United Way
Toronto

Participating Effectively as a Collaborative Partner

A United Way Toronto Toolkit

Written for United Way Toronto by: Heather Graham and Linda Mollenhauer
In consultation with UWT Partnership Toolkit Team: Irene Brenner, Susannah Cameron, Olga Korpalo, Michi Motomura, Rosario Pascua, Lisa Watson and Jodi Williams

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United Way Toronto

INTRODUCTION

Participating Effectively as a Collaborative Partner: A United Way Toronto Toolkit is designed to support United Way Toronto (UWT) staff members to be more effective community partners. The audience for this first iteration is UWT community-facing staff members that are actively engaged in collaborative initiatives. The tools found in this resource were identified by community-facing staff as the most critical for addressing their current challenges and opportunities. The Partnership Toolkit Team, comprised of staff from across UWT, provided ongoing guidance and direction to the project.

There are three parts to Participating Effectively as a Collaborative Partner: A United Way Toronto Toolkit.

Section A: Framing Collaboration: This section is designed to help UWT staff to better understand collaboration by providing a definition, offering some important facts about collaborative practice and identifying key characteristics that distinguish authentic collaboration. It also provides frameworks that enable UWT staff to place current or potential collaborations along a continuum of key dimensions and in various developmental stages. (See page 4 for a summary of the section)

Section B: Building Effective Collaborations: This section provides tools that staff can share at collaboration tables to strengthen their effectiveness. The tools will help ensure that there is a clear and consistent understanding about the intent of the collaborative effort and agreement about how the collaborative partners will work together. This section also provides a number of tools which allow collaborative partners to assess? value and risk to their organization and to evaluate its effectiveness. As well, it includes tools to help manage the collaborative relationships and the unique challenges which arise with UWT's participation as both a key funder and a collaborative partner.
(See page 11 for a summary of the tools and how they can be used.)

Section C: Leaving or Terminating a Collaboration describes steps to ensure that the collaboration ends well.

This resource is a living document that will be continually refined to enable UWT to achieve its broader organizational goals related to its strategic priority of Building and Sustaining Effective Relationships and Partnerships. It will also help staff to meet the Community Impact Framework objectives which call for UWT to "work with agencies, the social service sector and a broad range of partners to collectively identify priorities, set common goals and outcomes objectives, identify indicators of success, measure and evaluate change and communicate about impacts".[1]

[1] United Way Toronto's Community Partnership and Relationship Framework, April 2010, page 5.

SECTION A:
FRAMING COLLABORATION

OVERVIEW: THINKING REFLECTIVELY ABOUT COLLABORATION

The following chart describes how the information and frameworks in this section can be used to help United Way Toronto to think reflectively about collaboration.

Information and Frameworks	How to Use Them
1. Definition of collaboration	Clarify if there is a shared understanding, both within the UWT and with partners, about what collaboration means.
2. Facts about collaboration	Reflect on the degree to which UWT works from evidence-informed practice to strengthen its collaborative practice.
3. Characteristics of authentic collaborations	Assess how potential and/or current collaborations measure up against specific characteristics that distinguish authentic collaboration.
4. Dimensions of collaboration	Consider where UWT's collaborations fit on a continuum ranging from simple to complex, based on various factors. Then identify the implications for meeting UWT's priorities and for building and nurturing its collaborative relationships.
5. Stages of collaboration: Development process	Think about ways in which UWT supports the development of collaborations with its community partners and the implications for deploying resources and setting expectations about accountability.
6. Stages of collaboration: Evolution	Consider the stages of evolution of UWT's current collaborations and reflect on the supports, expertise and tools required to make each stage work effectively.

DEFINITION OF COLLABORATION

Consider the following definition of collaboration as UWT reflects on its strategic priorities, ways of working and community initiatives. It is intended to capture the wide range of collaborative arrangements as well as diverse range of partners.

Collaboration is defined as:

> *Two or more different partners (e.g., individuals, organizations, networks) coming together from various sectors, groups and/or neighbourhoods to work toward common goals. Collaborations are about people and organizations building, nurturing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships in order to achieve shared goals that will benefit all partners.*

- It is important to distinguish between collaboration as a way of working and collaboration as a distinct structure or entity.
- The term collaboration is often used interchangeably with networks, learning groups or communities of practice, strategic alliances, partnerships, and coalitions.

FACTS ABOUT COLLABORATION

The following facts dispel some widely held beliefs and assumptions about collaboration by presenting key findings from a recent collaborative research study by The Ontario Trillium Foundation that gathered and synthesized experiences and insights from local collaborative practitioners and stakeholders[2].

- **The 'one size fits all' approach doesn't work.**
  Collaborations form organically and therefore different supports and measurements are required at different stages in their development. To be successful and to innovate, collaborations need to be able to build authentic relationships, take risks with new strategies, and shape and reshape as they evolve.
- **Collaborations should be enabled versus mandated.**
  Research on collaborations confirms that the most successful collaborations are the ones that happen because individuals, groups and not-for-profit organizations identify a shared need, not because a funder requires it. Collaborative partners may perceive that collaboration is being mandated even when the intent of the funder is simply to avoid duplication or to encourage the achievement of more significant impacts.

[2] Drawn from Strengthening Collaboration in Ontario's Not-for-profit Sector; Ontario Trillium Foundation, 2011.

Trust is at the core of successful collaborations.
In order for collaborations to build trust, respondents emphasized that they need the time, resources and space for individuals to build authentic working relationships; to identify and revisit the outcomes and expectations; and to find the right balance between the need for a formal relationship and the need to remain nimble, responsive and innovative.

Achieving significant impacts takes risk, time and resources.
Successful collaborations, particularly those that address complex problems/issues and work toward broader social impacts, require a certain level of risk. Being innovative means allowing for surprises and unintended consequences, being comfortable with the unknown, and learning from mistakes.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AUTHENTIC COLLABORATION

Collaborations can serve many different purposes and take diverse forms. However, there are a set of unique characteristics that distinguish authentic collaborations and set them apart from other structures and initiatives. The following checklist[3] can be used to 'test' potential or existing collaborations to ensure they are authentic.

In an authentic collaboration, partners:

- Have agreed upon a shared mission, values, goals and measurable outcomes
- Are empowered by their organizations to come to consensus so that decisions and solutions are focused on the best interests of the collective
- Each have a voice in the collaboration so there is joint decision-making and power differentials are acknowledged and negotiated
- Each stands to gain in a significant way from the collaboration, both in terms of their own organization as well as the collective
- Must all have something significant to contribute to the collaboration, including time, knowledge, expertise and funds, although partners may bring different resources to the table
- Recognize that its structure and processes will continue to adapt to address new circumstances
- Are prepared to share in the risks, liabilities and responsibilities associated with the collaboration itself and its work in a way that encourages mutual accountability
- Nurture relationships that are characterized by mutual respect and trust
- Are comfortable with conflict and stress because they recognize they are products of active engagement and are a part of the dynamic and complex nature of collaborations
- Share credit for outcomes and successes based on parameters that are determined by partners together
- Recognize each other's strengths and assets but also openly acknowledge and work to strengthen areas requiring improvement
- Are all prepared to be open, transparent and honest about their organization's expectations, issues that emerge in the collaborative or among partners, and any personal concerns or conflicts of interest

[3] Adapted from: Campus Partnerships for Health: Partnership Principles Checklist, page 45.

FRAMEWORK 1: DIMENSIONS OF COLLABORATION

There is a wide range of purposes, sizes, arrangements, and durations of collaborations which make it hard to label them. To better understand UWT's various collaborations, place each on a continuum based on the degree of intensity - from those that are simple, to those which are more complicated through to those which are highly complex. Consider the different factors which influence the intensity of collaboration.

Keep in mind that a collaboration can shift along the continuum as it evolves.
They may begin as an informal relationship to share information but could grow into a formal arrangement to achieve significant outcomes. They may also form to achieve more complex outcomes and, once achieved, move to a simpler collaboration to exchange information and resources.

Key Factors	Simple	Complicated	Complex
Collaborative purpose or intent	Share information and expertise	Align resources and/or implement joint program or service delivery	System change
UWT's role and contribution	Exchange of information, advice and/or expertise	Strategic and integrated leadership and decision-making	Contribute funds with specific conditions and expectations
Partner diversity	Like-minded and familiar organizations	More diverse partners with different purposes, structures and cultures	Across public, private and non-profit sectors

There are other factors which can influence the degree of intensity of the collaboration.
For each of UWT's collaborations, describe it in the context of the key factors found below.
Then place the collaboration on the continuum from a simple to complex.

DIMENSION: Simple ⟷ Complicated ⟷ Complex

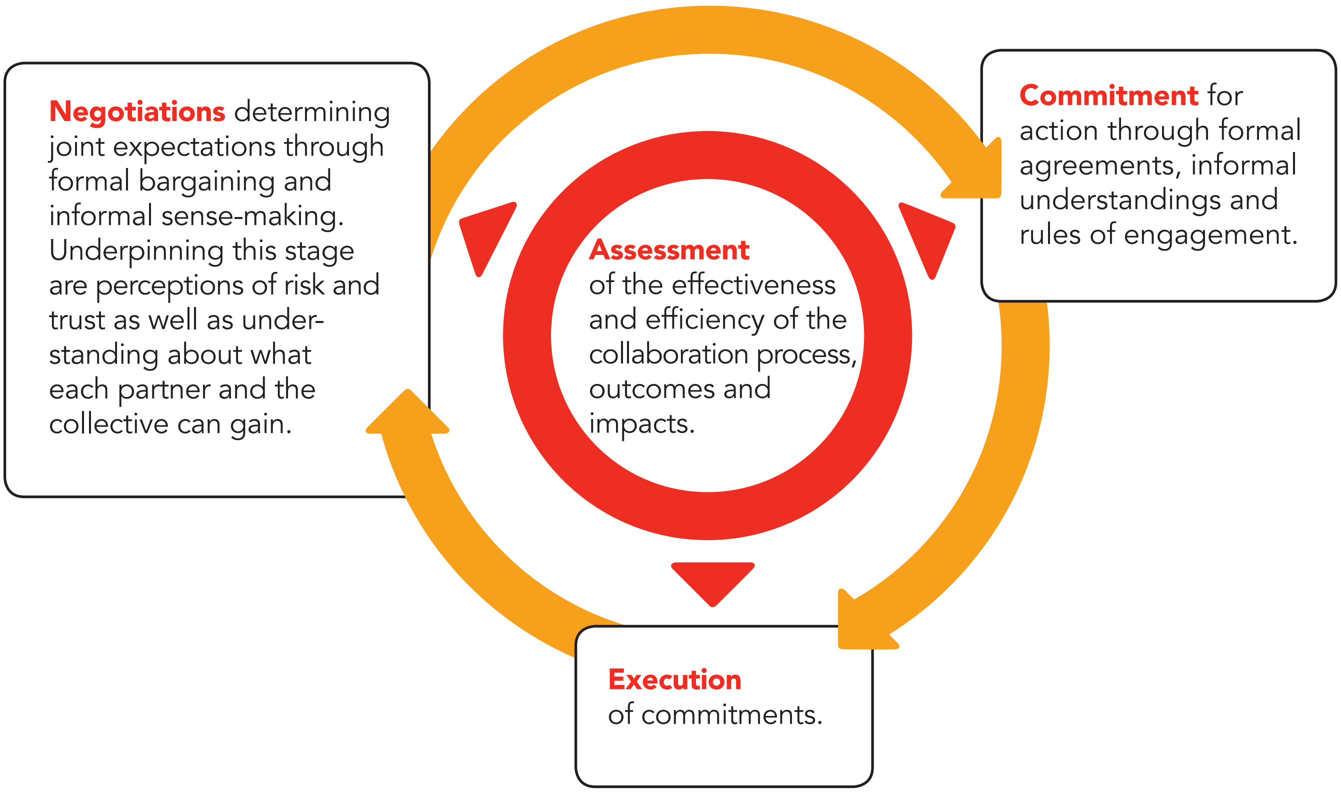
KEY FACTORS:

- Breadth and depth of impact
- Number and types of issues
- Type of relationships
- Degree of integration
- Level of accountability
- Mobilization of resources
- Depth of commitment
- Formality of processes and structures
- Sharing of power and decision-making
- Level of risk
- Degree of innovation

FRAMEWORK 2: STAGES OF COLLABORATION

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

There are a number of ways to look at the stages of collaboration. One way is to describe the stages based on the development process. The following diagram, adapted from the Wellesley Institute's *Collaboration in the Third Sector* [4], illustrates the dynamic, continuous and iterative nature of collaborative development.



There are a number of factors which will affect how quickly and easily a collaboration moves through the stages of negotiation, commitment and execution.[5] They include:

- Degree of difficulty arriving at agreement about the problem or need
- Number and diversity of stakeholders and the interdependencies of the relationships
- Kinds of participant motivations, including the degree of self-interest and urgency, and the access to resources and expertise
- Ability to communicate and find common meaning among the partners
- Quality of leadership and capacities
- Level of trust

[4] *Collaboration in the Third Sector: From co-opetition to impact driven cooperation;* J Richard Blickstead, Eleanor Lester, Michael Shapcott, Wellesley Institute, drawn from Van de Ven's model of collaborative process

[5] Ibid. page 15

FRAMEWORK 3: STAGES OF COLLABORATION

EVOLUTION

Another way to view UWT's collaborations is along the stages of evolution from the early exploration of potential partners to the formative stage in which partners develop explicit rules of their engagement together, through to the sustaining stage which focuses on achievement of outcomes and, then finally, transformation or dissolution of the collaboration. The characteristics of each of the stages are described in the following table. Also, keep in mind that the stages are not always linear; there is a continuous process of reflection, evaluation and revision that may return you to earlier stages.

Continuous process of building trust; addressing issues; redefining the relationships and adapting direction

STAGES	CHARACTERIZED BY
Identify and stimulate potential partnerships	• Seek out more effective ways to achieve an organization's mission or goals • Build relationships with others who might share common goals or concerns • Explore the potential to work together and identify shared interests, opportunities and challenges • Begin to determine the scope of work, who else should be involved, potential resources and indicators of success
Develop and formalize	• Continue to negotiate a shared vision, purpose and values • Give more shape to outcomes, indicators and scope of work • Find common language • Clarify the individual and collective benefits of participation • Determine what needs to be evaluated and how it will be used; undertake evaluation and critical reflection • Formalize the relationship through an agreement (may be formal or informal; simple/complex) which clearly articulates roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, resource allocation, etc. • Begin to show impacts • Build for sustainability
Sustain	• Demonstrate that partners are invested by living the agreement and by being able to demonstrate the value to their own stakeholders • Use agreed to processes for communication, decision-making and conflict/issues resolution • Continue to integrate different perspectives and modes of practice into common directions • Review evaluation and reflection findings and renew or make course corrections to the collaboration itself and/or to the description of outcomes/impacts, strategies and actions • Demonstrate sustainability and impacts
Institutionalize, scale up or find new and meaningful directions	**Wind down or terminate the collaboration**

SECTION B:
BUILDING EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIONS

OVERVIEW OF THE TOOLS

The following table describes how each of the tools can be used at various stages of evolution of the collaborative. You may be interested in the specific tools identified in the left column and how they apply to each stage. You may also want to review a particular stage of evolution and identify which tools should be in place and how to use them. Refer back to Framework 3 to understand the characteristics of each stage. .

	STAGE 1 **Identify and stimulate potential partnerships**	**STAGE 2** **Develop and Formalize**	**STAGE 3** **Sustain**
TOOL 3 & 4 Setting direction and theory of change	• Facilitate informal discussion with potential partners using the tools as a reference. Explore potential directions and consider alignment in mandates.	• Use tools (3) and (4) to build agreement among partners about the direction and outcomes of the collaboration. Continuously test assumptions and assess whether the right partners are around the table. • Use the information to inform the development of the agreement (5) and evaluation of outcomes (9).	• Use the results of setting direction (3) and the theory of change (4) to refresh understandings, test assumptions and revise directions as new information emerges. • This process may also inform a decision to leave, terminate or revitalize a collaboration.
TOOL 5 Agreement	• Use the template as a backdrop to conversations when exploring potential relationships. Identify who might be appropriate partners and explore conditions that are important to them.	• The agreement template (5) provides a comprehensive list of possible considerations to define how the partners work together; clarify expectations; and describe what is to be achieved. Use it to build a common platform and understanding. • The agreement may include evaluation mechanisms (tools 7,8,9) and a conflict resolution process (11).	• Continuously review and, if necessary, revise the agreement. Use it to refresh commitment or to check in on how the collaboration is working. • If the collaboration does not have an agreement, then go back to the previous stage.

	STAGE 1 **Identify and stimulate potential partnerships**	STAGE 2 **Develop and Formalize**	STAGE 3 **Sustain**
TOOL 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8 Personal reflection; assessing alignment; and evaluation	• Use the personal reflection tool (1) to determine your readiness for collaboration. • Use the assessment process described in tools 2 (a) (b) and (c) to assess the alignment with your organization and risks. • Use tool (8) informally to reflect on key success factors.	• Use the Evaluation Process: Steps (7), What to Look For (8) and Evaluation of Outcomes and Impacts (9) tools to create mechanisms to evaluate the collaboration's relationships, structures and processes and to measure progress in achieving outcomes. • Draw from the results of action planning and the theory of change statement (Tools 3, 4). • The assessment tools (2) can be used to test your organization's alignment with existing collaborations.	• Learning from the evaluation tools (7, 8,9) can be used to revitalize the collaboration and ensure it remains compelling and relevant to partners, their organizations, funders and stakeholders. It might also provide insights into what new purpose the collaboration could fulfil. • If the collaboration has not put mechanisms in place for evaluation, go back to the previous stage.
TOOL 9 and 10 Building trust and equity and managing conflict	• Use tool (10) as a reference when considering which potential partners might be a good fit and conditions that will need to be met in your working relationships.	• Use the Building Trust and Equity; Managing Differences and Conflict tool (10) to develop processes and protocols to strengthen the collaboration. • The Conflict Resolution tool (11) will create a mechanism to resolve conflict constructively. • Use these tools to inform evaluation and the content of the agreement.	• The Building of Trust and Managing Conflict tool (10) can be used to inform the evaluation of the collaboration and to check-in and renew the way that partners work together. • In order to sustain the collaboration, it will be important to demonstrate that all of the factors are in place.

TOOL 1:
AN EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION PARTNER – A PERSONAL REFLECTION

INSTRUCTIONS: Reflect on the following questions to ensure that you are personally prepared, engaged and empowered to be an effective collaboration partner. The findings can be used to take personal action and/or to discuss the results with your board or supervisor and find ways to address concerns.

This can be used to reflect on both potential and existing collaboartions.[6]

- Is there a clear and substantive link between this collaboration and my other work priorities?

- Are there professional opportunities and advantages associated with my participation? Are there personal ones as well?

- What relevant experience, skills, and qualities can I bring to help advance the collaborative?

[6] Adapted from *Collaboration: Building the Road for the Journey Together, From co-opetition to impact driven cooperation;* TRIP Promising Practices Report Supplement Assessing the Potential Collaboration, 2008, page 8.

- Is there any personal or professional 'baggage' or issues that might affect my ability to be a good partner? If so, what can I do to name it and address it?

- Do I have the necessary support from my organization to effectively participate (e.g. allowance of time, access to resources, supervisory support)? If not, how will I get it?

- Could there be a power differential that may emerge because of our role in the collaboration? Do I have confidence it can be addressed? If not, what strategies can I use to address it? (See Tool: 10)

- As the representative of my organization, do I have enough authority to effectively participate (e.g. make decisions at the collaboration table, speak on behalf of my organization)?

- What fears or misgivings (if any) do I have about participating in the collaboration? How can I overcome or mitigate them?

- Can I effectively communicate and express my ideas, concerns and feelings in a group? If not, what can I do to build my confidence or address barriers?

- Am I confident that others think that I will do a good job representing our organization?

TOOL 2(A): ASSESS FOR ALIGNMENT WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION: STEP ONE – GATHER INFORMATION

Adapted from: Community Partnership Policy Worksheet: Assessing and Approving Potential Partnerships; Heather Graham Consulting Services; 2009

INSTRUCTIONS: In the case of a collaboration that requires a significant organizational commitment, use this tool to gather information about the potential or existing collaboration and its alignment with your organization. This is the first step in an assessment process to determine its value to your organization and potential risks. The three step process will help prepare staff to participate effectively at collaborative tables in a transparent and productive way.

In consultation with staff from your organization, fill in the following template. You may need to draw on the knowledge of other staff members participating in the collaboration as well as consult with internal experts (e.g. communication, public affairs, legal counsel).

Collaboration name:

Completed by (name and position):

In consultation with:

Contact information:

Date:

1. What was the impetus for initiating the potential collaboration? Was it internally (e.g. by management or the Board) or externally driven (e.g., by a funder, community partner)?

2. What is the purpose/intent of the collaboration (i.e., what does it endeavour to achieve) and what demonstrated need(s) does it intend to address?

3. Which of our goals and priorities does it meet?

4. Who are the prospective partners and what do we know about their missions, goals, culture/values, issues and reputation?

5. What are the potential benefits of our participation? Here are examples:

- ◯ Deliver services or programs in a new/better way
- ◯ Improve coordination and quality of service
- ◯ Create greater impact
- ◯ Spread risk
- ◯ Leverage or attract more resources
- ◯ Makes services and programs more responsive
- ◯ Develop skills or capacities
- ◯ Generate economies of scale
- ◯ Gain knowledge and expertise
- ◯ Increase marketing penetration and visibility
- ◯ Expand scale

Other:

6. What are the barriers that may get in the way of success (think about your organization's internal policies, processes or culture, and the external political, economic and socio-cultural environment)?

7. What tangible and intangible assets and capacities can we bring to the table (e.g. program delivery mechanism; visibility and access to clients or markets; fundraising and financial capacity; facilities or equipment; respected leaders and spokespeople; communication or distribution systems; organizational and project management expertise)?

8. What role(s) might our organization play in the collaboration (e.g. share information and/or leading practice; provide program expertise or delivery; offer skills in facilitation, convening, evaluation, research, advocacy, capacity building, resource development, communication/marketing)?

9. What time, resources and commitments will be available to support our role and the work of the collaboration?

10. What funding sources are being explored to support the collaboration? Are there any conflicts of interest?

11. Are there any stakeholder expectations that we need to be aware of when discussing our role, the outcomes and/or structure, processes or timelines at the collaboration table? How critical are they?

TOOL 2(B):
ASSESS FOR ALIGNMENT WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION: STEP TWO – EVALUATE

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the following internal evaluation drawing on the information collected in the first step: Gather Information. The evaluation tool can be used as a survey sent to internal staff or a s a guideline for a dialogue with colleagues. It should be completed by the team of people within your organization who are vested in the collaboration. After completion of the questions, use the rating system in step three to determine how to proceed.

If you are assessing existing collaborations, then you can also draw on findings from their evaluations (see tools: 6, 7 and 8).

Select one response for each section:
0 = Don't know; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Strongly agree

1. The problem, issue or opportunity that partners want to address requires a collaboration approach.

   0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

2. There is a fit between our vision, mission, values and goals/priorities and those of prospective/existing partners.

   0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

3. The collaboration is a good fit with our brand.

   0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

4. There is an established degree of trust and respect with the potential or existing partners.

   0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

5. There is a clear audience and demand for the intended outcomes of the collaboration.

0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

6. The anticipated/current benefits (e.g., greater impact, leveraging resources, new and better ways to deliver services) our organization receives outweigh the costs (e.g., time, resources).

0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

7. The anticipated/current resource requirements (e.g., time, expertise, funds, leadership) are in line with the intended outcomes.

0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

8. We have the right person/people from our organization to sit (or sitting) at the collaborative table.

0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

9. The other prospective/current partners have the capacity, competencies, and commitment to make the collaboration effective.

0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

10. We have enough control over the use of funds, decision-making, staffing and information sharing to satisfy our Board and management team.

0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

11. We are confident that we can put enough protection in place to address risks (e.g., financial, ethical, human resource, reputational).

0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

12. There is an organizational commitment to participate as an authentic partner in the collaboration. (Refer to Section A: Characteristics of Authentic Collaboration).

0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

13. The current environment (e.g., changing demographics, policy, funding) are conducive to the collaboration.

   0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

14. All indications are that this collaboration is going to be successful.

   0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

15. This collaboration has the potential to achieve sustainable impacts.

   0 ◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯

TOOL 2(C):
ASSESS FOR ALIGNMENT WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION: STEP THREE – CALCULATE THE RESULTS

STEPS:

1. Add up the responses from the survey (Step Two)
   (e.g., how many responses were circled as 1, 2, 3 and 'Don't Know').

2. Divide the total score by 15 (the number of questions) to get an average for each
   (e.g., 60% were 3; 20% were 2; 10% were 1; and 10% were 'Don't Know').

Suggested Rating:
Combine the total percentages for scoring of 3 (strongly agree) and 2 (agree).

If they equal:	Then the collaboration is likely:
100% - 90%	High value and low risk
89% - 80%	Good gamble
69% - 60%	Low value and high risk
Under 59%	Walk away or rethink

Note: There may be a high number of 'Don't Know' responses. If so, you may have assessed it too early in its development. You may choose to wait until the collaboration is better defined, and reassess it.

Also, there may be actions that can be taken to address areas of concern or weakness that would give your organization more confidence about its value and risk management.

TOOL 3:
SETTING DIRECTION[7]

INSTRUCTIONS: Finding common cause among partners and coming to agreement about the collaboration's outcomes, strategies and resources is key to its success. Use the following process outline to set your directions and identify the capacities, resources, expertise and appropriate roles and responsibilities required to implement them.

1. WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR THE COLLABORATION?

Definition: Visioning is the exercise of constructing a mental picture of a better and different future that results from the collaboration's efforts. It provides an opportunity to open partners' thinking about possibilities. It must be developed and agreed to by all collaboration partners and be easily communicated to the leadership within each partner's organization and to other stakeholders. It should stretch, challenge and inspire partners, but be plausible. It should also help partners to make decisions and choices about the collaboration's directions when faced with competing priorities and options.

Why it's Important:

It provides a:

- Compelling aspiration that propels partners forward
- Shared direction that coalesces multiple interests and mandates
- Beacon when opportunities and challenges pull partners in different directions
- Reminder that a collaboration is a means to an end, not an end in itself
- Ultimate destination against which to measure success

2. WHAT IS THE CONTEXT OF OUR WORK?

Definition: The context provides a backdrop for setting the collaboration's goals and strategies. It articulates the key issues, needs and problems that the collaboration has come together to address and describes the environment in which the collaboration is working. Its primary purpose is to generate information that helps stimulate thinking and insights that lead to the best possible strategies.

[7] Drawn from: Building Strong Foundations, Enhancing Organizational Capacity: Strategic Planning Toolkit, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario, Linda Mollenhauer and A Framework for Collaboration on Health Policy Development: A Tool for Voluntary Organizations Working in Health, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada

Key Questions:
- What is the critical issue(s) which brought us together? Are they still relevant and why?
- What problems or needs are we seeking to address?
- What trends, opportunities and threats surround the issue(s), problems and need?
- What resources do we have to work with? What approaches are currently being utilized by our collaboration partners?
- What guiding principles or values do we share and how do they affect our direction?

3. WHAT ARE OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES[8]?

Definition: Strategic outcomes and objectives set out the intended results of the collaboration's work. They need to link clearly to the vision. They must provide enough detail to inform actions, but be broad enough to incorporate the interests and needs of all collaboration partners and flexible enough to promote innovation and responsiveness. They should be realistic, concrete and measureable; otherwise, they are only well intentioned wishes.

Why it's Important:

It provides a:
- Road map for arriving at the collaboration's vision
- Set of concrete directions against which the work of the collaboration is measured; resources are obtained and allocated; and roles and responsibilities are set
- Focus to avoid drifting
- Umbrella to integrate the programs, processes and people partnering in the collaboration

[8] Other language can be used to describe strategic priorities and objectives, such as strategic imperatives, outcomes or goals.

4. WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS THAT WILL ACHIEVE THE STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES AND WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION?

Definition: The strategies and action steps and implementation lay out how the strategic outcomes and objectives will be achieved, what capacities, resources and expertise are required, the timelines and the roles and responsibilities. They should recognize the strengths, knowledge, expertise and resources each of the partners can bring to the table.

Why it's Important:

They provide an opportunity to:
- Test the feasibility of the strategic priorities and objectives and each partner's commitment to them
- Consider how each partner can contribute to the collaboration
- Identify ways to be innovative and overcome barriers
- Set expectations for accountability to funders, partner organizations and each other

TOOL 4:
QUICK AND EASY THEORY OF CHANGE WORKSHEET

Adapted by Brenda Doner and Cathy Lang from 'Identity Statement',
The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution by David La Piana.

INSTRUCTIONS: A Theory of Change process is a way of engaging stakeholders in a conversation about outcomes and of uncovering assumptions that will inform the collaborative effort. The Theory of Change statement provides an opportunity to build consensus around strategies and opportunities for change.

Facilitate a discussion using the worksheet below with key stakeholders. Note where there is consensus and talk through points that are unclear or where there is a difference of opinion. Seek out documented research and experience from members, their organizations and/or from other credible sources that validate or question your assumptions around strategies. Use this research and the discussion to further craft directions.

- **We believe that by.....** (strategies/activities)

- **Our work will lead to.....** (goal/objectives)

- **So that.....** (vision, desired impact/outcomes)

- **Our team.....** (stakeholders, governance, who and how you work)

- **Who will benefit.....** (target beneficiaries)

- **From our unique niche ......** (role/advantage, what you do better than others)

- **We sustain ourselves by……** (things that keep us going)

- **Using these resources…..** (financial and physical resources, funding)

- **So we can demonstrate….** (improvement or changes that have happened as a result of the work).

TOOL 5:
COLLABORATION AGREEMENT TEMPLATE

Developed by Heather Graham Consulting Services, 2009

INSTRUCTIONS: Collaborations will vary in the amount of formality required to define what is to be accomplished and how collaborative partners will work together. while the following template identifies a comprehensive list of key considerations, not every collaboration will need to complete all sections.

Start by reviewing the list with collaboration partners and come to consensus about which are relevant and need to be documented. Then work with partners to complete those sections. Part of the value of the exercise is to capture all the key information about the collaboration in one place and ensure that there is a clear and consistent understanding.

If an agreement is already in place, use this template as a checklist to ensure your collaboration has documented all that it should.

1. Background and Mandate:

- Specify how the collaboration was initiated, identify who is funding it, the priority needs/issues to be addressed and the target population(s) to be served.

2. Parties and Signatures:

- Describe who is involved with each partner's legal name
  Note:
  - *Designated representatives of lead and partner organizations (Executive Director and/or Board Chair) will sign the agreement*
  - *Although a collaboration may deal with a specific program/service area, the parties to the agreement must be the legal corporation*
  - *Any person signing on behalf of the organization must be an authorized signatory*
  - *Consider the signing authority and executive limitation policies already in place within each partner organization*
  - *Unless a collaboration is a formal legal entity, each partner becomes a party to the agreement and must sign the agreement*
  - *By signing this agreement each organization agrees to comply with the terms and conditions set out in the document*

3. Purpose of the Agreement:

- Identify what the agreement proposes to do and to whom it is applicable
  Note:
  - *For example: The purpose of the agreement is to document arrangements between the lead organization and the partner organizations. All parties agree to be guided by the terms and conditions set out in this agreement.*

4. Values and Guiding Principles:

- If possible, clarify the values and/or guiding principles that govern the partners

  Note:
  - *For example: Communities will be active partners in this project and will be supported to participate in various phases; all activities and practices will uphold the principles of diversity, equity, anti-oppression, respect and inclusiveness; project partners will have an equal voice in decision-making and equal voting privileges.*

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5. Project Outcomes, Strategies, Actions and Timelines:

- Clearly state the shared outcomes and actions that all parties will endeavour to achieve

  Note:
  - *Outcomes describe the expected accomplishments.*
    For example: to increase knowledge of community resources
  - *Activities are the specific actions that will contribute to the outcome.*
    For example: Deliver parent workshops

- *Specify the duration of the collaboration, and the anticipated dates for specific outcomes/actions*

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6. Roles and Responsibilities:

- Specify the roles and responsibilities of key people and decision-making bodies such as :
  - Lead/Trustee organization
  - Partner organizations
  - Advisory/Steering committee
  - Working groups
  - Partner organization's staff assigned to the collaboration
  - Staff hired by the collaboration

- Clarify the reporting relationships between those bodies and people

- Clarify employment relationships

  Note:
  - *Who are staff employed by?*
  - *Who is responsible for salary, pension, insurance (including workplace safety insurance) and other coverage and for related withholdings, remittances and deductions?*
  - *Develop a terms of reference for any project committees (e.g., Advisory/Steering, Working Groups) detailing:*

  - *Committee/Group mandate*
  - *Areas of responsibility (e.g., strategic planning, project activities and evaluation)*
  - *Permission to establish other committees to fulfill their responsibilities*
  - *Quorum (e.g., 50% +1 must be present for the meeting to take place)*
  - *Frequency of meetings*
  - *Declaration of conflict of interest*

7. Policies and Procedures:

- Identify the policies and procedures that partner organizations and collaboration staff will adhere to.
  Note:
  - *For example: partners may wish to identify particular policies and procedures designed specifically for the collaboration and/or those of the lead/trustee agency that will govern the collaboration*
  - *Policies/procedures might include: staff hiring, supervision and training, conflict of interest, anti-discrimination, access and equity, media and public relations*

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8. Communications between partners:

- Identify the frequency of meetings between partner organizations (consider committee and working groups)
- Specify who is responsible for initiating meetings, setting agendas and chairing/facilitating
- Specify how partners will communicate between meetings (e.g., email to all members)
- Suggest how representatives will maintain ongoing communication within their own organization's Board, management, staff and volunteers so that they are clear about project objectives and responsibilities
- Clarify rules and expectations around confidential business information
  Note:
  - *This is important if there is personal information (e.g.,client) to be collected, used or disclosed in the course of the collaboration. Consider whether confidentiality is based on specific legal obligations; the nature of the collaboration itself; or the sensitivity of the information to a partner.*

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9. Risk Management Provisions:

- Identify the insurance coverage each partner holds
- Identify who has responsibility in the event that something goes wrong, especially high risk activities and how such risks will be managed and by whom
- Clarify workplace safety and insurance responsibilities
- Identify legislated or regulatory obligations (e.g., parties will comply with the Personal Health Information Protection Act; anti-discriminatory policies)
- Identify any internal policies to be followed
- Include indemnifications (it is typical to have mutual indemnification, but many small agencies cannot commit to this because they can't insure against it)

10. Decision-making Processes:

- Clarify how the partners, including committees, will ideally make decisions
  Note: *For example,*
  - *We will strive for consensus in all of our decisions. In instances where consensus is not possible, the Chair can request an issue be put to a vote where each partner is entitled to one vote and a simple majority will decide the outcome.*
  - *Decisions must have the agreement of a majority of all Project Partners (not merely those present at meetings)*
  - *A regular meeting schedule will be established and agendas will be circulated at least two days prior to each meeting. Each agenda will include time for new business arising where members may bring forward any issues of concern.*
  - *Any project partner may request additional meetings by providing a minimum of one week's notice to all project partners*
  - *In emergency decisions, the Lead Agency will have the responsibility to make decisions on behalf of the collaboration providing they have made a reasonable attempt, wherever possible, to involve project partners, and as long as the mandate, values and objectives aren't compromised by the decision.*

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11. Resolving Conflicts and Complaints

- Identify a process to resolve conflicts in a productive way (See Tool 10)

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12. Finances and Administration

Note: review signing authority and executive limitation policies

- Specify who is responsible for setting and changing the budget

- Indicate who is authorized to make spending decisions once the budget is set
- If applicable, clarify how and when partner organizations will receive payments for services rendered/expenses incurred (e.g., terms of payment and documentation required)

- Specify how administrative support for the collaboration will be provided

- Outline how the collaboration will address a budget deficit
  Note:
  For example: The assumption of the Steering Committee is that there will be no deficit because partners will live with assigned budget funds (budget revisions may be proposed to the Steering Committee through working groups and/or a project staff/coordinator).

- Identify what will happen with the funding if the collaboration ends early, what needs to be returned and the criteria of how that dollar value will be calculated

13. Addressing Proposed Changes to the Collaboration:
(e.g., termination of the collaboration, project enhancement/proposals for funding, and membership changes)

- Identify the process to withdraw from or to terminate the collaboration
  Note: *For example,*
  - *Project partners will provide a minimum of 3 month's written notice to the Steering Committee regarding their intention to withdraw from the collaboration, and will complete any outstanding reporting and service delivery commitments.*
  - *The Lead Agency will provide a minimum of 3 month's written notice of their intention to withdraw from the Lead Agency role or the collaboration itself and will continue to act as the Lead Organization for the project until a process of changing the Lead Organization is completed with the funder.*
  - *In instances where partners are not maintaining their commitments, they will be brought forward to the Steering Committee for discussion and conflict resolution if required.*
  - *Any monies already received or all monies received must be returned to the Lead Organization if this agreement is terminated before the date of termination agreed upon.*
  - *In the event of a Force Majeure (e.g., an unplanned event outside the control of parties, such as SARS) the tenets of this agreement may be suspended. If an event such as this does occur, parties will discuss how, if at all, collaboration activities will be impacted.*

- Identify a process to enhance/expand the existing collaboration
  Note: *For example,*
  - *Proposals to enhance/expand the existing collaboration (e.g., seek additional funding to address new objectives or to serve larger numbers of clients) will require discussion with the Board and Management of each of the partner organizations. Such enhancements will only be pursued if the Lead Organization, and partner organizations confirm that they have the support of their individual organizations to proceed.*
  - *Proposals that seek to address objectives that are part of the existing collaboration agreement should be discussed with the current funder before proceeding.*

- Identify the process to add member to the collaboration
  Note: *For example,*
  - *The Steering Committee will review written letters of intent from any potential partner wishing to join the collaboration. It will determine that the prospective partner shares the core values of the collaboration; and will decide upon their inclusion as an Associate or Project Partner based on how their participation will enhance the project objectives and effectiveness.*

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14. Evaluation Plan: (See Tools 7, 8, 9)

- Indicate who is responsible for initiating and conducting the evaluation

- Outline the critical indicators of success and the appropriate tools/mechanisms to measure progress
  Note: *For example,*
  - *The Steering Committee will develop a detailed evaluation protocol which will be used consistently by all activities and services, regardless of site.*

- Specify when and how this will take place

TOOL 6:
SAMPLE AGREEMENT TEMPLATE FOR A SIMPLE COLLABORATION

COLLABORATION AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

(insert legal names and addresses of each partner)

Outcomes, Goals and Objectives. Provide broad statements of what partners want to achieve. A work plan can be attached as an appendix to the agreement.

Collaboration Values. Describe values or principles that guide the relationships and work of the collaboration.

Roles and Responsibilities. Describe who will do what, who will be responsible for what, who will report to whom, and how the collaboration and its activities will be managed. Think about individual partner's roles and responsibilities as well as any decision-making groups, such as committees and lead agency (Terms of Reference can be attached).

Resource Commitments. Describe staff, facility, and/or in-kind commitments.

Finance Commitments. Detail the financial contributions of each partner or any other financial arrangements. A budget can be attached as an appendix to the agreement.

Evaluation. Specify how the collaboration will evaluate identified outcomes. An evaluation plan can be attached as an appendix to the agreement.

Decision Making. Specify a mutually satisfactory process for making significant decisions. *EXAMPLE:* The Steering Committee will strive for consensus in all of its decisions. In instances where consensus is not possible, the Chair can request that an issue be put to a vote where each partner is entitled to one vote and a simple majority will decide the outcome.

Resolving Conflicts. Specify a mutually satisfactory process to resolve conflicts and complaints.
EXAMPLE: Where differences arise, the partners agree to:
– Address their differences in a timely, open and honest manner
– Attempt to resolve issues at the staffing level at which they occur
– Engage an independent mediator, if appropriate, to assess the collaboration and/or the situation, either when required or as part of a formal evaluation

Termination of Collaboration or Partner Involvement. Specify a mutually satisfactory process to terminate the collaboration, or a partner's involvement in the collaboration.
EXAMPLE: Project Partners will provide a minimum of 3 month's written notice to the Steering Committee regarding their intention to withdraw from the collaboration, and will complete any outstanding reporting and service delivery commitments. Instances where partners are not maintaining their commitment will be brought forward to the Steering Committee for discussion and conflict resolution if required.

In the event that partners acknowledge that their participation is no longer viable, partners can agree to dissolve the relationship, honourably and without acrimony, following discussion of the situation and alternatives to the current arrangement at the Steering Committee. Notice will be served in writing to all pertinent stakeholders.

IN WITNESS OF THIS AGREEMENT the parties have executed below:

(LEGAL NAME OF EACH PARTNER ORGANIZATION)
Per its authorized signatories

Signature	Print name and title
Signature	Print name and title

TOOL 7:
EVALUATION PROCESS: STEPS

INSTRUCTIONS: Evaluation is a process of inquiry that facilitates learning by asking critical questions to help inform decision-making. The challenge is that the models used to evaluate organizations don't always address the dynamic and complex nature of collaborations. The following steps and suggestions will help your collaboration to effectively evaluate the collaboration processes and relationships and its achievements.

1. Identify what needs to be evaluated, why and for whom and how it will get done.

- What are we evaluating (e.g., the feasibility of the collaboration, the structure and processes of the collaboration and/or its outcomes and impacts)?
- If we are looking to evaluate outcomes and impacts, have we clearly articulated them and if not, how will that be done?
- Why are we evaluating (e.g., to satisfy accountability demands; improve our work and results; verify our value; generate participation or support)?
- What type of evaluation are we doing (e.g., collecting information to be used to fine-tune or adjust strategies in a continuous feedback cycle or to inform a more formal planning cycle)?
- Who needs the information and how will they use it (e.g., members of the collaboration, partner organizations Boards or staff, funders, clients/stakeholders)?
- Who will conduct the evaluation, what resources are required and how will the work plan be developed?

2. Design the evaluation framework and methodology.
Consider the following questions to help frame it:

- What approach will we use (e.g., surveys, mapping, focus groups, document analysis, testimonials, story-telling)? It will be important to use diverse approaches to address the complex and dynamic nature of collaborations.

- Do you want a snapshot in time, to capture things as they unfold and/or to look at past performance?

- Will the evaluation be done routinely, periodically or in longer intervals?

- Whose views need to be heard to ensure that there is the right diversity and credibility of responses to capture a true picture?

- How can we capture unexpected outcomes as part of the evaluation? Remember that collaboration can lead to synergies and outcomes that could not be predicted at the outset.

- What questions need to be asked to solicit the right information?

- What sources of information will be used and how credible are they?

- Is there baseline information we can use to make comparisons?

- Who will collect the information and how can it be done with the least amount of bias?

- Who needs to review the evaluation findings (e.g., partners, partner organizations, respondents, funders, key stakeholders)?

- How can the findings be presented in a way that allows for the best observations and learning (e.g., show consolidated information or the diversity of perspectives; use tables or vignettes)

- How can we ensure we are capturing different interpretations (e.g., what lens is being used; are we challenging our assumptions)?

3. Determine the actions that need to be taken to respond to what was learned.
Consider:

- How will we make changes, adaptation or refinements based on what we have learned?

- How can we use the information to gain support for our initiative?

TOOL 8:
EVALUATION OF THE COLLABORATION: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

INSTRUCTIONS: This tool focuses on the performance and quality of the collaboration itself. Use the following success factors to design the evaluation. All of these success factors should be present in a strong and healthy collaboration. Identify areas of strength and celebrate them; identify areas that need improvement and develop strategies to address them.

If there is already an evaluation process in place, use this checklist to ensure that all areas are covered.

Direction and Impacts:

- ◯ There is a shared understanding about the problems or issues we are trying to address based on clear evidence
- ◯ Our vision for what the collaboration can accomplish is realistic and compelling to each of our partners and to the communities they serve
- ◯ We can describe the outcomes that we are trying to achieve and they make a unique contribution that no other organization or collaboration could make
- ◯ We have developed milestones and indicators that we watch carefully to measure our progress in achieving the outcomes and impacts
- ◯ Our collective set of priorities and actions are directly linked to the outcomes we are working to achieve
- ◯ We regularly check-in on changes to the environment, each partner's organizational priorities and learning, the views of our combined stakeholders and our collaboration's performance and then make necessary revisions and/or course corrections
- ◯ We monitor our results and actions in a way that captures the unintended outcomes of our efforts

Engagement:

- ◯ We have the right amount of diversity among our partners, with the right skills, knowledge and perspectives to effectively accomplish our goals and represent the interests of stakeholders in our organizations and the community
- ◯ We have considered who is not engaged in our work that should be, why not and how we can involve them
- ◯ We can demonstrate a clear interconnectedness between all the partners, while also respecting their autonomy
- ◯ Each of our partners has the commitment of their organization to the collaboration as reflected in their willingness to contribute resources, to make and abide by decisions and to be held accountable for results
- ◯ Because each partner has a voice in our directions and actions, there is a high degree of ownership for achieving what we say we will do
- ◯ Our communications to our partners and to their respective organizations is seen as highly relevant, accurate and timely
- ◯ We utilize different types of communication to engage our stakeholders, including the use of technology and face-to-face interaction
- ◯ We have formal and informal mechanisms to get feedback from stakeholders and use it to make our collaboration more effective
- ◯ We create an environment in our meetings that is conducive to debate, honest dialogue, reflection and creative thinking
- ◯ Our meetings are seen as a very productive use of people's time
- ◯ We draw effectively on the views, perspectives, experiences and expertise of a wide range of people
- ◯ We target certain capacities that are required for our collaboration to succeed and put in place strategies to ensure that they are present (e.g., education, training, knowledge exchange)

Architecture, Processes and Resources

- ◯ We can demonstrate why a collaboration is the best approach to accomplishing the outcomes
- ◯ We have the right structure (e.g., governance, committees) in place to achieve our outcomes and actions and to ensure the collaboration work effectively
- ◯ We have a collectively developed agreement which outlines how we will work together; it is as formal as it needs to be
- ◯ The roles and responsibilities of each of our collaboration partners are clearly articulated and linked to tangible outcomes
- ◯ The different cultures, values and processes of each partner's organizations have been effectively acknowledged and, as much as possible, integrated into our collective ones
- ◯ Our decision-making processes are transparent, fair and promote equality
- ◯ We have formal processes in place to address conflict and to resolve it effectively and fairly
- ◯ We have systems in place that ensure we are accountable and get the work done effectively, but they also allow us to adapt to changing circumstances and new learning
- ◯ Our evaluation uses formal and informal mechanisms and collects both qualitative and quantitative information
- ◯ We have the appropriate amount of processes and policies to ensure that we are fiscally and ethically responsible, to safeguard our reputation and to manage risk
- ◯ We are realistic about the resources at hand to accomplish our work but are always seeking innovative ways to build our capacity and leverage or expand our resources
- ◯ We have a plan in place to sustain our work as long as it is achieving significant impacts and meeting the needs of partners and the people/communities they serve

TOOL 9:
EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS: KEY QUESTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS: It is not only important to evaluate the collaboration structures, processes and relationships, but also critical to determine if progress has been made on achieving the intended outcomes. The following questions provide a framework for designing your evaluation of outcomes and impacts. Keep in mind that your ability to answer these questions is dependent upon the clarity and measurability of your collaboration's outcomes, indicators or milestones, strategies and actions. (see tools 3 and 4)

• Has anything improved or changed as a result of our work? For whom? How did it change?

- To what extent are we achieving our desired outcomes? Are they in line with what we promised/envisioned?

- What difference has resulted from the collective work of our collaborative?

- What have been the unintended or unanticipated outcomes? What have we learned from these?

- What changes have occurred within our partner organizations as a result of our work?

- What inputs were required to achieve the outcomes/impacts?

- Was our collective effort worth the time and costs to achieve the results?

- What strategies, activities or interventions had the most/least impacts on what was achieved and why?

- Did we confirm or challenge any assumptions we had about strategies for change related to the issues we are trying to affect?

TOOL 10:
BUILDING TRUST AND MANAGING CONFLICT – KEYS TO SUCCESS

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the following checklist to determine the degree of trust and equity within your collaboration and whether differences and conflicts are well managed. This checklist can be designed as a formal survey (e.g., with response boxes for strongly agree; agree; don't agree; don't know) or can be used as a discussion guide for an open and honest conversation among partners.

- ◯ There is genuine agreement among all our partners about our purpose, intended outcomes and priorities and the strategies we employ to achieve them.
- ◯ The concept of 'equity around the collaboration table' is built into our agreement.
- ◯ The roles, responsibilities and expectations of our partners are clearly documented and agreed to jointly; if a member is not abiding by the roles and responsibilities or is not meeting expectations, we talk about it openly and resolve it.
- ◯ The values that guide our behaviour and relationships include concepts of fairness, transparency, respect and diversity; they are clearly articulated; sensitive to the different partner's cultures; and are jointly agreed to by all partners.
- ◯ The way we work together has integrated, as much as possible, the different cultures, styles and needs of our partners.
- ◯ Time is allocated for team building (e.g., socializing, addressing diversity of personalities and styles); we recognize that it is a critical element of our work.
- ◯ Leadership within our collaboration is clearly declared; the leadership demonstrate strong skills in facilitation, listening, managing change, delegating, negotiating and interpersonal communications.
- ◯ Our partner organizations (not just the individual members) are fully engaged so they feel a sense of ownership for what we are trying to accomplish.

- ◯ Each member of our collaboration has been delegated authority and is empowered by their organization to make decisions so everyone can be held accountable for abiding by them.
- ◯ Each of our partners is very open about their organization's needs, interests, risk tolerance and any conflicts of interest that might arise.
- ◯ A significant amount of time is spent consulting with our partners which results in everyone feeling they have a voice.
- ◯ The communication and information sharing processes between our members and their organizations is highly transparent and timely so no one feels uninformed or that important information is withheld.
- ◯ The management model and decision-making processes are highly transparent and have been agreed to jointly by partners.
- ◯ Consensus building is used regularly in our decision-making so we find 'mutual gain solutions' rather than 'win-lose' or 'watered down' compromises.
- ◯ Formal processes are used to manage and negotiate differences and to manage conflict.
- ◯ Members have strong interpersonal communication skills so they clearly communicate issues as they emerge and feel comfortable addressing differences and conflicts.
- ◯ The environment in our meetings promotes honest and open dialogue and debate; our agendas are shaped in consultation with all members.
- ◯ When necessary we will bring in a facilitator to manage more difficult conversations or to deepen reflections so that all partners can feel they can voice their views.
- ◯ If there are personalities or attitudes that don't mesh with our values and culture, we will discuss it openly and work to resolve it; if it can't be resolved, we will ask the person to leave.
- ◯ A code of conduct has been developed that guides our behaviour and all partners abide by it.
- ◯ Recognition and credit to be received by our partners is clearly articulated and it is based on a value of equity. Recognition of member contributions is regularly acknowledged and celebrated.
- ◯ Evaluation results are shared among all the partners.
- ◯ The process for termination of the collaboration has been clearly laid out so we avoid turmoil if the collaboration runs into difficulty.

TOOL 11:
CONFLICT RESOLUTION – PROCESS STEPS

INSTRUCTIONS: Conflicts and disputes will inevitably emerge in a collaboration because of the challenges of managing multiple mandates and cultures and diverse perspectives. The following steps describe a process for effectively dealing with conflict. It recognizes the importance of agreeing to a formal process before differences have escalated into conflict and then to ensure that all partners abide by it.

1. Determine who and how issues or concerns will be brought forward.
2. Clearly document the problem or conflict in a way that gets at the root issues, the sources and history of the conflict and clarifies the assumptions. Consider issues of confidentiality.
3. Determine who will resolve the issues (e.g., Steering Committee, subgroup or neutral person/agency). To the degree possible, ensure the group or person selected to manage the process of resolution is seen as neutral and credible by all those affected.
4. Ask those parties that are affected by the conflict to: reflect on the information; ensure mutual understanding; agree to interpretations; and identify the individual's interest in the issue. Try to frame the issues and concerns in a way that can result in new understandings and solutions.
5. In an open and constructive environment, identify possible solutions that best meet the needs and interests of all those affected. Be prepared to compromise and find consensus. Utilize any elements of the collaboration agreement that helps frame solutions (e.g., value statement; roles and responsibilities).
6. Select and document the best possible solution(s), develop a plan to implement them that includes actions, responsibilities and timelines.
7. If an acceptable solution cannot be found, move to a more formal process of facilitation, mediation or arbitration by an independent person.
8. Bring closure to the dispute by ensuring that the people with the conflict have let it go, both in their 'head and heart'.
9. Communicate the results to appropriate stakeholders.

SECTION C:
LEAVING OR TERMINATING A COLLABORATION

TOOL 12:
LEAVING A COLLABORATION: STEPS[9]

INSTRUCTIONS: A partner may face circumstances where they are unable or don't want to continue to participate in a collaboration. For example, there might be a shift in organizational priorities or staff changes that necessitate an exit. If the collaboration has been using best practices for engagement and communication, then it won't be a surprise to other partners.

Use the following steps to ensure that your organization is leaving the collaboration in the most positive way.

A) Confirm that your organization wants to leave

Discuss with colleagues the reasons for leaving and the following issues:
- Is this about the match with your organization or is it the effectiveness of the collaboration?
- If it is about effectiveness, are there steps to be taken to strengthen the collaboration? Are they feasible, likely or worth your investment of time?

Identify the risks of leaving, determine if they are worth taking and if so, how to address them. Consider:
- Damage to your organization's brand
- Implications for future relationships
- Impacts on the collaboration outcomes and impacts
- Loss of influence
- Impacts on investment of time and resources to date

[9] Adapted from: *The Improvement Service: Partnership Working, Rocket Science, 2006, page 103*

B) Plan to leave:

Set out clearly and in writing the rationale for leaving the collaboration and a plan and share it with the appropriate internal staff. The rationale and plan should include:

- The reasons for leaving and how they will be presented to partners
- The assessment of risks of leaving and the strategies for addressing them
- If appropriate, how to maintain some benefits of participation (e.g., information, influence)
- Who needs to be informed, when and by whom

C) Review procedures:

If there is an exit strategy as part of the collaboration agreement, review it and consider the steps required and implications for your exit strategy

D) Communicate the message to partners in the collaboration in an honest and transparent way:

Develop the key messages to be communicated which include:

- Clearly, simply and honestly laying out the reasons for leaving so they can't be misinterpreted
- Suggest how your organization might be able to continue involvement and support

Determine who should communicate the messages, to whom and how best to do it

E) Follow up:

Ensure that the message has been received accurately by the right people and, if appropriate, carry out agreed upon follow-up actions effectively

TOOL 13:
BRINGING CLOSURE TO A COLLABORATION: STEPS

INSTRUCTIONS: Collaborations should come to an end because: outcomes are achieved; as much as possible has been accomplished toward the goals; key partners withdraw; new recruits aren't motivated to participate; and/or funding ends. Regardless of the circumstances, it is important that the collaboration not just drift apart. It should be dissolved in a way that acknowledges and celebrates its accomplishments and builds solid foundations for future relationships and initiatives.

By following these steps, collaboration partners will close the collaboration in a positive and productive way.

- ◯ Review the terms and conditions for closure in the collaboration agreement. Follow them.
- ◯ Identify the major accomplishment(s), celebrate them and demonstrate appreciation for the contributions that people and organizations have made to those achievements.
- ◯ Document the collaboration's history and the lessons learned.
- ◯ Develop key messaging about why the collaboration is ending; develop a plan for communicating those to key stakeholders.
- ◯ Determine what contractual or reporting commitments need to be fulfilled and how they will be done.
- ◯ Create a system for storing records and key documents.
- ◯ Refer to the agreement to confirm how any intellectual property or assets will be distributed/retained/used following the dissolution.
- ◯ Consider the implications for the stakeholders and resolve outstanding issues.
- ◯ Identify the action steps that are required, who will do them and by when.
- ◯ Determine how to celebrate the closure and who should be there and assign responsibilities and timelines.

Participating Effectively as a Collaborative Partner

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United Way
Toronto

United Way Toronto
26 Wellington St E 2nd Floor
Toronto ON M5E 1W9
Tel 416 777 2001
Fax 416 777 0962

unitedwaytoronto.com