

Fostering Collaboration

Collaboration is a structured process where two or more people or organizations work together toward a common goal. Collaboration is a relationship that requires teamwork between parties and promotes knowledge-sharing, learning, skill-sharing, and consensus decision making to meet a particular interest, mission or goal.

How to Begin

Know Your Organization

Skills:

Understand the overall skills and resources that are available in your organization. Knowledge on this information will allow you to identify when you need collaboration. Furthermore, being aware of the limitations of your organization helps you identify the characteristics and strength traits that you look for in collaboration.

Purpose: (project, awareness campaign, fundraising, events etc.)

Do your research about your collaborators, know who they are, the work they do. Understand why they should participate and how this relationship is compatible with their values, interest, and organizational mission. If the purpose for collaboration is not in line with the interest of the collaborators' vision, the relationship may lack motivation. There has to be a common interest that is valued by all parties involved in order to begin the process and stay motivated.

Choosing collaborators:

It is important to be mindful that the outcome of successful collaboration depends on the purpose, how it relates to those who are involved, and promoting positive relationship. Communication is critical when seeking collaborators. If your organization is initiating the collaboration, be prepared to present why others should team up with your organization.

What to Look For

1. Search for collaborators with diverse talents and skills that complement the purpose for collaboration.
2. Find organizations that can bring different perspectives and complement your organizational skills and resources needed to meet the goal.
3. Choose organizations that are accountable, open to possibilities, and are committed to work.

Skills to Foster Relationships

- Communication
- Open to negotiation
- Problem solving
- Encourage and be open to feedback

Process

1. Set ground rules to minimize conflicts
2. Be respectful
3. Search for opportunities and encourage participation
4. Stay organized
5. Identify goals and specific objectives to meet the purpose for collaboration