

ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS TO COLLABORATE CHECKLIST

PURPOSE

Before making a decision to invest in collaboration, assess the degree to which your organization is ready to collaborate. Consider if you can be a good collaborative partner, determine the value of collaborating, and clarify your organization's ability to commit to collaboration.

HOW TO USE THE TOOL

- Circulate the following checklist to members of your Board and Management, and to staff who have played a key role in collaborations. Reflect, individually, on the organization's readiness to collaborate.
- Facilitate discussions regarding themes emerging from the individual reflection exercise.
- Identify the degree to which your organization is ready to effectively collaborate, and discuss where you most need to focus to get ready.
- Consider the tips to help you get ready to collaborate.

We can be a good collaboration partner.

- We are open to new ideas and ways of working.
- We are comfortable with joint decision-making which means that we may have to give up some control and power in the interests of achieving a greater collective impact.
- Our Board and staff understand that we will need to arrive at shared goals that serve the collaboration's interests, not just our own.
- We are ready to share credit with other partners in the community, even if we compete for funding or clients.
- We recognize, and are prepared to support, the fact that collaborations don't always work in the same way as organizations. They require a lot of time to build trust and negotiate shared directions.
- We believe that we can learn and benefit from the experience and perspective of other organizations.
- We are able to be transparent about our organizational expectations, needs and challenges.
- Our staff members work collaboratively across functions and between program areas. We place a high value on team work internally.
- We are comfortable with managing conflict effectively given that it may arise when negotiating shared decision-making, accountabilities, and leadership.

TIPS TO GET READY:

- Examine your motivations for collaboration and ensure you aren't driven solely by funder expectations.
- Discuss the degree to which your organizational culture and values are aligned with collaboration.
- Consult with staff involved in collaborations to find out what has worked, and what has gotten in the way of success in past and current collaborations.

Strategic thinking and decision-making:

- Working in collaboration will help us to advance our own strategic priorities.
- We are clear about the needs, issues, or opportunities that collaboration will help us to address or advance.
- We can identify tangible and intangible strengths and assets that our organization can bring to collaboration.

TIPS TO GET READY:

- Ensure that your organizational purpose and strategic directions are clearly articulated and understood.
- Discuss current service gaps or opportunities to innovate within the community/sector.
- Identify your core organizational competencies and capacities which you could bring to a collaboration (i.e. How are we unique? Where can we add value? What skills and resources do we have to contribute?)

We've made an organizational commitment to collaboration.

- Our Board and Management have declared a commitment to invest in collaboration.
- We have carefully considered the potential risks, costs, benefits and implications of our involvement in collaboration.
- We are prepared to support our staff to be good collaborative partners (e.g. giving them the authority to make decisions at the collaborative table; providing them the time to build and nurture relationships; supporting their contributions so they can add real value)

TIPS TO GET READY:

- Create space for Board and Management to decide whether it is a good time to invest in collaboration.
- Talk to other organizations that have had successful experiences in collaboration to identify the costs and benefits.
- Make sure that staff have the time, resources and skills to effectively collaborate.



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