



Collaboration is the process through which parties that see different aspects of a problem can explore constructively their differences and search solutions that go beyond their own limited vision or capacity. Collaborative initiatives are found everywhere and are sometimes mandated by funding sources. These inter-agency connections can range from loosely organized networks to formal commissions and legal bodies.

There is a continuum of relationships that exist between organizations which represent the depth and formality of their work together.

1. **Networks** focus on communication. It could be a clearinghouse of information or a way to explore common interests.
2. **Support Groups** are for mutual exchanges to support the individual efforts of each member and is based on mutual obligation and trust.
3. **Task Force/Alliances** match and coordinate needs, resources and activities. This can lead to limiting duplication of services and more efficient results.
4. **Partnerships/Consortiums** link resources to help parties achieve joint goals. Organizations are able to build and deepen trust by working closely together.
5. **Collaborative** develops a shared vision, build interdependent systems and share resources to address issues and maximize opportunities.

## Collaborative work might be useful in the following kinds of situations:

- There are complex problems with interrelated causes.
- Where resources are constrained.
- Where there is social fragmentation.
- When there are rapid, sweeping changes that impact a broad cross-section of society.
- Disengaged citizenry

**Collaborations are a mechanism for leveraging resources, tackling scarcity, reducing duplication, capitalizing on individual strengths and capacity building.**

## Phases of Collaborative Development

**Getting Started:** The partners start out by creating a shared vision, and begin to develop procedures, guidelines and structures within which to work. At this phase leadership and management structures are also agreed upon and put in place.

**Organize and Act:** Staffing and resources are put in place; action plans are developed as well as put communication systems in place. The collaborative then implement and pilot their chosen activities and measure.

**Achieve and Transform:** In the final phase the collaborative looks at their impact on larger change by building the capacity of the community to sustain the effort. The members will then look at integrating the collaborative functions into their organizations and decide whether to continue or dissolve.

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Prepared by Oliver Ferguson and Kathryn Heinz, July 2014  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Available at [www.meas-extension.org/tip-sheets](http://www.meas-extension.org/tip-sheets)

