

## GETTING THE WORK DONE

# MANAGING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COLLABORATION

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Adapted from: Building a Nonprofit Network <sup>1</sup>

## PURPOSE

There are different options for identifying who'll be responsible in your collaboration for implementing the activities to achieve your goals and outcomes. Options range from drawing exclusively on partners' capacities and resources to seeking external supports. Before deciding on the best way for your collaboration to manage its work, consider all the possibilities.

## HOW TO USE THE TOOL

- Review the following strategies, factors and coordination options. Consider them in light of the particular circumstances of your collaboration.
- Together with your partners, decide on the best option given the collaboration's unique set of circumstances.
- Develop clear terms of reference based on your selection; remember to include the key co-ordination functions in job descriptions and outline those functions and role assignments in your collaboration agreement.

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

### Who will be responsible for the work of the collaboration?

Most collaborations use one of four strategies (or a combination thereof) for achieving their objectives:

1. All partners are jointly responsible for coordinating and implementing activities
2. Many or all of the partners contribute to the work, with support from a coordinator/manager (as described below)
3. Paid contract staff are hired or seconded and are responsible for specific projects/tasks, but consult with and draw from the expertise and knowledge of the partners
4. Paid staff are hired to be responsible for coordinating and implementing activities, but consult with and draw from the expertise and knowledge of the partners (more typical of nonprofit membership organizations)

### What key factors influence your approach to assigning work?

- The degree to which the purpose/goals of the collaboration align with the purpose/goals of individual partner organizations and the willingness of partners to allocate resources to the collaboration
- The espoused values of the partners (e.g. if a partner organization places a high value on equity and democracy, they may choose to be more inclusive in their approach and expect this from others in the collaboration.)
- The capacity of partners to contribute to the collaboration (e.g. if partner capacity is limited, resources must be found elsewhere; alternatively, the partner may want to second a staff to the initiative)
- The availability of funds to support infrastructure (e.g. Does the collaboration have external core funding? If so, how consistent is it? What will it support?)

## FULFILLING THE COORDINATOR/MANAGER ROLE IN UNINCORPORATED COLLABORATIONS:

The following describes some options for filling the role of coordinator/manager:

5. Second a consistent staff person from a partner organization
  - Pro: Low or no cost; high degree of awareness and understanding of the needs of collaboration partners
  - Con: Lack of commitment to the role due to pressures from the coordinator's own organization; the collaboration may not be able to 'hand pick' an individual with the skills; there may be a perception that the coordinator's organization has more influence than other partners
6. Rotate assignments among collaboration partners
  - Pro: Ownership of the collaboration is shared among its partners; benefit from the specific skills and capacities of partners at different times and for different aspects of the work
  - Con: Potential lack of commitment; inconsistent performance; the collaboration may not be able to 'hand pick' an individual with the right skills
7. Hire someone outside of the collaboration
  - Pro: Can hire to exact requirements
  - Con: Higher cost; temptation to let the coordinator/manager take on too much responsibility and compromise shared responsibilities; may create disengaged partners

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from Building a Nonprofit Network: Linda Mollenhauer, Valerie Johnston, Janine Gates; for Ontario Volunteer Centres Network (2011)



### Project Consultants

Heather Graham, H. Graham Consulting, heather@hgrahamconsulting.com

Cathy Lang, C. Lang Consulting, cathy@clangconsulting.com

Linda Mollenhauer, Mollenhauer Consulting, mollenhauerl@rogers.com

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