



# Collaboration Framework

## ... Addressing Community Capacity

### Foreword

Collaborative community efforts are constructive responses to creating caring communities and expanding the safety net for children, youth and families. (National Commission on Children, 1991; Dryfoos, 1990; Meszaros, 1993). The goal of community collaboration is to bring individuals and members of communities, agencies and organizations together in an atmosphere of support to systematically solve existing and emerging problems that could not be solved by one group alone. While this is easily “said,” experience shows that it is not easily “done.” It has been likened to “teaching dinosaurs to do ballet” (Schlechty in DeBevoise, 1986, p. 12).

Understanding the complexities of collaboration and applying the key elements involved in collaboration increases the likelihood of achieving shared goals and outcomes. To assist citizens and practitioners in their collaborative efforts, the National Network for Collaboration has created a *Collaboration Framework*.

The *Collaboration Framework* is designed to help individuals and practitioners who are either starting collaborations, or need help in strengthening an existing collaboration. Specifically, the *Framework* assists people, groups and organizations to achieve clearly defined outcomes. Drawing from a diversity of people and opinions, the *Framework* is based on a **Core Foundation** of shared vision, mission, principles and values. It clarifies the **Factors**, both **Process** and **Contextual**, which can either promote or inhibit the effectiveness of a collaboration which, in turn, affects its desired **Outcomes**.

The *Framework* can be used as a tool while developing and sustaining collaborations. While, those involved in collaborations often describe it as being “on a journey,” the *Framework* may be used to define the shortest and safest route. For individuals starting a collaborative journey, the *Framework* can serve as a guide. Utilizing the *Process* and *Contextual Factors* will define routes in reaching specific *Outcomes*. Once a collaboration has been established, the *Framework* may be used as a diagnostic tool to evaluate the continued development and expansion of the group.

The *Collaboration Framework* has been developed through the collaborative efforts of eleven Land Grant Universities and the Cooperative States Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES). It utilizes knowledge and expertise of specialists who have researched collaborations and experienced sustaining collaborations within communities.