

Sustainable Community Collaboration Checklist

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A variety of groups may work together on community sustainability issues. Sometimes leadership or communication problems can occur if the groups have not worked together previously. This NebGuide includes a Sustainable Community Collaboration Checklist to help groups build a more effective collaboration.

When you work on issues that impact community sustainability, you may find yourself interacting with a variety of groups that may or may not have previously worked with each other. On the surface it may appear that the groups will function well together, but often leadership or communication issues emerge. These issues may have negative impacts on the collaborative process.

Leadership and communication are just 2 of the 13 factors identified by researchers Borden and Perkins (1999) that can either promote or inhibit the collaborative process. In addition to identifying the factors, the researchers also organized them into a self-assessment checklist that groups can use to help locate group strengths as well as potential challenges.

If you are working with a new collaborative group, having the members go through the checklist may result in a discussion about areas that appear to need further fine-tuning as well as highlight obvious strengths of the working relationship. The checklist also can be used with established collaborative groups when they are entering new projects or relationships. It could indicate how diverse or similar the membership views these factors by comparing individual rankings as well as grand totals. Regardless of how the self-assessment checklist is used, it is one tool that can help groups acknowledge and develop process mechanisms to improve their collaborative work.

Interpretation of the scoring: The authors suggest that if a group scores an average from 0-30 points, the collaboration has many components that comprise a successful collaboration. There are probably closely linked goals, working members, and strong leadership. If the collaborative group scores between 31- 48, the group has some of the factors; however, there is probably a need to develop new ways of working together. A group score between 49-65 signals that the group may wish to refocus its goals and leadership. Establishing a group's strengths and challenges can ultimately serve as a springboard to building a more effective collaborative group.

Sustainable Community Collaboration Checklist

<i>Progress Checklist for Collaboration</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (1)	<i>Somewhat Agree</i> (2)	<i>Neither Agree or Disagree</i> (3)	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i> (4)	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (5)
Communication: is open and clear; there is an established process between meetings.					
Sustainability: there is a plan for sustaining members and resources; includes membership guidelines for terms of office members and replacement of members.					
Research and Evaluation: needs assessments have been conducted to establish goals; data are continually collected to measure goal achievement.					
Political Climate: the history/environment around power and decision making is positive; it may be located with the community as a whole or within systems or networks.					
Resources: are available (capital, environmental, in-kind, financial, and human).					
Catalysts: collaboration emerged due to an issue in which a comprehensive approach was needed.					
Policies/Laws/Regulations: these have been changed to allow for more effective functioning.					
History: community has a history of working cooperatively/solving problems.					
Connectedness: members have established informal/formal communication networks at all levels.					
Leadership: facilitates and supports team building; capitalizes on diversity, individual, group, and organizational strengths.					
Community Development: the community was mobilized to address important issues; there is a communication system and informal channels that permit exploration of issues, goals, and objectives.					
Understanding Community: it understands the cultures, values, and habits.					
GRAND TOTAL					

Resource

Borden, L. and Perkins, D. (1999, April). Assessing your collaboration: A self evaluation tool. *Journal of Extension*, 37(2). Retrieved August 1, 2010 from joe.org/joe/1999april/tt1.php

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