-term and dependent on so many factors?

- We are supposed to be working together but I have to report my own accomplishments to my superiors. How can I take some credit for my collaborative work without undermining the effort?
- I'm being asked to join every collaborative. It seems that all I do is go to meetings. How do I know when to be involved, what my role should be, and when to say no?
- Is evaluating the process of the collaborative good enough or do we need to measure the outcomes of our work?
- What do I report to my agency when they want to know what impact *I'm* having?
- When we are all in this together, how do we distinguish one agency's role from another agency's role?

As we began helping people answer these questions, we found various interpretations of the words ***evaluation*** and ***collaboration***. These different interpretations led to errors in understanding and inaccurate expectations of the purpose and process of evaluation in a collaborative context. As a result, we began to clarify our terminology and thinking, using available research and experience (see Glossary). This manual is a culmination of that process. We decided to formalize it into a working manual for others who are dealing with the same concerns. We have relied heavily on the literature in health and human services. However, we have made the discussion in this manual purposefully generic in order to be useful for collaborative members working in any sector for any purpose.

# SECTION 1

# The Evaluation Context

## SOCIETAL CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR COLLABORATION

Collaboration is proposed as a way to enhance public or communal problem solving at all levels. It is based on the premise that devolution of authority and responsibility is necessary for effective and lasting change. Collaboration, as a process, demonstrates the potential to re-energize and reconnect fragmented systems and to empower participating actors. More specifically, collaboration is called for in response to the following factors:

*Collaboration, as a process, demonstrates the potential to re-energize and reconnect fragmented systems and to empower participating actors.*

1. **Complex problems** with multiple interrelated causes and effects. To adequately diagnose these problems and mobilize key resources (human and physical) to respond requires multiple sources of knowledge and invention. Accurate diagnosis involves integrating specialized knowledge and skills with local knowledge through expanded citizen participation.

2. **Hard-pressed resources.** Increasing demands on public resources along with growing resistance to public expenditures necessitate approaches that reduce duplication and maximize impact. Collaboration allows for the unique and complementary roles of diverse organizations.

3. **Social fragmentation.** Social and bureaucratic fragmentation and divisive competition over dwindling public resources are compounded by societal inequality, all of which hamper resolution of problems. Collaboration provides a constructive process for building interconnections and social fabric that corresponds to the complexity of problems and taps the resources of all groups.

4. **Disengaged citizens.** Citizens want a role in problem solving but feel powerless in the face of powerful yet often dysfunctional systems. Through collaboration, citizens reengage and share ownership for solutions.

5. **Rapid, sweeping change** affects all facets of life and is expected to continue. To cope effectively, such change accelerates the need to recognize interdependence, but it can also can foster retrenching in familiar beliefs, relationships and patterns. Collaboration provides a process for affirming special interests and identities while promoting interdependent problem solving.

*Evaluation is a process to systematically collect, analyze and interpret information in response to critical questions to inform program and/or organizational decision making, judgments, and learning.*

## Evaluation: An Approach for the Collaborative Context

Evaluation has various meanings that reflect alternative concepts about its purpose. For us, evaluation is a process to systematically collect, analyze and interpret information in response to critical questions to inform program and/or organizational decision making, judgment, and learning (Alkin, 1990; Patton, 1982; Weiss, 1990). In this manual, evaluation is seen as a process of inquiry that facilitates learning rather than merely a tool to determine success or failure. Given the high expectations for collaboratives and their dynamic qualities, a process is needed that will help collaboratives reach their potential. We are advocating an evaluation process that supports and aids the successful development of the collaborative.

*Evaluation is a shared process among collaborative members and other key stakeholders that helps guide decisions and enhances communication.*

In this view, evaluation is a *shared process* among collaborative members and other key stakeholders (clients, represented agencies, citizens) that helps guide decisions and enhances communication. Even in the smallest collaborative, people have different priorities and points of view. Evaluation provides the opportunity to examine processes and procedures, engage stakeholders, create mutual understanding, expand knowledge, and ultimately improve our ability to meet today's social, economic and environmental concerns. Rather than something that is done to the collaborative, evaluation becomes a part of the collaborative, enhancing its organizational capacity for innovation and growth. The traditional separation between evaluation and programming disappears as evaluation provides the focus, feedback and learning to support continuous progress and ongoing adaptations (Patton, 1994).

Evaluation can foster not only continuous learning but deeper learning. Surface learning resolves obvious symptoms of problems. Deeper learning addresses the more basic beliefs, practices,

and structures that underlie and perpetuate problems, and thus leads to more lasting solutions. To learn continuously and deeply is not easy. It means facing the unknown, recognizing that we do not possess all of the answers, conceding that we often do not know what to do, and admitting that past decisions and actions may no longer be valid. It also means questioning the basic assumptions we have held about operating organizations and solving problems, and making ourselves vulnerable amid the political dynamics that pervade all organizations and collaborative ventures (Redding & Catalanello, 1994).

*Evaluation provides the focus, feedback, and learning to support continuous progress and ongoing adaptations.*

Is it possible to build learning through evaluation into your collaborative as a continuous process? Yes, it is. Deep down we are all learners. At one time or another, most of us have been part of a great team with members who trusted one another, who complemented each other's strengths and compensated for each other's limitations, who had common goals that were larger than individual goals, and who produced extraordinary results. What we experienced then was a learning organization. Teams that become great don't start off great; they learn how to produce extraordinary results (Senge, 1990).

*Is it possible to build learning through evaluation into your collaborative as a continuous process?*

The way you define evaluation influences the way you go about doing evaluation. Take a moment to reflect on your own understanding and meaning of evaluation.

*How you define evaluation influences how you go about doing evaluation.*

***What does evaluation mean to you?***

***Why are you undertaking evaluation?***

***What do you wish to accomplish through evaluation?***

This manual flows from a user-focused, participatory orientation and promotes self-evaluation as a fundamental feature of effective organizations, no matter how small or large, formal or informal. Such organizations learn continuously and use their knowledge to increase effectiveness—the challenge and opportunity facing collaboratives.

## Collaborative: A Shared Resource Relationship

*Collaborative means the structure or group working together to achieve a shared vision.*

*Effective organizations learn continuously and use their knowledge to increase effectiveness*

Like evaluation, the terms ***collaborative*** and ***collaboration*** may mean different things to different people. We are using the term *collaborative* to mean the structure or group working together to achieve a shared vision. Inherent in this structure is a *process* that we are calling *collaboration*: a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can explore constructively their differences and search for (and implement) solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible (Gray, 1989). In other words, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Various words and ideas fall under the collaborative umbrella. People are using terms like coalition, collaboration, and networking in many ways. We are urging greater clarity in the words we use. Identifying distinctions among the many types of relationships we find in programming will help keep expectations realistic and ensure appropriate evaluation. A common view is emerging that suggests a progression among types of relationships (see table). We have also found it helpful to distinguish between *processes* and *structures* as we sort out the differences and similarities across these types of relationships.

The processes represented in joint efforts are *communication, contribution, coordination, cooperation,* and *collaboration (the 5-Cs)*. Because many people focus on the process of the relationship as the primary feature, these are described in more detail:

***Communication*** is a process based on the exchange of information and meaning. It is a crucial part of any type of productive relationship.

Structures focused only on communication are usually informal, without commonly defined mission, form, or planning. A typical structure would be the network or round table.

*Communication*
↘
*Contribution*
↘
*Coordination*
↘
*Cooperation*
↘
*Collaboration*

***Contribution*** is an informal relationship (often called mutual support) through which parties help each other by providing some of the resources and support needed to reach their independent goals.

Contributing structures occur on an ad hoc, intermittent basis. In other situations they emerge in a networking relationship

| Example: Relationships | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Integration* | *Process* | *Structure* | *Purpose* |
| LOW | Communication | Network, round table | Dialogue and common understanding. Clearinghouse for information. Explore common and conflicting interests. |
| | Contribution | Support group | Mutual exchanges to support each other's efforts. Build mutual obligation and trust. |
| | Coordination | Task force, council, alliance | Match and coordinate needs, resources, and activities. Limit duplication of services. Adjust current activities for more efficient and effective results. |
| | Cooperation | Partnership, consortium, coalition | Link resources to help parties achieve joint goals. Discover shared interests. Build trust by working together. |
| HIGH | Collaboration | Collaborative | Develop shared vision. Build inter-dependent system to address issues and opportunities. Share resources. |

where partners meet periodically to exchange personnel, material, or other resources as well as information. The contribution can also take the form of a short-term work group or coalition.

***Coordination*** generally is a deliberate, joint, often formalized relation among parties involving communication, some planning and division of roles, and longer term goals. It also contains some sharing of resources, risks and rewards for purposes of efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the complementary goals of the parties involved. Authority rests with individual parties.

Structures are formalized to ensure that the coordination process is carried out in an ongoing and effective manner. Coordination also occurs in structures aimed at collaboration. Typical forms include council, alliance, task force, and short term coalition.

***Cooperation*** is defined as a relationship in which parties with similar interests plan together, negotiate mutual roles and share resources to achieve joint goals. Each party maintains its own identity.

Cooperative structures range from informal to formal and from short-term to long-term. Their common characteristics are shared interests, joint decisionmaking and integration of efforts to achieve shared goals. Typical forms are partnerships, coalitions and cooperatives.

***Collaboration*** involves parties who see different aspects of a problem. They engage in a process through which they constructively explore their differences and search for (and implement) solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible (Gray, 1989). Relationships evolve toward commitment to common mission, comprehensive communication and planning, pooled resources, and shared risks and products. Authority is vested in the collaborative, rather than in individuals or an individual agency.

Structure is defined as an evolving forum for developing and achieving visions and for resolving complex issues. Sufficient structure develops to form and implement jointly created solutions. Structure often evolves toward more explicit integration of member interests, roles, and resources. Typical forms are collaboratives and long-term coalitions.

*Parties may aspire to collaborate, but they may begin with a less risky, less challenging level of relationship.*

The names given to these types of relationships vary considerably. What is most important to understand is what is going on within the relationship. Parties may aspire to collaborate, but they may begin with a less risky, less challenging level of relationship. Indeed, they may never reach the level of collaboration. As their relationship evolves over time, they may find that they operate in a collaborative way on some issues and in a contributive, coordinated, or cooperative way on other issues. The expected outcomes of these levels of relationship differ. Parties need to recognize these differences in the way they function and in the criteria they set for evaluation. Finally, the readiness of parties for different levels of relationship varies and must be considered before choosing the most realistic level for a given set of stakeholders.

*The readiness of parties for different levels of relationships varies and must be considered before choosing the most realistic level for a given set of stakeholders.*

Few efforts where stakeholders come together to address a problem or develop and achieve a vision of resolution actually function as a collaborative in the beginning. Rarely is the trust and commitment among parties high enough early on to genuinely engage in exploring differences and developing creative joint solutions in which parties depend on each other for implementation.

Most efforts begin with networking to get to know each other better. As common interests are identified, cooperative efforts emerge. Where parties identify competition or duplication, they may try to coordinate so that their actions mesh. In time, collaborative efforts around certain topics or issues may emerge from these preceding relationships. In cases of conflict, the parties may seek to negotiate a mutual resolution that enables a shared resource relationship. Sometimes a mediation process is needed. As new challenges arise parties may revert again to communication, cooperation or even conflict.

*Evaluation can help to clarify existing relationships, readiness for relationships of greater challenge, and the payoffs and impacts of relationships over time.*

Therefore, the relationships between parties are dynamic and they evolve as the readiness of participants and the demands of the situation change. Unfortunately funding sources and various decision makers sometimes assume that productive relationships among stakeholders occur rapidly according to preconceived plans. Parties to a joint venture then try to hold themselves accountable to a level of relationship that is beyond their current capabilities. Evaluation can help to clarify existing relationships, readiness for relationships of greater challenge, and the payoffs and impacts of relationships over time.

The nature of the relationship among parties affects the approach you take and the expectations you hold for evaluation. At simpler levels of relationship, conventional assumptions about evaluation make more sense. It is possible to develop objectives for independent parties and then measure their achievement at a later time, an approach that works fairly well for simple, discrete and relatively stable problems. More complex, interdependent and changing problems call for a more complex and dynamic relationship — the reason more people and organizations are striving to achieve collaboration.

We have written this manual primarily for persons who aspire to achieve a collaborative relationship, though the ideas apply to other forms of relationship as well. We recognize that relationships are dynamic. People need not function at all times at a collaborative level. However, if you believe that collaboration is needed to truly achieve your vision and you seek to establish collaboration as your core relationship, then we believe you will also need to think about and practice evaluation in some new ways.

# Collaborative Features and Challenges for Evaluation

Not only do collaboratives imply a "new way of doing business," but each has its unique set of circumstances, operational procedures and success criteria. Certain attributes seem to make evaluation particularly challenging (Kubisch et al., 1995; Layzer, 1996; Lopez & Anderson, 1996). We have highlighted several below.

## 1. Broad Goals and Expected Outcomes

Collaboratives form for many reasons. Some seek to develop and sustain resilient families or communities. Others are initiated to produce particular services, to leverage resources, to coordinate efforts, or to effect greater integration of services. Other collaboratives instigate social activism, or seek to create consensus around such issues as land use or school improvements. The focus of a collaborative may range from seeking specific changes in people (individuals, families or groups) to seeking higher order changes in policies, systems or communities. In the latter case, the emphasis may include empowering people and/or institutionalizing change. Some groups may not have a clearly defined or single purpose or one that all agree to or understand. In general, however, collaboratives form for one or a combination of the following purposes:

*The focus of a collaborative may range from seeking specific changes in people (individuals, families or groups) to seeking higher order changes in policies, systems or communities.*

- **Creation or modification of service delivery**
  To create new services or modify existing services, programs and other activities
- **Resource maximization**
  To combine and/or organize resources from various sources, including skills, time, people and money
- **Policy development**
  To create new or modify existing public or organizational policies
- **Systems development and change**
  To create new or modified relationships, agencies and groups (local, state, federal)
- **Social and community development**
  To facilitate participation and leadership; to strengthen networks, norms, social trust and other features of social capital; to effect improvements in social-economic-environmental conditions

Because collaboratives seek improvements in a variety of domains, no "cookbook" evaluation design exists or would be possible. Goals tend to be broad and imprecise, encompassing a range of activities. Often there are no agreed-upon definitions to clarify concepts or measures to determine effects. For example, *water quality* or *healthy relationships*—what do these concepts mean, for whom, and how would improvement be determined? Answers to these questions often have different definitions and measures, depending upon the stakeholder. Methodologists continue to grapple with the intricacies of defining and measuring family, organizational and community level outcomes.

*Because collaboratives seek improvements in a variety of domains, no "cookbook" evaluation design exists or would be possible.*

## 2. Evolving Nature

Especially challenging to the evaluation of collaboratives is their developmental nature. Collaboratives are dynamic and flexible, changing as they develop. Since they are to be responsive to the situation, they may look different from year to year. Membership may change, bringing new direction and emphasis. The roles of individual members or agencies also may change over time. While some collaboratives have a clearly defined start time and finish time, many do not. They may not start out being collaboratives. There may be no preordained design or "grand plan". Members may even avoid setting goals and expected outcomes since they feel that the collaborative must change as conditions change. The work and direction of the group may be invented as the collaborative proceeds.

*Implementation may be difficult to track and may never be complete, but if we wish to attribute outcomes to the collaborative, we must know what was implemented.*

As Patton in *Practical Evaluation* (1982) suggests, many of us bring a goals-based, rational, logical mode of thinking to evaluation. We expect (or our funders demand) specific, measurable objectives that are laid out in advance of operations. Yet, such a logical, deductive process of planning and evaluation may not fit the "evolving" collaborative. While discussions of goals, expected outcomes and models of action may help struggling collaboratives, expecting them to create a structured, preordained design may be counterproductive. Different approaches and techniques need to be explored; ones that may not be familiar, or feel comfortable or are even discovered yet. More recent ideas such as those advanced by Patton (1994) as "developmental evaluation" may better fit the collaborative context.

An evolving nature also means that implementation may never be complete and may be difficult to track. Even in multi-site

initiatives, perhaps at the state or national level, where a standardized format is to guide the development and operations of collaboratives, the actual approach and implementation at each site may vary significantly. If we wish to attribute outcomes to a collaborative, we must know what is implemented. Otherwise, we might know what went into the collaborative (the inputs) and what came out (the outcomes) but not what led to those outcomes. Given their evolving nature, paying attention to implementation, is likely to be a challenge.

## 3. Value in Synergy

*Fragmented or episodic evaluations may miss the effects of the interactions among people, prospectives and programs that denote the true value of collaboration.*

Collaboratives are promoted on the notion that the sum is greater than the individual parts. It is generally accepted that the synergy created by a collaborative is its power. How to track and assess synergy, however, has yet to be clarified. Consequently, evaluations tend to focus on individual components of a collaborative effort, that is, specific activities, programs or processes. These fragmented or episodic evaluations may miss the effects of the interactions among people, perspectives and programs that denote the true value of collaboration.

## 4. Intensity of the Initiating Issue

The nature of the problem or issue(s) that stimulate a collaborative response varies widely. Some issues, such as land-use debates and economic development options, where people have strong feelings advocating or opposing a side, can be very political and emotional. For other issues, such as the desire to reduce teen pregnancy, or to enhance service integration, collaborators may begin with agreement on common goals. While all collaboratives and evaluations are politically charged, some issues that give rise to collaborative efforts are clearly "hotter" than others. In these situations, the process of the evaluation and the communication of results may pose special challenges.

## 5. Mandated or Grassroots Origin

Whether the collaborative initiative is mandated externally or arises spontaneously as a grassroots effort appears to impact evaluation a great deal. In recent years, collaborative arrangements have been required as a prerequisite for funding. Groups and communities have scurried to find collaborators in order to meet the requirements. Often these individuals and their agencies have

had little prior contact or experience working together; and they may even have preexisting antagonisms. Clearly, these collaboratives present unique challenges and often need additional time and support to develop.

Interest in and commitment to evaluation can be expected to vary depending upon how and why the collaborative formed. Externally imposed collaboratives may be only interested in fulfilling funding requirements related to evaluation. Evaluation may be viewed as an add-on or a hardship. Grassroots groups, on the other hand, may be more interested in self-assessment in order to improve performance or to produce findings for attracting funding, gaining recognition or legitimizing their work (Lackey, Moberg & Balistrieri, 1997.)

*Interest in and commitment to evaluation can be expected to vary depending upon how and why the collaborative formed.*

## 6. Time Frame: Short-Term and Long-Term

Time frames also influence the type and process of an evaluation. Some collaboratives operate within a brief time horizon where their work and outcomes can be expected (or must) occur within a very short time. Examples are a collaborative that forms to address an emergency situation or one that works on a narrowly defined issue. Other collaboratives are long-term, working on broad issues such as hunger prevention over many years. Still others do not start out as a collaborative but become one as group goals and relationships develop.

Collaboratives may establish a time frame for their work within which results are expected to occur, or they may evolve without a set time horizon. This influences what outcomes can be expected and when they might be best measured. Time considerations may also influence the extent to which a collaborative can engage in self-learning and the amount of resources available for evaluation.

## 7. Shared Responsibility

The very nature of collaboratives is one of sharing. No individual member or agency is in control. This same ideal extends to the evaluation of collaboratives. Rather than an individual or an 'expert' defining and conducting the evaluation, evaluation often becomes a collaborative process of consensus building (Young et al., 1994). Members may need to work through a variety of considerations in this new way of thinking about evaluation.

*Rather than an individual or an 'expert' defining and conducting the evaluation, evaluation often becomes a collaborative process of consensus building.*

# Conflict and Power in Evaluating Collaboratives

## Conflict

Conflict is inherent in collaborative initiatives. In fact, collaboration without conflict may indicate that parties are not communicating openly or that some key interests have not been included. Where "hot" issues precipitate the collaborative, participants will have differences to work through. However, even at the outset when stakeholders seemingly share a common definition of the issue, differences may emerge as the collaborative unfolds and conditions in society change. Thus, it is realistic to anticipate varying degrees of conflict over the course of a collaborative relationship. Such conflicts take up time and energy. However, avoiding conflict can undermine trust and usually has the effect of reducing the amount of valid information the group considers in making decisions.

*Collaboration without conflict may indicate that parties are not communicating openly or that some key interests have not been included.*

Experience shows that conflict can play a very positive role in effective collaboration if parties have developed sufficient trust to recognize, learn from and creatively resolve such differences. Sharing of differences leads parties to question their assumptions and to develop new and better problem definitions and solutions. Each episode of conflict resolution can build the confidence of collaborators in their ability to work together. Thus, the simple presence of conflict should not be a concern in the collaboration process; instead it can provide positive energy.

*Experience shows that conflict can play a very positive role in effective collaboration if parties have developed sufficient trust.*

The danger of conflict reveals itself in how conflict is managed and in the depth or intensity of conflict. Poorly managed conflict can destroy trust and group cohesion or so constrain relationships that little progress is made. Intense conflict may prevent collaboratives from starting or halt efforts that are under way. Constructive conflict management calls for conscious attention to identifying, understanding and learning from differences. In successful collaboratives, constructive conflict management usually takes the form of informal negotiation among parties. In some cases, a more intensive process of mediation may be needed.

*Constructive conflict management calls for conscious attention to identifying, understanding and learning from differences.*

## Power

Evaluation of collaboratives is embedded in a social process that involves competing values and power relations. Although evaluation often is viewed as a technical or methodological activity involving data collection and analysis, it is fundamentally a political activity (Cronbach, 1980). Evaluation is not neutral or value-free. The idea of a single truth or an objective world comes under quick challenge in the evaluation of collaboration.

*Although evaluation often is viewed as a technical activity, it is fundamentally a political activity.*

Evaluation often is conducted in a political context where information is power. The ways people and organizations define problems and opportunities have important political significance. Such definitions legitimize some power configurations and challenge others. Political processes are at work when we apply diverse perspectives in judging the value or worth of something. Political issues are involved whenever we define priorities or allocate resources; when we make decisions about the purpose of evaluation; when we define who is involved in evaluation, what questions will be asked, and whose voices will be heard; or when we decide how information is to be analyzed and used. We cannot ignore or assume as nonexistent the varied internal and external politics that come into play when we undertake evaluation.

In fact, some of the greatest challenges we may have in conducting evaluation deal with politics, including the following:

1. Evaluation results are used for purposes other than those intended.
2. The evaluation becomes a political vehicle to either push through an inappropriate agenda or to conceal real problems.
3. Evaluation results are ignored.
4. The process of conducting evaluation upsets fragile relationships.
5. Powerful players try to influence the outcomes of the evaluation.
6. All players are not included or heard.

Ideally, evaluation can help to both reveal and resolve power conflicts, though the challenges are significant. Power relations

may determine who is involved in the collaborative, whose voice is heard, or how the collaborative functions. It may take special efforts to empower certain stakeholders, which may entail efforts to build knowledge or confidence for a group that is intimidated by more powerful organizations (e.g., special attention to empowering citizens in citizen/agency collaboratives, or some minority groups in multicultural collaboratives). One role of evaluation is to help identify political interests and to test strategies for addressing them in a context of changing power relations. A way to help ease the potential influence of political factors is to solicit inclusive participation in the design, implementation and interpretation of evaluation.

*Collaboration is a process of creating new, more effective power relations in order to bring about desired change.*

For many, the fundamental purpose of collaboration is to bring about change in the power relations of organizations and constituencies. Collaboration can effect new power relationships in a world where the potency of unilateral power is diminishing and effective solutions call for shared power relations among interested parties. John Bryson and Barbara Crosby (1992) described this shared-power world: ". . . we live in a world where no one is in charge" (Cleveland, 1973, 1985). No one organization or institution can implement solutions to the problems that confront us as a society. No one alone can decrease crime, restore economically ravaged inner cities and small towns, reduce government deficits, or reverse environmental damage. Instead, in order to obtain the legitimacy, power, authority, and knowledge required to tackle any major public issue, organizations, institutions, and citizens must join forces in a "shared-power world." In this world, organizations and institutions that share objectives must also partly share resources and authority in order to achieve their collective goals (Bryson & Einsweiler, 1991; Neustadt, 1990; Reich, 1987; Trist, 1983).

*The evaluation process provides a vital means for ongoing learning that can support these difficult processes of conflict management for positive change.*

Our approach in this manual is to acknowledge conflict and politics as expected and necessary elements of collaboration. Essentially, collaboration is a process of creating new, more effective power relations in order to bring about desired change. Conflict occurs as different views are considered and as the political implications of new strategies and relations are recognized. Resolving these conflicts in creative ways in a trusting environment enables parties to forge new power relations. The evaluation process provides a vital means for ongoing learning that can support these difficult processes of conflict management for positive change.

## Valuing Evaluation

Often, we are so busy "doing" that the thought of "evaluating" may seem an impossible add-on. Even if we want to evaluate, even if we are committed to the idea of building evaluation in "up front," we put it off. Some of us may feel that evaluation is difficult and time-consuming, requiring specialist expertise. We may view it as someone else's job. Or, we may see evaluation as something we must do to satisfy the funder or our agency, but it has little value to us. Members may not all understand what evaluation is or its usefulness. Most grassroots collaboratives comprised of voluntary membership have little time and few resources.

Making time for evaluation may require a change in thinking and behaviors. We may need to set aside time for thinking about the value of evaluation and what it can teach us and others about what we are doing.

The following ideas may help your collaborative become engaged in evaluation:

1. **Demystify evaluation.** Evaluation is something everyone can do and does. The premise of this manual and of self-evaluation is that systematic, useful evaluation can be done by collaborative members and local residents to meet their own needs.
2. **View evaluation as reflection.** It is an opportunity to answer your own questions. Think about and discuss: What can evaluation "teach" us? How might evaluation help us improve our work, influence key stakeholders, or ensure continued funding?
3. **See how evaluation can serve members' self-interest.** Information from evaluation, for example, could help a member communicate to his or her agency the contribution he or she is making.
4. **Integrate evaluation into your work.** It does not have to be an add-on. Methods and techniques and an "evaluative mind" can become part of the collaborative.
5. **Share the impact** other evaluations have had on funding decisions and public visibility.

*Demystify evaluation by helping people see that evaluation is something they can do. Systematic, useful evaluation can be done by collaborative members and local residents to meet their own needs.*

6. **View evaluation as having multiple purposes.** It is a process for answering critical questions as well as a way to build capacities in such areas as critical thinking, data collection and analysis, decision making, and so forth.

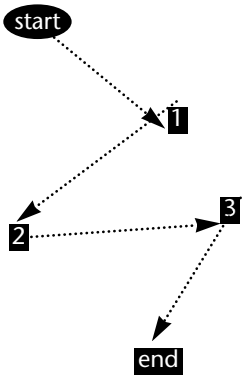
# SECTION 2

# The Collaborative Journey

As described in the previous section, collaboratives present special challenges for evaluation. We have found the analogy of a journey helpful in describing collaboratives and providing a framework for evaluation. A journey suggests passage—movement from one place to another—which relates to the developmental and evolving nature of collaboratives. A journey may or may not start with a fixed destination in mind and a prearranged itinerary. Sometimes we know where we want to go and the stops we will make along the way. We know what the end destination looks like so we know when we have arrived. At other times, we may not have a final destination in mind before we start. We are not sure what we might encounter along the way or where we might wish to stop. We are not even sure where the trip might end. But, in any trip, the traveler uses road signs, markers and striking events to document the journey, celebrate attainments, report progress to friends and family and/or to make modifications in the journey. Such milestones and critical events are important components of evaluation for monitoring progress, identifying modifications or changes needed and celebrating achievements.

*Along the way, there are natural steps or progressions that are not necessarily planned but that are normal on most journeys.*

As with a journey, mapping the trip is a helpful exercise. We will talk later in this section about logic models and "mapping" the collaborative journey. Even when we have no predetermined end point in mind, referring to a map provides the traveler with guidance to make forward movement. In some ways, a collaborative may be depicted as a special type of journey. Because we know so little about the process and outcomes of collaboratives, it may be similar to charting unknown territory. Often parties come together as a collaborative to explore new territory. Like Lewis and Clark charting the Northwest Territory, you will need to rely on local knowledge to develop your initial sketches and then revise and elaborate your map as your journey yields new information.




*Many people working with and writing about collaboratives use the analogy of a journey to picture and describe the process (see especially Winer & Ray, 1994; Goodman & Wandersman, 1994). We've added footprints to represent diversity of membership, collectivity, fluid movement, and the iterative process of collaboratives.

## Phases of Collaborative Development

While each collaborative is not the same and does not follow a predictable step-by-step process, a growing body of evidence indicates that the collaborative journey moves through loose chronological phases (Florin, Mitchell, & Stevenson, 1993). In each phase there is a series of tasks that appear important to ensure effective functioning, so that the collaborative can proceed forward.

Various authors describe these phases, but there is considerable overlap in their models. The following summary is adapted from among others, Kagan (1991), Chrislip & Larson (1994), Florin, Mitchell & Stevenson (1993), and Winer & Ray (1994). It is intended to be comprehensive, highlighting the possible tasks associated with each phase.

*A specific collaborative may include or emphasize only some of the tasks in any given phase, depending on the purpose of the collaborative and its circumstances.*

A specific collaborative may include or emphasize only some of the tasks in any given phase, depending on the purpose of the collaborative and its circumstances. Or, you may find different tasks to be critical. Remember, each collaborative is unique. Also, this summary presents a somewhat idealized notion of collaboratives. A collaborative journey is not linear and there is seldom a smooth progression from one phase to the other. Collaboratives may move back and forth between phases or appear to be static.

*A collaborative journey is not linear and there is seldom a smooth progression from one phase to the other.*

Think about where your collaborative may be in its development. Are you just beginning and starting to set some direction? Or, are you further along and implementing activities? Where the collaborative is in its development has important implications for the types of evaluation questions you ask. For example, it may be inappropriate to be asking about community outcomes when the collaborative is struggling with internal conflicts about purpose and has not begun to implement directed action. The following summarizes the major phases and potential tasks associated with each phase.

### Phase 1: Form and Focus—"Getting Started"

A collaborative takes shape when someone conceptualizes a problem or opportunity and shares those ideas with others. As the vision is shared and interests explored, stakeholders are identified and engaged. They become acquainted with one another,

## *Collaborative Phases and Tasks*

| *Phase* | *Possible Tasks* |
|---|---|
| **Phase 1:** Form and Focus *Getting Started* | Explore interests and context<br>Identify and mobilize stakeholders<br>Build capacity for collaboration<br>Develop working procedures and guidelines<br>Develop relationships and understanding<br>Create initial collaborative structure and clarify leadership<br>Institute conflict resolution process<br>Make intentional interorganizational links<br>Create shared vision<br>Identify community assets and needs<br>Develop goals and expected outcomes<br>Specify indicators to measure desired outcomes |
| **Phase 2:** Organize and Act *En route* | Secure staffing and resources<br>Develop action plans<br>Design pilot and expanded interventions<br>Ensure support of stakeholders<br>Assure communication systems<br>Rotate membership<br>Create joint agreements and systems<br>Implement activities with collaborative involvement<br>Communicate progress and achievements<br>Build toward comprehensive strategies |
| **Phase 3:** Achieve and Transform *Arrived* | Seek larger system changes<br>Develop community capacity to sustain efforts<br>Evaluate institutionalization and sustainability<br>Integrate functions into ongoing organizations<br>Transform the collaborative through new direction<br>Carry out collaborative ending activity |

EVALUATE

explore their interests, resources and concerns, and discuss whether a collaborative approach is feasible.

Special effort may be needed to organize or strengthen unorganized constituencies in order for them to work collaboratively. Some training in the collaborative process may be necessary. The constituencies agree upon an initial collaborative structure and institute methods to build trust and ownership, thus developing relationships and understanding. Leadership responsibilities emerge and working procedures and guidelines, such as ground rules for deliberations and decision making procedures, are established.

If participants share a sense of willingness and readiness to attempt joint activity, attention shifts to exploring and setting shared direction by developing goals and objectives. Participants create a vision by sharing expectations about the future. The group may engage in a visioning activity. Or, they may spend time defining the domain of the collaborative and seeking a shared definition of the problem to be addressed. Members may encounter significant challenges as they face differences in expectations, needs, visions, and operating and communicating styles of various parties. Conflict resolution processes may need to be put in place.

*Members may encounter significant challenges as they face differences in expectations, needs, visions, and operating and communicating styles of various parties. Conflict resolution processes may need to be put in place.*

Developing a sense of shared direction may take a considerable amount of time if parties have little past experience with cooperation or if stakes are high and initial differences in desired outcomes are great. As a shared direction emerges, participants begin to explore potential tasks, roles, responsibilities and to develop interorganizational links. Setting direction may involve assessing needs and assets. From these assessments, goals and objectives can be set that will achieve the collaborative vision. Many community collaboratives engage in a comprehensive planning process.

## Phase 2: Organize and Act–"En route"

The second phase involves development of a more formal structure to sustain collaboration through organization and action aimed toward the emerging direction of the collaborative. Group structures are reviewed and refined to accommodate different interests. Action plans are developed and desired results and indicators specified. Along with working structures, decision-making

procedures are reviewed to allow for meaningful flexibility and refinement. The creation of joint agreements and systems to be ratified by participating organizations may result, thus securing staff and resources for activities. At this stage it is important to confirm support from all essential stakeholders of the collaborative.

Proposed interventions are put into practice. The collaborative begins productive work that may include more intensive study of conditions, and needs and opportunities. Other functions include obtaining support of parent organizations or groups, securing resources, and implementing action plans. Continued attention to the relationships between individual collaborators and their home organizations is a vital consideration at this stage. Persons participating directly in collaborative meetings, discussions, and joint activities may understand the effort and reasons for committing organization resources; however, members and key decision makers in their home organization may not. Processes to draw the larger organizations into active support are crucial, though challenging. Intentional communication about collaborative activities is one way to gain active support of larger organizations.

*Processes to draw the larger organizations into active support are crucial.*

Changes needed in policies and procedures of collaborating organizations then can be identified and made. Accountability standards also can be created. As the collaborative moves forward, regular review and evaluation will call for occasional changes in direction, composition, organization or activities. Procedures for retiring current members and adding new members are considered as membership changes. Progress is celebrated on a periodic basis.

## Phase 3: Achieve and Transform – "Arrived"

At the mature stage, a collaborative pays close attention to the achievement of positive outcomes and longer-term impacts. Changes are sought that achieve the collaborative vision and reflect collaborative principles. Changes in the immediate precipitating conditions as well as in larger systems and policies and community capacities are documented and evaluated. Results are communicated to contributing organizations' members, funding sources and the community.

The collaborating group may seek ways to engage and commit the larger community in the work of the collaborative. Special

*The collaborating group may seek ways to engage and commit the larger community in the work of the collaborative.*

efforts may be given to building community capacity for sustaining activities and to integrating collaborative projects into ongoing organizations in the community. Efforts to foster changes in larger community systems may receive attention. At this point, outcome information is used as a basis for decisions about the adaptation, renewal or disbanding of the collaborative effort. In time, the collaborative group itself either will transform into another entity or simply bring an end to its activities as a special organization in the community. An ending ritual may be important.

This chronological journey offers a framework for organizing your evaluation. When people first are meeting to decide whether to work together or not, focusing attention on the feasibility of whether a collaborative is warranted, likely to succeed, and what role you will play might be most productive. Once the collaborative has been established, emphasis can shift to member representation and competence, and establishing structures and processes. In the final stage, efforts to document impact and ensure sustainability may be paramount.

*In the final stage, efforts to document impact and ensure sustainability may be paramount.*

You may wish to think about your collaborative in terms of these three major phases: early; mid; mature. Are you just getting started and working on building commitment, representation and understanding? Or is the collaborative moving forward with a plan of action? Are there spin-off benefits being felt by the agency (organization) represented within the collaborative? To evaluate appropriately, determine what phase you may be in and design your evaluation accordingly.

## Mapping the Collaborative Journey

*Sitting down and mapping out your trip does not ensure that you will arrive at your destination, but it does give you initial direction and a way to check progress.*

If a collaborative is thought of as a journey, a useful beginning step, if you haven't done so already, is to map this journey. Sitting down and mapping out your trip does not ensure that you will arrive at your destination, but it does give you initial direction and a way to check progress. Creating this map entails anticipation of both processes and outcomes. Consider the following questions:

1. Where are you starting from and where do you want to go? What is your end destination? What do you hope to accomplish?
2. How will you get there? Which route will you choose? What makes you think that you will get to where you want to go? What needs to happen in order to reach your destination?
3. How will you know when you've arrived? What will tell you or show you that you've successfully completed your journey?

## Logic Model: Your Map and Model of Action

Your map is called a "logic model." It lays out what the collaborative is expected to achieve and how it is expected to work, based on an expected chain of events that link

(a) the issue your collaborative is addressing — **the Situation** — to

(b) the investments it will make — **the Inputs** — to

(c) the procedures, activities, and products it produces — **the Outputs** — to

(d) the results that accrue — **the Outcomes** — to

(e) the final consequences — **the Impact.**

We use logic models everyday. Take the following for example:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Family is hungry* | *Groceries* | *Meal is prepared* | *Hunger is gone* | *Family is satisfied* |
| ***Situation*** | ***Inputs*** | ***Outputs*** | ***Outcomes*** | ***Impact*** |

This chain of events that links inputs to outputs to outcomes in response to a situation is called a ***theory of action*** (Patton, 1997). It articulates what you hope to achieve and how. It is based on a series of ordered actions that are logically linked: inputs logically precede outputs and outputs logically precede outcomes. Most are more complex than the one above. All begin with a clear specification of the situation — the problem or issue — being addressed in order to indicate the most appropriate chain of events. Too often we begin with a program, intervention, activity or service that seems like a good idea and then try to

*As you develop your map or logic model, think also about the underlying assumptions that relate to the success of your collaborative. Are they realistic and sound?*

make it fit the situation or problem. This sequence is described as "fire, ready, aim." Understanding the problem situation in order to design an appropriate response may involve a situational analysis, reviewing the research literature, current experience, and local knowledge.

Once the problem situation is clarified, think about the logical chain of events that will effect an improvement in the situation and achieve the collaborative's vision. What are the steps that turn inputs into outputs into outcomes? You might think about this as a series of **If-Then** relationships. For example,

**Situation: Families not using services**

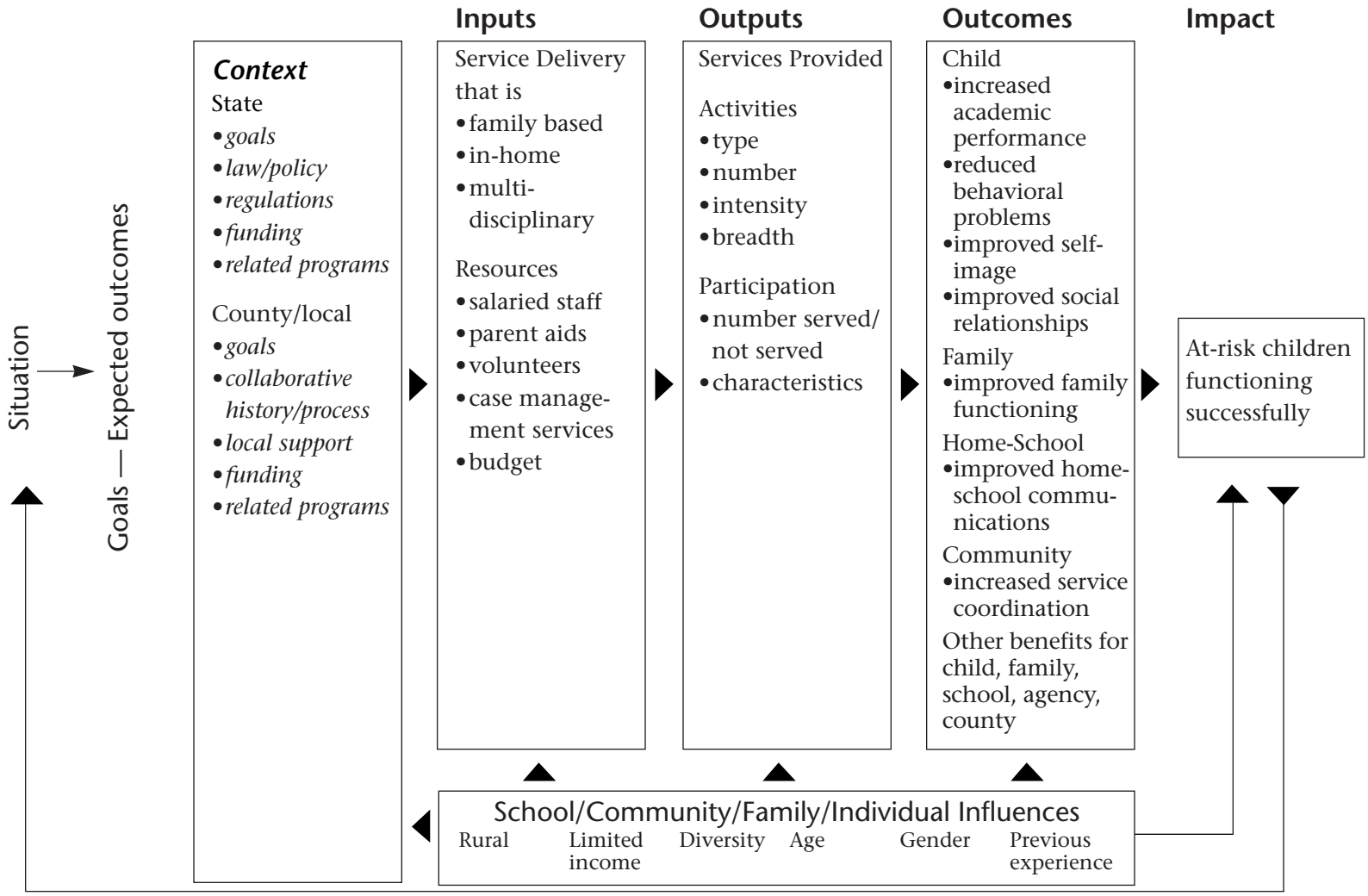
- **If** the collaborative invests time and money to develop a resource inventory , **then** families will be able to be informed about what is available to support families in the community. **If** families know what is available, **then** they will be able to access the appropriate services to meet their need.

**Situation: Duplication of services**

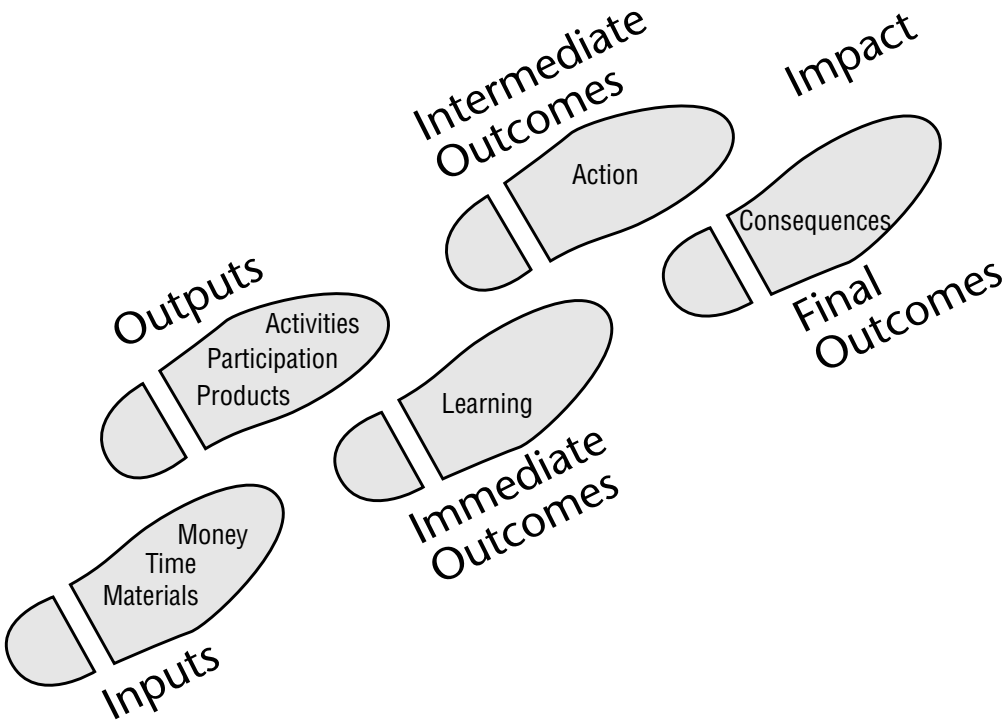
- **If** partnering agencies contribute time and effort, **then** communications among agencies will improve. **If** communications among agencies improve, **then** there will be less overlap and duplication of services. **If** there is less service duplication, **then** freed-up resources can be used to address other needs.

Underlying the series of if-then relationships are a number of **assumptions** about the situation, how the collaborative will work and what it can achieve. In the first example above, there is the assumption that a resource inventory is linked to improvement in client well-being and that the collaborative will have the necessary time, money, and expertise to develop the resource inventory. There is the assumption that once the resource inventory is developed, people will use it, particularly the identified target group. There is the assumption that once accessed, the service will, in fact, meet the client's need. Also, there is the underlying assumption that interagency coordination will make a difference relative to these families' needs. When developing your map or logic model, think about the underlying assumptions. Are they realistic and sound? What evidence do you have to support your assumptions?

## Logic Model of Child-at-Risk Collaborative



As you work with logic models, you will note that different practitioners use different terms or graphic displays. Don't worry. What is important is the concept of a logically linked sequence of change. Your model may be descriptive, a linear series of boxes and arrows, or reflect a more organic creation. We have had collaboratives illustrate their initiatives using such metaphors as an oyster, footprints, an octopus, or as diagrams with spirals or interlocking arrows. The emphasis, however, must be on the logically linked steps that turn investments into outcomes.




As you develop your logic model, it is important to realize that outcomes may exist at different levels — from immediate to final outcomes — relating to different time lines. In many cases, there is not just one outcome but a hierarchy of outcomes, each leading to the next higher achievement. We talk about these as immediate, intermediate, and final outcomes. For example, a "healthy communities" collaborative sponsors a series of town meetings about the prevalence of teenage alcohol abuse (outputs or activity); residents (youth and adults) increase their knowledge related to alcohol use (immediate outcome); this knowledge turns into action when parents, youth, and schools initiate a policy debate (intermediate outcome) regarding the visibility and public use of alcohol that leads to a policy change banning alcohol at public events and the enforcement of more consistent

penalties (final outcome). The ultimate consequence of this chain of events (the impact) might be a decrease in teenage drinking. In Section 7 we talk specifically about outcome levels, and types of outcomes and how to evaluate outcomes.

Engage as many members and key stakeholders as possible in the formulation of the collaborative's logic model. Everyone involved then will be able to see the collaborative as a functioning whole with the individual parts having a place and function in the process. This builds a sense of commitment and shared direction. Often, differences in perceptions and ideas about expected outcomes, procedures and philosophies emerge during these discussions. Developing the logic model together may unearth or accentuate divergent opinions on how to reach the end. For instance, partnering agencies all may want improved performance and behavior among at-risk youth but differ on whether prevention or intervention is the better delivery mechanism. Engaging in a discourse about expected outcomes and how to achieve those outcomes makes it possible to surface such differences and work toward understanding and consensus.

*Creating a logic model helps you recognize the limits of what your collaborative can do and what larger socio-economic-political changes may be necessary to achieve long-term goals.*

Working on a logic model can also help build ownership of both the collaborative process and evaluation. It helps members and key stakeholders recognize the limits of what the collaborative can do and how larger socio-economic-political factors may influence the achievement of long-term goals.

Yet, groups often do not spend time at the outset of their work together to develop such a model of action. People may come together without any real intention of developing a collaborative or without having a vision about what the final destination will look like. Perhaps you only know that there is too much duplication among services or that clientele are dissatisfied. It is only through the course of working together that you begin to discover what can and needs to be done.

For others, creating a map of the collaborative may seem overly rational or unrealistic. We're often asked how one can anticipate the flow of such a complex, dynamic process as collaborative development. Indeed there are many components of collaboratives that are beyond your control and ability to anticipate.

Regardless of when you create your map, you will want to do so as part of evaluation planning. Experience shows that taking time to develop a logic model — thinking through the model of action — not only makes explicit the intended outcomes and assumptions of the collaborative, but makes evaluation more feasible and effective. It enables you to focus on appropriate evaluation questions that have meaning and use to key stakeholders.

Building a logic model provides the following benefits:

**1. Develops understanding.** It helps build understanding, if not consensus, among collaborative members about what the collaborative is, what it expects to do, and what measures of success it will use.

**2. Monitors progress.** It provides a plan against which you can keep track of changes so that successes can be replicated and mistakes avoided.

**3. Serves as evaluation framework.** It makes it possible to identify appropriate evaluation questions and relevant data that are needed.

**4. Bares assumptions.** It helps members be more deliberate about what they are doing and identifies assumptions that may need validating.

**5. Restrains overpromising.** It helps members and others realize the limits and potential of any one collaborative.

**6. Promotes communications.** It creates a simple communication piece useful in portraying and marketing your collaborative to others.

## Unexpected Outcomes

When developing a logic model, a potential oversight is forgetting about unexpected or unintended outcomes. Not everything transpires as we wish. It is always important to consider what unintended consequences the collaborative may have, either for participating members or others. Sometimes, these unexpected outcomes may be of greater value than what we foresaw. In

other instances, unanticipated outcomes may have negative consequences for particular individuals or groups.

## Ways to Create Your Map

Creating a logic model makes explicit the implicit ideas members hold about how to produce desired outcomes. Following are some ideas to help a group achieve some consensus about the collaborative's development and expected accomplishments. Depending upon the group and level of shared understanding, this process may be relatively straight-forward. For other groups, developing a shared vision and plan of action may take more time and be fairly tortuous. We have found that "drawing" the logic model, either individually or as a group, is a fun and useful process. Another alternative is for a collaborative to engage in a full strategic planning process (see other resources, for example, Bryson, 1996 for ideas on this process).

**Idea 1.** Members draw their collaborative on newsprint, using any metaphor, design, or thought process desired that shows a chain of events and final outcomes. This can be done as a group, but more often it is useful for each individual, or small subgroups, to draw their own image of the collaborative. Each then shares the picture or scenario with the larger group. Similarities and differences as well as advantages and disadvantages among the models are noted and discussed.

**Idea 2**. Use a work sheet (see example) to develop the logic model. Again, this worksheet can be filled out individually, or created as a group. You can start on the right side and work backwards from expected final outcomes to specifying the precursor intermediate and immediate outcomes, the outputs, and finally the inputs that would be needed to achieve the expected outcomes. Or, you can start on the left side and work forward along the path identifying the steps and linkages that seem necessary to achieve your outcomes. Or, you may start anywhere in between with the activities and work that is being done and how these link together. Use arrows and/or connecting lines to depict flows and assumed linkages. Highlight the place and role of beneficiaries, partners and others in your model of action. List collaborative activities and show how these activities link to the hypothetical chain of events.

*Example. Logic Model Worksheet*

| Inputs | Outputs | | Outcomes | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Activities* | *Participation* | *Immediate* | *Intermediate* | *Final* |
| | | | | | ***Impact*** |

**Idea 3.** An outside facilitator or evaluation consultant may be engaged to model the collaborative based on what is written in the collaborative's funding proposal, observations and input gathered from members and key stakeholders. The external consultant might facilitate a process so that the group together develops a logic model. Or, the consultant might produce a logic model, outside the group, and then ask the group to react and discuss.

Attempt to work toward consensus on one model of the collaborative. Much can be learned about each other, your values and your visions by engaging in developing the logic model as a collaborative process (Layzer, 1996). It is also useful to review your logic model periodically in order to see what has changed, keep track of progress, make modifications either in your work or your map, or when initiating new members to the collaborative's model of action.

## Milestones and Critical Events

Once your logic model has been created, it becomes possible to identify milestones or "road signs" as markers of progress along your journey. Milestones are those markers that can be anticipated and then celebrated once accomplished or passed. These markers identify significant points along your journey that will let you know if you are following your map or if mid-course corrections are needed. For example, in a Family Preservation and Support project the logic model might include such markers as:

- formation of committee that represents all key stakeholders;
- finalization of comprehensive needs assessment;
- development of action plan;
- finalization of family resource inventory;
- implementation of annual evaluation process.

Spend some time thinking about and designating these markers of progress for your collaborative. You may wish to review the chart, **Collaborative Phases and Tasks**, on page 19 that lists numerous tasks often associated with collaborative success. Many of these may serve as milestones or the basis for developing markers of progress. An example checklist is provided on page 33. Every phase of collaborative development will have progress milestones that deserve to be recognized, reviewed, communicated, and celebrated. Signalling these will not only help keep the collaborative on track but will provide evidence of progress and opportunities for recognition. In collaborative development which is often slow, uneven, or sometimes even hard to detect, incremental accomplishments that help the collaborative develop and that sustain participation represent forward progress.

Besides the milestones that you anticipate, other occurrences, or ***critical events,*** may happen unexpectedly that affect the collaborative and its work, either positively or negatively. These may serve as progress markers and evidence of accomplishments to celebrate and share. Or, they may indicate disruptions or deviations that need to be addressed and resolved. Include anticipated special junctures in your evaluation planning and take time to consider and learn from those that occur unexpectedly.

| *Milestones* | *Critical Events* |
|---|---|
| • Convening potential collaborative parties to explore interests<br>• Developing a collaborative vision<br>• Completing a strengths or needs assessment<br>• Developing a strategic plan<br>• Securing key funding or other resources<br>• Resolving a major issue or conflict<br>• Initiating a new project<br>• Conducting an important event<br>• Achieving new, increased visibility<br>• Influencing a policy change<br>• Adding or retiring members<br>• Ending the collaborative | • First time events (first meeting, new projects begun, etc.)<br>• Changes in resources (newer donor added; funding reversal)<br>• Changes in membership, leadership or staff (influential community member joins)<br>• Changes in structure of organization (committee forms around a sub-issue)<br>• Major activities<br>• Major issues or conflicts<br>• External recognition (award received for service; increased visibility) |

## *Example: Milestone Checklist*

| **Phase I: Form and Focus** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| It is/was a good time to address the collaborative issue. | | |
| Key stakeholders were identified and brought together. | | |
| An effective group facilitator emerged. | | |
| The group set ground rules for working together. | | |
| Members began building open communication and trusting relationships. | | |
| Members developed a shared definition of the problem/issue. | | |
| Members developed a shared vision for the future. | | |
| Conflicts surfaced, were addressed and resolved. | | |
| A recognized and effective structure exists for collaborative work. | | |
| The collaborative has affected positive relationships among organizations. | | |
| Members have assumed and perform productive roles. | | |
| The collaborative has adequate physical, financial and other resources. | | |

| **Phase 2: Organize and Act** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| Members are committed and energetic. | | |
| Members demonstrate the collaborative spirit in dialogue, decisions and actions. | | |
| Options were explored and action plans/decisions were made. | | |
| The process of retiring and replacing members works well. | | |
| Projects are implemented effectively. | | |
| The group jointly reflects on and learns from experience. | | |
| The collaborative communicates effectively to the community and has strong support. | | |
| Members are effective liaisons between their home organization and the group. | | |
| The group celebrates successes and recognizes/rewards members as it moves forward. | | |
| The group has evaluation methods for monitoring performance and providing feedback. | | |
| The group adapts its goals and approaches based on what is learned from evaluation. | | |
| Progress and achievements are communicated internally and externally | | |

| **Phase 3: Achieve and Transform** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| The collaborative and its projects(s) have fostered positive change in the community. | | |
| The group promotes the value of collaborative approaches to the larger community. | | |
| The collaborative enlists new community members to modify and enlarge the vision. | | |
| The collaborative seeks to build new leadership in the community. | | |
| The collaborative promotes larger system change. | | |
| The collaborative has reached an ending/transforming stage and conducted an ending ritual. | | |

# SECTION 3

# Evaluation Practice

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Evaluation as used in this manual is a process of inquiry that facilitates learning by asking critical questions to help inform decision making. Throughout the collaborative journey, questions continually arise. At the start, questions arise about whether a collaborative is warranted, the best approach and what the individual's role might be in the collaborative. As a collaborative moves forward, both those actively engaged in the collaborative and those at a distance will be asking questions about how the collaborative is working, whether it is making any difference, and if it is worth the investment and the loss of autonomy to pursue goals independently. Answers to such questions satisfy the needs of various actors and stakeholders for learning and communication, for improving the effort as it develops and moves forward, for resource investment and accountability, and for stakeholder satisfaction.

*Evaluation provides the means for answering the many questions that arise during a collaborative's life. These questions deal with **feasibility, process and outcomes.***

Evaluation provides the means for answering such questions. As we've found, these questions deal largely with **feasibility, process and outcomes**—relating to the three common types of evaluations. And they arise at two levels: (1) the level of individual members and the organizations they represent, and (2) the level of the collaborative as a whole. These may be characterized as questions that pertain to one's **self-interest** and those that pertain to the interests of the **collaborative**. The following table categorizes these types of questions at the two interest levels.

***Questions about:***
- ***feasibility***
- ***process***
- ***outcomes***

*Example: Types of questions and level of interest*

| | Self-interest | Collaborative interest |
|---|---|---|
| ***Feasibility questions*** | Should I get involved?<br>Is the involvement within my agency's mandate?<br>What will my role be?<br>What can I/my agency contribute?<br>What can I/we gain? | Is a collaborative needed?<br>What is likely to be the most appropriate approach?<br>What exists in the context that may be opportunities/barriers?<br>Are requisite resources, capacities available? |
| ***Process Questions*** | What is my role/contribution to the workings of the collaborative?<br>Is my voice heard?<br>Are my interests/my agency's interests being met?<br>What am I/we gaining? | Have we set a direction that is understood by all?<br>Are the right people on board?<br>Do we have the capacities to carry out what we want?<br>How is the collaborative operating?<br>Are we meeting our objectives? |
| ***Outcome Questions*** | What difference does/ did it make that I am/was involved?<br>What would have happened without me?<br>What benefit did my agency gain?<br>What credit can I/we take? | What has happened or changed as a result of the collaborative?<br>What difference is there? For whom? How?<br>Are there any unintended or negative outcomes? |

While you may think that the notion of *self-interest* runs counter to the essence of a collaborative, individual interests and concerns are a fundamental and critical aspect of collaboratives. Consequently, we have devoted one section to evaluating **self-interests** (Section 4). Other Sections follow that further detail the other three types of evaluation with ideas for your use—**feasibility** (Section 5), **process** (Section 6), and **outcomes** (Section 7). If evaluation is fully integrated into the fabric of your collaborative as an inquiry mode of learning, categorizing evaluation into such discrete types may seem artificial. In fact, we need to be cautious about fragmenting evaluation into specific types or time frames since doing so can lead to incomplete knowledge about what works, what doesn't work, and why.

*Individual interests and concerns are a fundamental and critical aspect of collaboratives.*

To further explain and situate our approach we should mention that some evaluation manuals focus on the evaluation of specific programs or services that a collaborative might develop and implement (for example, Linney & Wandersman, 1991) while others focus on the process and outcomes of the collaborative in a more general sense (for example, Winer & Ray, 1994). We have tried to be comprehensive, providing a question-based approach that can be responsive to whatever the learning challenges of your collaboratives might be.

## Planning and Conducting Evaluation

Regardless of whether you are engaged in an evaluation of a specific program/service of the collaborative or you have integrated evaluation into the fabric of the collaborative as an ongoing process, there are some basic steps and decision processes to consider. These are summarized below. For a more complete guide, see *Planning a Program Evaluation* (Taylor-Powell, Steele, & Douglah, 1996) or another of the many sources on planning an evaluation.

### 1. Focusing evaluation

Evaluation begins with questions raised by persons or groups. Who are these users and what do they want to know? Are the questions coming from within the collaborative, by a particular member or members, about particular concerns? Or, are questions being raised by the funder, the sponsoring agency,

community residents, targeted beneficiaries? What are the questions that are being raised? And Why? That is, what will people do with the information that the evaluation produces. Will it be used for improving the collaborative's work, external reporting of accountability, funding decisions, professional appraisals, generating grants, political maneuvering, and/or increasing knowledge about collaborative approaches?

The chart on the facing page illustrates the range of users, questions and uses that might arise. It also demonstrates the need to prioritize evaluation concerns. There may be too many questions or conflicting demands to address at one time. Identifying evaluation questions that are appropriate for the stage of the collaborative's development may be a critical first step.

In a continuous learning process, collaborative members identify questions on an ongoing basis to monitor and improve their work. Some questions will become routine ones that you ask every time you hold a meeting or complete an activity. For example: What worked and didn't work? What did we accomplish? What did we learn? Other questions may be inserted periodically to monitor communications and satisfaction within the group. At longer intervals, you may wish to engage your sponsoring organization, funders, citizens or others interested in the collaborative's work in identifying questions they have. This is a way to build interest and support. Sometimes it helps to review questions others have asked or to review the research on collaboratives. Networking among collaboratives is a powerful way to learn and share.

## *Example. Focusing evaluation*

| *User of evaluation* | *Questions of interest* | *Uses of information* |
|---|---|---|
| Members of collaborative | Should I get involved?<br>Are we making progress?<br>What credit can I take? | Planning and justifying time and work commitments<br>Performance appraisal |
| Supervisors of collaborative member | Are my agency's interests being met?<br>Is this a good use of our time? | Decisions about resource allocation<br>Marketing |
| Public officials | What is the collaborative doing?<br>What difference is it making? | Decisions about commitment and support<br>Knowledge about usefulness of collaborative approach |
| Community residents | What is the collaborative doing?<br>What difference is it making? | Decisions about whether to participate; contribute support |
| Clientele, Participants | Is the collaborative meeting needs? | Decisions about commitment; whether to participate in similar initiatives |
| Representatives from other organizations | Is the collaborative working;<br>the best approach? | Programming decisions |
| Funders | Is what was promised being achieved? | Accountability |

## 2. Identifying and Collecting Needed Information

The next step is to decide what information is needed in order to answer the questions. Be sure that each question is clear so that everyone understands what it is you want to know or understand. This may involve breaking larger questions into sub-questions or defining terms and concepts.

### *Indicators*

A challenge in any evaluation is identifying the information that best answers the question(s). Indicators express that which you wish to know. They are the measures or observable evidence that answer your questions.

Sometimes, the needed information is obvious and straightforward; for example, number and demographic profile of members, dollars generated, or description of services delivered. At other times the desired information is not specific enough to collect directly. For example, an outcome question of interest might be: Did the collaborative increase local responsibility? "Local responsibility" is a vague concept.

- How will the collaborative determine whether local responsibility increased or not?
- What would it look like?
- What would you see?

In such cases, several indicators may be necessary.

It is usually important to engage different people with various backgrounds and cultural understandings in the identification of indicators. "Local responsibility," for example, has different meanings for different people in different places. Listening to multiple perspectives will produce indicators that are more complete and meaningful. Likewise, key stakeholders may have particular ideas about indicators that measure certain phenomenon. Your collaborative will want to pay attention to these ideas if the results are to be used by these stakeholders. You may even wish to ask a few key influentials what evidence they think would answer the question. Some examples of indicators are presented in the following table.

| Question to be answered | Possible indicator(s) |
|---|---|
| Are collaborative members satisfied with the group's work? | meeting attendance: number, frequency<br>complaints: number, type<br>member satisfaction |
| Has the collaborative helped agencies work together? | increase in communications among agencies<br>number of agencies who share resources<br>number of agencies who share planning<br>clients' perceptions |
| Has the collaborative helped at-risk students perform better in school? | number of students who have fewer behavioral referrals<br>decrease in truancy<br>number of students who improve their grades<br>number of students who increase involvement in extracurricular activities |

Once again think about the people who will use the evaluation information. What type of information are they most likely to understand and consider credible? Will they be more receptive to statistics, to human stories, or to case descriptions, for example? In most cases, users find a mix of data—numbers and narratives—individual anecdotes and more generalizable results—most useful.

*In most cases, users find a mix of data most useful —numbers and narratives, individual anecdotes and more generalizable results.*

### *Influential Factors*

As you think about your information needs, consider also the factors that are likely to influence the results. For example, in answering the question, "What did clientele gain from the collaborative service?", it is likely that what clients gain will be influenced by their demographic characteristics, skills and abilities, geographic location, or past experience with similar services. You will want to include such influential factors as data to collect. However, avoid the temptation of collecting data on everything. Think about what are likely to be the most important influential factors related to your evaluation question(s).

*Avoid the temptation of collecting data on everything.*

### *Data Sources and Methods*

Once you have determined your information needs, begin thinking about which sources are most likely to yield the data you need and which methods are most appropriate for collecting the data. Remember to think about existing sources of information that may be useable before initiating new procedures. Collaboratives often have a variety of documents—minutes of meetings, grants, agendas, etc.—that may serve as information sources.

Likewise, consider innovative and multiple methods for actually collecting the information you need, taking into consideration what is most appropriate for the participant. For example, will the people you are seeking information from be more receptive to a mail survey, personal interview or some sort of group process? Consider any cultural issues or respondent characteristics (language competencies, disabilities, etc.) that might affect which procedures are more appropriate.

A variety of sources and methods are listed in the following chart (see also Section 8). Consider the options fully and use your own imagination and creativity. Often, your choice will be influenced by cost, time required to obtain the data and feasibility of the proposed method. Keep in mind the following:

- Will the resulting data be viewed as credible by those who will look at it?
- Will the resulting data be useful to collaborative members as you seek to make improvements and communicate progress and results?

This may be a time to consult with someone with expertise in social science methodology if that knowledge does not reside in your collaborative. There may be someone else in the community, faculty from a local college or university, or another consultant who can help you decide on the most appropriate data collection procedures.

Remember that data collection depends upon the purpose of evaluation and the questions being raised. The following worksheet may help you focus on appropriate data sources and methods to answer your questions.

## Sources of information and methods of data collection

### Sources of Information

**Existing Information**

Collaborative documents: grants, newsletters, minutes

Existing data bases

Public agency, school, media and business records

**People**

Members of collaborative

Participants, clientele

General public, local influentials

Key informants

Funders, other agencies, professionals

**Pictures and situations**

Before and after pictures

Actual events, activities, practices

Maps, charts

### Methods of data collection

**Survey**: collecting standardized information through questionnaires that may be mailed (surface, electronic), completed on site or through interviews, either face-to-face or telephone

**Case study**: in-depth examination using multiple sources of information and methods to provide a complete picture of a case situation

**Interviews**: information collected by talking with and listening to people, either face-to-face or over the telephone; includes focus group interviewing

**Observation**: collecting information through seeing and listening; includes use of trained observers

**Group Assessment**: use of group processes to collect evaluation information including nominal group, delphi, brainstorming, forums

**Expert or peer review**: Examination by a review committee, panel of experts or peers

**Portfolio review**: collection of materials, including samples of work, that encompass breadth and scope of the program/activity being evaluated

**Testimonials**: individual statements by people indicating personal responses and reactions

**Tests**: use of established standard measures to assess knowledge, skill, performance

**Photographs, slides, videos**: use of photography to capture visual images

**Diaries-journals**: recording of events over time revealing personal perspectives

**Logs**: recording of chronological entries which are usually brief and factual

**Document analysis**: use of content analysis to analyze and summarize printed material and existing information

## *Example: Evaluation Worksheet*

| ***What do you want to know?*** *Evaluation questions* | ***How will you know it?*** *Indicators* | ***Sources of information*** | ***Data collection methods*** *- Timing* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

## 3. Interpreting and Using Evaluation Information

### *Interpretation*

Now you have the information. What does it mean? Making sense of the information takes time. Tally up the numerical results, put related findings together, create tables and charts, find patterns and meanings in the narrative data, prepare case examples or vignettes. In general, find ways to put the information in a form where users can digest it and consider what it means. Numbers and narrative statements do not speak for themselves. They need to be interpreted based on careful and fair judgment. Also different people may interpret the same information in different ways. Thus, bring people together to consider what the information means. The interpretation step is crucial. It is where the greatest learning occurs. It is a time to consider different interpretations, to question your assumptions and to search for deeper insights.

### *Communication*

The last step closes the loop and may spark other evaluation questions. It is the **communication** step. Time and energy is wasted when the final step of communicating our evaluation findings to as many people as possible is slighted. Often, we jump into the next activity without fully sharing and capitalizing on what we've learned. Take some time and think about the communication process. Communicating evaluation information has multiple pay-offs:

- **Provides opportunity for clarification and consensus building.** Communicating about what the collaborative is doing, how it is functioning, and what effect it is or is not having, makes it possible for issues to be raised and the various stakeholders to increase their understanding of the collaborative's work.
- **Provides basis for collaborative development and improvement.** Armed with evaluative information, constituencies can make better decisions about direction or needed changes.
- **Provides support for continuation or expansion.** Funders and people who make resource decisions affect-

ing the collaborative need evidence that the investment of resources is worth it.

- **Provides basis for promotion and public relations.** Communicating evaluation information conveys an image of the collaborative that can be useful in marketing and promoting the collaborative.
- **Provides support to individual members.** Communicating evaluation results to the member's home organization helps both to justify continued participation of an individual member and his or her organization and to alleviate potential misunderstandings

In this Section, E*valuation Practice*, we've been stressing a question-oriented, user-focused approach to evaluation. Communicating *with* and *to* those users is fundamental; both during the process of the evaluation and in sharing the results. Who raised the original evaluation questions: what did they want to know, for what purpose? Your first priority will be communicating to these key stakeholders. As evaluation progresses, the original design often changes and new constituencies may become involved. Or you may identify other people who need to hear your information. This may not be just those people who have a stake or interest in the collaborative, but others who you want to influence or inform about the collaborative or who may be interested in the questions and answers you have to share.

- Who would you like to interest in your collaborative?
- Who needs to know about your work for it to be successful in the long run?

Ongoing communication about progress may be more important for collaboratives than other types of initiatives because it may be many years before results are visible. Thus, we see that communicating evaluation information may be directed to a variety of **internal and external constituencies.**

## *Internal and External Constituencies*

### Members

If you are answering your own questions and the whole group is engaged in the evaluation process, you may be sharing your findings as you go along. In situations where the evaluation tasks are being done by one or a few people, all members will need to

receive and understand the evaluative information. Involving members in the process of interpreting the evaluation findings helps builds this understanding and leads to a more complete analysis of the results. You may need to set aside time and/or create special activities in order to ensure that information is fully communicated among members. Merely distributing a report is unlikely to generate much action. Also, not all members are equally active. How will you share evaluation information with those who attend irregularly? How will their feedback and input be solicited?

### *Represented Agencies/Organizations*

Effective communication between collaborative members and their sponsoring agency is fundamental to collaborative success and member satisfaction. Members will want to report collaborative progress and achievements as well as any changes in direction or problems encountered. Brainstorm some ways in which members might communicate evaluation information to the various actors and groups in their respective organizations. This brainstorming may be done individually, or as a collective. It may involve time and effort to produce and distribute documentation or it might be done informally during a staff meeting.

*Effective communication between collaborative members and their sponsoring agency is fundamental to collaborative success and member satisfaction.*

### *Respondents*

Another priority is to communicate evaluation results and learnings to those who provided the information for the evaluation. Typically, we send a report and a thank you note. Again, however, depending upon who these respondents are and how many are involved, you may consider a group process, a meeting, a media release or any variety of ways to communicate with the people who provided the information.

### *Funders*

Communications with funders and other sources of resources are critical. Often they prefer brief reports to keep them informed of progress with more substantial reports coming only at designated reporting dates, or after substantial progress and results. Inviting funders to attend collaborative events or programs is a useful way to informally build their understanding. Creative methods using media that are appealing may also capture their interest (e.g., short video, attractive newsletter, intriguing web site).

### *Interest Groups*

A key characteristic of collaboration is that such ventures usually address complex issues that affect many diverse interests. Some of these interests will be represented among your collaborative members and the communications of members to home organizations/constituencies (see above) will serve to keep diverse interests informed. However, you may wish to consider some special efforts to communicate with particular interest groups that may or may not be represented among your collaborative members. What groups are most and least informed of the collaborative's efforts? What groups are most and least supportive of the collaborative's efforts? When you plan communications to particular interest groups, give special attention to the interests of the group, to their existing knowledge of and support or opposition to the collaborative, and to cultural and demographic factors (ethnicity, age, education level, income, etc.) that might influence the content or format of your communications. Then develop a creative approach tailored to the particular interest group.

### *Community at large*

Evaluation activities may also provide useful information to be communicated to the broader community. Evaluative activities help us identify our collaborative's image, which may then be conveyed to the broader community or larger group of stakeholders. What symbols arise from our progress that can convey our image to a larger audience obviously depends on the phase and vision of the collaborative. Symbols can be powerful tools to both build cohesion within the collaborative and to promote its vision and progress to the outside world. Most images need to be communicated in various ways to appeal appropriately to each group of stakeholders. The first and foremost consideration when designing a message to be communicated is to **know your audience.** If the collaborative has a diverse set of stakeholder groups in the broader community, multiple communication channels and formats to convey its image will be necessary.

As you think about getting the most out of your evaluation information, you may wish to make a sketch of all potential information users.

- Who would want to know what?

- Who would you like to interest in your collaborative or share information with?
- What information should go to each?
- How?

Remember, the cardinal rules in communication planning:

- Know the audience
- Know what information each audience cares about most; balance that with what you want the audience to hear
- Be timely
- Fit the communication format to each audience

When reviewing evaluation findings some tensions may surface or incongruities may be discovered. Data are not neutral. Numeric as well as narrative data can be presented and interpreted in numerous ways. It will be important to pay attention to potential sources of disagreement and promote conversation among all.

## Feedback

Feedback is an essential part of communication; otherwise, the process might be more appropriately labeled, "talking to." Ensuring two-way communication through feedback mechanisms is critical for using evaluation in an organizational learning model. A successful collaborative listens to both its internal and external stakeholders, whether from within its own group—individual members' reaction and feedback to the evaluation information— or that which is received from others. Part of communication is listening—the same goes for communicating evaluation. Listen to what people are saying about the information. As appropriate, incorporate their comments and ideas into the collaborative's thinking.

## Formal and Informal Communications

Much of your communication will be accomplished informally — during meetings when you share information with each other, when you meet a key stakeholder on the street, or when you report back to your supervisor or home organization. These are the spontaneous and ongoing opportunities you have for sharing information and increasing your learning. At other

times and for other purposes, a formal communication process may be needed. This requires more time and effort but is vital for raising understanding and building shared commitment. Such formal communications may be necessary either within the collaborative (when membership is large and/or you need to connect with inactive members) or between the collaborative and its external constituencies.

To create a formal communication process within a collaborative or between a collaborative and its external constituencies:

- Identify the key people who you want to or who need to receive the evaluation information.
- Ascertain what information is of greatest interest and of greatest use to each audience, including what you want them to know or the image you want conveyed.
- Determine the most appropriate format or medium for each audience. Remember that one of the most common mistakes is to create one report and expect everyone to appreciate it.
- Outline when each audience will receive the information.
- Determine feedback needs: who will be asked for feedback and how will their feedback be obtained.
- Decide who in the collaborative will be responsible for ensuring that communication flows in a two-way fashion. Designate time and resources to accomplish this role.

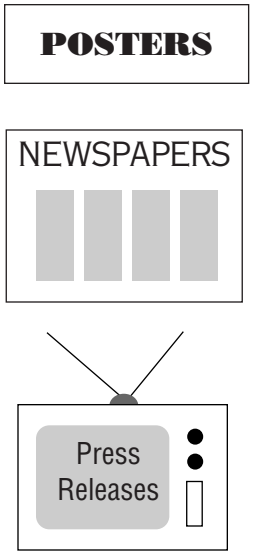
Knowing who will receive the information directs the purpose of the communication, its contents and its timing. All three will vary by audience. Here is a suggested format:

| Key People | Info. Needed | Format | Date | Feedback | Who's Responsible? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

## Communication Formats

Many formats can be used to communicate evaluation results. Again, creativity is the key. Consider the following in relation to your audience and message

- formal report, briefing paper: technical, popular, summary
- narrated slide show; video recording
- face-to-face presentation
- electronic mail, FAX
- collage of pictures
- targeted media release; widespread press release; news coverage
- display at a public site (e.g., in a main street window display, at the public library, in school lobby)
- data summaries sent to every key decision-maker, legislator, foundation, funder
- special newsletter, brochure, pamphlet
- journal article
- letter, memo




## Acting on Your Evaluation

It is not enough to simply answer questions. What will you or others do as a result of these insights? How will you use what you have learned?

You might apply your new knowledge to improving what you are doing. Perhaps you need to engage different people in your collaboration, or change direction, or methods or outcome expectations. Change is not always easy, but success in collaboration depends on paying close attention to what you are learning and using the learning to improve performance.

*Change is not always easy, but success in collaboration depends on paying close attention to what you are learning and using the learning to improve performance.*

Spend some time really looking at your evaluation information and what you've learned. You may wish to develop an action plan (facing page) that will set timelines and responsibilities for acting on the information.

## *Example: Using What We've Learned*

| New Insight | What is to be done | By Whom | When |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | | | |
| 2) | | | |
| 3) | | | |

## *Promote Your Results*

- A breakfast for funders to "tell the truth about how we got here"
- Data summaries from the evaluation sent to every legislator
- Data summaries from the evaluation sent periodically to every foundation that has some interest in the collaborative's effort
- An article published in the local United Way's newsletter about the collaboration
- A one-page description of the collaboration and its value included in every employee handbook in every participating organization
- Local news coverage of the benefits and cost-effectiveness of collaboration, using a message that is simple and compelling
- Luncheons, dinners, and socials to thank staff and supporters for implementing the work
- Thank-you letters to key people involved at every stage, highlighting the successes and thanking them for their contribution
- Thank-you letters to the associates, superiors, employees and families of people involved, thanking them for supporting the collaborative member.

*Source: Winer & Ray, 1994, p. 122.*

## Who Does Evaluation?

The premise of this manual is that valuing and taking responsibility for evaluation is everyone's responsibility as part of the learning process. In a collaborative context, this implies that evaluation itself is a collaborative process. Setting the purpose, direction and expectations for evaluation becomes a group process that is negotiated among the collaborative members.

The actual conduct of the evaluation tasks in the collaborative setting varies. We've seen a number of different scenarios:

- The collaborative designates a member or a team of members to take leadership for evaluation. The team communicates regularly with the collaborative membership to maintain joint ownership of the evaluation, but the evaluation tasks for the most part are done by the evaluation team.
- All members actively participate in setting goals and procedures for the evaluation process. Certain members take on specific evaluation tasks, such as an annual survey of members, monthly committee reports, or scheduled interviews with beneficiaries. Often one member is designated the evaluation leader to ensure tasks are completed and communicated, but the collaborative as a whole makes decisions and controls the evaluation process.
- The collaborative hires a consultant who provides advice or assistance on particular methodological issues, helps the collaborative develop an evaluation process, and/or conducts particular evaluation studies. The outside consultant provides leadership for evaluation and does most of the planning and data collection, but members are fully engaged in the process and feel it is "their" evaluation.
- The funder contracts an external evaluation of the collaborative, often as part of a large, multi-site initiative. Collaborative members may have little input in or control over this type of evaluation.
- An individual member of the collaborative wants or needs to conduct an evaluation for his/her professional or agency accountability needs. We find this particularly

among public agency representatives who need to account for their time and effort. In these cases, the individual may conduct the evaluation singly, soliciting assistance and input from collaborative members as possible. Or, the collaborative embraces the individual's plan and undertakes the evaluation jointly.

*The formality and intensity of the evaluation effort will vary depending upon who is asking for the evaluation, how the evaluation will be used, and what resources are available.*

Formal evaluation takes time and money. Many evaluative concerns and questions are addressed through an informal process of watching, listening and keeping track. The formality and intensity of the evaluation effort will vary depending upon who is asking for the evaluation, how the evaluation will be used, and what resources are available. It is clear that many collaboratives do not have the resources to hire an external evaluator, nor is one necessarily appropriate. Collaboratives often mix formal and informal evaluation activities. Increasingly, we find community-based collaboratives involved in what Wadsworth (1991) calls "everyday evaluation" , where members conduct evaluation as an *ordinary everyday part* of what they do.

## Not Everything Is a Success

In our desire to "tell our story" and to build support for our collaboratives, we may be inclined to focus only on success — the 'good things' — or want our evaluations to *prove* the value of our work. Be careful not to confuse marketing and public relations with evaluation. Evaluation is a process of inquiry to learn about and document actual activities and effects in order to understand what works, what doesn't and why. Collaboratives don't always work or work as well as intended. The cultural and political environment in which collaboratives function can be powerful.

*Doing honest self-appraisal will help ensure that the potential of collaboratives is achieved.*

It is important to recognize limitations and changes needed in collaborative relationships as well as to publicize successes. Most people know that improving social conditions is complex and uncertain. In this era of skepticism and reality checking, painting a true picture, which may not always be a rosy picture, is wise. Reasons for underachievement can be explained and plans for redirection highlighted. Doing honest self-appraisal will help ensure that the potential of collaboratives is achieved.

# SECTION 4

# Evaluating Self Interest

## Typical self interest questions

***Feasibility***

- *Is involvement in this collaborative within my agencies mandate?*
- *What can I/my agency contribute?*
- *What will we gain?*
- *Should I/we get involved*

***Process***

- *What is my role/contribution to the functioning of the collaborative?*
- *What am I/we gaining?*

***Outcomes***

- *What difference does/did it make that I am/was involved?*
- *What benefit did the agency gain?*
- *What credit can I/we take?*
- *What would have happened without me?*

## REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

The following *real world examples* illustrate the type of issues that arise over the course of a collaborative's development relative to self-interests. In each instance the individual had questions to answer that related to her and her agency's own interests.

### Feasibility

The local Health and Human Services department had applied for and received a Family Preservation Grant. The director had contacted several local agencies, including Cooperative Extension to

ask for representation on the steering committee. The Cooperative Extension Family Living agent already was actively programming in two areas of high need in county A, nutrition and consumer economics. She could see several benefits accruing from involvement with a multi-agency collaborative effort, and recognized the goal of strengthening families as an important one for the county. However, she wasn't clear about the role she was expected to play on the steering committee. While in the past she had experienced rocky relations with one of the agencies also asked to serve on the committee, she now was receiving positive signals from the state Extension office regarding family preservation and support activities. She decided she needed to carefully examine the pros and cons of getting involved in the collaborative effort to be sure her interests would be served.

## Process issues

The Family Preservation and Support effort in the county B had been under way for a year. The Family Living agent had served on the steering committee and contributed to the effort in numerous ways. In addition to actively participating in steering group meetings, she had facilitated a mission statement exercise, coordinated distribution and analysis of a survey of parents, and chaired the subcommittee on child care. Periodically, she reported her efforts to the Extension committee of the county board and to the statewide Extension office. On some of these occasions questions arose. Was her involvement needed, given the participation of so many other agencies? Were the roles she was performing appropriate to her educational mission? How did she justify all the time she was investing in the effort? She decided she needed to examine the contributions she was making to the collaborative as part of the processes of formation, direction setting and early-action planning. Was her involvement necessary and valuable and still needed and were interests of her stakeholders being addressed through her involvement?

## Outcome issues

In county C a Family Preservation and Support effort had been under way for 3 years. Several projects had been launched to address needs identified in the early planning. The Family Living agent had been especially active in leading a parent education workshop series, in coordinating a local family policy impact seminar, and in working with the 4-H agent and two other agencies to set up a youth center. Other FP & S initiatives included: networking

and exchange among agencies serving families, a school-based initiative to promote family interaction and school learning, and a summer, alcohol-free family festival. Evaluation data showed that the collaborative was changing community members' attitudes and stimulating new services by agencies, but having little impact on domestic abuse or teen pregnancy statistics. Members of the collaborative had promoted the collaborative and its efforts widely as a shared effort for the common good. Project promotions identified agencies making special contributions to a particular initiative. Nonetheless, members of the community sometimes credited an agency for efforts or impacts it had little to do with while failing to recognize the key contributions of other agencies. The Family Living agent decided she needed to document her contribution to the collaborative's outcomes.

***In all three of these cases*** the potential or actual collaborator faced dilemmas in deciding whether to become involved and/or justifying her involvement in the collaborative relative to her individual and agency interests. We call these predicaments evaluating individual interests. The questions regarding whether to become involved in the first place correspond to front-end analysis and context evaluation in the evaluation literature. However, in collaborative evaluation individual interest questions can arise throughout the collaborative process, from before the collaborative starts until after it is finished.

*Collaborative efforts are initiated and fundamentally driven by the individual interests of individual members.*

Collaborative efforts are initiated and fundamentally driven by the individual interests (sometimes called self- or private interests) of individual members and their home organizations or constituencies. For collaboration to occur in the first place participants must believe working together will serve their own interests. Throughout some successful collaboratives, members focus primarily on their individual interests. In others, a shift in focus from individual to common interests occurs after members have worked together. If this shift occurs, participants describe accompanying changes in language (from *I to we*, and *they* to *us*), in group norms, and as a perceived equalizing of power and status. According to Chrislip & Larson (1994), this shift is critical for sustaining a long-run effort and achieving extraordinary results for the community. This shift, however, is more likely to occur for active participants in the workings of

the collaborative than for the members and decision makers in the organizations and constituencies they represent.

*The very nature of collaboration is to create a shared vision and working relationship.*

Even if individual interest has receded from a primary to a secondary concern for active collaborative members, many will be accountable to home persons and groups who still may judge the effort primarily by individual interest criteria. Most agencies require evidence of personnel performance; therefore, members of collaboratives often have to account for their individual performances, despite the fact that they are not sole players or in control. Even when a collaborative is working as an effective team, individual members may have individual accountability requirement—for performance appraisal or agency accountability.

*Some people think that focusing on the individual undermines the ability of the collaborative to function as a true "team."*

Evaluating individual contributions is problematic in collaboratives since the very nature of collaboration is to create a shared vision and working relationship. Some people even think that focusing on the individual undermines the ability of the collaborative to function as a true "team." Nevertheless, most of us will want to (or need to) keep track of our individual contributions and achievements in collaborative work. And so may our partners.

## What To Consider

### 1. Deciding to Get Involved

- *Should I or my agency become involved?*
- *Is the collaborative compatible with my agency's mission?*
- *What is my needed/appropriate role?*
- *What are the political realities/liabilities for me/my agency?*
- *Are there others already doing this or better able to do this?*

*Should I or My Agency Get Involved or Stay Involved?* You should take time to evaluate whether your individual interests are apt to be served before joining a collaborative venture, as well as periodically while the project moves in new directions or as you consider new roles. Consider the overall collaborative and its potential success, because you will share in that success. Section 5 on feasibility evaluation for the collaborative as a whole can help you make these judgments.

In addition, consider the specifics of the contributions you will make to the effort. What are your capabilities for these specific roles? How will performing these roles affect your relationships within and outside of the collaborative? What do you have to gain or to lose? Initiating the collaborative may be desirable, but do you need to be a member? Would it be better to serve in an ad hoc manner, assisting when appropriate, not as a permanent member?

Individual interests are a fundamental aspect of collaboratives. Successful collaboratives keep self interests in the forefront and even renegotiate them as members and self interests change (Winer & Ray, 1994). It may be important to clearly understand your own and others' self interests as you initiate or join a collaborative. A facilitated discussion to this end will help clarify individuals' reasons for joining the collaborative, their interests, and their expectations: members might write these down and identify indicators that will signal accomplishment to clarify intentions and measure progress (see example below). Thus, you might share these perspectives within the group.

***Example: Are Your Self-Interests Being Met?***

Why am I a Member?

| What do you hope to accomplish? | How will you know or recognize it? |
|---|---|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. |

## 2. Choosing What Roles to Perform

*What Roles Should I or My Agency Perform or Have I or My Agency Performed?* Each member of a collaborative contributes to the joint effort, but the contributions vary according to the interests, resources and capabilities of each member. One of the reasons community collaboratives pose a special challenge for collaborators is that there are so many roles to perform in support of these efforts. Moreover, role and resource contributions of

members may vary at different stages in a collaborative's development cycle. Members may move in and out of roles, and some roles may be filled by individuals external to the group. Members may be more prepared for some roles than others. Performing one role sometimes can conflict with another role. Some roles are more visible in their performance and/or have more visible impacts. Some roles are clearly related to the mission of your organization, and others are not.

It is important to document the role(s) you play and the role(s) your larger organization plays in the collaborative effort if you are to assess the value of your contribution. The example below shows a variety of roles that we've seen played by collaborative members. Think about the roles that are being played in your collaborative — current and past. Who is doing what?

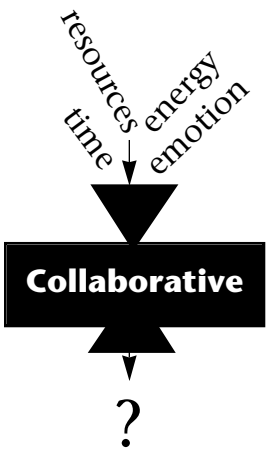
| *Example: Roles played in community collaboratives* | |
|---|---|
| Convenor | Recruiter |
| Leader: of full group; committee | Communicator |
| Member: of full group: committee | Grant writer |
| Officer | Fund raiser |
| Coordinator | Spokesperson |
| Implementor | Coach/mentor |
| Initiator | Resource-linker |
| Accountant | Teacher/trainer |
| Facilitator | Mediator |
| Evaluator | Advocate |

Successful collaborative relationships depend on various partners playing a variety of significant roles. When engaging in collaboration, success can be better ensured by determining whether some of these roles are needed or whether they need to be developed further by one, several or all partners.

Role definition typically evolves as the collaborative group matures from initial centralizing of leadership/other functions, to distribution of leadership/other functions, to sharing and diffusion of such functions. In a highly collaborative group, role definitions and performance become very fluid and pervasive as all members assume responsibility for high level group performance and as behavior responsive to group needs becomes second nature.

## 3. Considering the Consequences

*What are the consequences of my individual role contributions and what difference has my contribution made to the success and impact of the collaborative?* Group efforts like collaboratives rise and fall on the contributions by group members. However, it is not enough in today's world of tight resources and accountability to simply cite this truism as justification that you are a valuable or even crucial member of the collaborative. You must be prepared to specify the contributions you make to the effort and to explain why they are important to the collective success of the effort. Otherwise, your home organization or others may say or believe that the collaborative would be just as effective without your participation.




Given the dynamic nature of collaboration and the multiplicity of contributions by different members, it can be a challenge to tease out the specific contribution you are making and even more challenging to determine its impact. Nonetheless, paying attention to important questions will help you and your home organization consider the merits of your participation. In addition, addressing these questions collectively for each collaborative member will help the group make the best use of the resources devoted to the effort. You might wish to think about the example below.

***Example: How Have Your Individual Accomplishments Affected…***

| Focus | Changes in | Focus | Changes in |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Individuals beneficiaries/ clients collaborative members community residents | knowledge<br>attitude<br>skills<br>behaviors<br>self-concepts<br>lifestyles | 3 Agency/ organizations | policies<br>resource use<br>services provided |
| | | 4 System | policies<br>resource use/ generation<br>delivery of services |
| 2 Groups | interpersonal relationships<br>communications<br>achievement of outcomes<br>resource use<br>group process | | relationships |
| | | 5 Communities | cohesion/identify<br>civic action<br>social norms<br>policies<br>socio-economic-environmental conditions |

| + | – |
|---|---|
| ✔ | |
| ✔ | |
| | ✔ |
| | ✔ |
| ✔ | |
| | ✔ |

## 4. Individual and Agency Costs and Benefits

A last area to consider regarding individual interest is that of costs and benefits to the individual participant and/or home organization or constituency. Certainly each individual member shares in the overall impacts of the collaborative, those both good and bad. When credit and blame are shared equally the individual interest of each member parallels that of the collaborative as a whole. However, sometimes credit and blame are not shared equally. Some parties may claim or receive the lion's share of the credit. When this situation occurs an individual-interest issue arises for other members.

*Participating in a collaborative may affect the self interests of various members in different ways.*

Individual interest also arises independent of the overall success or shortcomings of the collaborative. Each member has particular needs, relates to particular constituencies, and possesses particular resources. Thus, participating in a collaborative may affect the self interests of various members in different ways. For example, one member may feel that its agency is relinquishing its traditional power by participating in the collaborative; another member may see the collaborative as an opportunity to gain new power. Or a member from a small organization may be devoting a relatively high proportion of its scarce resources to the effort while another member from a large organization considers participation a small investment.

In addition to members being conscious of the benefits and costs of their participation, each member needs to be sensitive to the different situations of other members and aware of the associated differences in benefits and costs. When the full collaborative keeps these individual-interest considerations in mind, better decisions and a spirit of teamwork can produce desired results.

# How To Evaluate Self Interests

Matters pertaining to individual interests can be evaluated by individual parties on their own or through a collective process that jointly engages collaborators. Several methods can play a role in evaluating self interest. They include:

**Individual reflection.** Taking time to think through matters of individual interest can clarify such interests and help you prepare to articulate them to others.

**Documenting** individual contributions and impacts. Maintaining records and saving products of your individual contributions can provide a basis for your individual self interest evaluation and communications.

**Consultation** with key advisors. Discussing self interest concerns with persons who know your situation and your performance can extend your individual analysis.

**Engage** collaborative members in a collective evaluation of individual interest matters (e.g., roles, contributions, impacts, etc.). This activity can be accomplished through a structured inventory or through a group exercise/discussion.

**Survey** community organizations/members to determine their views of individual contributions.

Specific methods that address particular self interest concerns are summarized below.

## Determine the Feasibility of Joining the Collaborative Effort

Several methods can help you determine the feasibility of joining the collaborative. First, make your own assessment of the overall feasibility of the collaborative venture.

- What are indicators that this effort has some promise of success?
- What are indicators suggesting the effort may flounder?

Then consider how the venture fits with your larger priorities, what costs and benefits you can expect from joining or not joining, and what contributions you can make. After these efforts at individual analysis, take time to consult with others. Discuss the venture with key persons inside and outside your organization who can help extend your analysis of your individual readiness, who can help you consider the likely costs and benefits for your home organization or constituency, and who can extend your individual analysis of the feasibility of the overall effort.

Some of your feasibility questions will be better answered after you meet with other potential collaborators. A goal of such an early meeting should be to learn about the individual interests

of each potential collaborator so that each party can assess the feasibility of continued participation. This exploration can be done through a round of individual sharing, a group discussion, or a survey of individual interests.

*Keep Records!*
*log*
*diary*
*survey*

## Document the Role You Play and Your Activities in the Collaborative

As indicated earlier, collaborators may perform various roles according to their interests and capabilities and the needs of the collaborative. Often roles of a member change over the course of the collaborative life cycle. You may find yourself moving in and out of various roles. You may leave the collaborative for a while and return in another capacity; the make-up of the collaborative may change and you find that you have returned to a previous role or are playing several roles at once. Keeping a log book or diary helps keep track of your role, recording such information as (a) the nature of your role, (b) when your role changes, (c) or why your role changed. Periodically surveying collaborative members regarding roles of members and perceived value of these contributions also can be helpful.

In conjunction with your role, track specific activities you carry out in each role or review the stages of collaborative development (Section 2) and record your role and contributions by stage.

### *Example: Tracking Your Role*

**Name**_____

| Role | Dates served | My inputs | My activities | Outcomes | Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Initiator | May-Oct. '94 | my time<br>specialist support | planned and convened meetings<br>networking | informal working agreements between collaborators | brought the collaborative into existence |
| Chair | Oct. '94-Oct. '95 | leadership and facilitation skills<br>knowledge of local government | visioning exercise<br>team building<br>mobilizing support | established working procedures<br>shared vision<br>3 year plan of work | plan resulted in securing grant monies |

Ways to track these activities include:

- Keeping records yourself
- Using collaborative records (e.g., activity and responsibility charts, minutes from meetings, etc.)
- Asking members for input

Document inputs you bring to the collaborative (besides yourself and your expertise); for example, state level support, national network of expertise, finances, and so forth.

## Determine the Impact of Your Contributions to the Collaborative

Your concern here is to assess how your roles/activities/accomplishments affect(ed) the operation of the collaborative, achievement of outcomes or other intended/unintended consequences of your involvement in the collaborative, both positive and negative.

You might wish to consider how your individual efforts have affected the collaborative at individual, collaborative and community levels. In each case it can help to begin by identifying what changes you might expect to see before ascertaining actual changes. Examining the following information can help you make sense of and interpret the results:

- Individuals within the collaborative (e.g., changes in knowledge, changes in ability to work effectively in a group setting, etc.)
- The collaborative as a whole (e.g., ability to function effectively; achievement of intended outcomes)
- The community. (e.g., end results of collaboration effort, changes in community members, community conditions, services, policies, and so forth)

You may wish to single these out (for quarterly/annual progress reporting) and/or combine and report on them at the end of each year or a longer period. To portray and communicate your contributions, you might use a **diagram**, **time line**, or **flowchart** indicating how your contributions over time have contributed to community change.

Specific methods (see Section 8) for determining individual impacts include:

- Asking members of the collaborative to tell what they see that you've done, and what it contributed to meeting the collaborative's outcomes. Effective tools to use would be group or individual interviews, solicited testimonials, or photos and diagrams to stimulate discussion.
- Asking beneficiaries to relate if they've changed, how much they've changed and the extent to which any change was due to your involvement. Using surveys and interviews would facilitate discovery.
- Asking others who can or have observed the collaborative and its work if there has been a change and to what they attribute that change. The key informant interview works well here.
- Inviting "experts" to judge what difference your agency has made.
- Carve out your own part for a closer examination. For example, if you are responsible for leadership training as part of the collaborative's work, conduct a focused evaluation of the leadership training component.

### *Example: Scoring Individuals and Groups*

**Objective** To provide feedback of individuals' perceptions of the value of their own contributions to group performance

**Materials** Paper, pens

**Time** 5 minutes

**Procedure**

1. This can take place at any time, during any meeting or work session. Tell everyone that they are going to evaluate their contribution to the group. Ask each individual to select a rating, from 0 to 5, for the question:

   "To what extent does the group listen to the contribution that I make to the discussion?"

2. Each person writes his/her rating on a piece of paper, but not their names.
3. Collect the papers, calculate an average value; report the average, and the range.

**Comments** Individuals who give a high rating may be surprised by average values below their score. Thinking about and being sensitive to others' contributions results in more effective group work.

Source: Adapted from Pretty et al., 1995

## Determining Costs and Benefits for You or Your Agency

In this manual we are advocating an informal approach to cost and benefit evaluation. Documentation and evaluation of costs and benefits can be a complex endeavor involving sophisticated calculations of agency inputs in relation to measures of benefit. In most cases at the local level your evaluation efforts can be better applied to other questions. If a systematic cost/benefit study is needed, we encourage you to consult with a professional evaluator. What we are suggesting, however, is that periodic reflections on costs of involvement versus benefits can be useful. Costs of involvement include time, resources, adverse publicity, and so forth. Benefits include positive relationships with others, member learning, community impacts, leveraged resources, and so forth. This information can be useful to collaborative members and their stakeholders. The methods described above easily can include attention to these questions.

# Using Results

When you and/or your collaborators evaluate matters pertaining to self interests, there are several uses for the findings. These include:

- Determining whether to take part in a new or changing initiative.
- Clarifying to yourself and others the interests you bring to the effort that must be met to sustain your participation.
- Explaining your participation and its contributions to members of your home organization or other persons/groups to which you are accountable.
- Determining whether changes in your participation or impact are needed.
- Recognizing the contributions of various parties to the collaborative effort.

## Evaluating Self Interests While Building Trust

We have made the case that recognition of self interests and attention to evaluation of whether those interests are satisfied is a key element of effective collaboration. We have also indicated that over time the attention of collaborative participants may shift from a focus on self interests to greater emphasis on shared interests or the common good. Trust is the key ingredient in encouraging members to pay attention to each other's self interests and in building a collective sense of common or shared interest. Trust allows open communication, sharing of resources, and respect for differences. Trust is built by consistently recognizing and attending to member interests and by consciously attending to and reconciling situations where self interests and collaborative interests are at odds. Evaluation provides a key process for accomplishing these key trust building tasks.

In *Partnerships: Shared Leadership Among Stakeholders* (Miller, Rossing, & Steele, 1990), a number of points are offered for attaining and maintaining trust in partnering situations. Of particular note to this discussion on evaluation are the following:

Make each partner feel his or her contribution is as important as anyone else's.

> *"Visibility, both for the partnership and for the individual partners also is essential to keep the larger community aware of the mission, progress toward the mission and the contributions of the partners"* (Miller, 1989, p.129).

Shared recognition and credit increases trust. Give credit where credit is due.

> *"Another element is sharing recognition and credit. This one is very crucial. All partners should receive recognition for their contributions to the mission, and also for their part in the partnership. This builds trust and a stronger relationship"* (Nuendorff, 1989, p.129).

Use a win-win approach.

> *"It is important to know what each partner is expecting to get from the relationship. Once they see that their needs are recognized, it diffuses distrust"* (O'Brien, 1989, p. 129).

***Credit is infinitely divisible***
***Contribution must be definable***

# SECTION 5

# Evaluating Feasibility

## Typical Feasibility Questions

- *Is a collaborative needed?*
- *What is likely to be the most appropriate approach and composition?*
- *What opportunities or barriers to collaboration exist?*
- *Are requisite resources and capacities available?*
- *Does a new direction fit within the mission of the collaborative?*
- *What are the implications of the new initiative for the existing structure and process of the collaborative?*
- *What are consequences of dropping a particular project or ending the collaborative as a whole?*

## REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

In the following *real world examples,* collaborators face the issue of whether a collaborative is warranted, likely to succeed, or if a new direction is appropriate. All these examples deal with issues of feasability either at start-up or during the collaborative's life.

### Example 1

The local Health and Human Services department had contacted several local agencies, including Cooperative Extension to ask for support for an application they were preparing for a Family Preservation and Support Grant. The grant required community collaboration as the main approach. There were some indications that the department's real motivation for the grant was to gain funds and that they expected to control the resources they received pretty tightly. Human service agencies and related community organizations had a history of cooperative efforts of two or three groups where mutual benefits were clear, but little experience in a broader collaboration. Often these agencies competed

for the same funds. Concern about strengthening families was high in the county and county board members were calling for less duplication and more interagency cooperation. A respected church leader teamed up with a county board member to contact several of the key local actors to assess their interest and readiness for a collaborative effort.

## Example 2

In a 100 square mile creek watershed, environmental and land use issues affecting the interests of many public and private entities would periodically arise. Over several years several local and regional actors had formed an association to broaden awareness of these issues. The association has been successful in increasing local awareness of environmental issues and in fostering informal relationships between members of various interests and organizations. However, several recent contentious land use proposals have been resolved in a win-lose fashion in traditional local government forums with little involvement of the association or other watershed oriented interests. The association felt a structured process was needed involving key stakeholders and leading to an accepted plan for land use and natural resource management in the watershed. They recruited a consultant to help them explore whether a mediated consensus building process was appropriate for the current situation in the watershed. He interviewed 34 people representing an array of interests. In his report, he concluded that a mediated process was not appropriate. Neither the issue nor the scale of watershed planning was accepted or strongly felt by local interest groups. Thus he reasoned and the association agreed, that motivation to sustain a consensus process at the watershed scale was not sufficient to give a probability of success.

## Example 3

In X County a group convened 2 years ago after a rash of highly publicized local crimes. They sought to set up neighborhood watch programs. These stakeholders conducted several workshops on crime and the neighborhood watch approach. As they learned more about crime in the community, however, they saw that the roots lay in unemployment and underemployment. They redefined their focus and concentrated on economic development as the crucial issue. To address economic development they needed a different set of actors because some of the original actors had little to offer. At this point they assessed the possibility of using a col-

laborative approach for this new direction. They conducted an exercise to identify stakeholders for economic development, and then convened them to consider the history of past economic development efforts and the feasibility of a new collaborative approach.

***In all three of these cases,*** the potential or actual collaborators faced dilemmas of whether the initiative was a good choice and if it were likely to succeed. We've labeled this "evaluating feasibility" but it also corresponds to context evaluation and front-end analysis. These questions, however, arise not just at start-up but may occur at any point in the collaborative relationship.

Collaborative and other shared resource relationships provide valuable opportunities for achieving important benefits for constituencies and communities. In some cases the only way to achieve desired outcomes is through such relationships. Yet these relationships also have costs and there is no guarantee that efforts will be rewarded with desired results. In some cases, while some success is achieved, the costs outweigh the benefits. Therefore, learn how to assess the relative mix of likely costs, results and benefits before entering into such relationships (as well as during the relationship) as conditions and directions change.

- Being thoughtful about these issues is important if collaboratives are to reach their potential.
- When is a collaborative a good idea and when is another form of relationship more appropriate?
- When is it in the practitioner's interest or the interest of the agency to be involved and when is it okay to say "no"?

Some groups and/or communities are not ready for collaborative work; some problems do not warrant a collaborative approach; and sometimes an individual's background and/or the agency's mission do not fit that of a collaborative.

*The focus of feasibility evaluation is on the feasibility of the collaborative as a whole, on its forming and functioning effectively and producing desired results and community changes.*

The focus of feasibility evaluation is on the feasibility of the collaborative as a whole, on its forming and functioning effectively and producing desired results and community changes. This

attention differs from evaluating the feasibility of an individual member/agency contributing effectively to and gaining sufficient benefit from a collaborative effort (see Section 4). Obviously, however, the two sets of concerns are closely related.

# What to Consider

## 1. Context and Readiness for Collaboration

The context in which the collaborative operates greatly influences its success. Context refers to the situation that surrounds the collaborative:

- The social-economic-cultural-political and bio-physical environment (human, physical and technical resources); and
- the organizational (culture, climate, rules and regulations) and stakeholder context that affect the formation and functioning of the collaborative.

### *Community and the External Environment*

Research indicates that a collaborative's success is directly linked to the context in which it operates. It may be important to first assess a community's capacity for change as well as the potential of a collaborative to foster change in your particular environment (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). What assumptions have you made about the way the collaborative will work/works and what in the local environment helps validate or challenge those assumptions?

- Is the issue to be resolved best addressed through a collaborative approach (recognizing that not everything is best tackled through a collaborative)?
- Is there a history of cooperation and trust in the community?
- Is the timing right for starting up a collaborative?
- Who/what can help or hinder the collaborative effort?
- Is there a core group of interested, committed and capable people to design and facilitate the collaborative process?
- Are there leaders with the credibility and respect to initiate and sustain a collaborative process?
- What is the level of conflict, mistrust, disunity among stakeholders?

### *Organizational Context*

Research also shows that there are specific organizational factors that influence the success of a collaborative. These factors include the awareness of need for an integrated approach, resource availability, flexibility in organizational structure and communication, history of collaborative work, and favorable political and social climates (Blumenkratz, 1992; Casey, 1995; Mattesich & Monsey, 1992; Melville & Blank, 1991). No group will have all these things. If some are lacking there may be steps that can be taken to educate interested parties on the collaborative process prior to initiating a collaborative. This preparation can help groups or communities ready themselves for change.

When considering the context in which your collaborative will function it is helpful to look at some of the organizational factors found to be either **barriers or facilitators** of successful collaboration (see next page). Some may be more important in a given context than others. The more facilitators you have and the fewer barriers within and across the potential collaborating organizations, the more likely that collaboration will succeed.

### *Stakeholder Readiness*

In a collaborative situation various constituencies will have interests in the outcomes a collaborative seeks to achieve. Some of these interests are represented in formal organizations, others find expression in citizens that may have a shared concern, but who are not organized to protect or advance their interest. Several factors may be significant in assessing the readiness of a set of stakeholders for a shared resource relationship, particularly a relationship aimed at collaboration. Such factors include:

- Degree of motivation to address the issue(s) or opportunity(s)
- Specificity in the way various parties define the issue or opportunity
- Current compatibility of definitions and potential for reframing to create a shared definition
- The scope of matters parties wish to include in the initiative
- Belief in the possibility of change and impact

## *Example: Organizational Facilitators and Barriers*

**Facilitating Factors for Collaboration**

- Perceived need for collaboration
- Benefits seem to outweigh costs
- Positive attitudes toward collaboration among stakeholders
- Agencies see others as a valuable resource
- Reward systems reinforce group approaches
- Common commitment to a problem or goal
- Partial interdependence exists
- Environment of honesty and accountability
- Degree of independence felt by local professionals from their state supervisors
- Clear and open communication has begun
- Prevailing organizational/environment norms value innovation
- Resources are scarce
- Needs/benefits actually exist
- A complementary diversity exists in staff
- Leadership styles of management favor collaboration
- Regular opportunities for informal contact/exchanges among organizations
- Geographic proximity among stakeholders
- Staff are specifically assigned to boundary crossing roles
- Similarity in organizational structures, capabilities, needs and services
- Support from the top
- Willingness to invest agency resources of time, personnel, materials or facilities
- Willingness to have joint evaluation of program outcomes

**Barriers to Collaboration**

- Costs outweigh actual benefits
- Bureaucratization inhibiting communication internally and externally
- Organization structure differences
- High staff turnover
- Lack of geographic proximity
- Professionalization of staff roles limits flexibility
- Categorical funding, confidentiality, statutory or other regulatory barriers to coordination
- Lack of resources/insufficient funding
- Lack of trained personnel
- Inherent power imbalances exist
- Sense of competition for resources or clients among organizations
- Differing leadership approaches/authority
- Organizations fear a loss of program identity, prestige or authority
- Organizations have differing levels of service effectiveness
- Disparities in staff training
- Different program priorities, ideologies, outlooks or goals
- Lack of common "language"
- Historically poor relations between organizations
- Inertia of existing service system

*Source: Adapted from Sippanen et al., 1996.*

- Ability to express interests in an organized way
- Identification with or allegiance to other decision making arenas or avenues
- Past history of relationships between parties
- Trust between parties
- Underlying differences between parties (e.g., values, organizational/social culture, etc.)
- Knowledge of and skills in forming or pursuing shared resource relationships.

## 2. Possible Changes in Collaborative Membership, Structure, or Direction

Collaboratives evolve. As they do, new activities, new members, and new directions unfold. You may be thinking about a new service delivery option, the addition of personnel, outreach into a new area, or changes in services. Or you may be considering dropping a project, or fundamentally redefining the collaborative or ending the collaborative as a whole. Do you merely let these things happen or do you systematically look at these opportunities and examine their potential and liabilities?

Evaluative questions might include:

- Does the new direction fit within the mission of the collaborative?
- Does the collaborative have the resources and capabilities to carry out the new initiative? If not, how might they be accessed?
- What are the implications of the new initiative for the existing structure and process of the collaborative?
- What is the expected outcome for the addition or change in direction?
- What are consequences of dropping the project or ending the collaboration?

## How to Evaluate Feasibility

Research shows that many factors affect the likely success of collaboratives. Thus it behooves potential or actual collaborators to make an assessment of feasibility when they are considering investing precious resources in a new or changed initiative.

The key elements in conducting a feasibility evaluation are pretty much the same whether one is evaluating feasibility at the outset of a proposed collaboration or evaluating the feasibility of a change in an existing collaboration. These elements include:

- recognizing the need to assess feasibility
- identifying and committing an individual or group to conduct the evaluation
- identifying feasibility questions
- gathering feasibility information and
- interpreting and acting on the evaluation results.

Sometimes the need for feasibility evaluation is quite obvious, because parties have serious reservations about the prospects for the collaborative. Unless a process is used to identify and address these concerns no collaborative will arise. In other cases, the case for collaboration is more compelling due to a funding opportunity, or an urgent community issue. Or a collaborative may look promising due to successful examples in other communities. In these cases, parties may convene and enter into collaboration without much consideration of feasibility. This is often a mistake, because parties later become frustrated and disillusioned by unmet expectations. Regardless of the past history of relationships of parties, in any new venture there will always be factors that both favor and impede collaborative success in the new or changed initiative. Considering these factors helps the collaborators build a constructive relationship based on more realistic expectations. Attending to these factors helps the collaborative to grow and mature over time.

The questions to consider in feasibility evaluation can be drawn from potential or actual collaborators, and/or from existing inventories or lists based on research that are presented in this manual. Since feasibility considerations cover a very broad scope it is best to be selective in focusing on the most critical considerations. Then as an effort proceeds additional considerations

will arise as parties learn more about each other and the situation they are addressing.

Typically, feasibility evaluation occurs informally and privately on the self interest level (see Section 4). Each party sizes up the likely effectiveness and outcomes of a collaborative effort and decides independently whether to become or stay engaged. We are advocating feasibility evaluation as a collective effort of potential or actual collaborators. This entails identifying an individual or group to develop a method for parties to meet and share with each other their feasibility assessments and to arrive at a collective judgement of the implications of their assessments. An evaluation can be conducted informally by collectively reflecting on past situations involving the projected parties. Or parties might complete a readiness questionnaire first and then an initiator group or representatives of stakeholders could consider the results.

For an existing collaborative, it may be possible to convene interested parties to discuss feasibility considerations and draw conclusions. This may be more difficult for a proposed new collaborative. It is still a desirable approach, but if the parties are not ready to meet and discuss feasibility considerations it may be best to ask a neutral person to meet with parties separately and then suggest feasible possibilities for the proposed initiative. When the stakes are high and resources are available, a more formal method can be used, such as asking a neutral person to formally interview all prospective parties to ascertain their readiness for the new initiative or their perspectives on the proposed change and then to offer recommendations.

When large organizations are involved in a collaborative effort, feasibility should be considered periodically with respect to the interest, support and involvement of decision-makers who are not active members of the collaborative. Typically active collaborators develop shared understandings and ways of working together that make joint efforts feasible at their working level. However, members of their larger organizations who have not participated actively may not be interested, willing or capable of contributing to the joint effort. It can be very disconcerting for collaborative participants to encounter resistance to well planned collaborative efforts. This may come from other members of their organization on whom authorization or implementation depends who do not understand or accept the ratio-

nale for joint effort. Usually each collaborator must each take responsibility for assessing feasibility factors with respect to members of their organization and for sharing their conclusions with other collaborators. Sometimes, collaborators can assist each other in these inquiries by offering useful or needed questions or by joining the organization representatives in meeting with their home organization leaders or members.

It is particularly important to view feasibility evaluation as an ongoing process. Because collaboration brings parties together that have different interests, mandates, ethnic and organizational cultures, operating procedures, communication styles and so forth each episode where parties meet, communicate or work together yields new insights about the characteristics of various parties. These can open or hinder new possibilities for collaboration. As trust builds parties will learn more about these helping and hindering factors and will need to periodically adjust their expectations regarding the nature and goals of their collaborative.

## Using the Results of Feasibility Evaluation

Information gained from evaluating feasibility may have various uses. These include:

- Justify involvement or non-involvement
- Use as baseline for later comparisons
- Identify the level of shared resource relationship that is feasible at present
- Set or change direction
- Identify limits or boundaries for the collaborative
- Indicate needs or issues to be addressed which would help the collaborative be successful
- Identify a new or different role for you or other members

# SECTION 6

# Evaluating Process

## Typical Process Questions

- *Are the right people on board? What is the level of involvement?*
- *Are we working effectively together as a group? Are members satisfied? Are we achieving what we want?*
- *Are programs being implemented as planned?*
- *Are we using resources wisely?*
- *How can we sustain people's involvement?*

## REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

The following real world examples show collaboratives facing a variety of process issues relative to how well the group is functioning, what it is learning, how it might improve, and what it can communicate to externals who have a stake in or are funding the effort. Because the very nature of collaboratives is a *process,* process evaluation takes on new significance in the collaborative context.

### Example 1

The Family Preservation and Support project was well underway in County B. The steering group had enlisted participation of several key agency representatives, developed a vision, and conducted studies of community, parent and youth attitudes. A monthly parent-youth communication workshop series was attracting increasing numbers of participants. Recognizing that the collaborative needed to provide a report to its funders annually, members began to think of ways that they could incorporate evaluation information collection into their ongoing operations. They decided to keep a portfolio of all documents, press releases, communications, meeting minutes, and testimonies. The secretary was charged with keeping this file up-to-date and designing a format to display the

information, including an annual summary highlighting membership and participation and key activities and decisions. In addition, they decided to design a simple form to document enrollment and monitor workshop participation as well as construct a questionnaire for workshop participants to determine their satisfaction with the workshop and their perceptions of the larger collaborative effort. They felt this evaluation process would show funders and other stakeholders the processes they were using, progress being made, and thereby justify continuing investments.

## Example 2

The Watershed Association had embarked on a dual phase two year effort to sponsor and implement a dialogue and collaborative planning effort. The first phase was drawing to a close. It focused on engaging local government officials, agency representatives, environment interest groups, developers, and citizens in a series of roundtables to learn about each others natural resource and land use values and concerns. The second phase was intended to provide a forum for collaborative development of a set of shared protocols for watershed management.

During the year, two new issues concerning a sub-division and a solid waste development arose in the area. The association decided to conduct a review of the first year focusing on who participated in the dialogues, the emerging climate for land use planning in the watershed, informal linkages of the dialogue process to local government decision-making, and ways the watershed concept had entered into the discussions of the recent issues. They collected records on dialogue participation, identified an interview sample and recruited a graduate student from the state university to interview several key informants who had taken part in the series. They hoped to learn more about how their process was working in order to improve it and plan for the next phase.

*The members knew they were going through a critical transition and wanted to be sure the processes they were using were laying a foundation of positive relationships that could support and sustain productive efforts in the future.*

## Example 3

A grassroots effort to address rising incidents of crime in neighborhoods across a county had evolved into a longer term effort to foster economic development to provide jobs and a sense of hope for residents with limited education. As the focus broadened and changed, early citizen organizers sought new participants, including business and government representatives. Confusion reigned for many months as early organizers and new participants debated goals and strategy.

One issue was whether to continue supporting the neighborhood watch programs that had been started previously or whether to focus on business and job creation and spin off a separate group to support neighborhood watch programs. Collaborative participants realized they could benefit from a review of the workings of the collaborative. They decided to focus on changes in the composition of participants, communications, sharing of leadership and decision-making processes. Members agreed to complete an organization assessment tool and to discuss results at a Saturday workshop. They knew they were going through a critical transition and wanted to be sure the processes they were using were laying a foundation of positive relationships that could support and sustain productive efforts in the future.

***In each of these cases*** collaborators saw a need to assess either the workings of their collaborative group or the manner in which programs or projects of the collaborative were being implemented, or both. They had different reasons and they used different methods. However they all shared a concern for evaluating the process of their collaborative effort. These questions can arise at any time in the collaborative life cycle. At different stages different questions may arise. To effectively guide collaboration in its evolving nature, participants must be attentive to process evaluation as an ongoing component.

*How a collaborative develops, what it does and how it functions, has a great deal to do with what the collaborative accomplishes.*

### *Why Interest in Process?*

Everyone knows that the process used to make a product has much to do with whether and how much of the product is produced and the quality of the product. It is the same with collaboratives. How a collaborative develops, what it does and how it functions, has a great deal to do with what the collaborative accomplishes. This may seem obvious but for a collaborative, process is particularly important, because it is not predetermined, static, or simple. Process involves more than delivering programs; it involves the working of the collaborative itself.

*For some members, process is the outcome. The true value of the collaboration lies in the development of relationships, capacities, new ways of working, and the sharing of resources.*

Throughout this manual we are stressing that collaboratives imply a "new way of doing business." They are not a defined program that is identifiable and can be delivered or an intervention that has a clear beginning and end, though some collaboratives may implement programs and/or deliver services.

**Collaboratives are a process.** They unfold over a period of months or years.

The process is often unclear, so we are inventing as we go along. Attending to this process is important for helping the collaborative make positive and progressive changes over its life span. It helps ensure that desired outcomes are achieved. For some members, process is the outcome. They may feel that the true value of the collaborative lies in the development of relationships, new ways of working together, and the sharing of resources, regardless of any community or target group benefits. Collaboration, as an end in itself, may be considered "good."

*The term "process" signifies the continual development of the collaborative from start-up to the point when the collaboration either transforms or no longer exists.*

We are using the term process to signify the continual development of the collaborative from start-up to the point when the collaboration either transforms or no longer exists. This is similar to Scheirer's (1994) definition of process in her discussion of process evaluation. It encompasses all of the phases of the collaborative's development—the full chain of events that defines the collaborative— as discussed in Section 2. It focuses on *how* the collaborative evolves and functions—the mechanisms, relationships, structures, and capacities that transform inputs to outputs and outcomes. This notion of process evaluation includes such concepts as formative evaluation, implementation analysis, evaluability assessment, and theory-based evaluation. Evaluating process focuses on what is going on within the collaborative while it is operating.

*Conventional program evaluation and many funders of collaboratives focus on activities and programs that are delivered.*

Conventional program evaluation and many funders of collaboratives focus on activities and programs that are delivered. We are saying that you also must pay attention to the workings of the collaborative if you expect your work to have an impact. This broadens the normal use of process evaluation in collaboratives to add a focus on the capacities and operations of the collaborative itself, a focus that will enable the collaborative to use inputs effectively, to produce outputs, to achieve desired outcomes and thus reach its potential.

For many years funders and public decision makers have been emphasizing outcomes, putting most of their resources into measuring results. Yet outcomes are dependent upon what the collaborative does, how it functions and the assumptions it makes about the context, problem and *theory of action*. Too often a lack of significant outcomes is due to inadequate or faulty

implementation. Likewise, without knowing what the collaborative has done and how it has done it, we cannot be sure that the outcomes that occur are due to the collaborative effort. We might know that certain outcomes occurred but not what led to those outcomes. Therefore, attending to process helps the collaborative continuously learn and make appropriate corrections. It also helps explain the link between inputs and outcomes—what works and what doesn't work for whom and why—in bringing about meaningful change. Understanding such cause-effect relationships is fundamental if we wish our work to effect social improvements.

*Outcomes are dependent upon what the collaborative does, how it functions and the assumptions it makes about the context, problem and theory of action.*

## What To Consider as Process

- What is your collaborative?
- How does it work?
- What is going on?
- What is it expected to achieve? How?
- What are the mini-steps along the pathway of change that moves the collaborative in a positive direction.

A collaborative is made up of people, activities, actions, structures, strategies, behaviors, practices, programs and technologies. Some of these components are related to the membership and workings of the collaborative group itself, and the way it interacts and interfaces with others. Some are related to the programs and services, activities, and events that the collaborative carries out (see the following table).

### Mapping the process

Identifying all the components of a collaborative may be time-consuming. More complex collaboratives are likely to have more components. Yet, doing so is essential since they all may play a part in achieving results.

As you think about your collaborative and the components to monitor in order to ensure that it functions effectively and efficiently, a useful exercise is to 'map' the process. Oftentimes, modeling the process of a collaborative helps members really come to terms with the expected flow of events, interrelationships and interdependencies in the logic model (Section 2),

## *Example: Key Components of Collaborative Process*

| *Workings of the Collaborative* | *Implementation of Programs* |
|---|---|
| **Capacity** | **Program/Service/Technology** |
| member skills and characteristics | type |
| sectors represented | who implements |
| links to constituencies | when |
| leadership | location |
| decision making | how implemented |
| conflict resolution | |
| **Operations** | **Participation** |
| structure and procedures | numbers of participants |
| planning | characteristics of participants |
| member participation | selection process |
| communications | |
| linkages: internal, external | |
| consensus building | |
| financial resource development | |
| outreach efforts | |
| recruitment and use of volunteers | |
| **Climate** | |
| trust | |
| respect | |
| relationships | |
| satisfaction | |

expectations, responsibilities and assumptions. Engaging in such an exercise as a group allows differences and misunderstandings to surface while creating a more comprehensive picture of the collaborative process. Once a process model has been developed, it is possible to identify some key critical components—the points for collecting information in order to monitor progress and assess results.

## Workings of the Collaborative

Many of the items under "Workings of the Collaborative" in the preceding table often are called process dimensions. This term is not to be confused with our use of the term "process" to signify the total development and actions of the collaborative, including the programs and activities it implements. People talk about the need for process skills in collaborative work, mentioning such abilities as facilitation, participatory decision making, consensus building, effective communication, resolving conflicts, working with diverse interests, and respecting others. These are the intangible ("soft" or "difficult to measure") aspects of collaborative work. Such dimensions often can make or break collective action. As discussed previously, conflict is inherent: power dynamics, territoriality, self-interests, performance systems based on individual achievements, personality characteristics, and so forth, all make collaborative work extremely difficult.

*Research demonstrates that training and technical support are needed throughout a collaborative's life.*

Too often collaboratives falter because well-meaning people find it difficult to work together or they lack the skills and expertise necessary to work together successfully. Collaboratives are mandated, but is sufficient time and attention being given to what it takes to work effectively in one? Research demonstrates that training and technical support are needed throughout a collaborative's life. Attending to the workings of the collaborative will help you identify and take corrective actions as appropriate.

We have divided the working of the collaborative into three categories—capacity, operations and climate—to bring attention to various aspects that appear to influence success. These categories are not discrete or finite categories.

### *1. Capacity*

Collaboratives are a function of the characteristics, skills and expertise of individuals as well as of the group as a whole. The collaborative's ability to develop, recruit and mobilize people, and develop and manage resources depends upon a variety of factors, including member characteristics (e.g., attitudes, interpersonal and technical skills, commitment, power, expertise), who/what the members represent, and their external connections. Many collaboratives seek to engage representatives from the target group (those most affected by the collaborative work) or previously overlooked members in the community (e.g.,

youth, minorities, elderly). Timing of this representation seems important, as is recognizing that people can be added along the way. Various resources exist to help you with how to solicit powerful membership and how to include others than "who you know"(Winer & Ray, 1994; Forest, 1988). Our task here is to ask the ongoing evaluative questions:

- Do we have the right mix of people, expertise, representation, demographic characteristics, authority?
- Are all pertinent interests represented?
- Are members working well together and satisfied?
- Do we have the expertise and external connections necessary to accomplish our work?

Competent **leadership** and **shared decision making** often are identified as essential to collaborative success, as is the ability to resolve conflict. **Conflict** can be expected as members with different perspectives, experiences and decision-making patterns begin to work together. When such differences are not managed, time and energy may be diverted from achieving your purpose. The conflict may be open or covert; members may be noncommunicative or stop coming to meetings. Recognizing differences and establishing ways to manage conflict seem essential.

*Anyone who has participated in a group effort knows the importance of effective and efficient operating procedures in getting things done.*

### *2. Operations*

Anyone who has participated in a group effort knows the importance of effective and efficient operating procedures in getting things done. Having structure and procedures that facilitate a task orientation is important; not everyone in a collaborative of 20 members, for example, needs to be involved in all decisions or all activities. Attention will need to be given to committee structure, roles, staffing and resources.

### *MEETINGS*

A common complaint in collaborative work is that there are a lot of meetings but little gets done. Yet, effective meetings and committee operations are crucial to the functioning of collaboratives. A variety of resources exist to help groups achieve effective meetings. *Meeting Effectiveness Inventory,* developed as part of a comprehensive formative evaluation approach of the Center for Substance Abuse, is one (Goodman et al., 1996). In general, evaluative questions concerning meetings focus on:

- How effective are our meetings?
- Are we covering key issues?

- Are members participating?
- Are the meeting structure and process helping us reach our objectives?

### MEMBERSHIP

- *frequency*
- *intensity*
- *quality*

Of interest to any discussion of group work is who is involved, when, levels of involvement, and in what activities and decisions. Some research indicates that member influence in decision making, early in the initial forming stage of collaboratives, is important for fostering member satisfaction and commitment (Butterfoss, Goodman, & Wandersman, 1996). Member participation may be measured in terms of frequency (how often), intensity (to what extent), and quality (value to individual and group). Sustaining participation over time may become an issue that demands attention.

### PLANNING

*Good planning and continued planning should help boost the impact of your collaborative.*

Planning is a major ingredient of many community-based collaboratives. However, it is often hurried (Linney & Wandersman, 1991); done without the benefit of a complete needs assessment (Wandersman et al., 1992); or may not be continued as needed throughout the life of the collaborative( Goodman et al., 1993). Pay attention to the process and quality of your planning efforts. While planning quality and satisfaction do not necessarily determine collaborative success, good planning and continued planning should help boost the impact of your collaborative.

The *Plan Quality Index* (Butterfoss, Goodman, & Wandersman, 1996), developed in collaboration with community coalitions focused on alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse prevention, is a tool for rating plans on the basis of whether they meet the criteria of quality plans. Some 18 items serve as the quality criteria. Three items measure whether objectives and activities are clear, realistic, and reflect the needs assessment information. Six items measure the scope of the plan, including staffing, timelines, targeted populations, and coordination. Three items measure availability of resources to support efforts during and after the funding period. You may wish to decide upon criteria that would define a quality plan in your situation, for your collaborative. This could be used to help develop quality plans as well as to assess the quality of completed plans.

### LINKAGES

Another unique component of collaboratives is the linkages the group establishes with constituents, organizations and external resources, as well as the linkages between a member and his or

her sponsoring agency or interest group. We may think of these linkages as a web of influence beyond the membership of the collaborative. This type of influence and the amount of networking that goes on outside meetings appears to be a critical component to member satisfaction and collaborative success (Butterfoss, Goodman, & Wandersman, 1996).

### *3. Climate*

*Trust is an essential ingredient of moving beyond an individual to a group vision.*

Trust is an essential ingredient of moving beyond an individual to a group vision. How people feel about the group, that is, the group's internal climate, is critical to effective functioning. A respectful, task-oriented, supportive environment may be the key factor that keeps members satisfied and sustains participation. However, satisfaction and commitment don't necessarily translate into impact on community. We all can like each other and get along well but not effect significant change. Thus, a supportive climate is necessary but not sufficient.

A variety of checklists or scales are available for assessing a group's internal functioning. An example is shown on the following page. Think about the most critical aspects for your own collaborative and develop your own.

## Factors Influencing Success

In a review and summary of research related to collaboration, Mattessich & Monsey (1992) identified 19 factors that influence the success of collaboration. These are listed below followed by a checklist that shows how items can be converted into an assessment tool.

### *Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration*

Factors Related to the ENVIRONMENT

- History of collaboration exists in the community.
- Collaborative group is seen as a leader in the community.
- Favorable political and social climate exists for support of the collaborative.

Factors Related to MEMBERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

- Mutual respect, understanding, and trust exists among members.

## *Example: Internal Collaborative Functioning Scales*

*Instructions:* Indicate how you feel the collaborative is functioning by circling the number on each scale that you feel is most descriptive of our collaborative.

**Shared Vision**

| We do not have a shared vision | | | | | | We have a shared and clearly understood vision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Goals and Objectives**

| Members do not understand goals and objectives | | | | | | Members understand and agree on goals and objectives |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Responsibilities and Roles**

| Roles and responsibilities of members are not clear | | | | | | Members are clear about their roles |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Decision Making Procedures**

| We do not have effective decision making procedures | | | | | | We have effective decision making procedures |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Changing Membership**

| We do not have procedures for changing members | | | | | | We have procedures for changing members |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Conflict Management**

| We are able to successfully manage conflict | | | | | | Conflict keeps us from doing anything |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Leadership**

| Leadership is not shared and inadequate | | | | | | Leadership is effective and shared when appropriate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Plans**

| We do not follow work plans | | | | | | Plans are well developed and followed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Relationships/Trust**

| People don't trust each other | | | | | | Members trust each other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Internal Communication**

| Members do not communicate well | | | | | | Members communicate well with each other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**External Communication**

| We do not communicate well externally | | | | | | Our external communication is open and timely |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Evaluation**

| We never evaluate our performance | | | | | | We have built evaluation into all our activities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

- There is an appropriate and representative cross-section of members.
- Members see collaboration in their self-interest - benefits exceed costs.
- Members are able to compromise.

Factors Related to PROCESS/STRUCTURE

- Members share a stake in the process and outcomes of the collaborative.
- Layers of decision-making - all levels of each organization participate.
- Flexibility - varied forms and functions are allowed.
- Clear roles and policy guidelines exist.
- Adaptability to major changes in the environment.

Factors Related to COMMUNICATION

- Open and frequent communication between members and to the outside.
- Established informal and formal communication links.

Factors Related to PURPOSE

- Goals and objectives are both clear to all members and obtainable.
- A shared vision and mission exists for the collaborative.
- A unique purpose exists for the collaborative different from organizations.

Factors Related to RESOURCES

- Sufficient funds exist or are expected for functioning of the collaborative.
- A skilled convener in the collaborative has respect and legitimacy.

*Source: Adapted from Mattesich & Monsey, 1992*

## Implementation of Programs

Part of evaluating process is the implementation of programs/services/technologies that collaboratives undertake in order to bring about the desired outcomes. While there is debate among practitioners as to the value of collaboratives undertaking service or program delivery—versus serving in a coordinating or support role—many do. This part of assessing process is more commonly

## *Collaboration Checklist*

| **Environment** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Is there a history of collaboration or cooperation in the community? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Is the collaborative seen as a leader in the community? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. Do political leaders and influentials support the mission of the collaborative? | ☐ | ☐ |

| **Membership Characteristics** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Do members have an understanding and respect for each other and their organization? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Does the collaborative have an appropriate and representative cross-section of members? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. Do members see collaboration as in their self-interest? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. Are members able to compromise? | ☐ | ☐ |

| **Process/Structure** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Do members feel ownership of both the process and outcomes of the collaborative? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Do all levels in each organization in the collaborative participate in decision-making? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. Is the collaborative flexible to varied forms of working? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. Do collaborators understand their roles, right, responsibilities and needed actions? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. Can the collaborative sustain itself through adaptation in the midst of major changes? | ☐ | ☐ |

| **Communication** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Are communications open and frequent? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Do both formal and informal communication links exist? | ☐ | ☐ |

| **Purpose** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Are goals and objectives clear to all members and obtainable? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Do collaborators share a common vision and mission for the collaborative? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. Does a purpose exist for the collaborative different from that of member organizations? | ☐ | ☐ |

| **Resources** | **Yes** | **No** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Does the collaborative have adequate and consistent funds? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Does the convener have organizing and interpersonal skills and respect of the members? | ☐ | ☐ |

what is presented in handbooks and evaluation materials as *process evaluation*. It centers on (a) intended and actual programs undertaken by the collaborative, and (b) the people who are targeted and reached. The outcomes resulting from these programs are discussed in Section 7 as outcome evaluation.

*The term "program" loosely signifies any product, series of activities, service, resource, technology or multifaceted initiative that a collaborative develops and/or undertakes aimed at achieving desired outcomes.*

### *1. Programs*

We are using the term **program** loosely to signify any product, series of activities, service, resource, technology or multifaceted initiative that a collaborative develops and/or undertakes aimed at achieving desired outcomes. Examples might include resource directories, workshops, media campaigns, single-parent networks, peer counseling, environmental technology, and downtown revitalization. In common parlance, a "program" implies a series of organized activities and resources aimed at helping people make improvements in their lives.

Various useful materials exist to help you conduct a process evaluation of particular collaborative programs, services, activities and events (for example, see Linney & Wandersman, 1991) Most of these materials ask you to describe the various components of the program, initiative or project and then to document the extent to which it was accomplished. Common elements include:

| *Element* | *Example* |
|---|---|
| *What* the program is | a 3-series workshop, a multimedia campaign |
| *Who* implements the program | three professionals, 21 volunteers, you, a collaborator... |
| *When* the activity is accomplished | Weekly at 7:00 p.m. |
| *Extent* to which the program is implemented | All sessions were conducted as planned; 15 of 17 participants attend |
| *Where* the program is done | On-site; classroom; in home |
| *How* the program is implemented | Experiential learning; group meetings; press releases |

An important aspect of process evaluation concerns the **extent to which the program is actually implemented as planned.** If the program is based on a series of six workshops, for example, and only five of the six sessions are held, or if participants do not attend all six, then the *intervention* has not been implemented fully and may not achieve the expected outcomes.

### *2. Participants*

Certainly most program managers and funders are interested in participation data. While the plan may target particular types and numbers of participants, documentation of actual participation is important in order to know who potentially benefits. As you think about what participation data to collect, think about what information may help explain any discrepancies that arise between projected and actual participation. Standard elements include:

| *Element* | *Example* |
|---|---|
| *Who* the program is targeted for: | 50 at-risk students, 35 single parents, 25 lakefront owners, all Spanish-speaking residents |
| *Who* actually participates: | relevant characteristics of actual participants (e.g., demographics, categories of eligibility, different reasons for participation; any relevant characteristics that link to willingness and ability to participate) |
| *How* participants were selected: | eligibility requirements; access; previous experience |
| *Discrepancies* between projected and actual participation | 45, of projected 50, at-risk students recruited |

## Keeping your eyes and ears open

Nothing in collaborative work is static or definite. While planning is fundamental, seldom do plans unfold as designed. Paying attention to the changes that occur as the collaborative develops is vital, such as changes in membership, external conditions, collaborative actions and programs.

- What is happening that was not planned or foreseen?
- Who else has become involved?

Building ongoing evaluation processes into your collaborative's operations will help you observe and be ready for the unexpected, positive and/or negative. Documenting these changes is part of process evaluation.

You may wish to refer to the phases of collaborative development (Section 2) to review the type of tasks and activities that often are critical in a collaborative's life span. Any of these tasks and processes may be elements to pay attention to. Drawing from this chart, other resources and case examples, the following table, *Components of Collaboratives,* lists a number of factors that appear to influence the ability of collaboratives to work effectively. Many of the items are general phrases that you can modify to suit your situation. Or you may wish to use these phrases as points of discussion within your collaborative.

These listings are provided to help you think about the critical dimensions that need to be monitored and evaluated to ensure that your collaborative succeeds. You will not need to or want to include all of these elements in your evaluation. Think about your unique collaborative and the elements that appear especially relevant to your situation and critical for achieving the desired outcomes. And certain ones may be more or less pertinent at different times.

## Example: Components of Collaboratives

***Shared direction***
explore shared vision

***Outcomes orientation***
articulate common set of expected outcomes and indicators

***Comprehensive planning***
identify needs and assets
engage target audiences in planning
use planning results

***Inclusiveness***
involve all key stakeholders
communicate interests and views of all parties

***Membership***
appropriate and representative
clear, accepted member roles
mutual respect
active participation
system to recruit, terminate, change members
recruit and use volunteers

***Leadership***
competent
suits collaborative purpose and members
democratic, people-oriented
shared, when and as appropriate

***Communications***
open and frequent
internal and external
effective formal and informal linkages
prepare and release information to the public
attention to public relations
communication procedures clearly understood

***Decision making***
participatory, inclusive
decisions acceptable to all
decisions made by consensus
influence in decision making

***Capacities***
build member capacities, as needed, to implement and sustain activities

***Conflict resolution***
system/procedures for dealing with internal conflict
group is able to solve problems it experiences
differences are recognized and worked through

***Financial resource development***
grant writing
resource generation
identify and use member resources

***Operating procedures***
agreed-upon roles and responsibilities
mutually acceptable operational rules
committee structure and procedures
flexibile working relationships
focused, task-oriented meetings
explicit relationship(s) with constituent agencies/units
interagency agreements maintained

***Barrier reduction***
identify barriers to collaborative operations and strategize to eliminate
identify barriers to program/activity implementation and strategize to eliminate

***Climate***
satisfaction of members with operations
high levels of trust and respect
interactions are open, cooperative
members feel valued, important

***Service/program delivery***
actual implementation
actual participation
explanation of discrepancy between projected and actual

***Outreach***
numbers
characteristics

*Source: Adapted from Sippanen et al, 1996; Winer & Ray, 1994*

# How to Evaluate Process

A variety of methods are provided in Section 8 to provide some ideas for collecting information on your collaborative process. Any social science data collection procedure is appropriate (refer to Section 3, *Identifying and Collecting Information*). Probably the creative and innovative ideas you come up with will be the most useful.

**WHEN** to focus on process will depend upon your group. We have been arguing in this manual that evaluation is a continuous process, fundamental to learning organizations. Some of you will embrace these ideas (or have done so already) and will find ways to incorporate evaluation into your ongoing routines. Much of this evaluation may be informal. Other methods may involve a mix of qualitative and quantitative data that come from (1) periodic assessments of group functioning and member satisfaction; (2) existing materials such as management charts for monitoring tasks and responsibilities; and (3) assessments of specific activities to ascertain how well the activity was implemented and who were the participants. You also may turn to evaluation on specific occasions when the collaborative struggles with internal management issues or needs to assess a particular program or event. Following are some examples from collaboratives we've encountered of ways to evaluate collaborative process.

## Workings of the Collaborative

### *Periodic Reviews*

Many collaboratives use periodic reviews to assess where they are and where they are going. Reviews may be as simple as periodic informal discussions during meetings to a more intensive, structured evaluation process including multiple data collection procedures. For example:

✎ Each quarter, a coalition for improving school readiness of young children distributes and collects a short questionnaire. It asks members to write comments around the following questions:

- What have we done for our children this quarter?
- What progress have we made as a collaborative?
- What difficulty did we encounter?

✎ A "clean lakes" initiative involving local government, industry and residents contracts with a local researcher to conduct

annual focus groups with each key stakeholder group. Questions focus on:

- What changes do you see in the collaborative; in the lake environment?
- How is the collaborative benefitting the area and people?
- Of your particular interests, what were addressed this year, and what were not?

✎ A community-wide "healthy community" initiative annually conducts a mail survey of all members, constituent agencies and key stakeholders in the community with slightly different questions for each.

✎ Annually, a county coordinating collaborative distributes a member questionnaire. It includes questions directed at where we've been, what we've accomplished, are we on track, and levels of satisfaction. Is the group's mission still on target or has it shifted any? Have any of the roles of the partners changed?

✎ A health collaborative holds an annual retreat for the purpose of self-reflection, appraisal and direction setting. Celebrating accomplishments is part of the retreat. Evidence of accomplishments and future directions are documented and published in the local newspaper and formal reports.

✎ An environmental collaborative works with an evaluation consultant who conducts an organizational survey every quarter to assess member's perceptions of the functioning of committee meetings. Questions focus on clarity of goals for the meeting; quality of leadership; level of participation; level of conflict; satisfaction with decision making and accomplishments. Items are rated on a scale of 1 to 5. The consultant aggregates the results and facilitates a discussion of the findings with members.

✎ A Family Preservation and Support collaborative guards 15 minutes at the end of every meeting to ask itself three questions:

- What did we accomplish today?
- What could have made this meeting better?
- What are some things we need to work through?

How often the review occurs depends upon the scope and nature of the collaborative. Some reviews may be informal discussions while others may consist of systematic data collection,

perhaps even involving outside reviewers (other county residents, members from another collaborative, another agency representative, evaluation consultant, etc). For self-assessment purposes, consensus within the group that such periodic reviews are needed appears necessary. Once this consensus is reached, then you can work out how the review is to be conducted and who should be responsible. Some possibilities include:

- Each member takes responsibility for a quarterly review deciding on process/procedures.
- A team is charged with setting a schedule and process for periodic reviews.
- An "outside expert" is engaged to conduct the review.
- The group sets the agenda and process and collectively does the review.

On the facing page is an example of a periodic review from Yoland Wadsworth, 1991 *Everyday Evaluation on the Run*.

### *2. Using Existing Materials*

Some collaboratives take advantage of existing materials such as minutes of meetings, proposals, telephone logs, project reports, calendars, management charts, activity forms and other existing documentation to keep track of their process and progress. Think about what information is available to use to answer some of your questions. It may be possible to integrate such documentation into the ongoing management of the collaborative so that you are collecting evaluative data at the same time as you are carrying out standard management routines. Examples follow:

- Minutes of meetings. In Collaborative X the leadership reviews minutes of meetings twice annually to identify topics discussed at meetings, whether topics are consistent with collaborative's goals and objectives set for the committee, and decisions that are made. They compare the minutes—topics and decisions made—to what the collaborative said it would be doing. (See example on page 100. For help in analyzing the content of minutes, see Section 8.)
- Telephone logs may be used to see the type and frequency of communication. One collaborative, for example, used telephone logs (see Section 8) to help assess communication patterns and contacts.
- Registration forms provide information that can be assessed to see who is attending what. Check this against projected expectations of participation.

## *Example: Annual Collaborative Review*

A new year is beginning and we thought it would be good to reflect on what we have gotten out of being part of this collaborative. It will help us in the future if we know what worked for everyone over the past year and what didn't work.

**Procedure:**

We will start by filling in questions ourselves. Then we will pin them to the wall. You do not need to put your name on your answers. We will go through and read all of the contributions and then discuss them further. This will help us reach decisions about what we should be doing in the coming year. In this way, we can ensure everyone's participation and give everyone a chance to voice their opinions. *(Note: Answers to each question could be written on separate cards or sheets and then pinned together with other responses. This will allow discussion to focus on each question at a time.)*

1. Why do we participate in this collaborative? What do we hope to get from it? (As an individual and as a representative of your organization).

2. What were your first impressions when you came to the first meeting of the collaborative?

3. What have been the best things about the collaborative?

4. What has not been useful about the collaborative?

5. Has being part of this collaborative had any effect on you? Do you (or we) think, feel, act differently? *Give examples — again, both the individual and organizational perspective can be discussed.*

6. If you weren't part of the collaborative what would you be missing (or gaining)?

7. Are there other groups or individuals that need to be part of our collaborative?

8. What would you like the collaborative to work on this year?

9. Any other comments you would like to add?

Take your time! When finished, pin your sheets up on the wall and then read each other's contribution. If the other sheets make you think of new things, please share them during the discussion.

*Source: Adapted from Wadsworth, 1991*

## *Example: Minutes of Meeting*

Meeting Place: _____ Start time: _____
Date: _____ End time: _____
Attendance (names): _____

**1. Agenda Topic:** _____

Discussion: _____

| **Decision** | **Related tasks** | **Who responsible** | **Done by when** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |

**2. Agenda Topic:** _____

Discussion: _____

| **Decision** | **Related tasks** | **Who responsible** | **Done by when** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |

**3. Agenda Topic:** _____

Discussion: _____

| **Decision** | **Related tasks** | **Who responsible** | **Done by when** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |

- Management charts are a common approach for tracking a group's progress through simple charts. Written forms may serve a management function and provide evaluative information. They help keep the group on task as well as monitor progress towards accomplishment of those tasks. See examples below and on the next page.

### *Example: Collaborative Monitoring Chart*

**Collaborative** _____ **Year** _____

| Process | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of meetings held attendance | 2<br>10/11 | 1<br>11/11 | 2<br>11/12 | 1<br>12/12 | 1<br>10/10 | | | | | | | |
| Number of sub-committees met or formed | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Tasks done on time | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Minutes and records kept | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Accounts maintained/reported | ✓ | R | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Number of members Leaving/joining | 0/0 | 0/0 | 0/1 | 0/0 | 2/0 | | | | | | | |
| Evaluation activities conducted (c)/reported (r) | c | r | c | c | r | | | | | | | |

## Particular concerns

Often collaboratives face particular issues (struggles, uncertainties, accountability demands) at particular times in their existence. The ongoing monitoring that the collaborative has been doing may not yield the exact information to help answer the needs or issues. For example, participation in the collaborative may have declined and the group is wondering why. Or perhaps the collaborative is ready to undertake a new initiative but is uncertain about how it is perceived by the community-at-large and whether the new initiative is likely to succeed. A funder may request information on a particular aspect of the collaborative for accountability reporting and want the information within a month's time. To respond to such particular issues, the collaborative may need to undertake a focused evaluation.

## Programs or Services the Collaborative Implements

As suggested previously, collaboratives often, though not always, carry out programs or deliver services. Many of the stan-

## *Example: Collaborative Management and Responsiblity Chart*

| Year_____ Month | Activity/Task | Person Responsible | Status: Progress | Status: Accomplished | Status: Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| January | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| February | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| March | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| April | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| May | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| June | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| July | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| August | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| September | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| October | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| November | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |
| December | 1. | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | |

dard approaches to process evaluation apply to these efforts. Evaluation forms such as those developed by the Office for Substance Abuse Prevention, in the manual, *Prevention Plus III* (Linney & Wandersman, 1991) help collaboratives keep track of whether their programs are meeting their objectives, reaching the target audience(s), being implemented as planned, or dealing effectively with barriers and opportunities.

The following are a few examples of the many ways in which collaboratives are trying to monitor and assess the process of the programs they initiate or help carry out. Ideas from these examples may be combined or adapted to meet your particular needs.

- Each time an activity is carried out, program implementers record key information including date, place, what was actually carried out, attendance, observations of participant reactions, problems encountered and comments on things to change or keep.
- Participants in the program keep a record or log book of their experiences, attitudes, reactions, behavior.

- Forms are distributed to all participants to record their reactions and satisfaction. Participant feedback is collected as an indication of anticipated learning or behavioral change.
- Program managers facilitate a group discussion at the end of each program, soliciting input on strengths and weaknesses of the program.
- Participants keep daily checklists for recording weight of child, food intake, etc.
- Public print and media information is collected and analyzed to monitor the community's reactions to the program.
- Five key informants in the community are contacted quarterly — either in person or by telephone — to solicit their insights and comments relative to the collaborative's work.

## Use of Process Evaluation

As you can imagine, process evaluation has untold uses. Use will be enhanced if you thought about who the intended users are before planning the evaluation and you have incorporated their interests or involved them in designing the process. Following are some standard uses of the information collected through a process evaluation.

*Process evaluation can be used for:*
- *improving the collaborative's work*
- *attributing final outcomes*
- *accountability*
- *replication*
- *knowledge*
- *affirming hard work*
- *keeping the collaborative visible*

### *Improving the collaborative's work*

Keeping track of activities and group processes is fundamental for knowing what is working, and why or why not. Process information is used by the collaborative to (a) help the collaborative stay on track and ensure that activities, services or intended beneficiaries are not neglected; (b) ensure the efficient use of resources; (c) assist members in making decisions about improvements, needed changes or additions.

### *Attributing final outcomes*

In order to attribute outcomes to a collaborative, you must know what the collaborative consisted of and the degree to which the collaborative functioned and intervened in the community. By having information on what was done, who was involved and how the process evolved, you can discern reasons for achieving or not achieving the expected outcomes.

### *Accountability*

Since collaboratives often work over time and may not accomplish quick and decisive results, you need to document the intervening milestones that have been accomplished. When accounting to funders, you can use your process to communicate accomplishments and interim outcomes that are beneficial.

### *Replication*

Providing a description of the collaborative is essential for others who want to learn from or develop a similar initiative.

### *Knowledge*

Because knowledge about collaboratives is relatively undocumented, process evaluation provides information for understanding how collaboratives operate so others can learn and apply the information elsewhere.

### *Affirming hard work*

Collaboratives take a lot of hard work and time. Monitoring achievements and celebrating even small successes is a way to affirm hard work and helps to encourage sustained member participation.

### *Keeping the collaborative visible*

Process information can be used in communication messages in order to keep the effort visible and convey the collaborative image.

## CELEBRATE PROGRESS

Paying attention to these various aspects of a collaborative's process and taking corrective action as needed will help your collaborative reach its potential. As you do so, remember to celebrate progress. Evaluating how the collaborative is working and documenting the achievement of milestones along the journey are accomplishments to celebrate. Think about:

- How will we celebrate our accomplishments?
- How will we acknowledge those who have made contributions?
- Who shall we inform about our accomplishments? How?

# SECTION 7

# Evaluating Outcomes

## Typical Questions

- *Has anything improved as a result of our work? Changed? What? How? For whom?*
- *To what extent are we achieving desired outcomes? Keeping our promise?*
- *What difference has resulted from our working as a collaborative?*
- *Was the collaborative effort worth the time and costs to achieve its results?*

## REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

The following *real world examples* illustrate the various types of outcomes that collaboratives are evaluating. Each situation represents different questions being asked, different methods of data collection and different timeframes.

### Example 1

After several years the Family Preservation and Support effort had enlisted the active participation of many local agencies and organizations including Health and Human Services, Cooperative Extension, schools, youth organizations, churches, area businesses, hospitals, the aging council and Parks and Recreation. Several programs had been implemented aimed at developing skills of family members and persons supporting families based on a family strengths model. In addition, two new coordinating bodies had been established: a volunteer network and an inter-agency council. Collaborative members were especially interested in documenting the kinds of system change that had occurred. System change had been one of their driving goals and they wanted to report results to funders to justify future grants and to organizations to confirm their efforts. They developed a survey of organizations. Within the survey they included items pertaining to changes in organization programs, structure, philosophy and

interagency communications which had been influenced by the Family Preservation and Support effort.

## Example 2

Efforts to facilitate a watershed natural resources and land use planning management plan for the Green Creek watershed had stalled. After a year of roundtables the consensus based planning effort had begun with high hopes. Local government officials, agency representatives, environment interest groups, developers, and citizens had all agreed to convene in a forum to attempt to negotiate a set of guidelines for watershed planning. After months of discussions the participants had agreed to a set of protocols. The agreements were presented to authorizing bodies and several passed resolutions endorsing the plan. However, two town boards, the regional planning commission and the developers association all refused to approve the plan. Three months of negotiations with these bodies proved fruitless. In the meantime, several town boards and one city council began reviewing and changing ordinances in accordance with the plan. The association that sponsored the planning effort decided to document the changes that had occurred and the resistance that was encountered. They assembled records of meetings to document participants, issues discussed and reasons for agreement or lack of agreement. They also identified key informants in each sector and interviewed them regarding their perceptions of outcomes and problems encountered. While the effort had not fully succeeded in accomplishing their original goal they felt that a great deal had been accomplished. They would use their findings to guide future initiatives and aid other localities seeking to replicate aspects of their collaborative venture.

## Example 3

The Opportunity Knocks project had evolved into a unique effort to replace crime with jobs. Collaborative members began by inventorying the assets of local citizens, neighborhood by neighborhood. This was accomplished by expanding the existing neighborhood crime watch programs into talent watch programs. Organizers were especially attentive to identifying assets of high risk teens and young adults. They discovered talents and interests with real small business potential. Banks and businesses engaged in the effort provided loans and training to budding entrepreneurs. The collaborative established a small business incubator program to nurture new businesses. The asset inventory also revealed skills that could be tapped by existing businesses and agencies through

part and full time hires of local residents. Periodically focus groups were convened in neighborhoods to gauge the reactions to the program and to assess changing perceptions of public safety, job opportunities and sense of community. Over time the focus group results began to show a pattern of enhanced sense of opportunity and community support and a decreased fear for personal safety. The collaborative members summarized the outcomes. They presented these results to neighborhoods through several media and public meetings to confirm the changes taking place and to renew and sustain further community development addressing jobs, crime and other issues.

*Outcomes did not occur just at the end. Rather, collaborators were interested in documenting outcomes when they felt their efforts had been sufficient to either yield significant results or lessons for future efforts and when there was an audience for the results.*

***In all of the above cases*** collaborating parties recognized a need to document and evaluate outcomes of the effort. They focused on different outcomes, ranging from system change, to policy change to changes in community perceptions of community life, according to the priorities of their project and to the information they wanted to share with stakeholders. They used methods that fit their evaluation focus. Outcome evaluation provided information that met accountability, learning, and motivational/support needs. Outcomes did not occur just at the end. Rather, collaborators were interested in documenting outcomes when they felt their efforts had been sufficient to either yield significant results or lessons for future efforts and when there was an audience for the results.

## Why Outcomes?

Despite how well we function as a group, the relationships we develop, or the activities we undertake, funders and others are likely to judge our efforts as a collaborative by benefits that accrue to people and communities. Evaluating outcomes is essential not only for our own personal gratification and sense of accomplishment but also to verify the collaborative's value, to account for investment of resources, to promote and publicize the collaborative's value, and to sustain financial investments and personal commitments of members and citizens at large. This manual is based on the premise that collaboration is a *means* for achieving improved results, not an end in itself.

*We evaluate outcomes in order to:*

- *verify the collaborative's value*
- *to account for investment of resources*
- *to promote and publicize the collaborative's value*
- *to sustain financial investments*
- *to sustain personal commitments of members and citizens at large*

Outcomes are the desired conditions that the collaborative seeks to achieve. They are not activities (e.g., conferences, priority-setting initiatives, events, delivery of curriculum or service) or the

*Outcomes are the verifiable results of those activities, organizational actions and processes. They answer the question,* SO WHAT? *We've been working as a collaborative,* SO WHAT?

processes that groups engage in during collaborative development. This was discussed in the previous section. Outcomes are the verifiable results of those activities, organizational actions and processes. They answer the question, *SO WHAT? We've been working as a collaborative, SO WHAT?*

Outcomes may occur at different times during the course of the collaborative's work. Final outcomes or ***impact*** refers to the highest level outcome, that is, those results that usually take longer to achieve and have wider socioeconomic and/or environmental benefit. Outcome assessment focuses on two components:

(a) changes to individuals, families, groups, organizations, systems, or communities;

(b) value that is added as a result of the collaborative.

While we do not address **cost-benefit** questions directly in this manual, they merit our continual reflection. Naturally, people are concerned with the ***value-at-what-cost*** question. Working in collaboratives often takes considerable time, personpower and money.

- Are the results worth it?
- Would another approach have been as effective or more efficient?

More focused research is needed to compare the cost-effectiveness of working in collaboratives to alternative strategies for effecting societal improvements. Collaboratives are not always the most appropriate approach—continued research is needed to know when and where collaboratives are appropriate.

## What to Consider

The challenge for collaboratives is to decide **what outcomes to measure.** This is a major undertaking for several reasons:

- collaboratives tend to deal with "big" issues so that desired outcomes are often broad and complex.
- collaborative members often have different or multiple perspectives as to expectations.
- outcomes may not be detectable in the short-term and may change or evolve over time.

- indicators and measures of community-level outcomes are not well developed.

Review your collaborative's goals and expected outcomes. Reflect on what brought the members together and what you had hoped to accomplish. As discussed in Section 2, we recommend that collaboratives spend time in the forming phase to arrive at some consensus on expected outcomes and to map out a strategy for achieving them. This does not mean that the collaborative will develop exactly according to the plan or that we can determine everything in advance. Often we may change direction and/or renegotiate what we hope to accomplish. However, without a map and a direction, we do not know where we are going; we are unable to attribute effects or to replicate what we've done. Engaging in this process during collaborative formation is more likely to encourage greater participation of individuals and groups (Bergstrom et al., 1996).

*Spend time in the forming phase for members to arrive at some consensus on expected outcomes and to map out a strategy for achieving them.*

*"Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?" said Alice. "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.*

Alice in Wonderland
by Lewis Carroll

If you have not spent time talking about outcomes—expected end results and how you will know them—you will want to do so before engaging in outcomes evaluation. This may be the time to develop your **logic model** (see Section 2). Discuss within the collaborative:

- What is it that brought us together?
- What is the group trying to achieve?
- If the collaborative is successful, what will be different? What will it look like? How will we know it?
- What kind of changes would we see? Where or among whom?

This process will be enhanced by including the perspectives of people outside the collaborative (participants and other key stakeholders), regarding what they see as the most important benefits. Multiple perspectives will help the collaborative think about its work and benefits more broadly than if the group only relies on its own perceptions. Involving these other key people in defining outcomes also encourages their acceptance and enhances their understanding of the collaborative's work.

*Multiple perspectives will help the collaborative think about its work and benefits more broadly than if the group only relies on its own perceptions.*

Also think about the **intended users** of the evaluation. Each audience is likely to vary in its selection of which outcome it considers as the most important. Different stakeholders proba-

bly will have different notions of what indicates success or failure. Therefore, it will be useful to engage these stakeholders in the discussion of **what** to measure.

Some collaboratives have no real bounded life, that is, there was no point in time when they began, no formal beginning, and there may be no defined ending point. For example, a group of concerned individuals may get together and start working on an issue of common concern with no premeditated notion of forming a collaborative. The group, its focus and membership, evolves and changes as needs and conditions change. Perhaps the group evolves into a collaborative, achieving a common vision and sharing resources. But the group functions in a constant state of evolution and development based on the premise that as conditions change, so must the focus change. Goals and expected outcomes may be set, but are subject to change. In come cases, members may refuse to think about expected outcomes, arguing that it is impossible to project results. In any event, members will want to document change (positive and/or negative) and achievements in order to valorize participation and resource investments.

## Types of Outcomes

*Outcomes for*
- *individuals*
- *groups*
- *agencies*
- *system*
- *communities*

Given the unique nature of individual collaboratives (i.e., contextually situated, developmental and multifaceted), there are no standard outcomes or indicators of success. However, collaboratives tend to operate under one or a combination of the following broad goal areas.

- Service or program creation or modification
- Resource maximization
- Policy development
- Systems development or change
- Social or community development

These broad goal areas then translate into various types of tangible outcomes for different individuals or entities in the social ecology (see following table). There may be **outcomes for individuals**, such as members of the collaborative who develop new skills and capacities, or for residents and individuals within the community. There may be outcomes for groups or families. Often, we are looking for **agency or organizational outcomes,**

## Example: Tangible Outcomes

| *Outcomes for:* | *Type of Outcome* | *Illustrative Examples* |
|---|---|---|
| Individuals<br>• client<br>• community residents<br>• member of collaborative<br>• service provider | *changes in*<br>• attitudes, perceptions<br>• knowledge, competence<br>• skills, abilities, capacities<br>• behaviors, actions<br>• lifestyle: income, employment, levels of empowerment | As a result of a nutrition education initiative, senior citizens have saved money and improved their nutrition.<br>Collaborative members have learned strategic planning and have transferred these skills to other situations. |
| Groups<br>• family<br>• work group<br>• community group<br>• collaborative | *changes in*<br>• interactions, behaviors, actions<br>• values, culture | As a result of a family support initiative, families with dependent members exhibit greater caring and less stress. |
| Agency; organization | *changes in*<br>• number of services or programs<br>• type of services or programs<br>• access<br>• practices (e.g., expanded hours)<br>• resource generation<br>• resource use<br>• policies | The organization has generated over $1 million in cash or in-kind services in less than five years.<br><br>Agency resources have been redirected to expand a mentoring program to serve an additional 15 teens-at-risk. |
| Systems<br>• agencies<br>• departments<br>• organizations | *changes in*<br>• relationships,interaction patterns; linkages and network<br>• practices<br>• policies<br>• delivery of services<br>• resource generation and use<br>• institutionalization to sustain changes | Agencies, businesses, and local churches have established a joint planning process, merged their communications, and are sharing resources to better serve non-English-speaking residents. |
| Communities | *changes in*<br>• values, attitudes<br>• relations, support systems<br>• civic action/ empowerment<br>• social norms<br>• infrastructure<br>• policies, laws, practices<br>• social-economic-environmental conditions<br>• institutionalization | Friction within the community has eased and a coherent land use plan has been adopted.<br><br>Youth are valued as contributing and equal members of the community. |

such as changes in service delivery, (e.g, the addition of a mentoring program for at-risk youth, increased access by targeted clientele). In other cases, we are interested in **system changes** in which agencies, departments or whole organizations work in new ways, behave differently, share resources and provide services in an integrated fashion. Some collaboratives are focused on **outcomes for communities**, including changes in norms, policies or actions at a community-wide level, for example, changes in zoning or land-use policy; attitudes toward youth or approaches to poverty alleviation.

Often there is the expectation that successful collaboratives will lead to the institutionalization or routinization of change. **Institutionalization** seems to have several meanings and may operate as: (a) the creation of indigenous competence to address continuing issues, (b) the creation of organizational and community supports to sustain programs, or (c) continuation of the collaborative effort after termination of funding. In some cases, **empowerment** is the expected end result where the emphasis is on self-determination and capacity building of individuals and groups to take control of their own development. Outcomes and indicators for each are slightly different. If your collaborative is seeking these long-term changes, think about what you mean by these words and how you will know it.

While community initiatives are often focused at one level, there may be interaction among several levels. For example, a community collaborative may be focused at the individual level (e.g., improving school readiness of young children), but improvements for the individual and/or family can be assumed to affect positively the wider community. Likewise, improvements in community-wide conditions (e.g.,changes in social norms, such as no alcohol at public events) may well lead to positive changes for individual families and people within the community. Social science research is just beginning to understand these interactions and the forces that influence these linkages. Thus, while your focus may be on outcomes at one level, don't overlook interactions among levels and possible influences and benefits across the social ecology.

Discuss and clearly articulate your expected outcomes. Where your language is vague, try to use words and meanings that people understand. As you do so, think about:

- What would it look like?
- How would I know it?

*Discuss and clearly articulate your expected outcomes. Where your language is vague, try to use words and meanings that people understand.*

Different members of the collaborative may value different outcomes, depending upon the mission and orientation of his or her agency. For example, in a multidisciplinary, family-based, in-home approach to address the needs of underachieving children, the educational representative may measure success by academic achievement while other members may judge success as improvements in family functioning or increased connectedness within the community. Different ideas of expected results may indicate differing agendas of collaborative members. Where possible, differences need to be discussed and understanding achieved regarding expected outcome(s).

Be sure that the outcomes you seek to measure are related to what the collaborative has been doing. A problem arises when we attempt outcome measurement without considering implementation and the plan of work. You may end up trying to measure outcomes that haven't been part of the collaborative's actual work or outcomes that couldn't be realistically achieved given changes or problems in implementation. It may be necessary to spend time reviewing the collaborative's actual work and determine what is appropriate to evaluate. A whole field of evaluation, called ***evaluability assessment,*** helps clarify differences between intended and actual operations in order to decide if a formal assessment of outcomes is feasible. For additional help with evaluability assessment, see Smith, (1989); Wholey et al., (1994).

*A problem arises when we attempt outcome measurement without considering implementation and the plan of work.*

## Levels of Outcomes

Basic to any discussion of outcomes is the concept of levels or a progression (hierarchy) of steps that moves toward the desired end result — moving from lower level outcomes to higher level outcomes. This is particularly true for collaboratives, given their often broad and complex goals and developmental nature. Seldom do we arrive quickly or directly to our end result. For instance, it is unlikely that in the short-term we will see a reduction in high school drop-out rates, even though it is assumed that in the long run we can effect such an outcome. There are,

however, **precursor outcomes** that indicate progression along the way to the desired result, higher educational achievement. These precursor accomplishments need to be clearly linked through evidence to the collaborative's ultimate impact goals or final outcomes. For example, improved school attendance, greater participation in school activities, improved school-home communications, reduction in behavioral reports, etc., may be seen as precursor outcomes "on the way" to the ultimate outcome of a reduction in high school drop-out rates.

Outcomes may be thought of as **immediate**, **intermediate**, and **final** outcomes related to the time periods when they are likely to be detected. Again, we see the concept of a journey and achievement of milestones along the way. Immediate outcomes are usually not the ends in themselves, but are meaningful as links to higher outcomes. They show progress along the developmental path (see example below).

Thus, we see that outcomes do not just occur at the final stage of a collaborative's life. There may be a series of outcomes that can be documented and celebrated over the course of the collaborative's work. Interim outcome measures, however, must be clearly linked to the final outcomes the collaborative is working to achieve and not just be measures of inputs and outputs. We've

*Example: Outcomes*

| Immediate → → | | Intermediate → → | | Final |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parent's sense of mastery; increase in social support | → | Reduced substance abuse | → | Reduced child abuse or neglect |
| Increase in citizen knowledge of and ability to analyze impact of programs and policies on families. | → | Open, frank, inclusive discussion of policy options | → | Local policies reflect community decisions |
| Increased knowledge of childcare needs in the community | → | Employers and residents discuss options and formulate a joint plan | → | Families have expanded child care options to meet their needs |
| Empty inner city lot converted to community garden | → | Youth and adults learn gardening skills, nutrition, food preparation and management | → | Money is saved, nutrition is improved and residents enjoy a greater sense of community |

said that process and outcomes are inextricably intertwined — you are unlikely to achieve "hoped for" outcomes without an effective process. But, don't mistake measures of one for measures of the other. Outcomes are the ***so what? So what happened to individuals, families, agencies, or communities, as a result of the collaborative effort?***

Special studies may be necessary to verify the assumed linkages and causal relationships operating within a collaborative. Which characteristics of the collaborative are associated with better results? What mediates between inputs, outputs, and outcomes? As our experience and knowledge base grows in working with collaboratives of all types, we will better understand what leads to certain results under varying situations.

Identifying and documenting accomplishments along the way that link to final positive outcomes is necessary for insuring support — financial and personal — and to help keep the collaborative on track. Implementation of collaboratives takes time. We may not see "final" outcomes for many years. Consequently, documenting immediate and intermediate outcomes is crucial to sustaining credibility and visibility, and providing milestones for celebration. Communicating these *milestones* and *critical events* internally (i.e., among members) and externally (to key stakeholders) is important. Tracking and reporting intermediate outcomes along the way can contribute to final outcome assessment and performance measurement by providing evidence of the collaborative's role in producing final outcomes. See examples of communicating milestones in Section 2.

The Bennett model (1979, 1982, Bennett & Rockwell, 1995), widely used in Cooperative Extension, presents a chain of events and levels of evidence that can be adapted to collaboratives, providing a way to look at levels of outcomes. This model suggests a typical chain of events.

### *Example: Chain of Events*

*Resources* are invested to conduct

*Activities* that are undertaken to obtain

*Participation* in activities.

Participants *react* to what they experience, which affects their

*Learning* (knowledge, opinions, skills, and aspirations).

Through *learning,* people take

*Action,* which helps them achieve

*Impact* (social, economic, environmental change).

The upper three levels relate to outcomes. The highest level, or the situation that takes the longest to achieve, relates to **impacts,** changes in social, economic, or environmental conditions.

Again, we see the idea of a logic model. Think about your "map." What are the accomplishments—milestones and achievements—along the way that link to the final expected result? What has led (or is leading) to what? It may be helpful to list these achievements as immediate, intermediate and final, drawing connecting lines to illustrate how each relates to or facilitates the occurrence of the next. In this way, you can diagram the progression of immediate, to intermediate, to final outcomes. You may not *know* or be able to foresee all these steps, but what is your ***theory of action*** at this point? You can keep track of progress or discern where your theory was wrong and take corrective action.

It also may be that an outcome that one member hopes to achieve may be "along the way" to a higher level outcome that another member holds as the criterion for success. By measuring outcomes at different levels, it is possible to fulfill the needs of each member.

## *Example: Hierarchy of Effectiveness*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| OUTCOMES | 7 | **Impact** | social, economic, environmental conditions; long-term end results and consequences |
| | 6 | **Action** | behavior, practices, decisions, policies, social action, product development |
| | 5 | **Learning** | knowledge and understanding, opinions, skills, aspirations, attitudes |
| OUTPUTS | 4 | **Reactions** | people's response to activities — feelings, interest |
| | 3 | **Participation** | people involved, reach |
| | 2 | **Activities** | activities, methods, role |
| INPUTS | 1 | **Resources** | staff, money, time, materials, volunteers, technology |

**Tips:**
- Higher levels involve longer time horizons
- Evidence of outcomes is stronger as hierarchy is ascended
- Difficulty and cost of obtaining evidence increases as hierarchy is ascended
- Evaluations are strengthened by assessing at several levels of hierarchy
- Information from the lower levels helps to explain results at the upper levels

*Source: Adapted from Bennett & Rockwell, 1995.*

## *Example: Issues in Defining Outcomes*

- **There is no *right* number of outcomes.** The number of outcomes selected by your collaborative will depend upon the nature and purpose of the collaborative, resources, size and number of constituencies represented.

- **Some collaboratives may define more than one "outcome track."** This means that the collaborative may have several "chains of events," usually linked to different target groups or programming components within the overall vision of the collaborative.

- **In some cases, immediate outcomes may seem like outputs.** This misinterpretation occurs because initial outcomes may not represent major change. Critically ask yourself, "Is this an outcome or an output?"

- **The more immediate the outcome, the more influence the collaborative has over its achievement.** In a community gardening example, the development of knowledge and skills of gardening and nutrition can be largely attributed to the education and training provided by the collaborative's program.

- **Conversely, the longer term the outcome, the less direct influence a collaborative has over its achievement and the more likely other extraneous forces are to intervene.** The extent to which the final outcome of increased community solidarity and economic well-being is influenced by a variety of factors in the sociocultural, political, and economic environment.

- **Because other forces affect an outcome doesn't mean it shouldn't be included.** Despite the influence of other factors on community solidarity and economic improvements, the collaborative wished to measure and track these outcomes in order to understand what effect the collaborative had and what might be done to achieve the desired results.

- **Long term outcomes, however, should not go beyond the collaborative's purpose or target audience.** Think about what the collaborative is designed to do—where its influence is likely to be felt—and focus the outcome measurement at that level. Likewise, keep the outcome measures focused on the targeted audience. In the above example, improvements in community life were to change in one neighborhood of a major metropolitan center, not for the city as a whole.

*Source: Adapted from Hatry et al., 1996.*

The following questions often arise:

- How far up the hierarchy should our collaborative go in setting final outcomes?
- What is the highest level outcome for which the collaborative should be accountable?

*"The outcome of interest. . . must be inherently valued." (Mohr, 1995: 19)*

Answers to these question will depend upon the nature of the issue, resources available, other resources/programs in the community, and so forth. Think about what would be the most meaningful benefit or change that would reflect the full extent of the collaborative's influence. You probably do not want to make the collaborative accountable for results that lie far beyond what it can effectively influence.

## Indicators of Outcomes

Indicators express that which you wish to know or see. Indicators answer the question: "How will we (and others) know that we've achieved our outcomes?" The information in the answer will indicate how well the collaborative is doing regarding the outcome(s).

*Ask yourselves how you can tell if the outcome has been achieved.*
- *How do you know that it has happened?*
- *What do you see and feel?*

Some outcomes may be relatively straightforward and agreed upon, such as decreased school drop-out rates (indicator = school graduation rates). Often collaborative outcomes are imprecise. Designating indicators helps you define the outcome in observable and measurable ways that will have meaning to your funders and stakeholders.

*Keep refining the indicators by asking,*
- *What does this look like?*
- *Does it tell us if the outcome has been achieved?*

Indicators may be expressed quantitatively, numerically, or qualitatively, using words to express the quality of the outcome. What does the expected outcome "a healthy community" look like? What would one expect to see there? How would one expect to feel? Selecting indicators takes time and thought. Ask yourselves how you can tell if the outcome has been achieved. How do you know that it has happened? What do you see and feel? Keep refining the indicators by asking, "What does this look like? Does it tell us if the outcome has been achieved?"

Different people may understand words differently or expect to see different things as indication that the outcome(s) have been achieved. Engaging others in identifying indicators that have meaning to key stakeholders also may be important. Who are the outcomes for? How will these stakeholders know that the outcome has been achieved? See the examples on the following pages for example outcomes and outcome indicators.

### *Example: Outcomes and Outcome Indicators*

| Type of Collaborative | Outcome | Indicator(s) |
|---|---|---|
| School readiness | Preschool children have regular well health care | • number of visits to MD<br>• number and percent of children having hearing/seeing exams<br>• number and percent of children with complete immunizations |
| Communities for Youth | Youth engaged in civic life | • number and percent of youth involved in community service<br>• number and percent of youth involved in community decision-making roles<br>• increased allocations to youth development |
| Child-at-risk | At-risk youth improve school performance | • maintains or improves grades<br>• regular school attendance<br>• decrease in detention<br>• number in behavioral reports |
| Lakes Council | Water resource protected and preserved | • number and percent of lakefront owners involved<br>• clean environment<br>• healthy fish and waterfowl habitat<br>• safe water |

You likely will need more than one indicator to express the outcome(s) your collaborative is working to achieve. However, collecting information on too many indicators is burdensome. Think critically about which indicator(s) most accurately and credibly measure the outcome. Does each indicator measure some important aspect of the outcome that no other indicator measures? Is the wording of the indicator sufficiently specific and understandable? Would everyone understand it in the same way? You may use the example below as a worksheet to help identify indicators for your outcomes.

### *Unanticipated Outcomes*

Not all change is positive. Unanticipated events may occur that result in neutral (no effect) or negative outcomes. Or there may be unexpected positive results that are as impressive or more impressive than the planned outcomes. Think about what some other effects of the collaborative are. Stay tuned for these unexpected consequences of the collaborative's work.

## Example: Outcomes and Indicators Worksheet

| *Outcomes* | *Indicators* |
|---|---|
| Outcome 1 | 1.1 |
| | 1.2 |
| | 1.3 |
| Outcome 2 | 2.1 |
| | 2.2 |
| | 2.3 |
| Outcome 3 | 3.1 |
| | 3.2 |
| | 3.3 |
| Outcome 4 | 4.1 |
| | 4.2 |
| | 4.3 |

As you think about and develop your logic model, a useful exercise is to draw some chains of events that show potential unintended or negative consequences of the collaborative work. In her discussion of theory-based evaluation, Carol Weiss (1998) encourages practitioners to think about these potentially negative outcomes and to consciously identify possible pathways of unintended effects.

**Note:** While there is much interest in and demand for outcome assessments, collecting only outcomes information will be inadequate in most cases. You still need information on inputs, activities and collaborative processes. Without some documentation of the implementation of the collaborative's work, you will not know what led to the outcomes, a condition known as the "black box" of evaluation. You also will not be able to replicate the work or share it with others. If you find that the outcomes fall short of expectations, you will need information on the preceding components to know where and how to make improvements or modifications.

# How To Evaluate Outcomes

There is no *best* or *most appropriate* way to assess outcomes. Choice depends upon the question(s) you are seeking to answer, your situation, the users of the information and their expectations, times, money and expertise. Any social science research design may be considered as well as the innovative techniques you and your colleagues create.

We've been saying in this section that outcomes may occur at various times throughout the collaborative's development. They do not just occur at the end of your work; or at some future point in time. Asking questions about outcomes—what outcomes, when might we see them, how will we know it?—at the beginning of the collaborative's work will help you be prepared to detect and document results necessary for sustaining resource commitments and reaching your potential. Of course, don't try to document outcomes prematurely; or mistake outcomes for outputs.

Probably the most common way collaboratives assess outcomes is by simply documenting and describing them. This may be done through observation, collection of testimonials and materials describing results (e.g., newspaper articles), and/or the conduct of surveys, interviews, or group techniques. The source of such information may be

- the collaborative members themselves
- persons being served through programs implemented by the collaborative
- community residents; community leaders
- informed others
- local-level statistics,
- print materials, etc.

Refer to the chart on page 111, *Tangible Outcomes,* to review the various possibilities where outcomes may be occurring. These are briefly summarized below with a few evaluation illustrations. Data may be collected through informal methods, single studies, multiple studies and/or be integrated into the ongoing routines and management of the collaborative.

## Measuring outcomes for individuals

Typically when measuring outcomes the focus is on changes in participants. You might measure changes in attitudes, knowledge, skills and behavior of individual participants in collaborative activities. As part of a healthy youth collaborative, for example, the teen suicide prevention workshop uses an end-of-workshop survey to assess knowledge teens gain from the workshop. A nutrition education initiative periodically interviews participants in their homes to assess knowledge changes, application of recommendations and satisfaction with the initiative. In addition, the collaborative has developed a set of mini case studies to illustrate the meaning of the nutrition education program to low-income families. Typically, we have relied on participant's opinions of our work as a measure of outcomes. How people react to the collaborative and/or programs initiated by the collaborative are helpful insights. Seldom, however, are reactions adequate measures of outcomes.

Within the collaborative context, other possible beneficiaries are the individual members of the collaborative itself. It is expected that members are learning and changing as a result of being a part of the collaborative — gaining new skills in needs assessment, leadership, collaborative processes, conflict resolution; changing attitudes about the source and resolution of problems, etc. To document such changes, some collaboratives conduct surveys of their members asking questions about what members have learned and are able to do as a result of working in the collaborative. Repeating member surveys periodically provides over-time data on changes in group composition and capacities.

## Measuring outcomes for groups

Besides outcomes for individuals, collaboratives often work at the group level where the focus of concern is the family, community group, work group or the collaborative group itself. The unit of analysis is the group as a whole, rather than individuals within the group. For example, a Family Preservation and Support initiative collected longitudinal data through a series of interviews with participating families to document their evolving ability to deal with stress, access community resources and reduce family isolation. In a community development initiative, the collaborative annually undertakes a group discussion following the "1,000 mile journey analogy" (see Section 8) to assess

where the group has been over the past year — accomplishments achieved, where it is, and where it is going.

Remember, the collaborative is a group and there may be important outcomes accruing to it as a group. In particular, we have seen collaboratives documenting their outcomes in terms of monies generated, transferability to neighboring communities, and institutionalization of the collaborative initiative.

## Measuring outcomes for agencies

As professionals come together in collaborative work, an implicit or explicit question often has to do with the extent to which agencies and organizations change as a result of the collaborative. Again, the emphasis is on the organization, rather than individual people. Collaboratives may be working to achieve a change in the number or type of service that is provided, access to service, governing policies, or resource use. A collaborative of youth serving agencies, for example, working to open up their membership to underrepresented youth, aggregated individual registration data before and after the 2 year effort to assess changes in membership. In another example, an agency budget was analyzed to determine if and how much of the total budget was redirected to the teen-at-risk program.

## Measuring outcomes for systems

Other collaboratives are working toward changes in systems—the way groups, agencies, businesses, organizations work together—for example, integrating an interagency service delivery system, sharing resources across agencies or departments, or undertaking joint planning. The emphasis is on changes in relationships, interactions and practices across the system, rather than on individual groups or agencies. Data may be collected at the individual agency level but is aggregated with like data from all participating agencies to show changes in the total system. A community-based initiative to enhance service integration collected data on communication flows within each agency and the number, type and quality of joint planning activities to measure degree of integration.

In some cases, attainment of collaboration itself may be an outcome for agencies who are seeking new working relationships within their agency or across agencies. Collaboration is valued

as an end result. It may represent either an agency or system level change.

## Measuring outcomes for communities

The widespread interest in collaboratives has been energized by the realization that community issues and problems demand community resolution — in the community, by the community. Efforts targeted at individuals have been largely ineffective in helping to resolve larger socio-cultural-environmental issues such as teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, declining environmental quality, unhealthy lifestyles. Improvement in such conditions is dependent upon changes in the total social-ecological context in which behavior occurs. Collaboratives form to improve neighborhoods, watersheds, and communities. So, the question becomes, to what extent has the neighborhood, watershed, community changed for the better as a result of the collaborative effort? Measures must focus on the total geographical unit, not just individuals within the area. In the community gardening initiative, for example, among other outcomes, neighborhoods were expected to achieve increased cohesion and a sense of community. Indicators for these outcomes included: increased interaction among neighbors, increased helping behavior, increased responsibility for the neighborhood's physical space, and positive attitudes about the neighborhood. Data were collected through observation, interviews with garden participants and neighborhood leaders, a sample survey of residents, and logs kept by staff. Results were aggregated to the neighborhood level to determine the proportion of residents exhibiting increased interaction, helping behaviors, responsibility, and feeling positive about the community.

# Design

Many of you will want to know not just what occurred as outcomes, but would those outcomes have resulted without the collaborative. That is, what influence did the collaborative have on the observed outcomes. This calls for **comparisons** and attribution of effects to the collaborative.

Most simply, you can ask people to make such comparisons. For example,

- Ask participants of collaborative activities, collaborative members, or others who have been involved in the collaborative to make judgments about the outcomes of the work. In an annual group member survey, for example, members may be asked questions about outcomes and impact the collaborative is having on individuals and the community as a whole.

- Ask an expert(s) — a knowledgeable outsider — to assess the collaborative or one of its programs and make judgments about outcomes. For example, several knowledgeable community representatives could be asked about what influence the collaborative had on educating people and helping to change behavior relative to solid waste management. This could be done through a structured survey, interviews, or a group interview.

While commonly used, the above two types of evaluations have inherent biases. A variety of other designs may be possible, some of which are briefly described below. For greater detail and description see for example, Weiss (1998) and Wholey et al., (1994).

## 1. Single group

**After-only:** The collaborative or any one of its programs is assessed after the collaborative is well underway or the program is over. In these cases, information is sought through archival information or knowledgeable people about the state of affairs prior to start-up to use for comparison purposes.

- A variation is the "post-then-pre" design (Rockwell & Kohn, 1989) that asks respondents to signify at the after point, their level of understanding or achievement before and after.

**Before-after comparison:** In these designs, information is collected before an activity is begun and after its completion. Comparisons between the "before information" and "after information" are used to indicate the effect of the initiative. For example:

- Clients receiving a service provided by the collaborative are assessed prior to the service and again at the end.
- Photographs of "before" the collaborative initiated a lakefront clean-up are compared to photographs of the same area "after" the cleanup.

As Weiss (1998) discusses, this design while seemingly logical, is not always sound. Many things may happen between Time 1 (before) and Time 2 (after) that could influence the results. It does not account for maturation or outside events that could have been responsible for the reported results. And in the event of no change being reported, it does not report outside events that may have been responsible. You can strengthen this design by adding additional data collection during the course of the program or collaborative work to document what is happening, keep track of potential external influences, and clarify the association between events, processes and outcomes.

As suggested above, you can improve single-group designs by collecting more data at different points in time. Rather than limiting yourself to before and after evidence, consider collecting information during the process. You could collect information on the activities or services being provided as well as the progress being made. Such information adds to the picture of what the collaborative is doing and helps explain the outcomes that occur. Without information about the process, it will be impossible to explain what led to the observed outcomes. Information collected during the initiative helps determine if the collaborative can take credit for the observed results or if other factors are responsible.

The use of program theory in evaluation presents the opportunity to account for cause-effect relationships without the burden of randomized selection. It involves laying out the theory of the program as the basis for data collection, identifying the key points along the pathway of change when data are collected, and comparing results to assumptions. Collecting data at key points throughout the initiative's life, following and validating its logic model, provides evidence of not only what is going on but what effects the initiative is having. For further elaboration of using program theory in evaluation, see Weiss, 1998; Weiss, 1997a; Weiss, 1997b; Chen, 1990; Bickman, 1987.

## 2. Comparison groups

In these designs, another group, community or clientele set serves as a comparison. When the group is randomly selected, it may be called a "control group." A comparison group helps to ensure that the collaborative (the program) caused the observed outcomes. The crux of this design, however, is that the comparison group must be very similar to the group we are investigating. Examples follow:

**After-only:** A one-day teen suicide prevention workshop is held in one school district. A neighboring school district is selected as the comparison, because it has a similar student body, socioeconomic environment and is exposed to similar outside influences. A survey is distributed at the end of the workshop and is administered to the same number and type of students at the comparison school to assess knowledge and attitudes concerning teen suicide.

**Before-after:** Using the above example, in a before-after comparison group design, the students in School A and School B each would be assessed twice — before and after the workshop. The similarity and status of both groups both before and after the program are assessed and compared.

Any type of comparison study tends to be difficult and costly. Even with close matching, comparison groups inevitably differ from the group of interest in important ways (Weiss, 1998). Validity that the collaborative and not other things caused the observed changes can be enhanced by adding multiple measurements over time.

## 3. Longitudinal

Collecting data at multiple points over time increases our costs but provides more evidence. It allows us to better understand the effect of our collaborative, the conditions that affect the outcome of interest and establish trends. For example,

- Participants in a women, infant and children nutritional program are followed over several years and their nutritional behavior is recorded at six month intervals.
- Data on waste at landfill sites are collected quarterly and compared.

These examples can be further strengthened by

- adding data collection points before and after the collaborative's initiative. For example, data are collected from youth prior to their attendance at a summer camp, at the beginning of camp, at the end of camp and again several months later.
- adding comparison groups/sites.

A variety of designs exist that you may wish to explore. We did not even discuss randomized designs since they are seldom possible or feasible within the context of community-based programming. A host of evaluation resources exist that cover design matters in much greater detail than we have here.

## Strengthening Evaluation

Another way to alleviate bias and strengthen validity is to use several different methods, data sources, types of data and/or analysis options. This is called triangulation (Denzin, 1978) and is based on the assumption that any "way of knowing" has its own inherent biases. For many of us, comparison groups and sophisticated designs may not be needed, wanted or possible. We can strengthen evaluation by:

- collecting information from several sources; for example, community residents at large, targeted clientele, and a few key elected officials
- collecting information using several different methods; for example, conducting a sample survey of neighborhood residents as well as several focus group interviews and on-site observations.
- using several different 'evaluators'; for example, asking two or more people to serve as investigators who would gather, analyze and interpret evaluative information about the collaborative
- mixing quantitative and qualitative designs; for example, using a comparison group design to solicit quantitative data through a survey as well as developing several case studies of particular students featuring qualitative data

- using various perspectives to interpret your data; for example, involving various people in interpretation or using differing theoretical perspectives

The possibilities to mix methods and techniques are almost limitless. As you think about the choices, however, keep in mind your purpose. Likewise, resources, time considerations and political realities all affect what we are able to do.

# Section 8

# Methods and Techniques

Once you have identified the evaluation questions most important for your collaborative, you will need to decide how to best answer them. This section is designed to give you ideas on how to go about gathering evaluative information to support learning in your collaborative. A first consideration in answering evaluation questions is identifying appropriate sources of information. Once identified you will want to choose a method or tool appropriate for that source. Below we list potential sources of information for evaluating your collaborative and then describe various methods and techniques you may want to use to answer your evaluation questions.

## Sources of Information

Multiple sources of evaluation information are available to any functioning collaborative. Usually, collaboratives have a wealth of existing information. There also may be various people, observations and pictorial records to serve as important information sources.

### Existing Information

It is likely that the collaborative has a variety of materials and documents that may serve as sources of information for evaluating process, outcomes, feasibility and individual interests. Think about what information is available that might be used to answer some of your questions. Information exists in the following:

- Program documents: Joint agreements, workplans, meeting minutes, accomplishment reports, logs, proposals, grant records/reports, activity registration forms, newsletters.
- Data bases: Census Bureau, population, housing, industry, school census data etc.
- Research reports: published literature

- Histories: county, program, life histories
- Media records
- Public service and business records: local government plans, employment statistics, farm records, justice, social and health agency data, student performance records.
- Evaluations: of same or similar collaborative groups/programs

## People

The stakeholders of a collaborative are an essential and often the most common source of information. People who may provide useful information for your evaluation include:

- Collaborative members: active and inactive
- Participants, beneficiaries: people who benefit directly or indirectly from the program
- Non-participants; proponents; critics; victims
- Key informants; anyone who has particular knowledge about the collaborative or its work
- People with special expertise; judges, faculty from a nearby college, etc.
- Local residents, leaders, influentials
- Collaborating agency staff, administrators, volunteers
- Funders
- Policy makers, legislators, federal or state agency staff

## Pictorial Records and Observations

Pictorial records and other types of observation may provide evaluative information which would not be discovered in existing materials or even when talking to people. Below are some examples of these sources of information.

- Videotape of a group meeting which illustrate order of business, leadership and collective decision making skills
- Observations of events and activities to record numbers and characteristics of participants, practices or behaviors in action, interaction patterns, skill development

- Before and after pictures such as photos of streets before and after "Clean Sweep"; photos of the garage before and after it became a youth center, or the empty lot before and after the gardening initiative
- Art done by children which illustrate perceptions of or responses to their environment, e.g. perceptions of violence, drugs etc.
- Slide series of over-time changes such as a lakefront development, downtown restoration, changes in participant skills such as in employment counseling or speaking before a public audience
- Videotape excerpts from nutrition education program which demonstrate participant reactions and learning taking place
- Video or photos of collaborative activities showing the diversity of participants
- Observations of verbal and nonverbal behavior such as people reacting to an issue at a collaborative meeting, working together in a team process, or interacting with community people outside the collaborative

## Methods

Any of the traditional social science data collection methods can be applied or adapted by collaboratives to document process and outcomes. Increasingly, we see collaboratives create innovative techniques to meet their needs, purposes and resource considerations. The key is *triangulation* of methods, that is, the mix of methods to provide a more complete and valid assessment. Triangulation is based on the premise that each method has its own biases and deficiencies. Thus, in order to understand complex phenomena, we use various methods as well as sources of information.

## Surveys

Surveys can be designed to collect evaluative information on either discreet activities or continuous processes. Surveys are a standardized process for collecting information using structured questionnaires either through the mail (surface and electronic), telephone, in-person, or in a centralized activity such as part of an event. We find collaboratives using surveys in a variety of ways, largely in needs assessments to determine attitudes and concerns, in outcome evaluation to document practices, and behavioral change, and in assessing levels of satisfaction with situations, services, collaborative operations.

### Types of Surveys

| ***Verbal*** | | ***Written*** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Face to Face* | *Telephone* | *Mail* | *Electronic* |
| • Functions like a structured interview<br>• Questions predetermined<br>• Systematically record answers | • Decide who to call<br>• Draft straightforward questions<br>• Generate pool of phone numbers<br>• Make a recording sheet for callers to write on<br>• Write a standard introduction and explanation<br>• Test and modify questions | • Include cover letter with explanation<br>• Personalize the letter<br>• Use two matching envelopes - one with return address and postage<br>• Time of mailing affects response rates<br>• Follow up mailings increase response rates<br>• Make plans to handle clerical help, mailing list problems and questions from respondents | • Make sure desired respondents have access to e-mail or the internet<br>• Send questions over e-mail<br>• Include reply instructions<br>• Design a web site containing a survey<br>• Ask respondents to visit the web site and give suggestions<br>• Access and computer familiarity affects response rates |

### *Variations*

- ***Meeting Effectiveness Survey*** — A meeting effectiveness survey is a way to assess meetings for leadership, participation, decision making, conflict resolution and productivity or any other variable of interest.

- ***Organizational survey*** — Organizational surveys can be used to assess the commitment and perceptions of participating organizations toward the collaborative. Individual members of a collaborative may find it useful to pose questions to their home agencies about the collaborative and then share that information in the collaborative. This type of survey can gauge the commitment of participating organizations and the resources which flow from such commitment. An organizational survey can also be designed to discover the impact the collaborative is having on constituent organizations.

- ***Member survey*** — A member survey can be used after every few meetings or perhaps annually to review the internal processes of a collaborative. Questions may address members' perceptions of functioning of committee meetings including: climate, task orientation leadership, staff support, membership costs and benefits, communications, conflicts, etc. See appendix for an example.

- ***Community survey*** — A community survey may be used to assess community perceptions of the collaborative by asking questions about intermediate outcomes of the collaborative and how they may be meeting community needs. The sample of respondents may be drawn from collaborative stakeholders or beneficiaries within the community or from members of the larger community which do not have a direct relationship to the collaborative. The sampling strategy will depend on the evaluation purpose and questions you have.

- ***Specific source survey*** — Surveys may also be used to collect information from specific people or groups. These are designed for key informants who have special information or represent specific groups of people.

### *Where to learn more*

Dillman, D. A. (1978). *Mail and telephone surveys: the total design method*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Leads, C. Implementing a mail questionnaire. *EDGE Evaluation Guide Sheet*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University, Cooperative Extension Service.

Pietro, D. S. (Ed.). (1984). *Evaluation sourcebook for private and voluntary organizations*. New York, NY: American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service.

## Interviews

Interviews are based on the age-old process of talking with and listening to people. Interviews may range from being tightly structured, seeking to collect the same information from each respondent, or free-flowing and conversational. Interviews may be conducted face to face or over the phone. They may be conducted with individuals or a group, as in a focus group interview. They also vary by structure, purpose and types of questions.

| | Types of Interviews/Structure | Purpose | Preparation |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Low** | informal conversation | discovery | background information |
| ↓ | unstructured | open-ended probe | interview guide |
| | structured | open-ended verification | standard questions |
| **High** | limited response | closed verification | questionnaire |

*Source: Adapted from Pietro, 1984*

When conducting interviews you may want to keep in mind the different types of information you will be getting depending on the structure as outlined above. For example, people will respond to questions differently in a group context than they will individually. When possible use different types of interviews for verification or combine interviews with other methods.

Interviews primarily provide qualitative data, but some quantitative information may also be gathered if the questions are structured. Interviews are especially useful for evaluating collaboratives when used to explore issues.

Interviewing tips:

- keep the purpose of your interview in mind
- be natural - for structured interviews, practice your questions so that they will flow
- use appropriate non-verbal responses to show you're listening
- dress appropriately for the setting and person you are interviewing
- interview in a comfortable place - the location should make the respondent feel comfortable, consider privacy issues as well
- don't be satisfied with monosyllabic answers - use probing questions if all you are receiving are yes and no answers
- be sensitive to cultural nuances
- be respectful — show appreciation for the information and time the person being interviewed is providing
- be cordial and appreciative — remember to thank the person at the beginning and end of the interview and answer any questions he or she may have about the process
- practice, practice, practice —you will learn the most about interviewing by doing it

### *Variations*

***Focus Groups*** — "A focus group is a carefully planned discussion, with five to ten participants, designed to obtain perceptions about a specific topic in a permissive and non-threatening environment" (Krueger, 1994). Focus groups provide qualitative information and are generally used to discover the perceptions, feelings, or thinking of respondents on a particular topic. A range of possible responses as well as common features of responses are often uncovered during focus groups. You may want to do a focus group with the members of your collaborative group. You may also ask other groups to participate in focus groups such as community residents, panels of experts on a certain issue, or program participants.

Focus groups could be conducted based on any number of evaluation questions such as: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the collaborative? What is the collaborative accomplishing? How well is the collaborative functioning?

**Steps in conducting a focus group:**

*Planning a focus group*

- Identify participants — 5 to 10 is the usual number
- Recruit participants — invite them and confirm their commitment to participate before conducting the focus group
- Develop questions — choose a few well-thought-out questions which go from broad to more focused on the particular issue
- Find an assistant moderator and practice moderating

*Moderating a focus group*

- Have participants face each other
- Create a warm and friendly environment with small talk before starting
- Begin by welcoming participants, thanking them and setting ground rules for the session (i.e., everyone should have an opportunity to speak and their input counts, confidentiality will be maintained and only summary information reported)
- Keep the discussion on topic without stifling responses.
- Use a 5 second pause (accompanied by eye contact) to encourage the sharing of additional points of view
- Use probing questions like "Could you explain that further?" to encourage discussion
- Take few notes — just to remind yourself of questions for clarification later
- Have a wrap-up time where people can react to what was discussed in the session. (i.e., ask them to say one thing they heard which was especially important)
- Thank them again and remind them how the information will be used

*Recording a focus group*

- Tape record and transcribe for formal focus groups — check equipment before and at the end of the session
- Have an assistant moderator take detailed notes during the session
- If not tape recording have two note takers (besides the moderator) which can record and compare nuances of the discussion and participants reactions
- Have a de-briefing discussion immediately following between the moderator and assistant(s)

*Analyzing results on four levels*

- Data — What did the participants say?
- Interpretations — According to the analyst, what did the participants mean?
- Judgments — Are these findings valuable? Did we get answers to our evaluation questions?
- Recommendations — How do these results affect our collaborative? What do we need to do now?

***"Thousand Mile Journey"*** **—** The "thousand mile journey" (Long & Faas, 1993) is a technique for focusing a group discussion which seems especially appropriate for evaluating collaboratives as it builds on the journey analogy of collaboration. It helps a group look across time at what was, what is, and what will be. The technique is easy to administer, requires minimal time for preparation, and takes less than two hours of participant's time. A facilitator presents a list of questions like those suggested below. The group then places their individual thoughts/responses on a timeline to answer the questions. It is important to have a good facilitator who can summarize group responses. The responses on the timeline can answer evaluation questions about how the collaborative process has worked or is working and how it can be improved. It may also reveal outputs, achievements and outcomes of the collaborative that were either intended or unintended.

Sample Questions:

- Where did we start in 19__?
- Where are we now?
- What helped move the group from where we started to where we are now?
- What else could have been done to achieve more?
- What may have interfered with our progress as a group?
- Where do we want to be a year from now?
- What resources do we have that would help us achieve our short and long term goals?
- What additional resources, training, etc. might we need to achieve our goals?
- What should we avoid in the coming year?

***Key Informant Interviews —*** Another type of interview is one with a key informant. Key informants are people who hold special information about the functions, activities or outcomes of a collaborative. Questions may relate to the informant's personal perceptions of the collaborative, critical events, potential for success of a collaborative or to the impact that services or programs have had on a community. Like many other data collection methods, this type of interview can be used to answer feasibility, self-interest, process and outcome questions.

### *Where to learn more*

Fetterman, D.M., Kaftarian, S.J. & Wandersman, A. (eds.) (1996). *Empowerment evaluation: knowledge and tools for self-assessment & accountability*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krueger, R.A. & King, J.A. (1998). *Involving community members in focus groups*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krueger, R. (1994). *Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Long, James S. & Faas, R. (1993). *"Retrospection: A tool for a team of Prospectors."* In *Proceedings of the American Evaluation Association Extension Education Evaluation — Topical Interest Group. (M.G.*

*Marshall, ed.)*. USDA: Planning, Development & Evaluation. Washington, D.C.

Malone, P. (1995). Downtown Whitehall, a thousand mile journey: a capacity building evaluation of a downtown revitalization organization. Trempealeau County, WI: University of Wisconsin -Extension.

Patton, M.Q. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Pietro, D. S. (Ed.) (1984). *Evaluation sourcebook for private and voluntary organizations*. New York, NY: American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service.

## Observation

Considerable evaluation data can be collected by just observing. Direct observation is an underused and valuable method for collecting evaluation information. "Seeing" and "listening" are key to observation. Observation provides the opportunity to document activities, behavior and physical aspects without having to depend upon peoples' willingness and ability to respond to questions.

Observation is useful for many aspects of evaluating collaboratives including all types of evaluation questions to document program activities, collaborative processes, outcomes, individual interests and feasibility. It is appropriate in the following situations:

- **When you want direct information** — observing the conduct of a collaborative meeting, recording diversity of stakeholders participating, randomly visiting ongoing program activities etc.
- **When you are trying to understand an ongoing behavior, process, unfolding situation or event** — describing the differences as a collaborative moves through various phases of development, observing the integration of new collaborative members into the group, recording changes in working relationships within the collaborative etc.

- **When there is physical evidence, products or outcomes that can be readily seen** — observing physical changes in the community in which the collaborative is working (buildings, roads, parks etc.), inspecting products of program activities (youth centers, cleanliness of parks, brochures, books and other written resources of the collaborative, etc.)
- **When written or other data collection procedures seem inappropriate** — have participants volunteer to observe and report on program delivery instead of filling out a questionnaire, record group dynamics of a meeting or collaborative workshop, etc.

### *What to observe*

- Characteristics of members or participants
- Group Interactions
- Nonverbal Behavior
- Leaders, Facilitators
- Physical Surroundings — Environment of the Collaborative
- Products/Activities of Programs

Remember to pay attention to what is NOT happening. We can often learn as much from what is not happening as we can from what is happening. When you identify the important evaluation questions for your collaborative, think about what could be happening but is not.

### *Where to learn more*

Cloutier, D., B. Lilley, D. Phillips, B. Weber, & Sanderson, D. (1987). *A guide to program evaluation and reporting*. Orono, MN: University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service.

Kumar, K. (1987). *Rapid, low-cost data collection methods for A.I.D.* Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development.

Taylor-Powell, E. & Steele, S. (1996). *Collecting evaluation data: Direct observation*. Program Development and Evaluation. Madison, WI.: University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension.

## Group Assessment

Group assessment has built-in potential for evaluating collaboratives as most of the work of collaboratives is done in groups. Group assessment techniques use a group format for various purposes. Group assessment may be used at any phase of collaborative development to identify evaluation needs and questions, to prioritize them, to share evaluation information within the group, to document outcomes, and to monitor and/or process feelings within the collaborative. Though varieties of group techniques abound we describe a few variations which may be useful in evaluating collaboratives. Please note the references below for sources of more detailed descriptions of these techniques and instructions for carrying them out.

### *Brainstorming*

Brainstorming is a common tool for groups to creatively generate ideas. Participants are instructed to let ideas flow freely and share as many of them as possible with the group. Four rules tend to govern brainstorming sessions.

- Generate as many ideas as possible (quantity over quality)
- Avoid criticizing ideas as they are shared
- Do not self censor ideas—wild and exaggerated ideas are good
- Build on the ideas of others

Such a creative thinking session can be used by a collaborative to generate evaluation questions and/or think about a future vision of success for the group against which performance can be measured.

### *Nominal Group*

The nominal group technique is a popular problem-solving or idea-generating strategy for achieving consensus. Group members are asked to write their ideas down instead of expressing

them verbally. This tends to ensure that everyone in the group is heard. While the nominal group process can be varied, a common approach is for participants to write their ideas down on a piece of paper and then in round robin fashion each idea is listed in full view. Ideas are discussed as needed for clarification or explanation. Participants then rate each idea and the ratings are tallied to reveal the group results.

### *Buzz Session*

Buzz sessions simply break down a large group (10–15) into smaller units (3–5) for focused discussion. Some people have trouble participating in large group discussions or meetings. This technique can facilitate participation from those who are not comfortable sharing in front of the whole working group. A leader and recorder is selected for each sub group and items discussed are recorded. These can be shared together as a group or read later by the leader or meeting facilitator. Thus, it is a useful technique for evaluating the value of meetings for individuals involved or for dealing with emotional or confrontational issues. For many collaboratives an important component of evaluating the collaboration process is the ability to monitor and assess the emotions and feelings of collaborative members. Buzz sessions can help members share their feelings about the collaborative and its work in a safe environment.

### *Fishbowls*

A fishbowl refers to a smaller sub group which is discussing among itself while the larger group or another group affected by the issue at hand looks on. This technique can be used to share information between collaborative members or between a designated committee within the collaborative to other members. It could also be used for external communication if stakeholders are invited to a collaborative meeting to observe.

### *Where to Learn More*

Butler, L.M. & Howell, R.E. (1980) *Coping with growth: Community needs assessment techniques*. Western Rural Development Center. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University.

Chang, R. Y. & Niedzwiecki, M. E. (1993). *Continuous improvement tools: a practical guide to achieve quality results, volumes 1 & 2*. Irvine, CA: Richard Chang Associates, Inc.

Delbecq, A. H., Van de Ven, A. H. & Gustafson, D.H. (1975). *Group techniques for program planning: a guide to nominal group and delphi processes*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Kayser, T. A. (1995). *Mining group gold: how to cash in on the collaborative brain power of a group*. Chicago, IL: Irwin Professional Publishers.

Rohs, F. R. (1994). *Group methods and techniques*. Athens, GA: Cooperative Extension Service, University of Georgia.

Seevers, B., Graham, D., Gamon, J., Conklin, N. (1997). *Education through Cooperative Extension*. Albany, N.Y.: Delmar Pub.

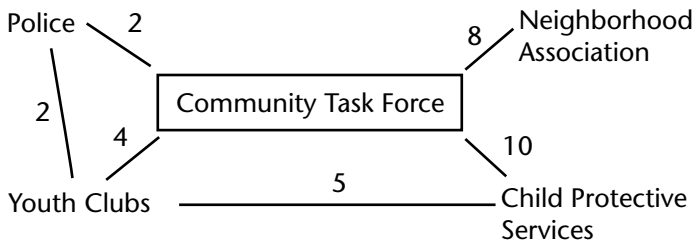
Tagliere, D. A. (1992). *How to meet, think, and work to consensus*. San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer & Company.

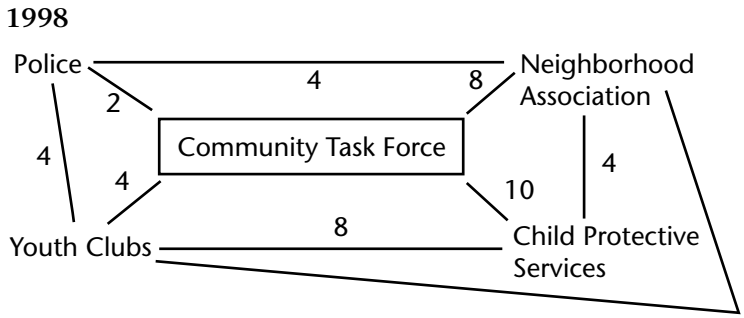
Tague, N. R. (1995). *The quality toolbox*. Milwaukee, WI: ASQC Quality Press.

## Sociograms

A sociogram is a diagram of social interaction between people or groups of people. It is a visual representation of linkages. Sociograms vary by the nature of the diagrammed connections which may be based on communication, face to face interaction, service provision, or formal collaborative agreements. The example below shows the connections between groups involved in a Family Preservation and Support Collaborative at two points in time. Sociograms can be constructed based on simple data collection techniques like informal interviews to uncover the number of information exchanges among collaborators or within communities.

**1997**






*Numbers next to lines indicate frequency of information exchanges between groups per month outside of meetings.*

*Source: Adapted from Chavis (1996).*

The most useful aspect of sociograms for evaluating collaboratives is their ability to show changes in networks and communication over time. Periodically diagramming the functioning networks a collaborative has established or channels of communication can show changes over time. It can also help identify weak linkages or bottlenecks within a collaborative effort.

## Creative Expression

Various forms of creative expression can be used in evaluation as a means for individuals and groups to represent their ideas and/or feelings. They can generate rich data containing many subtleties which may not be uncovered in other ways. These methods do pose interpretation challenges, but getting a group to work through interpretation can provide yet more useful insights into evaluation questions. Creative expression forms include: drawing, stories, drama, role plays, music, found objects and collages.

When using creative expression it is important to choose an art form which feels comfortable to participants. Once the form has been chosen it is usually helpful to give the individuals or group a theme or question(s) to guide their work. Some ideas follow:

### *Drawings*

Asking collaborative stakeholders to draw may provide deeper insights into their perspective on concepts, issues or questions than verbal discussion alone can. They could be asked to draw pictures, charts, maps, timelines, abstract shapes, social interaction networks, diagrams, or make collages. Pictorial representations provide an avenue for discussing and understanding col-

laborative dynamics and outcomes. Asking members to draw their collaborative is one example. For example, one member may draw a circle with people facing each other smiling while another uses darker colors and three different groups talking among themselves. If everyone draws only collaborative members talking to one another, this could raise questions about whether external linkages are developing or being overlooked. A variation on this would be to ask participants to choose and draw an animal to represent their collaborative. Having people share the reasons for their choices may provide useful answers to evaluation questions like what are we doing here? how well are we working together? If your collaborative intends to be together for a long time, using drawings at different stages of collaborative development may also be useful. Comparing drawings made in the initial phase of your collaborative to those made later can provide information about the progress made and changes that have occurred.

Drawings can also be used to help collaboratives decide on intended outcomes and/or indicators. These then may become the basis for evaluating outcomes (See Section 7). Words and concepts have different meanings for different people. Asking members of a youth support collaborative to draw the effects of youth dropping out of school - or the effects of more kids staying in school can reveal the different perspectives members bring to an issue and their work. Some may draw the effects on the community like increased crime and a weaker work force. Others may draw dissolving families, tension between parents and children, or teen pregnancy. Still others may draw the effects on the kids themselves like alcoholism, drug addiction, or isolation. These different creative representations of the problem can lead to useful discussions about what the collaborative as a whole is working toward and how they will know when they have arrived at their intended outcome of keeping kids in school. The key to any drawing exercise is the process of discussing the ideas expressed and learning from them.

### *Drama*

Like drawings, drama may be used in many ways. People can act out before and after stories, provide different perspectives on the same issue through different characters, or depict a critical incident. Having people come up with a scenario for drama is also a useful process if you take note of what kind of characters they

see as most important and how they eventually act out the story or problem. Drama can be used to recall and evaluate a critical incident that occurred in a collaborative. If an important funding source dropped its support, members and other stakeholders could be asked to act out the decision and what led up to it. This can identify the key people involved in that decision as well as the reasons for it.

### *Role Play*

Role play is a creative way to help people see an issue or problem from someone else's perspective. Role plays may also be used to share and learn from evaluation information. If information has been collected about the climate of a collaborative then someone leading that evaluation activity may come up with characters and assign different roles and emotions to them. Assigning various members to play different roles than they hold themselves will help everyone learn more about their group and how they are working together. For example, a leader or dominant participant in collaborative meetings may be asked to role play a listener and receive instructions for body language such a person has been using and emotions they have been having as part of the collaborative.

### *Personal Stories or Testimonials*

Personal stories may be either written or oral. They can be a fun and relaxed way to reveal the impressions people have of certain collaborative events, processes and the collaboration process in general. Members may relate why they are part of the collaborative and what their experiences have been. A set of questions can help them get started, but try to have them focus on who they are and how that affected their involvement or how that has changed. Some example questions for collaborative members are: How did your involvement with the collaborative come about? Why have you stayed involved? What has the work of the collaborative meant to you? Have you been involved in collaborative work before this?

Stories and testimonials could also be elicited from participants in collaborative activities or programs. You may wish to video tape activities and then add personal stories to the video tape to illustrate the meaning behind activities for specific people.

Participants may be given a camera or video recorder themselves and asked to photograph their community, their school, their life etc. The resulting video or collage of photos may be presented and discussed to answer evaluation questions.

### *Problem Stories*

Problem stories are narrative accounts of past, present or future situations that are used as a means to identify perceptions of program activities or impact, and as catalysts for discussion and analysis. Using fictional characters to externalize problem situations will allow for more open discussion of the issues among collaborative members.

Pietro, D. S. (Ed.) (1984). *Evaluation sourcebook for private and voluntary organizations*. New York, NY: American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service.

## Content Analysis of Existing Materials

Content analysis can be very useful for analyzing documentation and other existing information that your collaborative has collected. It can either produce qualitative summaries of information or quantify content according to preset rules, word searches, counts etc. Content analysis varies by the type of document analyzed; meeting minutes and summaries, visual materials, and activity/program registration forms. Other documents could also be analyzed for content such as program reports, proposals and publications if they exist. An approach similar to the one we describe for meeting minutes could be used with these documents as well.

### *Meeting Minutes*

If you take meeting minutes then you may use content analysis to identify topics discussed at meetings, whether topics are consistent with collaborative's goals, tasks assigned and/or completed by members, and decisions made. All that remains to be done is a simple content analysis to see what you have discussed, decided and acted upon as a group.

As with other types of content analysis, analyzing the content of minutes can range from a formal and elaborate set of data codes and analysis to an informal review of minutes to pick out major highlights. You can compare the topics discussed and decisions made to what the collaborative said it would be doing. If you have minutes from many meetings over several years you may want to code categories and use them in a database or spreadsheet analysis. You can also keep records like those suggested below and do a manual count of the summary information.

As with all tools, content analysis can easily be adapted by choosing different types of categories for analysis. This information should then be communicated both externally and internally to describe both the process and outcomes of your collaborative.

Aspects you may find through content analysis of meeting minutes:

- Inputs
- Decisions
- Activities
- People Involved
- Reactions
- Organization Changes
- Policy Changes
- Consequences of decisions

### *Meeting Agenda Summaries*

Forms like the ones below can be used to keep track of decisions, actions, and achievements.

**Summary of decisions made/actions to be taken**

This summarizes the previous meeting and may accompany the agenda for the next meeting.

| *Decision Made/ Action to be Taken* | *Responsibility* | *Deadline* |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

**Summary of achievements to date**

This is a log of all achievements. It may be based on a one time content analysis of past minutes or updated regularly as a log of achievements.

| *Achievements* | *Responsibility* | *Deadline* |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

*Adapted from Winer & Ray, 1994*

### *Audio-Visual Materials (Photos, videos, tapes etc.)*

Content analysis can also be done with visual materials of the collaborative like photos or videos. An intentional review of such materials with specific questions in mind can often uncover previously unnoticed evaluation information. Such an analysis could answer questions about who is participating in collaborative programs and activities and who is not. Paying attention to body language in such materials can also point to attitudes and groups functioning as well.

An audio recording of a collaborative planning meeting could be analyzed like meeting minutes to determine the decisions made, problems solved, alternatives identified and evaluated, or actions planned.

### *Activity forms/registration*

For each program activity the collaborative has sponsored, you may have some forms used for the activity that tell who was involved. These may be summarized through content analysis to reveal the degree of representation among stakeholders, demographic characteristics of participants, level of participation in various activities, etc.

### *Steps in content analysis:*

- Decide which documentation is appropriate for answering your evaluation question(s)
- Gather and order your materials (by date, type of material, etc.)
- Read through or review all materials to familiarize yourself with the overall content
- Decide on themes or categories to be explored and summarized - positive statements from collaborative members about an activity, decisions made at meetings, accomplishment of a collaborative goal etc.
- Create a coding or organizing system for categories (particularly helpful for a large amount of material and analysis of multiple issues at one time)
- Read through the materials again carefully looking for information on chosen themes or categories, coding them as you go along
- Organize and separate all content that is alike
- Consolidate and interpret the results of the content analysis through written explanation or graphing

### *Where to learn more*

Crowley, B.P. & Delfico, J.F. (1996). *Content analysis: a methodology for structuring and analyzing written material*. Washington, DC:United States General Accounting Office, Program Evaluation and Methodology Division.

Worthen, B. R. & Sanders, J.R. (1987). *Educational evaluation: alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. New York, NY: Longman.

## Expert Review

There may be people who hold special knowledge about your collaborative or the issue it has formed to address. Inviting these "experts" to review the performance of your collaborative can provide useful answers to many evaluation questions. Such experts could be key stakeholders of the collaborative, people involved in similar collaborative initiatives in another community, or educators from a local school or university.

Adequate preparation for an expert review is paramount. As you plan for an expert review, consider the following:

- WHO is best qualified to evaluate the collaborative? Who will be seen as credible? How many will be included?
- WHEN will the "experts" review the collaborative's work? How long will the review take? What dates are most appropriate?
- WHAT will the "experts" be expected to look at? What questions might they answer?

## Diaries, Journals and Logs

Diaries, journals and logs are records of events and processes that occur over time. Not only do they record events and processes, they are also useful for recording problems that arise along with peoples' feelings and thoughts about what transpired.

Diaries and journals provide a personal perspective on a program and or its results and sometimes can show how results came about. Diaries and journals can be kept by collaborative members, program participants, volunteers, or program staff. They reveal the personal perspective of the person doing the writing. The writer controls what data is recorded and shared.

To share the responsibility of keeping a "collaborative diary" and ensure all perspectives were included, members of one collaborative rotated the diary monthly—each month a different member made the entry. Annually the entries were analyzed and used to facilitate discussion on the collaborative's performance. Among other things, diary material may be useful for:

- recording and examining involvement, reactions, likes and dislikes

- tracking program activities and reactions to them
- identifying major turning points or problem areas
- identifying changes and accomplishments

Logs also have chronological entries but are briefer and more factual usually not including reactions and thoughts. Logs record times, dates and brief narrative comments related to programs. Keeping logs and then using the information to supplement your evaluation is easy and practical. Some examples of logs include; telephone logs, attendance logs, activity logs, resource logs, media logs which record dates, length, content, of media work.

Communication logs may be used to see the type and frequency of communication between collaborative members and with other stakeholders. A collaborative can analyze and count the content in telephone logs to assess the degree of communication among partners. This type of information can be fed into a sociogram to visually document the changes in and extent of communication within and outside of the collaborative.

### *Where to learn more*

Pietro, D. S. (Ed.). (1984). *Evaluation sourcebook for private and voluntary organizations*. New York, NY: American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service.

## Semantic Differentials

Semantic differential can be used in surveys or rating forms to determine nuances of opinion about specific issues. It is a method of measuring personal meaning or attitudes about a concept. The differential represents adjective pairs on a continuum between which respondents must choose. There are generally three major categories of meaning explored by the pairs: value (good vs. bad, positive vs. negative, pleasing vs. annoying, etc.); activity (fast vs. slow, effective vs. ineffective), and strength (strong vs. weak, difficult vs. easy). The attributes of a concept one wants to explore determines which adjective pairs are used. It is a good idea to pretest your chosen pairs to eliminate any confusing or ambiguous terms. Also, be sensitive to cultural or situationally specific terms.

Odd numbered scales (3,5,7, etc) are usually used to allow for a midpoint rating in case the respondent is neither positive or negative about a concept. It is also a good idea to change the order of positive and negative adjectives so that respondents are not always checking in one direction (left or right). Instructions for marking the scales used should be clear so that they are marked correctly for easy interpretation. Ideas for adjective pairs useful for evaluating collaboratives are listed below.

*Place an X on the line to indicate your response.*

**Goals**

clear _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ confused

members indifferent _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ members involved

conflicting among groups _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ shared among groups

**Leadership**

autocratic _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ democratic

task oriented _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ people oriented

seeks change _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ maintains status quo

**Cohesiveness**

open interaction _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ guarded interaction

feelings expressed freely _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ feelings not expressed

members trust each other _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ members are suspicious

**Working Procedures**

clear working procedures exist _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ working procedures unclear

decision made by few _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ decisions made by consensus

closed, new members ignored _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ open, new members welcomed

**Outcomes**

group work aids achievement _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ group work hinders achievement

member resources used effectively _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ member resources wasted

### *Where to learn more*

Heiss, D. R. (1970). The semantic differential and attitude measurement. In Summers, G.F. (Ed.). *Attitude measurement*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.

Snider, J. & Osgood, C. (1969). *Semantic differential technique*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing.

Worden, P. (1987). *A source book for program evaluation and accountability*. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.

## Case Study

An evaluation method which provides comprehensive information about a single case is called a case study. You may want to use this method to obtain a complete picture of your collaborative's development or to evaluate a program carried out by your collaborative. A case study can help determine what happened and why by extending over a period of time. Case studies not only benefit your own collaborative but can contribute to the larger body of literature and knowledge about collaboratives from which other groups may learn and benefit.

Case studies use multiple information sources and multiple methods like those previously described above. A case study starts with keeping and building a complete file about the collaborative. You may keep an on-going log of the collaborative's work. You may also collect and analyze media releases, minutes, reports from committees, periodic reviews etc. You could also include interviews with collaborative members, community members and/or other stakeholders. Finally you would be able to supplement all these types of evaluative information with your own personal observation. The result is an in-depth description of what is occurring in the collaborative. An interesting component of the case study method is that data collection and analysis happen concurrently.

A GAO (1987) guide to case study evaluation lists 6 applications or types of case studies you may choose from:

- Illustrative — descriptive in character and intended to add realism and in-depth examples to other evaluation information
- Exploratory — descriptive but aimed at generating hypotheses for later investigation rather than illustrating
- Critical instance — examines a single unique instance of interest or serves as a critical test of an assertion about a program, problem, strategy, or critical event
- Program implementation — investigates operations, often at several sites and often normatively
- Program effects — examines causality and usually involves multisite, multimethod assessments
- Cumulative — brings together findings from many case studies to answer an evaluation question, whether descriptive, normative, or cause-and-effect

### *Where to learn more*

GAO — United States General Accounting Office. (1987). *Case study evaluations*. Washington, DC: United States General Accounting Office, Program Evaluation and Methodology Division.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Worden, P. (1987). *A source book for program evaluation and accountability*. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.

Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: design and methods* (2nd Ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

## Graphing Results

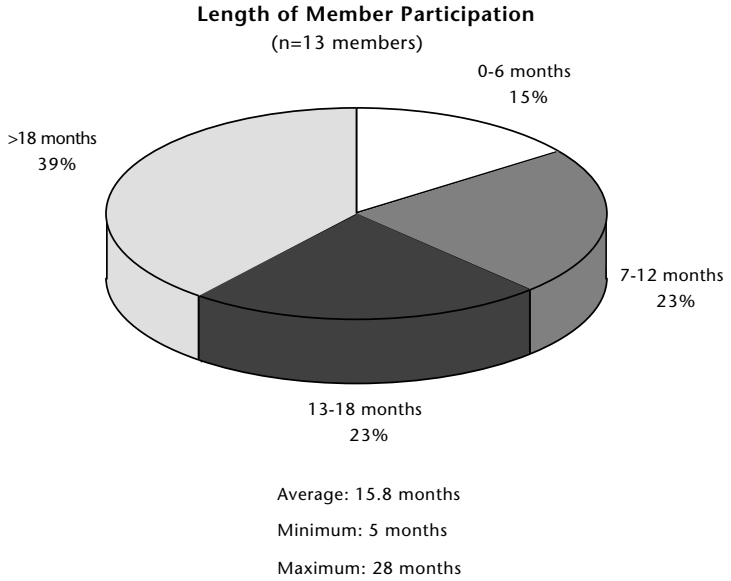
An important part of many of the methods and techniques described in this section is the presentation of the results. Graphs can be used to present evaluation information of all sorts. In evaluating collaboratives we often find creative ways of

graphing evaluation information and components of collaboratives.

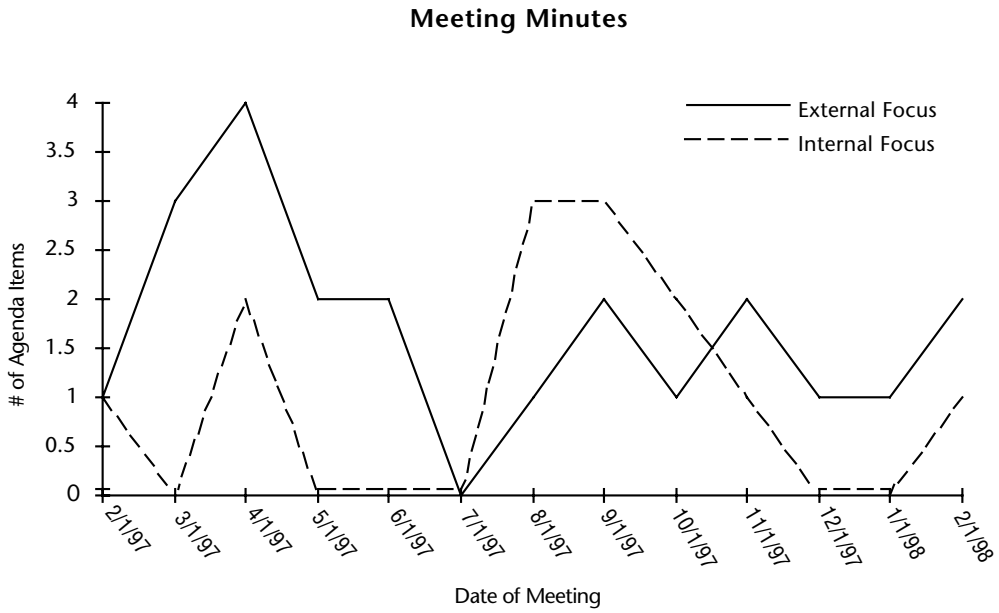
Results of a content analysis of meeting minutes may be graphed to show the number of tasks being assigned to the different members of the collaborative. Such a graph would show two important dimensions: extent to which tasks are clearly designated to specific people and distribution of tasks over the membership; both dimensions correlate to collaborative success. Or, you might wish to show the level of communication within the collaborative, by graphing the number of times different people speak over the course of several collaborative meetings. Another example from meeting minutes would be graphing the degree to which agenda items are internally or externally focused.

The results of surveys, interviews, observations or other data collection procedures likewise can be graphed. A variety of simple and more sophisticated charts and graphs exist from which to choose. Pie charts, bar and line graphs are the most common. Pictograms are a type of bar graph that uses figures for illustration, such as a thermometer to illustrate quantities or levels or a calendar to show length. Some examples follow. Use your creativity to find the best way to present your results, keeping in mind:

- your audience and what they will see as understandable and credible; and
- your data and what is the most authentic representative of the information.

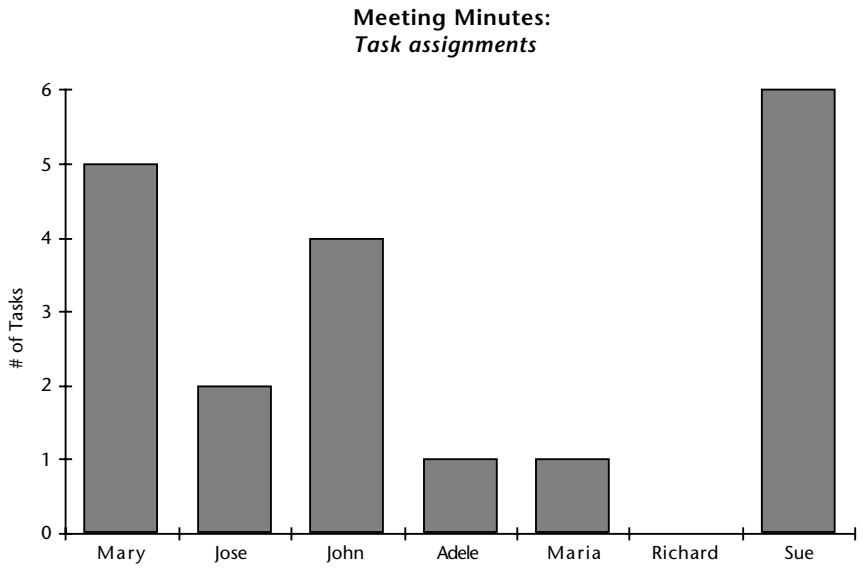



Three-dimensional Pie Chart

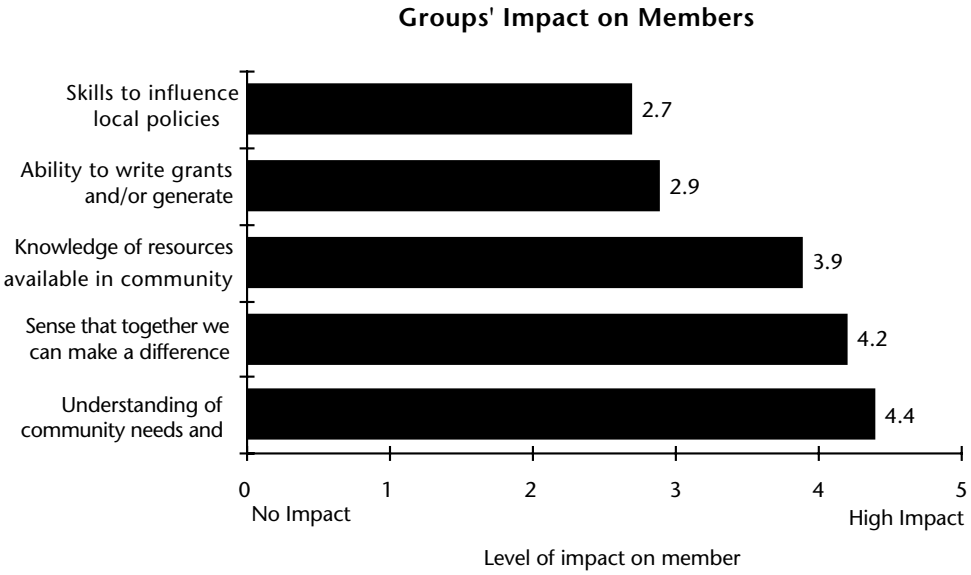



Internal focus represents discussions about the coalition, how it functions, goals and objectives, resource acquisition and other matters centered on the workings of the collaborative. *Source: Chavis, 1996.*

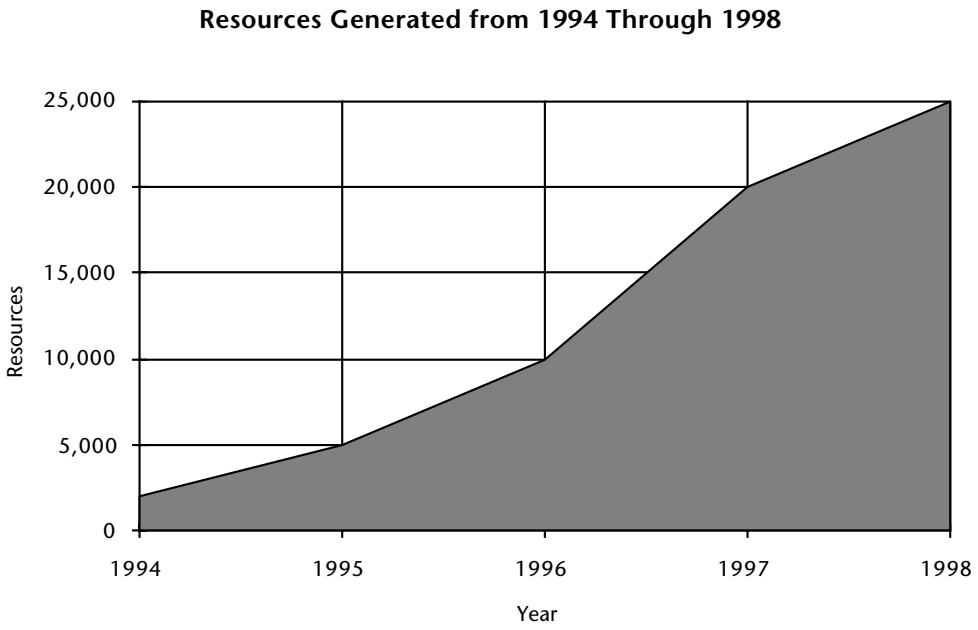
Line Graph



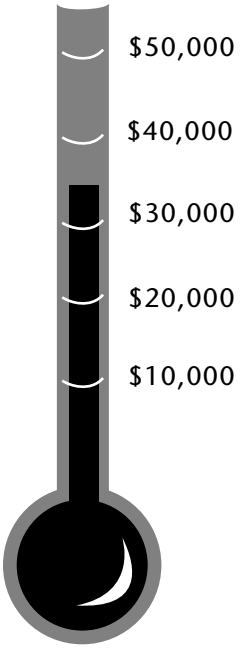

Bar Graph




Horizontal Bar Graph




Filled Line Graph




Graphical Representation of Progress

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# APPENDIX 1

The two instruments in this appendix were developed and are being used by the faculty and staff of UWEX-Cooperative Extension. The Community Group Member Survey questionnaire may be used in self-evaluation as well as in providing standardized information for aggregation across community groups. It includes a series of questions dealing with process and outcomes. It draws from a Task Force Member Survey developed by the Community Research and Services Team, Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies, Brown University and from the needs and experience of extension county agents working in and with community groups. The Extension Role in Community Group questionnaire is completed by extension educators to document the role they play and contribution they make to specific community groups. UWEX-Cooperative Extension collects and uses this information for accountability purposes.

# APPENDIX 2

The Community Organizational Assessment Tool was developed by Professor Robert Bright, Community Development Specialist, UW-Extension, Family Living Programs, from materials prepared by the Citizens Involvement Training Program, University of Massachusetts-Amherst. It provides a mechanism for facilitating organizational discussion and development.

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