

# FIELD NOTES



## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR COLLABORATION

Increasingly, nonprofit organizations are becoming engaged in collaborations. The common focus for all involved is often a mutual agreement to work together to make a more significant difference in their community than any single organization could accomplish on their own.

Quite often collaborations that were established several years ago and/or by a previous leadership team are left on their own without much attention from senior leadership. As a result, they can lose their focus and relevance.

### TAKE TIME TO EVALUATE

Donor By Design's Michele Goodrich has worked with a number of nonprofits to form and maximize their collaborative relationships. She stresses, **"to maintain the original intent and ensure ongoing effectiveness, it is important to evaluate and refresh your partnerships on a regular basis."**

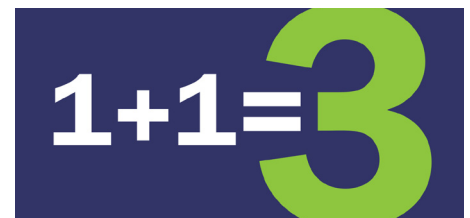
Through the evaluation process, you can establish new lines of communication while examining the collaboration's current viability, uncovering new opportunities and a setting a future path for working together. This effort may not only bring new life to "old relationships"; it may also make an enormous difference in each of the organizations' effectiveness.

### CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING YOUR COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

- **Communication and Connectedness:** Are representatives of each of the partner organizations connected? Are communication networks established at all levels?
- **Sustainability:** Is there a clear sustainability plan that is not overly dependent on unreliable funding streams? Is the commitment to sustaining the collaboration supported by the board and staff and not dependent on one or two individuals?
- **Planning and Evaluation:** Are there clearly articulated goals, a joint strategic plan and established criteria for collecting data and information to measure goal achievement?
- **Political Climate:** Is the environment surrounding power and decision-making positive or are there undercurrents that hamper successful and smooth operations?
- **Resources:** Does the collaboration have access to needed financial and human resources?
- **Leadership:** Does leadership facilitate and support ongoing team-building and capitalize upon diversity and individual, group and organizational strengths?

- **Community Benefit:** Is the community better served as a result of the collaboration?
- **Community Involvement:** Is the collaboration viewed as an integral and valued member of the community it serves?

Taking time to evaluate, develop or even dissolve collaborations can be a valuable investment for the partner organizations as well as the community they jointly serve.



Collaborating with another organization takes patience, hard work, compromise and open communication. In most cases, the advantages of working together far outweigh the extra effort involved. Collaborations can help nonprofits share expertise, avoid duplication of services, save on overhead costs, and increase overall effectiveness. Ideally, they create a win-win situation for each of the partners as well as the communities they serve.

Looking for help as you form or evaluate your collaboration? We can help!  
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