

# Rationale for Collaboration

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- Coordinated planning
- Cost-effectiveness
- Expands reach of programs
- Builds and restores fabric of community
- Promotes ownership and institutionalization
  - Integrates goals
  - Increases support over the long haul with local resources
  - Evolves structures and delivery mechanisms
- Develops spokespersons for the effort
- Increases partnership opportunities
- Reduces “Lone Ranger” initiatives
- Expands the community’s ability to respond comprehensively to community needs

# Stages of Collaboration

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## **COMMUNICATION**

Sharing information and non-material resources.

*For example:* Exchanging newsletters and calendars of events with other programs to remain informed of each others' activities.

## **COORDINATION**

Preventing duplication of efforts and activities with assurance of quality services provided.

*For example:* Creating a shared calendar of events to avoid conflicts with other events and activities.

## **COOPERATION**

Integrating program operations without sacrificing autonomy or identity of participating programs.

*For example:* Define services based on shared analysis of community needs and determining which programs are best suited for which services.

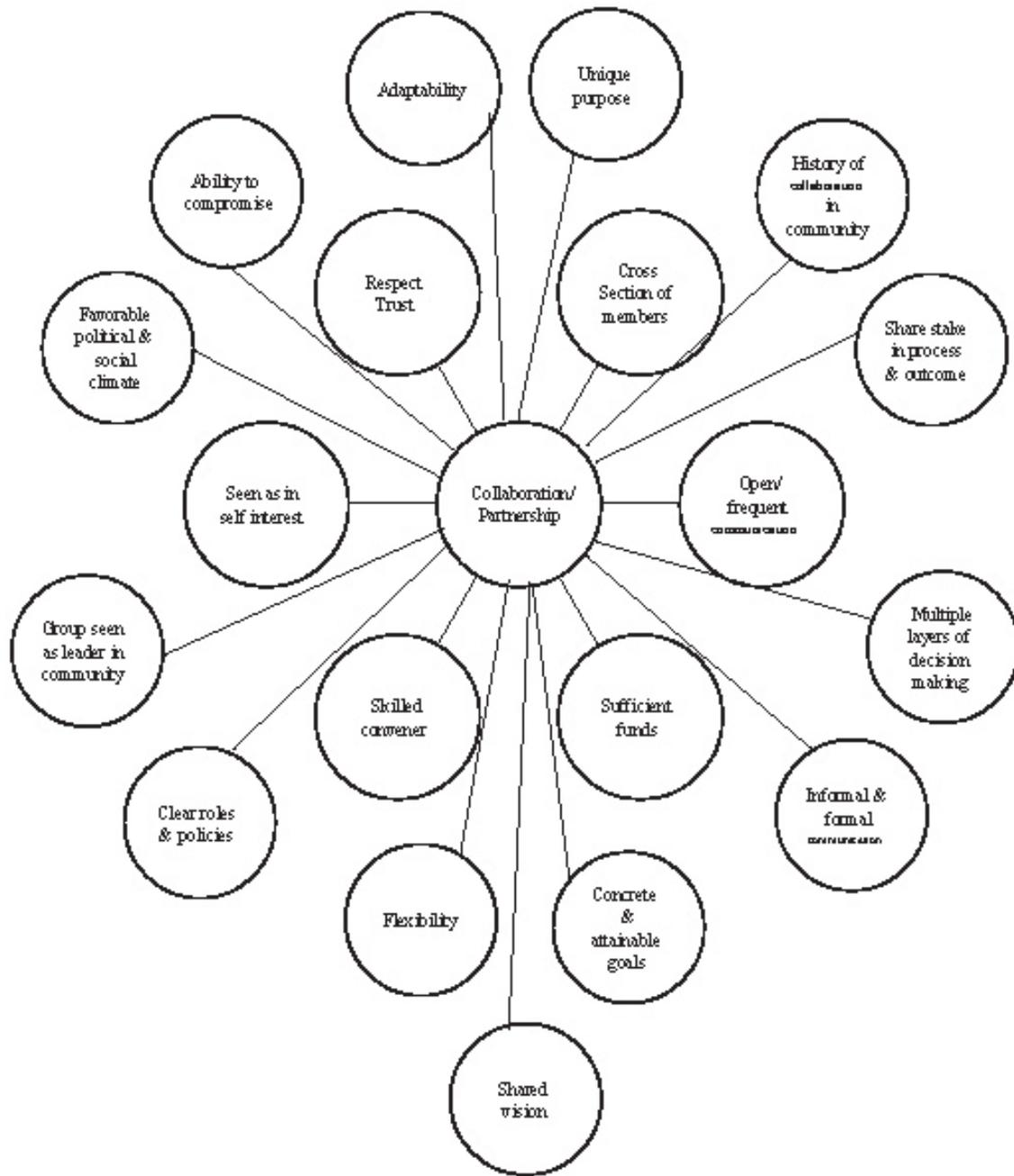
## **COLLABORATION**

A structured relationship through which varying programs, fields, and communities participate to achieve common goals and interests for mutual benefit. Members are equally committed to the collaboration goals as to their individuals program goals.

*For example:* Members of a collaboration share staffing duties at a community service project newly created by the collaboration to meet an un-met need in that community.



# Success Factors of Collaboration



Source: Wilder Foundation

**NOTE:**

Research shows the #1 success factor for collaborative partnerships is **Trust**.

# Troubleshooting Challenges to Partnership Success

*Adapted from Conservation Partnerships: A Field Guide to Public-Private Partnering for Natural Resource Conservation*

*Even with growing successes, partnerships may face challenges when formalizing their operations. If problems arise when building partnership roles and activities, consider the following possible causes:*

## **STRUCTURAL BARRIERS**

**Mission Differences** – Organizations have their own missions or mandates that have evolved from a history of influences, policies, boards, user groups, and the public. Organizational missions are unique to each group. In focusing on primary functions, the incentive to work with one another may not be immediately clear to all prospective partners.

*Misperceptions about other organizations can be the biggest stumbling block to a partnership.*

**Competition** – Organizations may compete for funds and publicity, so some may be reluctant to allow other groups to be involved in their internal processes, or share publicity, for an important project, especially if the recognition informs their funding stream. Similarly, nonprofit organizations may feel that a partnership threatens their unique niche for fund raising.

**Geography** – Some projects require activities at both the national and local level. Lack of jurisdictional overlap among organizations evolves, and some may therefore anticipate more cooperation than a prospective partner is comfortable accepting.

**Semantics** – The word *partner* has a unique legal definition in each of the fifty states. Other language involved in formal partnership agreements can also mean more than one thing to different people. To protect the organizations they represent, many boards or legal counsel may reject certain language use if they feel it is too restrictive or inappropriate for the intent of the partnership.



## **PROCEDURAL BARRIERS**

**Interested Parties** – Organizations must be careful about perceived conflict of interest when receiving money or in-kind assistance from for-profit partners or other groups, for fear of their actions being seen as improper or questionable.

**Use of Public Funds** – Barriers can arise due to spending public money in conjunction with private participation in the partnership.

**Procurement Rules or Policies** – Organizations may have to go through formal board approvals before accepting goods or services for direct benefit. These policies or rules can alienate other partners who may feel the organization does not trust them as a result.

**Personnel Regulations and Labor Laws** – Some agencies or organizations have regulations concerning minimum wage, use of volunteers for certain functions, and other personnel concerns that can affect the involvement of nonprofits or corporations in certain activities.

**Advertising and Logos** – Organizations often cannot appear to endorse corporations or products, or serve as a marketing channel. Yet many also join collaborative partnerships with public relations as a principal objective. Partnerships must address restrictions of private-sector logos used on government-supported activities.

**People Problems** – The first few meetings can be awkward. If a history of contention exists, some members may be waiting to attack a “rival” - or may fear such an attack. Be aware that some venting may occur. Do not try to stop it, but do try to focus the attention on the common interests in the room. If the history of conflict is long and hard to overcome, then consider using a trained and neutral facilitator because establishing trust is critical to success.

**Facilitators or Brokers** – These are external folks that can work with the participating organizations to help the partnership run smoothly. Facilitators and brokers benefit from the process of creating a successful solution rather than the outcome. Because these are neutral third parties, organizations are usually willing to use them if they feel they cannot otherwise reach an agreement.

“A good idea doesn’t care who has it.” –Anonymous

