

# Collaboration: What Makes it Work

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# 22 Success Factors – 6 Categories

1. Environment
2. Membership Characteristics
3. Process and Structure
4. Communication
5. Purpose
6. Resources



# Environment

**Environmental characteristics** consist of features of the geographic location and social context within which a collaborative group exists. The group may be able to influence or affect these elements in some way, but it does not have control over them.



# Environment Factors

## 1. **History of collaboration or cooperation in the community**

A history of collaboration or cooperation exists in the community and offers the potential collaborative partners an understanding of the roles and expectations required in collaboration, which helps them to trust the process.



# Environment Factors

## 2. Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community

The collaborative group (and by implication, the organizations within the group) is perceived within the community as reliable and competent—at least in relation to the goals and activities it intends to accomplish.



# Environment Factors

## 3. **Favorable political and social climate**

Political leaders, opinion-makers, those who control resources, and the general public support (or at least do not oppose) the mission of the collaborative group.



# Membership Characteristics

**Membership characteristics** consist of the skills, attitudes, and opinions of the individuals in a collaborative group, as well as the culture and capacity of the organizations that form the collaborative group.



# Membership Characteristics Factors

## 4. **Mutual respect, understanding, and trust**

Members of the collaborative group share an understanding and respect for one another and their respective organizations: how they operate, their cultural norms and values, their limitations, and their expectations.



# Membership Characteristics Factors

## 5. **Appropriate cross-section of members**

The collaborative group includes representatives from each segment of the community that will be affected by its activities. The group engages members at the appropriate time and an appropriate level of involvement.



# Membership Characteristics Factors

## 6. **Members see collaboration as being in their self-interest**

Collaborating partners believe that they will benefit from their involvement in the collaboration and that the advantages of membership will offset disadvantages, such as slower decision-making processes.



# Membership Characteristics Factors

## 7. Ability to compromise

Collaborating partners are able to compromise, since the many decisions within a collaborative effort cannot possibly fit the preferences of every member perfectly.



# Process and Structure

**Process and structure** refer to the management, decision-making, and operational systems of a collaborative effort.



# Process and Structure Factors

## 8. **Members share a stake in both process and outcome**

Members of a collaborative group feel “ownership” of both the way the group works and the results or products of its work.



# Process and Structure Factors

## 9. Multiple layers of participation

Every level (upper management, middle management, front line) within each partner organization has involvement in the collaborative initiative. Each layer brings different assets to the collaboration and may need to be involved to different degrees and at different stages of development.



# Process and Structure Factors

## 10. Flexibility

The collaborative group remains open to varied ways of organizing itself, shifting its internal structure, and performing activities to accomplish its work.



# Process and Structure Factors

## 11. Development of clear roles and policy guidelines

The collaborating partners jointly develop a set of shared operating principles. They clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and are committed to carrying them out.



# Process and Structure Factors

## 12. Adaptability to changing conditions

The collaborative group has the ability to make changes—even to major goals, members, etc.—in order to deal with changing conditions in the external environment.



# Process and Structure Factors

## 13. **Appropriate pace of development**

The structure, resources, and activities of the collaborative group change over time to meet the needs of the group, without overwhelming its capacity, at each point throughout the initiative.



# Process and Structure Factors



NEW

## 14. Evaluation and continuous learning

The collaborative group has an established process for measuring its activities and effectiveness; collaborating partners review these measurements, learn from them, and use them to guide improvement.



# Communication

**Communication** refers to the channels used by collaborative partners to send and receive information, keep one another informed, and convey opinions to influence the group's actions.



# Communication Factors

## 15. Open and frequent communication

Collaborative group members interact often, update one another, discuss issues openly, foster transparency, and convey all necessary information to one another and to stakeholders outside the group.



# Communication Factors

## 16. Established informal relationships and communication links

In addition to formal channels of communication, members establish personal connections—producing a better, more informed, and more cohesive group.



# Purpose

**Purpose** refers to the reasons for the development of a collaborative effort, the result or vision the collaborative group seeks, and the specific tasks or projects the collaborative group defines as necessary to accomplish. It is driven by a need, crisis, or opportunity.



# Purpose Factors

## 17. Concrete, attainable goals and objectives

Goals and objectives of the collaborative group are clear to all partners, and can be realistically attained.



# Purpose Factors

## 18. Shared vision

Collaborating partners have the same vision, with clearly agreed-upon mission, operating principles, objectives, and strategy. The shared vision may exist at the outset of collaboration, or the partners may develop a vision as they work together.



# Purpose Factors

## 19. Unique purpose

The mission and goals, or approach, of the collaborative group differ, at least in part, from the mission and goals, or approach, of the member organizations.



# Resources

**Resources** include financial and human “input” necessary to develop and sustain a collaborative group.



# Resources Factors

## 20. Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time

The collaborative group has an adequate, consistent financial base, along with the staff and materials needed to support its operations. It allows sufficient time for the activities necessary to achieve its goals and includes time to nurture the collaboration.



# Resources Factors

## 21. Skilled leadership

The individual who provides leadership for the collaborative group has organizing, facilitation and interpersonal skills, such as emotional intelligence and cultural competence, and carry out their roles with fairness. Thus, the leaders are granted respect or “legitimacy” by the collaborative partners.



# Resources Factors



## 22. Engaged stakeholders

The collaborative maintains sufficient connections between itself and external actors affected by its activities.



# Collaborating Across Difference



# Collaborating Across Difference

We are collaborating in the context of an increasingly diverse world.



# Collaborating Across Difference

When we think about the many elements of difference...

- People (gender, nationality, race and ethnicity, age, income level, first language, ability, sexual orientation)
- Organizations (size, sectors, geography)
- Culture, values
- Power dynamics



# Collaborating Across Difference

... We realize we are almost always collaborating across difference



# Communication

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# Membership

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# Membership Characteristics

## 5. **Appropriate cross-section of members**

The collaborative group includes representatives from each segment of the community that will be affected by its activities. The group engages members at the appropriate time and an appropriate level of involvement.



# Self-evaluation

1. Reflect on the 4 factors below
2. Write thoughts on your worksheet
  - Open and frequent communication
  - Mutual respect, understanding, and trust
  - Skilled leadership
  - Appropriate cross-section of members



# Pair & Share

Find someone nearby and take turns sharing the reflections you recorded on your worksheet:

- Where is your collaborative strong?
- Where could you use improvement?
- What next steps do you want to take?



# So What? Small groups

What new insights is this providing you?

What do you want to do differently?

What actions might your collaborative group take next to improve on this factor?



# Large Group Share

Did you hear any creative solutions?



# Questions?



[www.Wilder.org/collaboration](http://www.Wilder.org/collaboration)

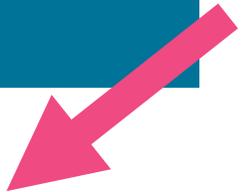


1. Opens to  
Wilder Collaboration  
Resources page

2. Open  
Collaboration:  
What Makes It Work

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation website. On the left is the logo with a large 'W' and the text 'AMHERST H. WILDER FOUNDATION Here for good.'. To the right are links for 'Donate | Employment | Contact Us' and a search icon. Below this is a secondary menu with 'What We Offer', 'Wilder Research', 'Community Impact', 'Get Involved', and 'About Us'. A breadcrumb trail reads 'Home : Collaboration' and a 'Share' button is on the right. The main banner is a dark blue rectangle with the title 'Wilder Collaboration Resources' and the subtitle 'Online companion to the third edition of our book Collaboration: What Makes It Work'.

Welcome to the online companion to the third edition of our book [Collaboration: What Makes It Work](#). Below you will find a variety of resources, tools, and ideas to support you in your collaborative efforts. We hope that you obtain valuable and useful insight from these resources – insight that you can apply as you collaborate with others to make certain that you build your work on a solid foundation.



You can also find more information about the [Collaboration Factors Inventory](#), a free tool to assess how your collaboration is doing on 22 research-tested success factors.





Thank You

