



Summary

Practical Application

This *Framework* is for people who want to learn to sustain community building through collaboration. It is for people who want to make collaborations more effective, while realizing specific outcomes. And it is for people who are invested in addressing an array of complex problems which resist “simple solution” fixes.

Using the *Framework*, people can experiment with redesigning or changing the direction of an existing collaboration or address the beginnings of a new collaboration. In the process, users will recognize increased skills in communication, decision making, and applying research. The *Framework* will guide collaboration members in dealing with daily problems and opportunities. It will help groups of people focus on investing in their capacity to develop new solutions while maximizing a range of resources to their fullest potential.



checklist

Respect for diversity lays the groundwork for a dynamic collaboration. The *Framework* foundation provides a purpose for collaborators to gather around. In sum, the *Contextual Factors* influence and are influenced by the *Process Factors*. The dynamic interaction among these factors determines the possibility of having a successful collaboration. In order to prepare for possible obstacles and pitfalls, the *Contextual Factors* (Connectedness, History of Working Together, Political Climate, Policies/Laws/Regulations, Resources, and Catalysts) can be evaluated before forming/developing a collaboration. Additionally, these factors can be used in ongoing evaluation of a collaboration.



spider web

The *Framework* itself can be used as a tool for communication, setting direction and focus, defining results, leveraging new resources or diagnosing problems. Although a few examples of applying the *Framework* follow, those using the *Framework* are encouraged to expand these examples and share with the Collaboration Network membership.

Opening Dialog



shifting our thinking

Whether one is working with an existing collaboration or developing a new one, communication within the collaboration and with those affected by the collaboration is critical. Using the factors as a focus of discussion may reduce fragmentation within the group and move group conversation from polite discussion to skillful dialog, sound decision making, and action. Open and honest dialog within the group contributes to the distribution of power in the group while increasing self-discipline and commitment. It also assists with viewing issues and problems in a holistic approach.



community conversation



Setting Direction and Focus



shared vision
& outcomes

Having a clear direction and focus for a collaboration defines the purpose of the collaboration as what its members seek to create. Setting the direction and focus begins with establishing the vision, mission, values, and principles. Defining the outcome(s) further establishes identity and fundamental purpose.

Applying the range of factors to the processes and contexts of the collaboration results in a greater shared understanding of what the collaboration stands for, where it's going, the community environment, and how it intends to make its outcomes a reality.

A five year–old Drug Education Collaboration, originally organized around a specific grant, recently used the *Collaboration Framework* to set a new direction and focus for its work. While the initial grant sought to provide drug awareness education after school hours, other organizations have become interested in joining with the schools, Extension Service, and community organizations to provide a continuum of drug education for all school age youth and families. The *Framework* has been used to guide the expansion and development of a broader vision, broader outcomes, and implementation of a range of new leveraged resources.

A Victims Support collaboration has identified four *Process Factors* and five *Contextual Factors* having potential direct impact on the success of the organization. They have a list of “indicators” of success for each factor. During meetings, the group discusses strategies to increase the success thereby keeping a focus on the important issues impacting the collaboration.

Leverage New Resources

The *Framework* may be used to explore new resources and enhance existing resources. Many collaborations look for “new money” to support the actions of the collaborations, when in fact the most valuable resources available exist within the community.

The *Framework* may be used to examine the membership of the collaboration. By reviewing the *Process Factors* a group may decide to add a member who agrees to facilitate the meetings or provide evaluation expertise. Key people in the community may be added who are viewed as “catalysts” in making something happen. The *Framework* has the capacity to redeploy people more effectively.

The *Framework* assists collaborations in designing fundamental mechanisms that increase the stability and value of the membership. For example, using existing communication systems such as newsletters, telephones, and electronic mail is far more effective than creating new systems.



A newly formed collaboration used the *Framework* to insure inclusivity in its membership. The collaboration’s purpose is to develop community capacity to support the juvenile justice system. With the *Framework*, membership now includes people and organizations with a wide range of backgrounds. The Extension Service has been added for its expertise in community development and communication. A local non–profit research agency with expertise in evaluation, and outreach workers with a social service agency have been added to assist in designing community–based outreach.

As a result of the added membership, new office space, equipment and a base budget have been added to the collaboration. Awareness of the collaboration among a wider cross section of the community has increased.

Diagnosing Problems



hunting for root causes

The *Framework* may be used to diagnose problems within a collaboration. Viewing the *Framework* as a “template” and placing it over an existing collaboration will help dissect the workings of the group. Often one or more elements may be causing underlying problems within the group.



checklists for working together

A four year–old Affordable Housing collaboration used the *Framework* as a diagnostic tool when they began to experience problems with low attendance, lack of commitment, few resources and lack of accomplishment. The membership along with an outside facilitator, examined each element of the *Framework* and how it applied to their collaboration. Through consensus, it was decided that the mission was muddled, communication systems were fragmented, leadership needed to be shared, and there was a lack of protocol on how the group worked together. Strategies for each factor were defined and within eight months new progress from the group had been documented.

In summary, the *Framework* can assist you in your collaboration. The National Network for Collaboration members invite you to join our evolving dialog.