

*Collaborative means the structure or group working together to achieve a shared vision.*

*Effective organizations learn continuously and use their knowledge to increase effectiveness*

Like evaluation, the terms **collaborative** and **collaboration** may mean different things to different people. We use the term *collaborative* to mean the structure or group working together to achieve a shared vision. Inherent in this structure is a process called *collaboration*: a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can explore constructively their differences and search for (and implement) solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible (Gray, 1989). In other words, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Various words and ideas fall under the collaborative umbrella. People are using terms like coalition, collaboration, and net working in many ways. Identifying distinctions among the many types of relationships we find in programming will help keep expectations realistic. A common view is emerging that suggests a progression among types of relationships (see table-page 2). We have also found it helpful to distinguish between processes and structures as we sort out the differences and similarities across these types of relationships.

The processes represented in joint efforts are *communication, contribution, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration* (the 5-Cs). Because many people focus on the process of the relationship as the primary feature, these are described in more detail:

**Communication** is a process based on the exchange of information and meaning. It is a crucial part of any type of productive relationship.

Structures focused only on communication are usually informal, without commonly defined mission, form, or planning. A typical structure would be the network or round table.

**Contribution** is an informal relationship (often called mutual support) through which parties help each other by providing some of the resources and support needed to reach their independent goals.

Contributing structures occur on an ad hoc, intermittent basis. In other situations they emerge in a networking relationship where partners meet periodically to (cont.)

**Communications**



**Contribution**



**Coordination**



**Cooperation**



**Collaboration**

## Example Relationships

<i>Integration</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
<b>LOW</b> 	<b>Communication</b>	Network, round table	Dialogue and common understanding. Clearinghouse for information. Explore common and conflicting interests.
	<b>Contribution</b>	Support group	Mutual exchanges to support each other's efforts. Build mutual obligation and trust.
	<b>Coordination</b>	Task force, council, alliance	Match and coordinate needs, resources, and activities. Limit duplication of services. Adjust current activities for more efficient and effective results.
	<b>Cooperation</b>	Partnership, consortium, coalition	Link resources to help parties achieve joint goals. Discover shared interests. Build trust by working together.
	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	Collaborative

(cont. from page 1)

exchange personnel, material, or other resources as well as information.

The contribution can also take the form of a short-term work group or coalition.

**Coordination** generally is a deliberate, joint, often formalized relation among parties involving communication, some planning and division of roles, and longer term goals. It also contains some sharing of resources, risks and rewards for purpose of efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the complementary goals of the parties involved. Authority rests with individual parties.

Structures are formalized to ensure that the coordination process is carried out in an ongoing and effective manner. Coordination also occurs in structures aimed at collaboration. Typical forms include council, alliance, task force, and short term coalition.

**Cooperation** is defined as a relationship in which parties with similar interests plan together, negotiate mutual roles and share resources to achieve joint goals. Each party maintains its own identity.

Cooperative structures range from informal to formal and from short-term to long-term. Their common characteristics are shared interests, joint decision making and integration of efforts to achieve shared goals. Typical forms are partnerships, coalitions and cooperatives.

**Collaboration** involves parties who see different aspects of a problem. They engage in a process through which they constructively explore their differences and search for (and implement) solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible (Gray, 1989). Relationships evolve toward commitment to common mission, comprehensive communication and planning, pooled resources, and shared risks and products. Authority is vested in the collaborative, rather than in individuals or an individual agency.

Structure is defined as an evolving forum for developing and achieving visions and for resolving complex issues. Sufficient structure develops to form and implement jointly created solutions. Structure often evolves toward more explicit integration of member interests, roles, and resources. Typical forms are collaboratives and long-term coalitions.

The names given to these types of relationships vary considerably. What is most important to understand is what is going on within the relationship. Parties may aspire to collaborate, but they may begin with a less risky, less challenging level of relationship. Indeed, they may never reach the level of collaboration. As their relationship evolves over time, they may find that they operate in a collaborative way on other issues. The expected outcomes of these levels of relationship differ. Parties need to recognize these differences in the way they function. Finally, the readiness of parties for different levels of relationship varies and must be considered before choosing the most realistic level for a given set of stakeholders.

Few efforts where stakeholders come together to address a problem or develop and achieve a vision of resolution actually function as a collaborative in the beginning. Rarely is the trust and commitment among parties high enough early on to genuinely engage in exploring differences and developing creative joint solutions in which parties depend on each other for implementation.

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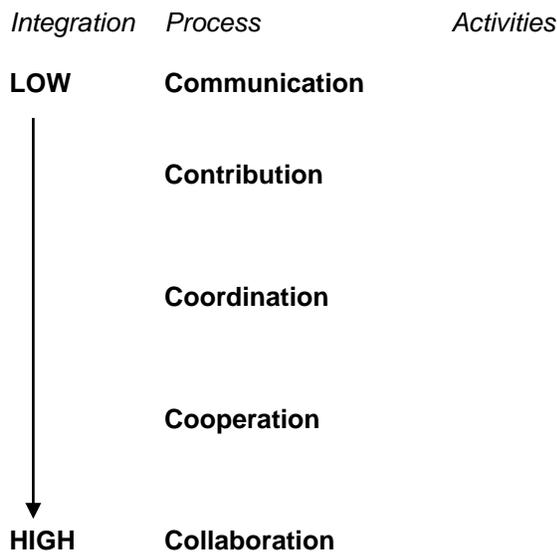
*The readiness of parties for different levels of relationships varies and must be considered before choosing the most realistic level for a given set of stakeholders.*

Most efforts begin with networking to get to know each other better. As common interests are identified, cooperative efforts emerge. Where parties identify competition or duplication, they may try to coordinate so that their actions mesh. In time, collaborative efforts around certain topics or issues may emerge from these preceding relationships. In cases of conflict, the parties may seek to negotiate a mutual resolution that enables a shared resource relationship. Sometimes a mediation process is needed. As new challenges arise parties may revert again to communication, cooperation or even conflict.

*Evaluation can help to clarify existing relationships, readiness for relationships of greater challenge, and the payoffs and impacts of relationships over time.*

Therefore, the relationships between parties are dynamic and they evolve as the readiness of participants and the demands of the situation change. Unfortunately funding sources and various decision-makers sometimes assume that productive relationships among stakeholders occur rapidly according to preconceived plans. Parties to a joint venture then try to hold themselves accountable to a level of relationship that is beyond their current capabilities.

## Relationship Mapping



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