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GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION:



Questions to consider
prior to entering into a
collaborative arrangement

This document is for any organization that is contemplating entering into a collaborative agreement with another organization. It provides some practical advice and key issues to consider prior to committing to a collaborative arrangement.

Introduction

Collaborations are often very positive, mutually beneficial experiences. A well chosen collaborator can lend credibility, expertise and improve the impact and reach of your organization's projects and initiatives. However, not every organization is an appropriate collaborator for your organization. Entering into a collaborative relationship with an inappropriate participant could damage the reputation of your organization's initiatives and projects, or your organization as a whole, and could potentially lead to financial loss. To avoid this, prior to entering into a collaborative arrangement, think carefully and plan thoroughly. This is the time to consider your mission and goals, the potential participant's mission and goals, how a collaboration could benefit you, and at what cost.

Forming Collaborations

1. Review the Goals of Your Organization

- ✓ Make sure you are clear about the mission, goals, and priorities of your organization.

2. Research the Potential Collaborator

- ✓ What business is the organization in?
- ✓ What are the organization's mission and goals?
- ✓ How does the organization conduct business?
- ✓ What is the organization's reputation?
- ✓ How does the organization promote its products or services?
- ✓ How does the organization promote its interests?
- ✓ If the organization's products or services have been shown to be harmful, how did the organization behave?

- ✓ Has the organization already collaborated with your organization or a similar group such as a public health organization, a community-based group, or a university? These organizations could give you valuable input regarding your decision.

3. Consider the appropriateness of the collaboration

- ✓ Is there a natural link between the mission and goals of your organization and the potential collaborator?
- ✓ Does the collaborator support your organization's key public health beliefs?
- ✓ Would you be able to publicly support the collaborator's public health beliefs?
- ✓ Would there be any appearance of personal gain or any actual personal gain resulting from the collaboration?
- ✓ Do you and the collaborator have similar scientific, ethical, and legal principles and practices?
- ✓ Are the business practices of the collaborator consistent with your organization's mission and goals?
- ✓ Could you and your organization stand behind the potential collaborator's practices?
- ✓ What are the health effects of the potential collaborator's products or services? Are these compatible with your organization's mission and goals?
- ✓ How does the public view the collaborating organization? (Their view of the organization will inevitably affect how they view your decision to enter into this collaboration.)

- ✓ Would you be willing to make this collaboration public?
- ✓ Might the public see your collaboration with this organization as a conflict of interest?
- ✓ How would this collaboration affect your organization's reputation with the public?
- ✓ Would the collaboration affect your reputation and credibility in the public health community?

4. Carefully Examine the Proposed Project

- ✓ What is the proposed project?
- ✓ What are the benefits to your organization of entering into this collaboration?
- ✓ What are the benefits to the potential partner of working with you? Why do they want to work with your organization?
- ✓ What does the collaborating organization want in return?
- ✓ How much control would your organization have in developing the content for the project?
- ✓ How much control will your organization have in how the project is carried out?
- ✓ Will the participant comply with your organization's policies and regulations?
- ✓ Will the collaborator's name and their participation in the project be made public? If so, will this relationship be seen as consistent with your organization's commitment to public health?
- ✓ Does the potential collaborator plan to use your organization's name to endorse one of their products? If so, will this be consistent with your organization's commitment to public health?

- ✓ What is the timeline? When would the collaboration begin and end? Be specific.

5. Review

- ✓ If possible, establish a formal review and advisory process for your organization to examine any potential collaboration.
- ✓ Consider formalizing any collaborative arrangements in a letter of agreement or contract. By documenting the terms and conditions, both parties can review and consent to the arrangement with confidence.
- ✓ Once the collaboration is formalized, routinely review and evaluate the arrangement to ensure both parties are satisfied. Key milestones throughout the agreement could serve as appropriate dates for review.

Collaborations can be a great aid to an organization's operational challenges, but they could also lead to problems. Think carefully before you decide to join forces. Considering these issues beforehand will help ensure that the collaboration is in everyone's best interests.

Adapted with permission from: *How to choose a corporate sponsor: CDC Guidelines for Collaboration with the Private Sector*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Atlanta, GA, USA.

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