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#### 1. Organizing Instruction

5. Consistently plans and uses in instruction								
4. Is making significant transition to instructional use								
3. Explores use of in instruction								
2. Shows awareness and some interest in								
1. Has little or no use of awareness of								
	1.1 Plans lessons based on IEPs and course outline	1.2 Delivers lessons based on sound content	1.3 Provides lessons that are well-paced and sequenced	1.4 Adjusts lessons to student needs, goals and other demands	1.5 Addresses relevant objectives	1.6 Facilitates integration of basic and life skills	1.7 Motivates students by teaching in small steps for success	Ave.

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# Collaboration:

## *A MEANS TOWARD ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT*

Collaboration is the “buzz” word frequently used as education agencies, human service organizations, and government and community agencies think how better to meet the increasingly complex needs of clients. Block grants and “one-stop” shops foster the need for collaboration through integrated services. In fact, one of the overarching purposes of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 is to ensure coordination of workforce programs. The demand on adult education providers to meet the varying needs of the community, business and industry, and welfare clients, also makes a strong case for collaboration.

The field of adult education is characterized by a multiplicity of service providers—e.g., four-year colleges and universities; state-supported training centers; local or regional agencies, including adult education programs, community colleges and community-based organizations; and professional organizations—and the uncertainty of resources. Collaboration, therefore, represents a promising strategy for enhancing professional development and for serving adult education clients better.

This document provides an overview of collaboration, including a definition and comparison with other partnering relationships, a rationale for establishing partnerships, the major benefits and challenges in building collaborative relationships, and an overview of steps for developing an effective collaboration. The document may be used as a guide in seeking to collaborate with different organizations providing professional development or between adult education and other systems.

## **A Definition of Collaboration**

Collaboration is one of several terms used to describe relationships between organizations, and while often used interchangeably with such terms as cooperation and coordination, it involves more intense, long-term efforts than the latter partnering processes. A collaboration is when two or more organizations enter into a formal, mutually beneficial, well-defined relationship to achieve common goals. The literature identifies several characteristics of collaboration, as shown in the box below:

**CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLABORATION**

- ❖ The organization's leaders are actively involved in or supportive of the relationship.
- ❖ One or more projects are undertaken for longer-term results and are jointly designed, implemented, and monitored.
- ❖ New organizational structures and/or clearly defined and interrelated roles that constitute a formal division of labor are created.
- ❖ Well-defined communication channels operate on many levels.
- ❖ Authority is determined by the collaborative structure, thus some autonomy is sacrificed by the participants.
- ❖ Resources (e.g., money, staff, technology) are pooled or jointly secured for a longer-term effort managed by the collaborative structure.

Collaborations require a change in the way agency and organization leaders think and operate, which can be intimidating and threatening. Organizations considering collaborative relationships, therefore, should carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of such a relationship.

## **Assessing the Benefits and Challenges of Collaboration**

There are multiple benefits as well as challenges to entering into a collaborative relationship for professional development. This section briefly explores some of these benefits and challenges.

### **Benefits of Collaboration**

Reports by participants in collaborative relationships and findings from selected literature point to several generic advantages of entering into collaborative relationships. Among the benefits are that agencies can:

- ❖ **Expand available services** by cooperative programming and joint fundraising or grant programs (e.g., two professional development agencies can share their staff expertise and offer different professional development options based on that expertise).
- ❖ **Provide better services to clients** through inter-agency communication about client needs, referral programs, and client case management (e.g., professional development collaborations across agencies may enhance staff knowledge about clients and enhance client services).
- ❖ **Share similar concerns while being enriched by diverse perspectives** that different members from varied backgrounds bring to the collaboration (e.g., adult education programs and workforce development boards can brainstorm ways to prepare adults moving into the workforce).
- ❖ **Mobilize action to effect needed changes through collective advocacy** (e.g., colleges, state-supported training centers, and local adult education programs can work together to foster the development of competencies for adult education instructors).
- ❖ **Achieve greater visibility** with decision makers, the media, and the community (e.g., craft letters to newspapers and community leaders with signatures of all participating agencies to solicit additional funding for professional development to enhance learner outcomes).
- ❖ **Enhance staff skills** by sharing information and organizing joint professional development activities (e.g., the local community college provides workshops on instructional approaches while the social service agency provides seminars on support systems for adults).
- ❖ **Conserve resources** by avoiding unnecessary duplication of services (e.g., jointly paying fees for facilitator and training facilities).
- ❖ **Share resources and expertise** (e.g., adult education programs can share their knowledge about adult learners with other agencies).

Specific benefits of collaboration vary depending on the partners within the collaboration. For example, adult education collaboration with colleges and universities is beneficial in that adult education agencies may gain (1) enhanced prestige from being associated with the college, (2) increased access to professional development for agency staff (e.g., mentoring, inquiry/research, seminars, and course work), (3) enhanced program quality resulting from shared resources, and (4) opportunities for competent instruction on specialized topics.

Collaboration with business and industry produces other benefits to the educational agency. For example, collaboration (1) facilitates the agencies ability to offer on-site instruction to students; (2) provides the opportunity to provide professional development to industry managers and staff and develop new products and services; (3) provides access to state-of-the-art equipment and technology that can be used for instruction and professional development; (4) provides increased visibility and credibility within the community; and (5) extends the mission of adult education to other populations.

Finally, collaboration with other social service and community organizations facilitates a more comprehensive service for participants. An integrated service approach can enhance retention in adult education classes as participant needs are supported through multiple agencies.

Collaboration also encourages the efficient use of resources by reducing the duplication of procedures (e.g., intake or assessment) and services both to their client and to staff. Professional development, for example, can be supported across agencies, reducing costs for any single agency. Staff from multiple agencies engaging in program or curriculum development and enhancement benefit from the diverse perspectives brought to the activity, and are encouraged to think “outside the box.”

Adult education agencies exploring the possibility of collaboration should consider how the organization will benefit as well as how the clients will benefit.

## **Challenges to Collaboration**

Building and sustaining effective collaborations require a great deal of commitment and effort. As the literature indicates, several challenges must be overcome in establishing successful collaborative relationships. Often, a feeling of mistrust between agencies and a desire to maintain their own turf inhibits agencies' collaboration. Some agencies may be unwilling to give up authority in any arena for fear they will lose control or have clients drawn away from them. They lose sight of the common goal in an effort to sustain their own authority. In some situations, the political or social climate is not conducive for collaboration. For example, agencies that rely on government funding may be wary of collaboration if state officials do not foster such efforts. Lack of mechanisms such as incentives, policy guidelines, interagency agreements, technical assistance, or coordinating councils inhibit collaboration. Collaboration may be more difficult to establish if there are no models within the community. Logistical difficulties such as location in different geographical areas that require time for travel, or involve conflicting state rules, also inhibit collaboration.

Other challenges that must be overcome to develop collaborative relationships for professional development in adult education include the following:

- ❖ **Philosophic and programmatic differences among agencies.** Organizations use different terms and work with different program cycles, primary target groups, objectives, expected outcomes, record-keeping practices, and reporting systems. They also have different organizational cultures and policies. These differences are reflected in their perceptions about each other and make it difficult for agencies to work together. Adult education programs, for example, employ primarily part-time instructors, have high turnover rates, and have a staff who generally work from September through June. These programs may have difficulty in developing collaborative professional development relationships with other agencies whose staff are employed full time and year round. The needs and schedules of staff from different agencies for professional development may be very different.
- ❖ **Resources diverted away from priority issues.** Individual organizations have their own goals and missions and may fear that a collaborative relationship will force the organization to move in directions that are not priority areas. With limited resources to begin with, this becomes an increasingly important concern. Adult education program administrators and staff, for example, may want to focus on improving the overall

- literacy skills of program participants. The professional development required to accomplish this goal may be different from the goals of a business partner, who may want to focus professional development on employment-related skills within a particular job skill area. The adult education program may feel that resources spent on professional development for employment-related skills will result in fewer resources to meet its primary mission.
- ❖ **Equity issues.** A related resource issue among collaborative partners that requires considerable thought is how to deliver services fairly and equitably to partners, especially when partners contribute unequal resources. For example, a regional collaboration among states to provide training to adult education staff may include some states with more resources than others. The difficulty arises in how to distribute the training across states if state contributions to the effort differ.
  - ❖ **Slow decision making.** Organizational bureaucracies, differences between public and private agencies, and limited staff time inhibit the ability to make decisions. Difficulty in building consensus among diverse groups and ineffective team leadership contribute to slow decision making. Business partners may be able to make decisions more quickly than adult education or other community partners who may have to jump through more bureaucratic hoops. Such a situation could be frustrating, particularly, to the business partners.
  - ❖ **Ineffective communication links.** Lack of formal and informal communication channels and different communication styles inhibit the effective sharing of information crucial to collaboration. For example, establishing peer training networks among staff from different adult education programs to train on issues related to developing a results-based adult education reporting system could be difficult if each agency did not designate an individual to serve as the communication link with other adult education programs. Scheduling training to address issues or questions that arise could be problematic without effective communication.
  - ❖ **Personnel changes that affect momentum and personality differences.** Good leadership in any organization is crucial to its success. Staff stability and continuity of leadership become increasingly important in maintaining an effective collaboration. For example, if the state director or administrative staff responsible for the collaborative effort keeps changing, it would be difficult for other community agencies or businesses to develop a trusting relationship and to establish priorities for the collaboration. In addition, the quality of the personnel and the ability to form positive professional relationships among the people in the partnering organizations are essential to the well-being of the collaboration. Personality conflicts will undermine the work the collaboration hopes to accomplish.
  - ❖ **Difficulty in building quality assurance and accountability.** In this era of accountability, it becomes necessary to monitor activities and identify outcomes. Accountability and assurance are difficult for individual organizations and are further complicated in a collaborative relationship where organizations have different record keeping and reporting systems. For example, the National Reporting System in adult

education may require different outcome measures than those required by business or other community agencies.

These challenges are not insurmountable but to overcome them takes time, energy, patience, and trust. Agencies considering collaborative relationships must recognize that collaborations take time to build, and require accommodation to diverse organizational cultures, as well as a balance between autonomy and involvement.

It is important to recognize that there are situations where a collaborative relationship may not be appropriate and may in fact cause more problems and frustrations for instructors and fewer benefits for the program as a whole. For example, a program whose mission and characteristics differ to a great extent from other adult education programs, already has a sufficient source of funding, and is resistant to change may not benefit from a collaborative partnership. Adult education programs should weigh the costs and benefits in overcoming the challenges listed above in order to decide if the relationship will be worthwhile to them.

## **Strategies for Developing Collaborative Relationships**

There has been a fair amount written in the literature on steps that agencies and organizations should follow in establishing a collaborative relationship. Among the literature is a *Guide for Developing Local Interagency Linkage Teams*, prepared by the Center on Education and Training for Employment, College of Education, Ohio State University. It describes six steps in establishing interagency collaborations and includes a series of questions agencies should ask themselves at each step. This document is included in the Appendix.

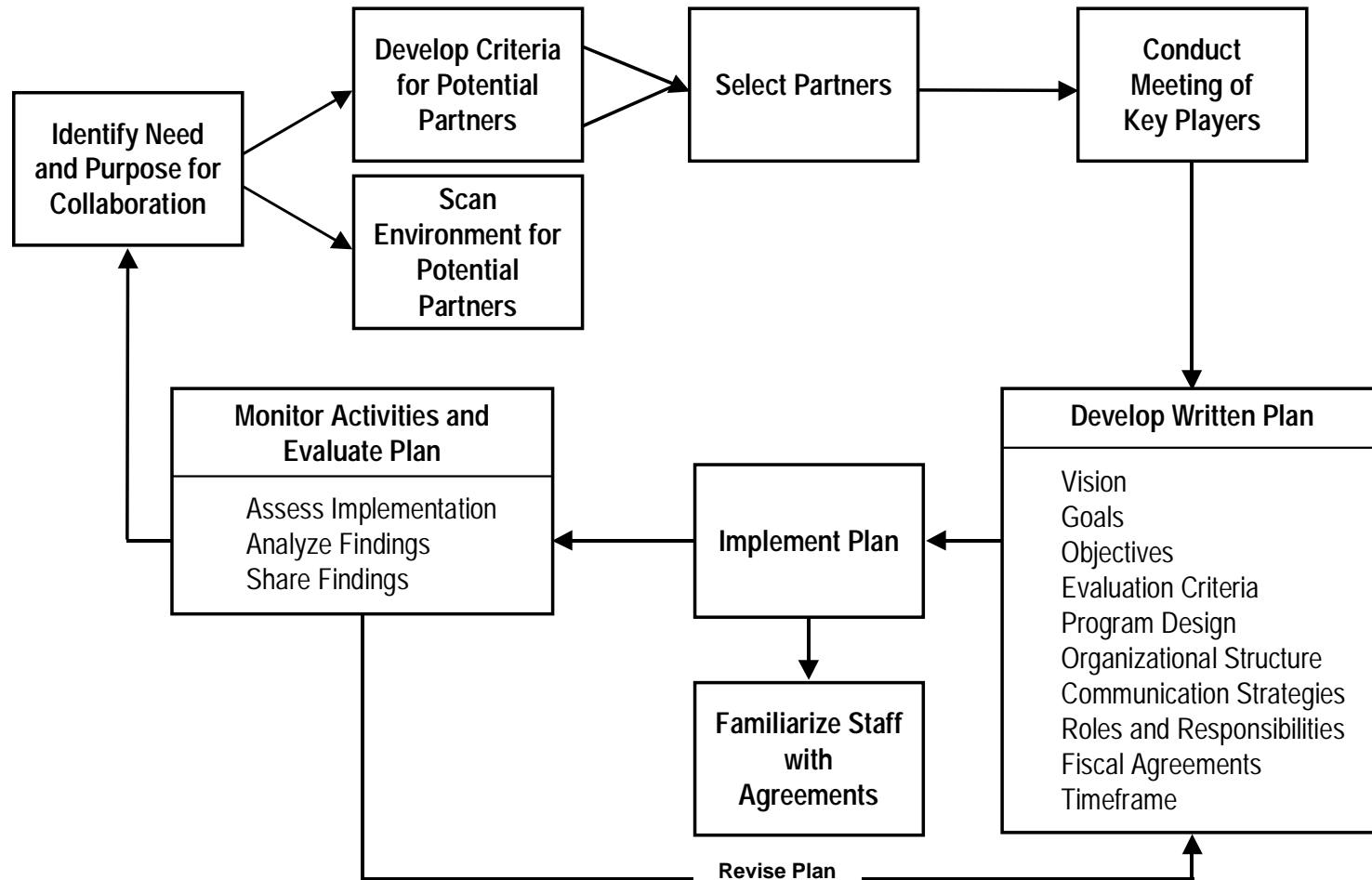
In addition, below is an overview of strategies for developing collaborations, based on the review of selected literature. Exhibit 1 illustrates these strategies.

- ❖ Clearly articulate the need and purposes for entering into a collaborative relationship.
- ❖ Develop criteria for membership into the collaboration.

- ❖ Scan the environment to locate potential partners and identify any existing relationships.
- ❖ Bring key players together (individuals in decision-making roles), get to know one another, and share knowledge and interests.
- ❖ Develop a written plan that provides the framework for guiding the collaboration and delineate a vision, goals and objectives, evaluation criteria, program design, organizational structure, roles and responsibilities, fiscal arrangements, and established timeframes.
- ❖ Provide sufficient time during plan development to consider all ideas and options so that final decisions will be more fully supported.
- ❖ Put systems in place that foster communication on multiple levels, facilitate decision making, and help resolve conflict.
- ❖ Establish monitoring and evaluation procedures to continuously improve the collaborative effort.
- ❖ Familiarize staff in the participating agencies with the agreements in the collaboration.

Formal collaborative relationships are guided by written agreements negotiated by the partners. However, it is important to periodically reassess these agreements as well as the action plan to ensure that the collaboration is responsive to changes in the environment and that it continues to benefit the participating organizations. System openness, flexibility, and adaptability are key for successful collaborations. Other key elements are trust and commitment and a feeling of reciprocity among the partners.

## EXHIBIT 1 Plan for Developing Collaborative Relationships



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## ***QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONSIDERING COLLABORATION***

Collaboration is one of several terms used to describe relationships between organizations, and while often used interchangeably with such terms as cooperation and coordination, it involves more intense, long-term efforts than the latter partnering processes. A collaboration entails two or more organizations entering into a formal, mutually beneficial, well-defined relationship to achieve common goals.

The Northwest Literacy Resource Center provides an example of a collaborative relationship among agencies and organizations with common interests in serving the adult population. In 1993, state adult basic education directors in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington formed the Northwest Regional Literacy Resource Center (NWRLRC) to share the best resources for professional development through a central clearinghouse. In 1997 Wyoming joined the consortium and Alaska withdrew. In 1998 Montana joined the consortium. The Resource Center is funded by the five current member states and is governed by an interstate Board of Governors. Members of the Board as of spring 2000 are:

Board of Governors	
<b>Idaho</b> <i>Cheryl Engel</i> , University of Idaho <i>Shirley Spencer</i> , State Department of Education	<b>Washington</b> <i>Israel David Mendoza</i> , State Board for Community and Technical Colleges <i>Donna Miller-Parker</i> , ABLE Network
<b>Montana</b> <i>Becky Bird</i> , State Department of Education	<b>Wyoming</b> <i>Karen Ross Milmont</i> , The Learning Connection <i>Diana Stithem</i> , State Board for Community Colleges
<b>Oregon</b> <i>Agnes Precure</i> , Office of Community College Services <i>Sharlene Walker</i> , Office of Community College Services	

For the purposes of a specially funded demonstration project, the NWRLRC worked for a period of 3 years with an interagency Board of Governors (including social services, JTPA, and employment services). During that project, the Board worked specifically on taking a collaborative approach to

professional development. As a part of the process they used the question set below as a basis for discussions to clarify that collaborative relationship.

Other agencies may wish to follow this example and use the questions to gather and analyze information about potential partners *before* deciding to collaborate. Reflecting on these questions may help potential partners to identify different structures, funding streams, staffing patterns, and culture, and the impact those differences may have on the collaborative partnership. These questions are arranged by the following seven categories: (1) organizational structure and decision making, (2) funding, (3) staffing, (4) outcomes, (5) culture, (6) perceptions about the organization, and (7) personal experiences.

### **Organizational Structure and Decision Making**

These questions pertain to governance and leadership and help to analyze the stability of the organization.

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*What level of control does the organization have over decisions regarding which people it will serve, what services it will provide, how those services will be provided, and the performance measures those services will be judged by? What other entities make or influence these decisions? How effective has the organization generally been in influencing decisions related to these areas that are outside of its direct control?*

*How is the organization governed? What decisions are made at what levels and by what entities? Is the governance structure a long-standing one? Have there been changes in the governance structure over time and, if so, what impact did the changes have on those served by the organization and those working in the organization?*

*How would you characterize the leadership of the organization? Have there been changes in the organizational leadership in the last year? In the last three years? In the last five years? How have these changes impacted the organization, the people served by the organization, and the people working in the organization? What is the primary leadership “style” in the organization? What is the general political influence of those served by the organization? Of those employed by the organization? Of the organization as part of a larger system, industry, or institution?*

*How big is the organization? What impact does size have on governance, human resource issues, service levels, etc.?*

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## Organizational Culture

These questions help examine cultural norms and beliefs within the organization as well as the level of diversity. Responses to these questions help to determine the compatibility between your organization and your potential partner.

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*What are the most important cultural themes or beliefs of the organization? What things do the people in the organization generally assume to be true about the world? For example, is competition or cooperation the cultural norm? Are hierarchical structures or participatory processes supported? What do people in the organization generally experience regarding power, use of resources, interaction with other organizations, level of information flow, what confers high or low status within the organization, etc.?*

*How diverse is the organization? This relates not only to characteristics generally considered in defining diversity such as ethnic background, gender, etc., but also to the range of beliefs and values represented in the organization. How many people from “outside” does the organization hire? (For example, in an educational organization, how many people from the private sector or from welfare or employment organizations are hired? Are these “outsiders” in the mainstream of the organization or in special departments?) How do recruitment, screening, hiring, and promotion systems either encourage or discourage diversity? How does the organization deal with those who have different ideas or ways of doing things? How much room is there for disagreement and conflict? How are tensions dealt with?*

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## Perceptions About the Organization

These questions provide information about how those outside of the organization (e.g., public, media) view the organization as well as those employed by the organization.

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*What is the general public perception of those served by the organization? Of those employed by the organization? Of the organization as part of a larger system, industry, or institution? Or, the neighborhood potluck party test: How likely is it that at a gathering of 30 people in your neighborhood, you would hear either negative or positive perceptions of the above?*

*What is the general media characterization of those served by the organization? Of those employed by the organization? Of the organization as part of a larger system, industry, or institution?*

*What part of public/media perceptions seems to be based on objective data vs. subjective myths? How much hard data are readily available to support or refute popular perceptions of the organization or those it serves?*

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*Does the organization view itself as experiencing limited, significant, or overwhelming change over the last five years? How do other organizations view the level of change in the organization?*

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## **Personal Experiences**

These questions help identify advantages and disadvantages of forming a collaborative partnership from the individual's (e.g., administrator, staff) perspective. The responses are based on personal reflections about the organization as well as experiences with the organization.

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*Would you want to work for the organization? If not, why not? If so, what is attractive about the organization?*

*Would someone from the organization want to work where you do? If not, why not? If so, what is attractive about your workplace to someone from the organization?*

*How easy would it be for someone from the organization to get a job in your workplace? What would the barriers be?*

*Would you gain or lose status in going to work for the partner organization? Why?*

*How often have you had conflict with people in the partner organization? Why? Did the conflict result in productive discussion and movement or simply reduce trust levels? How was the conflict resolved?*

*How often do you feel that you or your organization have been "taken advantage of" in dealings with the partner organization? What have you or your organization done when that has happened?*

*What level of respect or trust do you hear expressed regarding the partner organization and/or partner organization staff in discussions with your organization? What seems to determine this?*

*What level of "we/they" thinking seems to be evident in discussions about the partner organization?*

*What are the philosophical differences you see between your own organization and the partner organization? What beliefs are in conflict? Why do people in the partner organization think they are "right"? Why do people in your organization think they are "right"? Can you easily articulate the arguments people in the partner organization would make to back up their position on various issues?*

*What feelings are most evident in the relationship between the organization's: enthusiasm? comfort? being in sync? being part of something important/successful? frustration? anger? indifference? anxiety? caution? confidence? despair? resistance? mistrust?*

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*What are the personal and organizational beliefs in working with the other organization? What would be lost by not working with them? What can be gained by working with them? In what ways would it be easier not to have to work with the partner organization? Do you feel like the cost/benefit is worth it?*

*What percentage of the people in your organization are actually affected by the partnership between the two organizations? Is nearly everyone affected to some degree or is it only a very small group of people who deal with the ramifications of the partnerships? How does this affect relationships with the partner organization and relationships within the organization?*

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## **Funding**

These questions help identify funding sources, determine the stability of funding, and identify any restrictions on how resources can be spent.

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*How is the organization funded? What specifically results in more funding, what results in less funding?*

*Has the funding gone up or down in the last year? Five years? Why did the funding change? What impact did funding changes have on the people in the organization? What impact did funding changes have on those served by the organization? What historical “baggage” is tied to funding changes (institutional fear, concerns, expectations, etc.?)*

*How many “strings” are attached to the funding? (How big are the policy manuals?) What level of law, administrative rule, organizational policy defines how, when, where, and on what the money can be spent? How easy is it to make exceptions?*

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## **Staffing**

These questions help identify the quality and quantity of staff within the organization.

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*What determines the quality and quantity of staff in the organization? What sorts of things result in more staff? What sorts of things result in less staff? How are knowledge and skill requirements set for staff? How easily/often are they changed? Are requirements in alignment with current needs of the organization?*

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## Outcomes

These questions help analyze the effectiveness of the organization from the perspectives of the populations served as well as from staff and managers within the organization.

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*How is the “success” of the organization determined? How do people within the organization know when they are doing a good job? Are there outcomes that the organization understands as its mission? How easy is it to objectively know if the organization is successful or not? What happens when the organization is successful vs. what happens when the organization is not successful? How do people who are served by the organization or who work for the organization know if it is doing well or not doing well? Are there outcomes for individual staff members or managers that clearly define “success”?*

*How would people served by the organization describe their level of satisfaction with the services? What are the reasons for the satisfaction or dissatisfaction?*

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In summary, agencies seeking to establish effective collaborations with other groups should first engage in a thorough examination of factors important to the partnership. First, they should compare organizational and decision-making structures with potential partners to see if they are complementary. Second, the organizational culture of the potential partner should be examined to determine if there is a match with the agency’s own work culture. Third, public perceptions regarding potential partners and any personal views and expectations regarding the collaboration should be assessed. Fourth, funding and staffing issues across agencies should be explored. Finally, an examination of the organization’s benchmarks for measuring success is important. Attention to the kinds of questions detailed here for organizations considering collaboration may help in leading to collaborations that in the long run are successful and mutually beneficial.