

Benchmarks for Networks, Coalitions, and other Cooperative Efforts

For each benchmark, circle a number from 1 (not at all or never true) to 5 (always or absolutely true) to describe how well the benchmark describes your organization.

Then decide how important this particular benchmark is to your collaborative right now ... a “1” might mean it’s insignificant, and a “5” might mean that your survival depends upon it. If you think a benchmark is important, make a note to yourself about the goals you’d set to improve for the next year.

*Does this describe
your collaborative?*

*Does this matter
right now?*

Why We Ask

MEMBERSHIP			
<p>The Right Members</p> <p>1. The collaborative has the right members with appropriately broad and diverse membership for the purpose. There is a clear process for evaluating existing members and inviting new ones.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Collaboratives often form around homogenous groups with shared cultures and goals. A more diverse membership may be needed to accomplish the collaborative purpose but may increase tensions. A clear process for evaluating and involving members helps.</p>
<p>Contribution</p> <p>2. Members contribute the staff time, money, political influence, and other resources agreed on.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>When member groups actively contribute they demonstrate their commitment and the collaborative has a stronger base beyond the funding they may seek together.</p>
<p>Mutual Benefits</p> <p>3. The collaborative effort makes its members stronger, rather than stretching them thinner.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>In order to sustain a long-term effort, members must grow stronger internally – in terms of membership, fundraising, political clout, public credit, or other important measures. Otherwise, they can’t continue to contribute.</p>



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<p>Trust</p> <p>4. Members trust one another enough to disclose their organizational needs, to resolve differences in good faith, and to empower the collaborative's leaders.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>When collaboratives are new, or distrust reigns, needs go unspoken and often surface later in disguise, causing problems (i.e. battles over who takes credit.) Members then slow decision-making and exert more control.</p>
<p>Personal Relationships</p> <p>5. Leaders and key players have personal relationships which transcend the work and facilitate problem-solving.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Some important environmental coalition efforts have weathered long and difficult storms thanks to the personal friendships between their leaders. Collaboratives should dedicate time and activities to building relationships.</p>
<p>Continuity of Leadership</p> <p>6. The key leaders will stay with the effort throughout its critical periods.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>Collaboratives usually rely on a few key leaders to hold them together and keep them on track. Turnover in leadership usually sets things back.</p>
PURPOSE AND GOALS			
<p>Common Vision</p> <p>7. The collaborative develops and renews a future vision that is created and shared by members.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>When people do not hold a common vision confusion, mistrust, and disagreements about what to do increase. Significant effort and time can be wasted sorting this out.</p>
<p>Clear Purpose & Shared Goals</p> <p>8. The collaborative has a written statement of the goals for which it is working, which is shared by all the members.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>The greater the task, the more important it is to define it. For some information networks, a broad and general goal is enough. For advocacy groups, this is important to nail it down long before the negotiating begins.</p>



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<p>Strategic Analysis & Direction</p> <p>9. Effective analyses of external and internal opportunities to make change are analyzed and smart strategic directions are agreed on.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Without effective external and internal analysis directions are often set on perceptions. Directions set this way seldom are as effective and lead to frustration and confusion.</p>
<p>Value to Membership</p> <p>10. The coalition provides prestige, income and other valuable services to its members. Member groups are regularly consulted about their institutional needs and responsibilities.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Bad public image, institutional baggage, or coalition requirements that are not entirely funded or discourage member groups from being responsible to the collective..</p>
<p>A Clear Workplan</p> <p>11. The collaborative has a clear and realistic written workplan with measurable goals, roles and responsibilities, and deadlines. The leadership core monitors it regularly to make sure it's followed.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>A clear workplan is the tangible representation of the agreement about what the collaboration work is, who will do it, by when. The greater the goal, the more important a written workplan. It should also include the ways in which the work will strengthen the member groups. It should clearly specify roles and responsibilities.</p>
<p>GOVERNANCE, STRUCTURE, AND PROCESS</p>			
<p>Leadership</p> <p>12. Necessary committees have recognized chairpersons and coalition spokespersons are well respected by the other coalition members.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Coalition members often work for different organizations so that lines of authority do not really exist except as may be asserted through competent, respected, personal leadership skills.</p>



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<p>Tolerance for Autonomy</p> <p>13. The collaborative doesn't attempt to impose unity unnecessarily. It allows members to act independently where appropriate, and encourages their creativity.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Micromanagement and excessive control strangles collaborative efforts. Where unanimity isn't obviously necessary, trying to impose it will trigger power struggles. It's often better to err and learn than to sow distrust.</p>
<p>Clear Rights & Responsibilities</p> <p>14. Members clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, and the consequences of not meeting them.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>Collaboratives usually rely on members for financial or political support. The more they demand, the clearer they need to be about what they provide in return. Some members may want to limit their participation, with reduced responsibilities (and rights).</p>
<p>Public Outreach</p> <p>15. The work of the coalition is represented clearly in the media and member groups are adequately credited for their work. The coalition reached a broader section of society than it's individual members could without it.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>There is a fundamental tension between developing institutional profile for the coalition versus its member groups. This can be a creative opportunity to reach a wider audience. Each group should have a unique role in the coalition that can be honestly touted to its members and the media.</p>
<p>Capacity for Coordination</p> <p>16. Volunteers or staff have sufficient time to actually coordinate the work. Key tasks don't fall upon people without time or resources to do them.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Chairing committees, making reminder calls, and arranging events takes a lot of time. Long-term collaboratives recognize this and dedicate resources to it. Foundations are increasingly willing to fund it.</p>



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<p>Efficient Decisions</p> <p>17. The decision-making process is rapid enough for leaders to act expeditiously when necessary.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>As the collaborative's work grows, the decision-making process should be formalized. Toward the end of an advocacy campaign, the collaborative's leaders are often involved in negotiations, and need to make decisions very quickly.</p>
<p>All Voices are Heard and Considered</p> <p>18. The decision-making process is based upon and truly respects the guidance of the members and the needs they have.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>When a collaborative's leaders take executive measures that don't reflect the members' needs or positions, they sow distrust and ultimately slow the work.</p>
<p>Clear Decision Making Process</p> <p>19. There is an agreed upon process and group of people who make decisions. One can easily figure out who to go to to get information and advise as needed.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>	<p>When people do not understand who will make decisions and how, distrust and frustration increase. Valuable time can be lost in sorting it out.</p>
<p>Regular Communication</p> <p>20. The collaborative communicates regularly to inform member groups and maintain their level of support, and to keep campaign leaders abreast of critical developments.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Regular communication is essential to maintaining the collaborative effort over the long haul. Enthusiasm wanes quickly. Misinformation can make campaign leaders look foolish, and reduces support within member groups.</p>



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<p>Effective Communication</p> <p>21. Clear ways to focus and methods for communicating are established, resources are allocated to maintain and they are efficient.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>When clear communication roles and channels of interaction are not established, getting and providing necessary and accurate information is difficult if not impossible.</p>
<p>Evaluation and Learning</p> <p>22. The collaborative monitors its plan and progress, assesses honestly, and makes changes in order to be more effective.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Collaboratives which don't invite constructive criticism won't learn as much and may not succeed. Members and leaders must trust one another enough to be honest.</p>
<p>Celebrate and Rewards</p> <p>23. The collaborative celebrates its successes (even when small) and recognizes and rewards members for their contribution..</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not true</i> <i>very true</i></p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><i>not at all</i> <i>very much</i></p>	<p>Without recognizing successes and good work the long term struggle is demoralizing. Celebration supports teamwork..</p>

Are there more specific benchmarks you'd like to set for your collaborative? Write your own goals here!

	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>	
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