



What You Should Consider Before Entering Into A Collaborative Agreement

Collaborative efforts with other agencies are valuable and can have many advantages. However, there are some items you need to consider prior to entering into any type of collaborative relationship. You'll want to ensure that when you enter into a collaborative relationship, it is a win-win situation for your clients, your organization, other stakeholders, and for your collaborative partner. This article addresses some questions you need to ask and issues you need to consider before establishing a collaborative relationship.

1. The first item you need to explore relates to whether or not there are any mandates for you to collaborate with other organizations? For example, do your bylaws, policies and procedures, or funding sources state that you need to partner with another organization for a specific purpose? If there is a mandate, do you have an agreement or contract in place, and are you adhering to the requirements of that mandate? An agreement or contract is useful in that it states the responsibilities of both parties, provides deadlines, and addresses other issues relevant to the collaborative relationship.
2. Does your strategic plan address collaborative efforts with other organizations to leverage or maximize your resources? If so, are the organizations clearly identified, and do you have an agreement or contract in place with each of these organizations?
3. Do you currently work with other agencies to provide or supplement services to your clients? If so, do you have a specific type of agreement or contract in place?
4. In examining your mission, what other organizations in your catchment area share a similar mission? Which organizations provide funding or services for your clients that you are unable to provide? Would it be worth your time to collaborate with these organizations to save money, share resources, and better serve your mutual clients?
5. How do you find out about or keep track of new organizations in your community, with which you could develop collaborative relationships? Do you know where to obtain lists of other organizations in your local area or state that share similar missions or provide services to the same population? Although coworkers and colleagues can be resourceful and share information about other organizations, there are alternate ways to obtain this information. For example, there is generally a designated I&R agency that collects and

provides a vast array of information, and refers people to organizations that could benefit them. In addition, there is an association of nonprofit organizations in every state. To find the association in your respective state, contact the National Council of Nonprofits at www.councilofnonprofits.org.

6. Many nonprofit organizations only collaborate with other nonprofit agencies. As such, they may be missing out on a lot of great opportunities. Have you ever thought about collaborating with governmental entities (e.g., local, state, or federal agencies) that provide or fund services related to your clients? Or, how about working with specific corporations that fund targeted efforts or programs?
7. Have you thought about going outside of your local geographic area to explore other organizations (e.g., similar organizations in other states, national organizations) with which you might be able to collaborate?
8. Have you ever collaborated with another organization on writing a grant that would benefit both organizations? Many funders value and applaud collaborative efforts, and will often give preference to projects that demonstrate collaboration.
9. What collaborative relationships do you have with individuals versus organizations, such as media celebrities, foundation representatives, philanthropists, trainers, educators, etc.?
10. Do you have a staff member responsible for identifying, developing, and/or monitoring collaborative relationships with other organizations? If so, do their performance plans contain goals and objectives related to these activities?

Although collaborative relationships do have many benefits, it is best to explore upfront whether or not these types of relationships are best for your clients and organization. Take time to consider the above questions. If, after careful thought, you decide that a collaborative relationship would benefit your clients and organization, then begin the process. Decide what you want that relationship to look like, and develop an agreement or contract that clearly identifies and itemizes the responsibilities of both parties. Your agreement or contract should be crafted to ensure a win-win situation for all parties.

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If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website at <http://www.createitcoaching.org> or Nonprofit Professionals blog at <http://www.createitcoaching.com>, and sign up for her free monthly newsletter that provides information and resources designed to help you manage your nonprofit organization in a more

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