

Collaborative Capabilities

Overview

Foundation course

The U.S. Institute’s “Collaborative Capabilities” course provides the foundation for optimizing collaborative relationships and the foundation for the U.S. Institute’s training curriculum. This introductory level training develops basic skills and a comprehensive, overarching understanding of the collaborative process.

Advanced course

The U.S. Institute’s “Facilitative Leadership” course focuses more specifically on developing leadership roles, both within the collaborative team (e.g., an inter-agency review team for a specific project) and among the organizations participating in collaborative efforts.

Customized courses

The U.S. Institute can customize collaboration and facilitative leadership training by drawing from these capabilities and the training modules and scenarios developed by the Institute to match the needs and requirements of different federal agencies.

Document contents

This document defines working definitions of effective collaboration and “collaborative capabilities”. The inventory of collaborative capabilities addresses three aspects of collaboration:

- Individual capabilities
 - Capabilities of participating organizations
 - Collective capabilities of the collaborative team
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Definitions

What is effective Collaboration?

Collaborations are joint endeavors undertaken by multiple stakeholder organizations consistent with the policies, plans and priorities of each group. Collaborations may be either temporary, span many years, or permanent as required by law or the complexity of the work. The collaboration is partly “owned” by each stakeholder organization. Collaborations are governed by a written agreement or charter to ensure transparency that members write themselves to include:

- Statements of mutual interest, mission, vision, goals and desired results(charter, governance agreement)
 - Voluntary nature of participation
 - Benefits to the public, government and stakeholder organizations
 - Realistic timeframe to acquire funding, materials, and necessary approvals
 - Appropriate legal authority
 - Clear implementation process that includes: analysis, communication plan, budget, and dispute resolution process
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What are Collaborative Capabilities?

Traits, motives, attitudes, and self-concept combined with the behaviors, skills and knowledge useful to predict the ability to contribute to effective collaboration.

Collaboration involves layers of commitment to capabilities including:

- Personal competency
 - Commitment and leadership of participating organizations/agencies
 - Dynamics within collaborative group
 - Dynamics between collaborative group and participating organizations/agencies facilitated by its representative
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Definitions, Continued

Qualities taken to Excess A word of caution before discussing personal characteristics. Personal strengths taken to excess become weaknesses. Collaborators must be aware to guard strengths from becoming extreme.

Strength	Weakness	Extreme Weakness
Clever Sympathetic Flexible Affectionate Innovative	Tricky Fickle Inconsistent Fawning Changeable	Deceptive Wishy-washy Unreliable Groveling Erratic
Lead Challenge Stimulate Self-assured Eager	Dominate Argue Jar Unsympathetic Impatient	Oppress Fight Overwhelm Ruthless Driven
Reserved Careful Even Cautious Systematic	Guard Inflexible Unfriendly Pessimistic Ritualistic	Unresponsive Obsessive Rejecting Defeated Compulsive
Responsive Concerned Innocent Hopeful Contemplative	Critical Fussy Gullible Disillusioned Defensive	Righteous Furious Victimized Despairing Martyred

[derived from Facilitated Solutions – www.fscanada.org]

Collaborative Capabilities

Personal Capabilities

Personal Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity/Honesty • Pride in Purpose/Identity • Hopefulness • Tact • Flexibility/Resilience • Authentic, non-defensive behavior • Self-Confidence • Self-Control • Political savvy • Treats others and other cultures with respect • Recognizes that trust and respect must be earned • Ability to embrace/adapt to disruptive change • Collaboration style
Personal Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates initiative; proactive • Dependable/Credible/Competent • Sustains motivation • Action orientation • Willing to help others • Follows through on commitments • Accountable for actions • Demonstrates commitment to public service • Continually learning • Links prior and new knowledge • Results driven
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding • Listening with understanding • Speaking to be understood • Writing to be understood • Maintains regular contact • Demonstrates empathy • Understands motivation • Keeps parties engaged and motivated • Keeps parties informed
Relationship Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridges diversity • Creates personal networks and alliances • Works well within networks and alliances • Builds partnerships step-by-step over time • Relies on actions to build trust and respect • Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships within and across organization and agency lines • Ensures stakeholders are engaged and heard
Win/Win Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares power, vision, and responsibility • Thinks and acts in terms of “we” not “I” (in reference to both own team and whole collaborative group) • Seeks mutually beneficial solutions

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Collaborative Capabilities, Continued

Personal Capabilities (continued)

Teamwork & Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participates as a member of a team • Shares credit with inclusive perspective on achievements • Willing to share resources • Balances altruistic perspective on resource sharing with needs of contributing organizations • Collaborates to resolve conflict within the group • Creates an environment that fosters innovation and creativity
Information Seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates focused curiosity • Elicits information from others • Checks in with others to confirm understanding
Interpersonal Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates empathy • Seeks to understand motivation of others
Collective Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merge individual visions • Create joint processes for planning, analyzing, unpacking, prioritizing, selecting, communicating, and committing decisions into actions and results
Analytical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates problem and needs of merged vision • Evaluates risk • Creates evaluative criteria and tests against it • Evaluates potential success of options • Evaluates success of results/outcomes
Conceptual Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistically assesses situation to grasps “big picture” • Views the destruction/creation cycle as an opportunity to make things better • Manages both incremental change (adjustments) within a context of givens, and dramatic/radical change • Discusses implications of concepts with others
Complex Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinks creatively • Uses creative thinking techniques to engage others in possibility thinking • Creates smart processes to facilitate problem solving
Strategic Thinking & Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem focused based on collective interests and desired outcomes/solutions (not personal or organizational focus) • Solution-oriented • Aware of ramifications of various choices • Scans horizon from many different perspectives to adapt flexibly to changing conditions • Thinks many steps ahead
Technical Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates skills sets often • Encourages partners to develop new skill sets • Aware of web-enabled collaborative tools that enable both small group and mass collaboration

Participating Organizations' Capabilities

**Capabilities,
Commitment,
and Leadership**

Organizational/ External Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of organizational capabilities • Aware of what others are already doing • Aware of agency-to-agency and situation-to-situation limitations • Realistically recognizes challenges of leadership, commitment to collaboration, mandate to retain decision-making authority, what collaboration can mean to the organization, barriers to productivity, ie: lack of support stemming from a change in leadership, conflict avoidance mentality
Organizational Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to assess situational risks and benefits associated with collaborative involvement in support of decisions whether or not to participate • Promotes collaborative culture - enthusiastically supports collaboration and shared success • Provides sustained management involvement and support • Establishes reasonable expectations • Fulfills agreements • Assembles and makes available talented and skilled people with needed core capabilities • Commits to building organizational capacity • Contributes resources and budget as needed • Willing to realign organization as needed in support of system change identified as needed by collaboration • Adjusts organizational priorities as needed to support the collaboration • Withdraws from collaboration when involvement is no longer necessary or productive • Rewards collaborative behavior as part of desired job performance with merit-based human capital management incentives
Commitment to Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalizes best practices by embedding into standard operating procedures • Builds flexibility and adaptability into resilient internal structures

Collaborative Team Capabilities

Team Capabilities

Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a joint vision as key reference point for collaboration effort • Develops evaluation criteria to measure success • Shares ownership • Fosters enthusiasm and organizational buy-in • Transforms individualism into shared stewardship • Ensures leaders emerge
Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes benefit and purpose of conflict as a catalyst for improvement and change • Proactively plans to manage conflict • Uses Interest-Based Negotiation • Develops skills dealing with the challenge of complexity when multiple parties are involved • Depersonalizes conflict as much as possible • Handles reactive response to conflict in a fair and civil way • Leverages positive aspects of conflict while meliorating the negative aspects of conflict
Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collects data • Analyzes • Evaluates • Presents clearly/communicates effectively • Ensures transparency and accessibility of information to ensure it is understood by everyone (using accessible language, stripping out acronyms, making it physically accessible based on needs of audience) • Asks for assistance when needed
Organizational Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insures agreements, communication structures, and work plans are in place • Clearly defines joint expectations, roles, responsibilities, and time lines • Concern for quality and order
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines financial support requirements • Develops secure, flexible, and sustained sources of support • Builds diverse funding base • Develops comprehensive plan if long-term funding support is needed
Celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides incentives to stimulate collaboration • Sustains motivation to stay the course • Recognizes, congratulates, rewards contributors • Rewards creativity • Re-enforces goals and objectives • Celebrates each successful step and key benchmarks toward goal

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Collaborative Team Capabilities, Continued

Collaborative Leadership Role

Team Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminates impediments to collaboration • Leverages diversity • Develops others • Creates line of sight and sustains attention on goals – results driven • Reinforces collaborative efforts • Emphasizes importance of accomplishing mission • Removes barriers to progress • Keeps activities on track • Ensures timely decisions and actions • Decisive; matching decision-making method to problem (i.e.: IAP2 spectrum of participation: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) • Encourages reasoned risk • Assures letter of law is met • Entrepreneurial
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Collaborative Liaison Role

Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates needs and interests of participating organization so that they are understood by collaboration • Articulates needs and interests of collaboration so that they are understood by participating organization • Communicates clearly and with integrity • Delivers both good and bad news in a timely manner to both participating organization and collaboration • Builds and strengthens relationship between participating organization and collaboration
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Serenity, Courage and Wisdom

“...Grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference.”
Reinhold Niebuhr