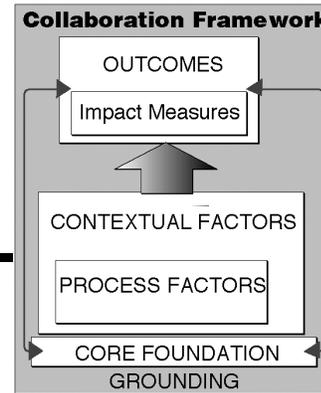




insuring successful collaborations

unit 5 focus

a look at how the Framework
can insure successful
collaborations.



- Taking Measure Along the Way.
- Systems Thinking.
- Understanding Collaborative Systems.
- Evaluating Your Efforts.
- Hunting for Root Causes.
- Checklist for Working Together.

Time: 45 minutes to 3 hours depending upon the number of people, the level of current knowledge, and the manner of facilitation.

Audience: 10-50 people collaborating or examining a collaborative process together.

Equipment: Overhead projector, paper, pencils, flip chart, felt pens, sticky dots (for voting), colored sticky notes.

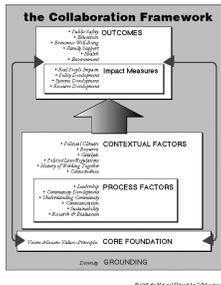


Unit 5

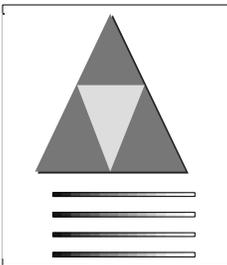
insuring successful collaborations

taking measure along the way

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- **OUTCOMES:** To assist the group in being able to evaluate its efforts and better understand its strengths and weaknesses.
- **DISCUSS:** The Framework itself, is a good diagnostic tool for identifying problems within a collaboration. By using it as a template, the existing collaboration's group dynamics can be seen clearly. One or more elements may be causing underlying problems with the group, and the Framework can often times point these out easily. Use it at any time during a collaborative effort to better understand how effectively the group is meeting its goals.

A highly functioning collaborative effort, at all times, focuses upon what condition(s) it seeks to achieve and how it goes about achieving that condition(s). If it doesn't feel right, if it's not going fast enough, or if it's not going smoothly enough, it may be time to take the measure of your collaboration.

- **ACTIVITY:** This exercise combines the A-B-C model of change we used in the 2nd Unit, with an "inverted triangle of vision" to get a sense of where the collaboration is now, and where it wants to be. Four factors are considered: Leadership, Strategies, Commitment, and Vision. Each is scored along a continuum by group members, with an "A" for where the collaboration seems to be right now, and with a "B" for where the group wants to be in the future.



Unit 5

insuring successful collaborations

(1) Define the four factors with the group. Ask individuals to respond to the following question, rating the collaboration on separate continuum lines for the four factors: "How strong do you think we are?" Place an "A" for current conditions on top of each line and a "B" for future conditions underneath each line, with arrows pointing toward the anticipated direction of movement.

(2) Use the process factors from Unit 3 to rate the collaboration. The group should be able to define its own questions to best meet its goals, but questions identified in Unit 3 are a good starting point. Use the same lines of continuum in the back of this unit. Think about using the contextual factors in Unit 3 the same way.

Look for system issues rather than individual ones. Avoid blaming people. Use "I" statements: When you ____, I feel ____. Assure a safe environment for all participants. Facilitate conversation as a dialogue, in which members brainstorm openly about issues, rather than jumping to conclusions and developing strategies or solutions right away.

systems thinking (from "What You Can Expect ... As You Practice Systems Thinking" by Charlotte Robert and Jennifer Kemeny in The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook)



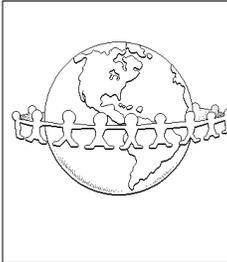
effective dialog
and discussion

- **OUTCOMES:** To develop the groups understanding of systems, and to better understand the benefits of thinking from a systems viewpoint.



Unit 5

insuring successful collaborations



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- **DISCUSS:** At its broadest level systems thinking is about looking at the interrelatedness of forces and seeing them as part of a common process. A system is actually a number of elements that "hang together" because they continually affect each other over time and work toward a common purpose. The word comes from the Greek verb *sunistanai* - "to cause to stand together", and as this suggests, the structure of a system includes the quality of perception with which the observer causes it to stand together. Systems are communities, families, teams, biological organisms, the atmosphere, factories, chemical reactions, politics, collaborations and organizations of all kinds.

One form of systems thinking is becoming particularly valuable to help achieve positive organizational change. It is "system dynamics" and was developed by Professor Jay Forrester and his colleagues at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He uses links and loops, archetypes, and other models to understand complex feedback processes and problematic patterns of behavior within organizational systems.

"There are no right answers. Because system dynamics illustrates the interdependencies within the current system, there is never a single right answer to any question. Instead, the discipline reveals a variety of potential actions you may take... Each of these actions will produce some desired results and (almost certainly) some unintended consequences somewhere else in the system. The art of systems thinking includes learning to recognize the ramifica-



tions and trade-offs of the action you choose... By its nature, systems thinking points out interdependencies and the need for collaboration. Thus, as the team continues its work, it may become necessary to bring in new members—particularly people who were once seen as enemies, but are now obviously players on the same side in the same game." p91-92.

understanding collaborative systems (adapted from Exploring Your Own Story by Michael Goodman, Rick Karash in The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook by Peter Senge)



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knowing the destination

How did we contribute to or create the circumstances we face now?

- **OUTCOMES:** To assist the group in discovering a coherent story from interrelationships of seemingly random events. This can be a powerful learning process for teams.

DISCUSS: This question lies at the heart of systems story telling: "How did we (through our internal thinking, our processes, our practices, and our procedures) contribute to or create the circumstances (good and bad) we face now?" -p105. Significant answers tend to come only after sustained deliberation.

The first step is to identify the problem. It should be an issue that's really important to the collaboration, not just an exercise. Focus on a situation which has troubled you repeatedly. Reduce the problem statement to one or two sentences and narrow your focus. Choose a problem whose history is known and describable. Do not sanitize your



Unit 5

insuring successful collaborations

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What are the
key themes
and recurring
patterns to
our story?

description of the issue - keep it as accurate as possible. Don't include any suggestions of solutions at this point. (The problem is: we just need a new computer.) Be non-judgemental.

Example: The problem is: profits were steady for two years, but have been declining for the last six months.

The second step is to tell the story. Bring the story or stories underlying the problem to the surface. Develop a theory that makes sense, is logically consistent, and could—if accurate—explain why the system is generating the problems you see. Then test the story, in the spirit of the scientific method. The team should purposely maintain as many diverse, even contradictory, ideas for as long as possible, rather than jump to the right solution. The story won't be linear, instead you'll begin to see a series of events from many vantage points, you'll begin to identify key themes and recurring patterns, and your understanding of the underlying structure will deepen.

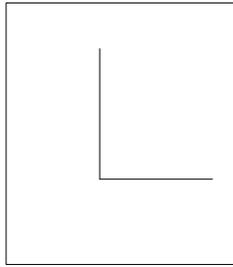
- **ACTIVITY:** Identify the "characters" of the story—the key factors of the story—by using the Frameworks process and contextual factors. Example: One key factor is the national health care costs are out of control, or we spend far too much time in redundant paperwork. The point here, is not to settle on any statement as right or wrong, but to begin talking about the problem, establish the dimensions of the problem, bring to light the collaboration's varied perspectives, and lay the groundwork for



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insuring successful collaborations

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selecting some key factors as variables.

Questions that might help: (1) How would this issue look from a high level management position? A front line worker position? (2) How would our elected officials view this issue? Or informed citizens? (3) What factors would be most prominent from these different perspectives? (4) What factors has our collaboration created or contributed?

Another approach is to give participants paper and pencil. Large sticky notes are great - 5 x 8 or larger. As individuals, draw the most important issue as a graph with time (months, years, whatever works) along the bottom of the X axis, and the key factor (number of clients per year, demand for technical support, etc.) as the Y axis. These don't need to be exact, just impressions. Accompany the graph with a few words (spoken or written) describing its significance.

Until this stage most people have only seen this situation in terms of the current moment. This exercise moves participants to a sensitivity for change over time, that it isn't a brand-new problem. When individual graphs are compared and discussed, suddenly a story is developed. You can notice common themes. If your graphs are on sticky notes you can begin to move them around on a wall, grouping them in patterns of behavior.

Questions that might help: (1) What basic story combines these graphs? (2) Do we need to reconsider the original problem?



Unit 5

insuring successful collaborations

evaluating your efforts (adapted from the Community Leader's Guide)



research and evaluation

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checklist

Did we do what we said we would do?

What was our impact?

- **OUTCOMES:** To assist the group's understanding of evaluation and how it corresponds with the Framework.
- **DISCUSS:** Evaluation is not concerned with summarizing your accomplishments, so much as understanding if you accomplished what you said you'd accomplish. It asks the questions, "Did we do what we set out to do?" And "What was the impact of our activity?"

Two basic philosophies exist for evaluation: (1) The evaluator should be separate from the action and be as neutral as possible, or (2) Those that carry out the plan are in the best position to interpret the information and draw conclusions. Have the group reach consensus regarding this.

Important aspects for a successful evaluation of the collaboration's efforts are already in place. The collaboration's outcomes and purpose and measurable indicators have been identified in Units 2 & 3. The only aspects that might remain for the collaboration to consider are the following: (1) Who is responsible for collecting the information, (2) How will it be collected and when? (3) What does the information tell us? (4) Who will interpret the information and draw conclusions and recommendations?

- **ACTIVITY:** If the group is comfortable in evaluating



Unit 5

insuring successful collaborations

its own efforts, bring the group to consensus regarding the questions in the above paragraph, and break into small groups for discussion and follow through.

The evaluation should make sense to the full collaboration, and help the group know whether or not they have reached their goal, or if they're on the right track. It should also be able to help the group justify what next steps may be needed.

hunting for root causes (adapted from The Five Whys by Rick Ross, in the Fifth Discipline Fieldbook by Peter Senge)



diagnosing problems

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- 1 why?
- 2 why?
- 3 why?
- 4 why?
- 5 why?

- **OUTCOMES:** To assist group members in solving current problems with their collaboration.
- **DISCUSS:** Answers to "Why" questions should not blame individuals, because then you'll end up only able to punish the person and there won't be any chance to change the system. Example - "Why is there oil on the floor?" - because maintenance didn't clean it up. "Why didn't they clean it?" - because the supervisor didn't tell them. "Why didn't he do that?" - because the crew didn't tell him. "Why didn't they tell him?" - because he didn't ask...

We need to learn to recognize the difference between event-oriented explanations, and systemic explanations. Systemic explanations are the ones which lead to the reasons why they didn't clean it up, or he didn't tell them to, or they didn't ask - such as poor crew training. To avoid the distraction



Unit 5

insuring successful collaborations

of event or blame-related answers, try asking, "Okay, is that the only reason?"

- **ACTIVITY:** This activity is a way to hunt backward for the root cause(s) of difficult, recurring problem(s). It's about asking "Why," five times in a team setting with discussion.

First, pick a symptom, an issue, or a problem - someplace to begin unraveling the mystery. Ask the 1st why: "Why is such-and-such taking place?" Try and get three or four answers to put on the wall for everyone to see. Leave plenty of space around each answer.

Steps 2, 3, 4, and 5: Repeat this process for every statement on the wall. Ask "Why?" about each one, and write the answer next to the original statement. Follow up on likely answers. Look for convergences. Twelve different symptoms might be able to be traced back to two or three systemic sources. Tracing these paths you'll probably find issues that affect the whole system.



checklists for working together (adapted from Building Coalitions - Factors Influencing Partnerships and Collaborative Ventures in Federal Youth-At-Risk Projects" by the Ohio Center for Action on Coalition Development)



diagnosing problems



participation matrix



checklist

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- **OUTCOMES:** To assist individual members in identifying problem areas for the collaboration.
- **ACTIVITY:** These checklists are designed to identify factors influencing the way people relate with each other in collaborations. The information obtained from this may help your group be more successful, avoid pitfalls, or diagnose problems that keep you from meeting your goals.

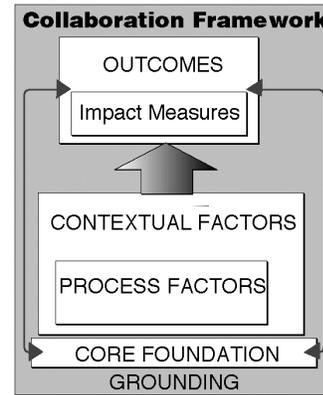
These checklists may be used individually or in groups. They can be assigned as "homework" for team members to fill out and bring in at some future, specified date, at which time they can be compiled and a general overview of the group can be displayed. The idea is not to point out individuals to blame, but to gauge the groups strengths and weaknesses, in order to direct attention, time and energy to supporting the strengths and negating the weaknesses.



guide

unit 5

to materials

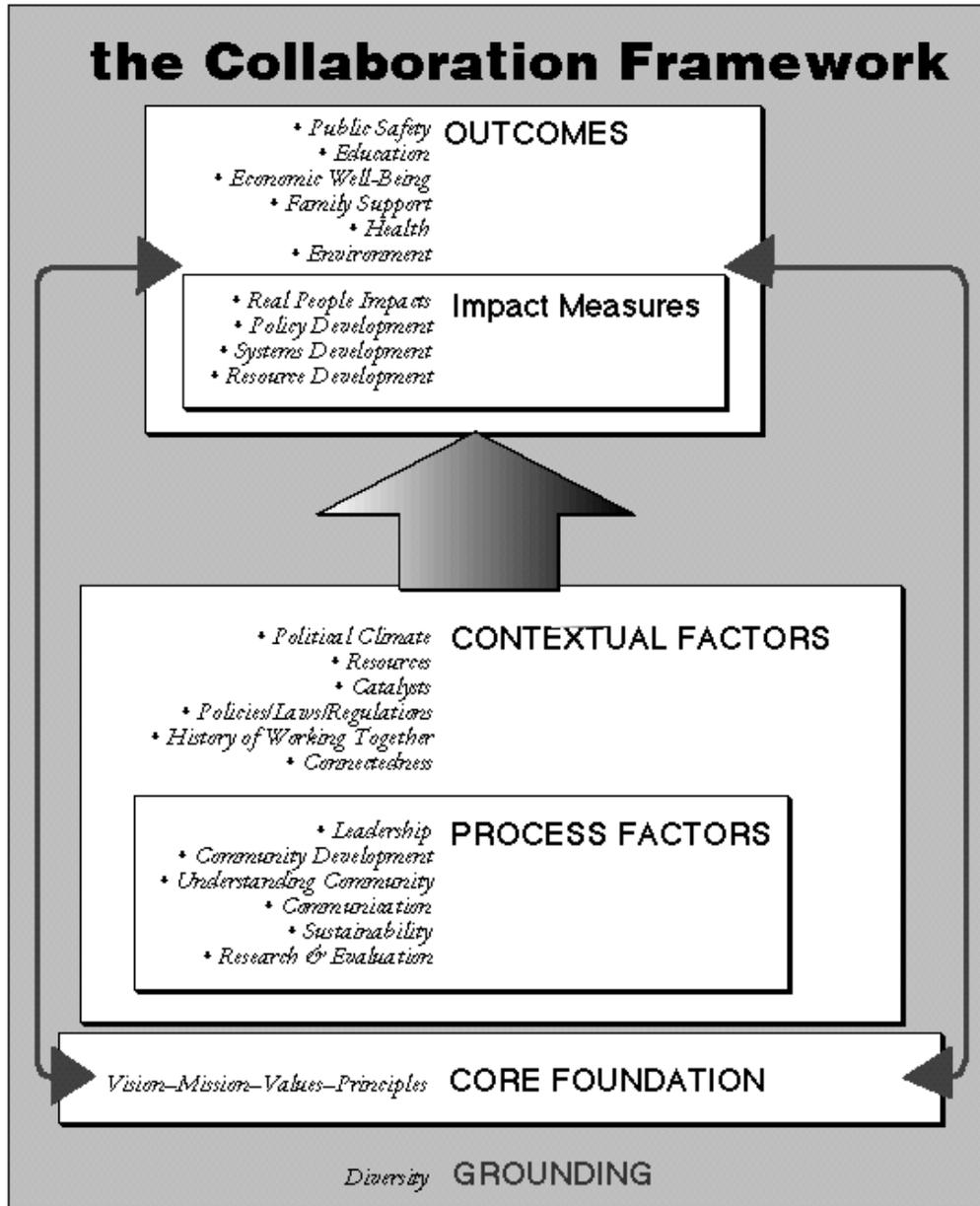


- **Taking Measure Along the Way.**
the Framework's 5 elements - triangle of vision.
- **Systems Thinking.**
interrelatedness.
- **Understanding Collaborative Systems.**
systems story telling - key themes - issue graph.
- **Evaluating Your Efforts.**
evaluation of efforts.
- **Hunting for Root Causes.**
the 5 whys
- **Checklist for Working Together.**
situational factors - structural dimensions - perceived effectiveness.



Unit 5

the Framework's 5 elements



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Unit 5

triangle of vision



Vision

Strategies

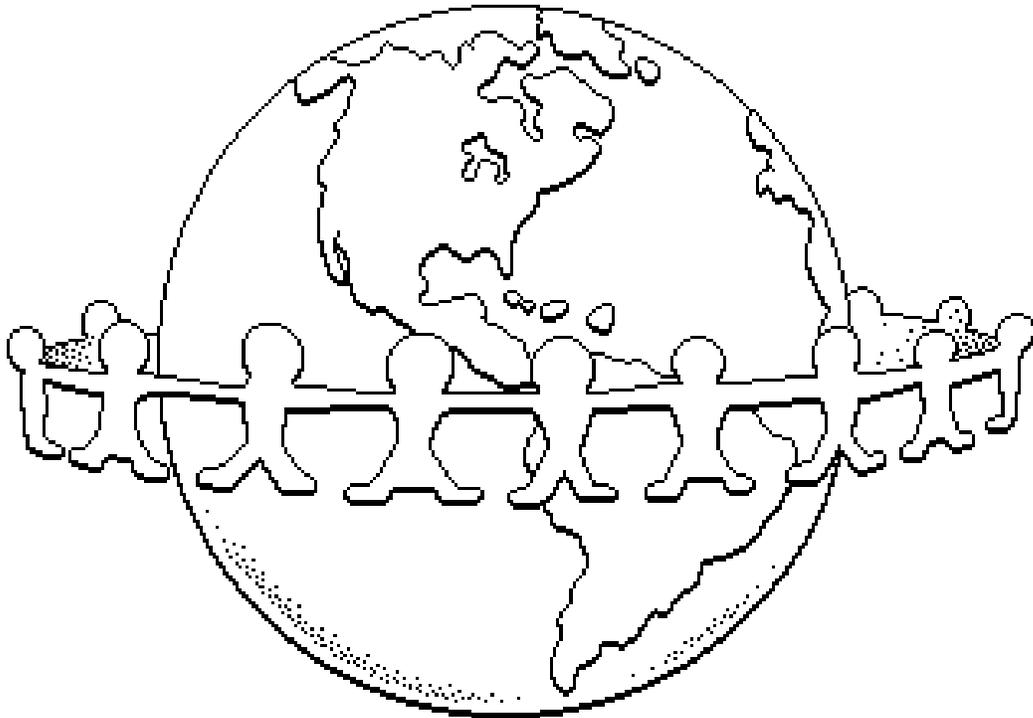
Leadership

Commitment



Unit 5

interrelatedness





How did we
contribute to
or create the
circumstances
we face now?



Unit 5

key themes

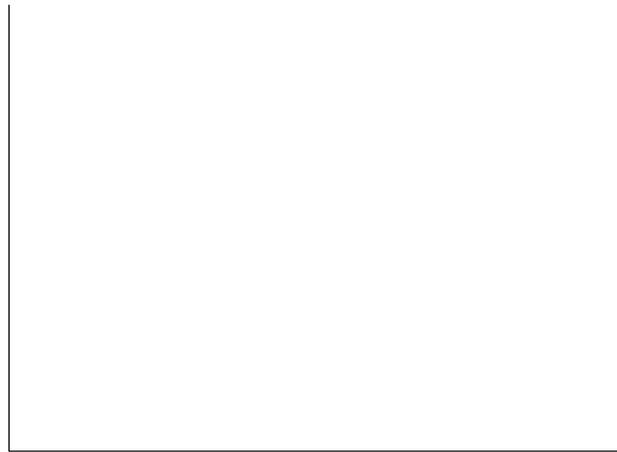
What are
the key
themes and
recurring
patterns to
our story?



Unit 5

issue graph

Key
Factors



Time



evaluation of efforts

Did we do
what we said
we would do?

What was
our impact?



1 why?

2 why?

3 why?

4 why?

5 why?



Unit 5

Situational Factors

1. To what extent do the people working with you in this collaboration need your services, resources or support (your's or your organization's) to reach their personal or professional goals? (put an O for your response along the line.)

2. In order to obtain your goals (personal or organizational) to what extent do you or your organization need the services, resources, or support from the other members of this collaboration? (put an X for your response along the line.)

3. What specific services, resources, or support do others involved in this collaboration need from you or your organization? (Put a O next to all that apply.)

4. What specific services, resources, or support do you or your organization need from the other members of this collaboration? (Put an X next to all that apply.)

- _____ Financial
 - _____ Facilitation
 - _____ Information
 - _____ Other (please list below)
- _____
- _____
- _____

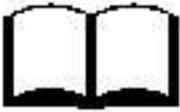
5. How well informed are you about the goals, etc. provided by other members of this collaboration?

6. How personally acquainted are you with the other members?

7. To what extent do you and the other members agree upon the goals of this collaboration?

8. To what extent do the members of this collaboration:

- A. Obtain funding from the same sources as your organization? (Use an O.)
- B. Provide the same kind of services as your organization? (Use an X.)
- C. Provide services to the same clients as your organization? (Use a Y.)
- D. Have the same kind of goals as your organization? (Use a Z.)
- E. Have staff with the same kind of skills/ experience as your organization? (Use an H.)



Unit 5

Structural Dimensions

1. How frequently were letters or reports exchanged during the last six months? (Use an O)
2. How often has the collaboration met during the past 6 months? (Use an X.)
3. How frequently were face-to-face discussions held during the past 6 months? (Use a Y.)
4. How frequently were telephone calls made with members during the past 6 months? (Use a Z.)

not						almost
al all						every day

5. To what extent has this collaboration received the following resources for its involvement with your organization during the past year? (Put an O for your response along the line.)
6. To what extent did your organization receive each of the following resources from the collaboration during the past year? (Put an X for your response along the line.)

A. Money	dont know		a great extent
B. Use of your staff	dont know		a great extent
C. Client referrals	dont know		a great extent
D. Tech assistance	dont know		a great extent
E. Recognition	dont know		a great extent
F. Supplies	dont know		a great extent
G. Goal attainment	dont know		a great extent
H. Information	dont know		a great extent
I. New programs	dont know		a great extent
J. Other (please list)			a great extent



Unit 5

Perceived Effectiveness

- 1. To what extent do members carry out their commitments? (Use an O.)
- 2. To what extent do you feel your relationship with the collaboration is worthwhile? (Use an X.)
- 3. To what extent is the time and effort for this collaboration worthwhile? (Use a Y.)
- 4. To what extent have individuals or organizations added after the collaboration was funded impacted it's effectiveness? (Use a Z.)

- 5. When you want to communicate with other members of the collaboration how difficult is it? (Use an X.)
- 6. How would you characterize the quality of your communication with other members? (Use a Y.)
- 7. How often did your communications or messages get lost or not receive follow-through? (Use a Z.)

- 8. To what extent has fluctuations or changes in membership had an effect on the collaboration?

___ No effect ___ Little effect ___ Some effect ___ No fluctuation

- 9. Have the fluctuations or changes been:

___ Positive ___ Negative ___ Neither

- 10. What things do you like most about working with the other members in this collaboration?

- 11. What things do you like least about working with the other members in this collaboration?

- 12. Has the collaboration experienced conflict between its members? ___ Yes ___ No

- 13. If yes, how was the conflict resolved?