

NICHQ's Essential of Collaboration Course

Key Takeaways

Effective Collaboration

To be an effective collaborator, you must build trust with others on an individual and organizational level. Trust is:

- Built by doing what you say you will do.
- Being consistent in your actions.
- Maintaining clear and open communication.
- The first step in creating innovative solutions.

Trust signals confidence in a relationship, which lets you recognize partner's strengths and identify responsibilities and roles for your joint work.

Locating New Partners

When choosing partners, keep three things in mind:

- *Align Your Goals:* Do your potential partners share your vision and goals for the community, organization or initiative? Can you work together to find mutual goals and create a shared vision of what is possible? If you are reaching across organizations, it is essential to maintain clear communication. Partners who share in the creation of a vision and goals will find it easier to commit to a project. Everyone should agree that their commitment to achieving the goals is beneficial to all parties involved.
- *Clarify Project Details:* Define what your project will require from all participants. If these details are known up front, potential partners will be more informed and able to determine if they have the capacity to join the effort.
- *Conduct a Gap Analysis:* Start by evaluating your strengths and skills as well as those of your department or organization. In what areas are you an expert? For those areas in which you are not an expert, you will need help. The gap analysis will let you discover where other partners might be able to help you achieve your goals.

Retaining Partners

Here are a few tips for retaining your new partnerships.

- *Identify Roles:* Identify clear roles and responsibilities for partners. All collaborators should feel involved, and as though they are using their knowledge and skills for the greater good of the project.
- *Build Trust:* Be strategic about building trust with all partners. Present yourself as someone with whom your partners can share their successes and struggles. Strive to maintain open communication, and model the behavior you hope to see in others.

- *Develop Accountability:* Develop accountability and evaluation plans. Follow up with your partners to make sure they are able to follow the project's general timeline. Offer help, if necessary, and be willing to receive help and feedback from your partners.
- *Acknowledge Partnerships:* Publicly acknowledge partner contributions. Doing so helps all partners feel a greater sense of accountability and responsibility. It can also be a great motivating factor.

Assessing Your Collaboration

Is your collaboration effective? Here are some common questions to be used for a lessons-learned meetings where you allow for reflection and constructive feedback.

- Have all the project objectives been accomplished?
- How many people were touched by the project?
- Has the project improved the lives of those it was intended to serve?
- Was the project completed within the budget?
- Was the project completed on time?
- Were there any conflicts? Were they handled gracefully?
- Were systems in place between the partners used effectively?

For more information on this course, or to get help with your organization's change initiative, contact NICHQ at communications@nichq.org.