



Approaches to Measuring More Collaboration in Communities

*Tamarack exists to build vibrant and engaged communities in Canada.
Our work will result in more collaborative approaches and less poverty.*

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Introduction

Collaboration is the collective effort of a group of diverse individuals, organizations and/or sectors working together for a common purpose. More than just a working group, collaboration implies that the various stakeholders are coming together from different places to accomplish something more significant collectively than could be accomplished individually.

Collaborations can occur in a single organization or sector or can cross many different sectors. In the *Vibrant Communities* example, collaboration specifically includes multi-sector partners and focuses on the engagement of government agencies, voluntary sector organizations, businesses, and private citizens, (including individuals living with low income) to work together to reduce poverty in a community. Of course, not all collaboration works for this type of purpose. This paper focuses on, researching tools which measure more collaboration through the lens of healthy and vibrant communities. .

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to review and describe different approaches that organizations and governments have used to measure more collaboration in communities. More collaboration in communities can be measured in different ways. The measurement approaches detailed in this paper did not use a consistent methodology but customized measures were developed rather than using a set of easily recognized indicators.

By compiling a variety of approaches, this paper offers an overview of measures being used to track “more collaboration in communities.” The intended impact of this resource is twofold. First, the summaries and the accompanying annotated lists act as a starting point for exploring the different approaches. Secondly, these approaches can aide in developing further conversations around measuring more collaboration. In this case, this resource serves as a set of briefing notes.

Background

This report is part of a funded project of The Ontario Trillium Foundation which seeks to research and build on current practices and knowledge regarding four key aspects of healthy and vibrant communities and outline metrics that are being used to monitor each aspect. The four aspects are:

- Less Poverty in Communities
- More Vibrant Communities
- More Engaged Communities
- More Collaboration in Communities

Ultimately, these papers are a starting point and further dialogue will be required to generate consensus about measuring, monitoring and reporting community progress and change.

The process undertaken to develop this paper on measuring more collaboration in communities began by interviewing an internal key informant group from Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement and Vibrant Communities Canada who provided their suggestions on relevant models and measures to consider. This paper includes approaches which informants felt offered a compelling perspective on collaboration and/or a practical set of measures and research tools. Additional information was collected by sourcing foundation documents on each approach.

Details

Measuring more collaboration in communities is challenging because it is often difficult to know exactly how many collaborative planning processes are operating in any community at any given time. The lack of an accurate baseline is the first challenge. A second challenge is measuring the effectiveness of the collaborative process ~ how well the collaborative group is working together or how well the collaborative group is able to accomplish what it has set out to do. The approaches considered in this paper review some or all of these elements within their measure of “more collaboration.”

A third challenge identified is that there are no standard set of indicators or measures for collaborations. It was extremely difficult to find a consensus on what exactly could be measured. Most often, evaluation of collaborative groups included a set of measures focused on the success of the work done within the group and the level of collaboration/working together group members felt they had achieved. Most often, evaluators were looking at the value of the collaboration, how well it worked and if it was able to accomplish its goals.

Very little information was found which would actually measure the increases in collaborative impact in a community; instead, most measurement tools focus on numbers of collaborative groups and self-evaluation of these groups. In seeking to understand how to measure *more collaboration within a community*, there does not appear to be a common measure.

It may be that “more collaboration in communities” is difficult to measure because many of the evaluation tools look at the “how” and not “what” work is being done. Cross-collaborative community impacts are rarely studied separate and apart from the focus of the work of a particular collaborative.

Many of the approaches in this paper used a framework for developing measures which can be adapted to different collaborative projects. While the framework or design is applicable to the individual project, the specific indicators and measures may need to be contextualized.

In producing this document, conscious efforts were made to bring together a variety of different approaches. Many of the current approaches for evaluating collaborations use similar theories and ways of thinking. This paper serves as an overview of some of the *different* approaches and not a complete list of all approaches used when measuring more collaboration in communities.

To add value to the summaries, web-based resources that will provide more in-depth explanations are included. Where possible examples of programs using the approach are also included. For those who wish more information about a particular summary, the resources will provide the source documents which explain the approach and in some cases also provide tools for reproducing evaluations, such as outcome tracking templates.

There are generally two types of measurement: quantitative or numeric (hard data) and qualitative or stories (often called soft data). Because qualitative data is considered less rigorous, combining it with quantitative data provides a more comprehensive picture of what is occurring in the community.

Emerging Evaluation Practice

Many of the evaluation strategies presented in these papers are based on similar theories and ways of thinking about measures and evaluations. Two such examples stand out for further explanation, *Theory of Change*¹ and *Developmental Evaluation*².

Theory of change is a method or technique that can assist communities to think about, plan and evaluate their work. It involves 'backwards mapping' from the goals and desired outcomes of the program to identify what is needed in the program design to accomplish these goals. Theory of change was more fully developed for community use by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change and is an integral part of the design of Vibrant Communities, Sustainable Livelihoods, National Indicators and likely many others.

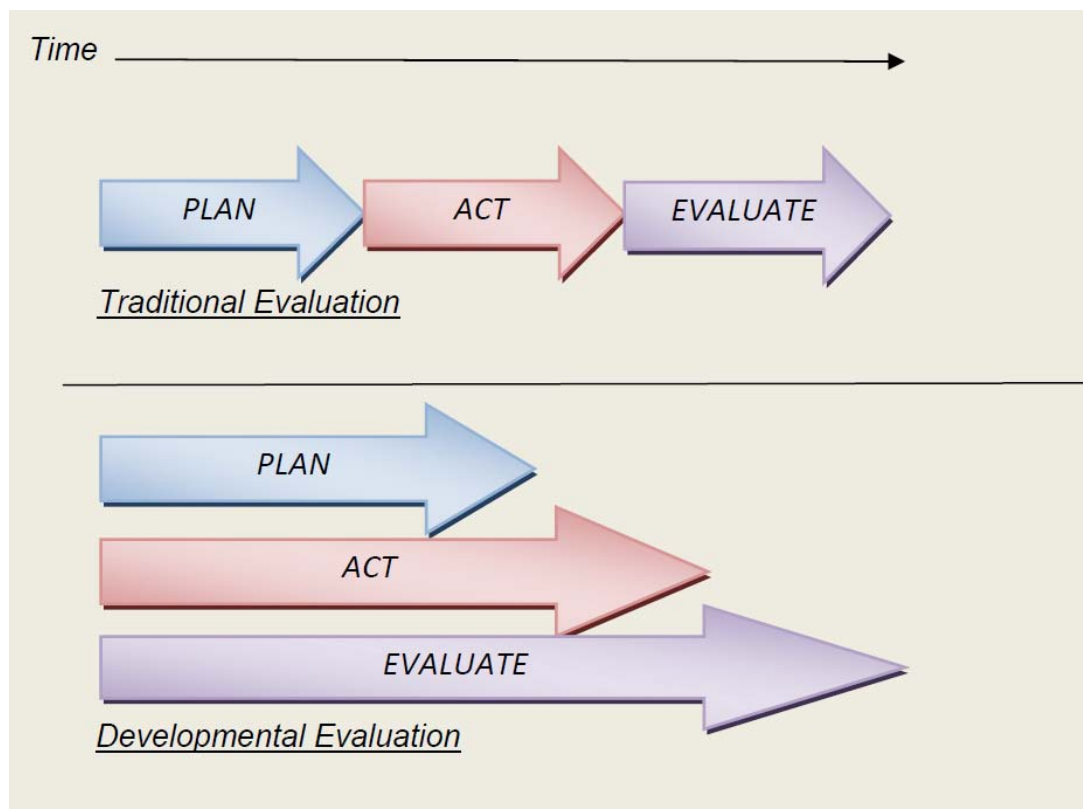
Developmental evaluation is a complete approach to evaluation which is appropriate to situations of shifting contexts, innovation and complexity. Whereas formative evaluation is focused on refining existing models, programs or strategies and summative evaluation is focused on 'judging' the worth of those models, programs or strategies, developmental evaluation is intended to help people and organizations create and continually adapt interventions. Unlike traditional situations where the emphasis is on 'think, plan, implement and monitor', the process of thinking, planning, implementing and evaluation is continuous and simultaneous. This is vastly different from traditional evaluation as shown in Figure 1.

Jamie Gamble explains the theory and approach to developmental evaluation in *A Developmental Evaluation Primer* published on The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation website. It is worth reviewing these concepts in order to understand how evaluation and measures are used in developmental evaluation processes. Developmental evaluation and theory of change are an emerging part of modern evaluative frameworks used by many of the approaches included in this paper.

¹ See Theory of Change by ActKnowledge: <http://www.theoryofchange.org>

² For more information see the document: Jamie Gamble, A Developmental Evaluation Primer. <http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/utilisateur/documents/EN/Initiatives/Sustaining%20Social%20Innovation/A%20Developmental%20Evaluation%20Primer%20-%20EN.pdf>

Figure 1. Traditional versus Developmental Evaluation



(adapted from Gamble p. 30)

The implications for measurement in developmental evaluation are significant. The process of identifying what measures are required, gathering and analyzing data on them, and making decisions is highly adaptive. In developmental evaluation, the emphasis is often on rapid feedback, 'good enough' level of proof, and the refinement, addition and dropping of measures. Developmental evaluation also emphasizes casting a wide net in search of outcomes, seeking unintended outcomes as well as intended ones.

For Further Reading

This paper provides seven different approaches for measuring more collaboration in communities. Each approach contains the following information.

Summary – Provides the essence of the approach and explains why the approach is included in this document

Background - Includes the history of the approach, current application, including information about the organization and partners if applicable

Details – Explains further what and how the approach measures more collaboration in communities

For Further Reading – Provides a resource list of web links and print resources to find more details and examples about the approaches outlined

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Vibrant Communities

Summary

Vibrant Communities are comprehensive, place-based community initiatives focused on poverty reduction. Vibrant Communities use the framework for change when developing the community plan or strategies focused at poverty reduction. Each framework for change details the economic, social and systems change initiatives meant to reduce poverty in the specific community or neighbourhood. The Vibrant Communities model focuses on poverty reduction, multi-sector community engagement, an action and learning process and evaluation.

Background

Vibrant Communities began in 2002 as a community-driven initiative for reducing poverty in Canada. Its national sponsors are: The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Caledon Institute of Social Policy and Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement. Vibrant Communities is a network of twelve initiatives across Canada. Vibrant Communities Trail Builders are collaborative, place-based initiatives currently implementing multi-year programs and strategies designed to reduce poverty.

Details

Each Vibrant Communities Trail Builder initiative is developed by a local community collaborative planning table. Each community is also encouraged to develop its own indicators for measuring community change and progress around poverty reduction. Vibrant Communities Canada has also developed a number of cross-community or 'proxy indicators'. Since each community approach is unique, Trail Builder Communities report on a variety of indicators including individual changes in income, education levels, housing and financial assets and changes in the collaborative structure including the engagement of multi-sector partners.

“Vibrant Communities is a community-driven effort to reduce poverty in Canada by creating partnerships that make use of our most valuable assets – people, organizations, businesses and governments.”

(Vibrant Communities Website)

Vibrant Communities measure progress of collaboration by both the number of connections made and the results-based outcomes of the work of the collaborative. Trail Builder communities submit regular reports to Vibrant Community sponsors.

Trail Builders are asked to examine the contributions their collaborations make to advancing specific strategies or projects. A key element of the Vibrant Communities model is multi-sector engagement around the issue of poverty and tracking collaborative partnerships is an important part of the evaluation. **Table 1** below is a sample partnership tracking tool used by Trail Builder initiatives.

Vibrant communities also have targets for partnerships between groups which are used to measure and evaluate the program. The partners working with the initiative may be contributing by:

- Serving on the initiative's governing body
- Providing funding or in-kind support to the convener group or its partners
- Implementing a poverty reduction initiative
- Providing technical knowledge/expertise
- Using influence to advance the initiative's work
- Organizing community members to make things happen

Table 1: Partnership tracking

<i>Sector</i>	<i># of Partners</i>	<i>Breakdown</i>
<i>Government</i>		<i>Federal – Provincial – Regional – Municipal – First Nations –</i>
<i>Business</i>		
<i>Non-profit</i>		
<i>Low-Income</i>		
<i>Interested Citizens</i>		

For Further Reading:

Learning and Evaluation for Trail Builder Initiatives in Vibrant Communities (February 2005) <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/vc/TBpackage.pdf>

This resource describes in detail the three streams of evaluation which Vibrant Communities are using: Community Approach; Strategies and Projects; and, Reporting and Dissemination. Included within the resource is information about Theories of Change and Developmental Evaluation.

Vibrant Communities - Evaluation and Learning <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g2s34.html>

A variety of evaluation resources are available through the Vibrant Communities website and include Trail Builders Community updates which details progress is being made toward poverty reduction goals in communities across Canada.

Born, Paul (ed.). *Creating Vibrant Communities: How Individuals and Organizations from Diverse Sectors of Society are Coming Together to Reduce Poverty in Canada*, Toronto: BPS Books, 2008.

This book thoroughly defines the Vibrant Communities approach to poverty reduction, the evaluation framework, as well as providing case examples from Trail Builder communities across Canada.

The Community Collaboration Project

Summary

The Rural Development Institute and Brandon University in Manitoba developed the Community Collaboration Project to increase capacity and governance in rural communities. Measures used to evaluate each collaborative were developed by each group. Indicators were chosen at the beginning of the project based on both quantitative and qualitative measures. The expectation was that these measures would be updated over time. Data was collected from diverse sources and reviewed by the Rural Development Institute and each regional roundtable.

Background

The Rural Development Institute and Brandon University engaged in the *Community Collaboration Project: Empowering Communities and Building Capacity 2005 – 2008*. This project was funded through the Government of Canada's Rural Secretariat, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The Community Collaboration Project (CCP) was initiated in 1999 in Manitoba and Nunavut as a "collaborative arrangement between communities in four regions of Manitoba and the Kivalliq region of Nunavut, federal, provincial and territorial government departments and agencies, non-government organizations and Rural Development Institute (RDI) of Brandon University." (*Fact Sheet 2007*)

Details

The Community Collaboration Project (CCP) was focused only on rural collaboration projects, including multi-community collaborations. Because of the lack of resources rural communities face, the collaboration in many cases brought together individuals and groups to address diverse planning, economic development and infrastructure issues (among others). CCP provided opportunities for new forms of collaboration and governance.

With access to the appropriate tools, resources and information, individuals living in rural and northern communities can engage in self-sustaining, informed, local decision-making and meaningful dialogue between and among communities, organizations and governments.

In evaluating and measuring the individual collaboration projects, the Rural Development Institute established a framework for evaluation using a *Logic Model* and *Participatory Evaluation*. Each project was also provided with a comprehensive evaluation handbook. The annotated list below provides more detailed information about the specific projects.

The handbook stressed the importance of establishing a baseline before the project begins in order to measure against progress. Specific indicators were developed by each project and could be improved on at any time in the project. According to the Handbook, the indicators that were chosen should be a combination of *quantitative* (have a numerical value) and *qualitative* measures (reflect perceptions, judgments or attitudes).

The final list of indicators should be a balanced mix of quantitative and qualitative measures so that a more realistic picture of what has happened is described.

When developing indicators, thought should be given to:

- data availability and data collection: what is possible with the resources available;
- attribution: measuring results that can be reasonably attributed to the group's activities;
- usefulness: potential use of evaluation findings while taking into account the importance of ensuring that the captured information is relevant; and
- Simplicity: two-three indicators per outcome (make sure the evaluation process isn't guiding the group instead of the group guiding the evaluation)."

(Handbook p 30)

The handbook also advised that indicators selected should be of a quantity and type that is manageable in order to accommodate the number of stakeholders and *must also be relevant to at least one stakeholder*.

This approach recommended that the regional round table, advisory group, RDI and its University partners should decide on the best way to collect information based on the individual group itself, "comfort level with particular tools, resources available, cultural aspects, language, etc." The data to be collected was to be from a wide variety of sources including meeting minutes and personal accounts to Statistics Canada data. Data collection for the indicators was the combined responsibility of Rural Development Institute and the Regional Roundtable.

For Further Reading

Marian Beattie and Robert C. Annis, *the Community Collaboration Story, Community Collaboration Project: Empowering Communities & Building Capacity, 2005–2008* (CCP Model Project), Rural Development Institute. Brandon University:
<http://www2.brandonu.ca/organizations/rdi/Publications/CCP/CommCollabModelFinalReport-Nov2008.pdf>

The Community Collaboration Story is the final report of the CCP project including information about participant roundtable groups. The Community Collaboration Story shares lessons learned about the different models and extensive details on several of the actual roundtable projects. For a shorter presentation with only the essence of what was learned see the document *Rural Matters! Forging Healthy Canadian Communities*, July 2008 at
<http://www2.brandonu.ca/rdi/Publications/CCP/CommCollabStory-RuralMattersPresentation.pdf>

Fact Sheet: Community Collaboration Project (CCP): Empowering Communities and Building Capacity 2005-2008:

http://www2.brandonu.ca/rdi/Factsheets/CCP_ModelsProjectFactsheet-July2007.pdf

This fact sheet offers a quick overview of the CCP. It explains the model of the collaboration and gives some details of two regional roundtables: Waterwolf Region and Yukon Region.

CCP Process Handbook, 2006:

http://www2.brandonu.ca/rdi/Publications/CCP/CCP_ProcessHandbook.pdf

This handbook was produced for the roundtable groups participating in the CCP. The bulk of this document is a set of useful tools for collecting information and planning projects. Included are: a blank Logic Model template and other tools and worksheets for designing, tracking and evaluating each project. This resource provides sample tools which may be adapted for other collaborative initiatives.

Rural Development Institute, Community Collaboration Project Website

<http://www2.brandonu.ca/rdi/ccp.asp>

This website offers links to actual examples of CCP projects and other resources and publications of the Rural Development Institute. Although the project has ended (2008) there are a lot of valuable resources available about this project and others.

Partnership Self-Assessment Tool

Summary

The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool developed by the Centre for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health consists of a questionnaire for participants involved in a collaborative planning process which evaluates the collaborative project after it has been completed. It is designed to be completed by participants from *within the project* to measure the strength of the partnership's level of collaboration and the success of working together.

Background

The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool is a free product of the Centre for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health - The New York Academy of Medicine. In 2001, the Center conducted the *National Study of Partnership Functioning*, a rigorous, evidence based study of partnerships throughout the United States which led to the development of the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool.

Details

The *National Study of Partnership Functioning* looked at 63 partnerships throughout the United States. It was designed to determine “the extent to which partnerships achieve synergy.” According to the study, partnerships with a high level of synergy have a special kind of *leadership*. This leadership relationship promoted productive interactions and the ability to efficiently use resources to achieve change.” The *National Study of Partnership Functioning* called this *partnership efficiency*.

The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool can be used to uncover the partnership's strengths and weaknesses in areas that are known to be related to:

- *synergy - leadership,*
- *efficiency,*
- *administration and management, and*
- *sufficiency of resources (financial and non-financial)*

Synergy is a key indicator of a successful collaborative process because it reflects **the extent to which the partnership can do more than any of its individual participants**. Put another way, a partnership's level of synergy indicates the extent to which the partnership, as a whole, is greater than the sum of its parts.

(Tool Report)

The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool also measures: partners' perspectives about the partnership's decision-making process; the benefits and drawbacks of participating in the partnership; and, their overall satisfaction with the partnership.

Figure 2. Synergy: The unique advantage of collaboration



(adapted from *Partnership Synergy* p.184)

Measuring the collaboration's effectiveness is gathered through of a self-assessment questionnaire which must be completed within 30 days of distribution. The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool suggests that 65% of questionnaires must be completed for a valid result. While in the past organizations could access this tool online, it is now only available in a print format. The website provides an evaluation guide for organizations to successfully use the tool.

The primary function of this tool is to assess how well the collaboration worked. It is a self-assessment tool of the collaborative experience rather than an independent evaluation of the collaborative results and as such it measures only the *value and success* of a specific collaborative planning process from the experience of the participants in that process.

For Further Reading

Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, *Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health*: <http://partnershiptool.net/>

This is the link to the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool. There are instructions provided to guide you through the process which may be downloaded and saved. It shows how to manually conduct the assessment and calculate the results.

Roz Lasker, Rebecca Miller, and Elisa Weiss, *Partnership Synergy: A Practical Framework for Studying and Strengthening the Collaborative Advantage*, *The Milbank Quarterly*, June 2001, V: 79, 179-206. <http://cacsh.org/pdf/milq792.pdf>

This paper explains the framework used to determine a successful partnership and how to improve on existing partnerships. This article also defines the concept of partnership synergy, its value and how it is achieved. The theory behind the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool is also described in this paper.

The Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health main Website <http://cacsh.org/index.html>

This website details the functions of the Center and includes links to other resources. The Center states that they create models which “conceptualize - in a measurable way - how collaboration strengthens the ability of a group to identify, understand, and solve complex problems.”

Evaluating Collaboratives

Summary

The University of Wisconsin-Extension has developed a framework for the evaluation of collaboratives based on their experiences working with groups and group processes for several years. This approach provides guidelines for developing indicators and measures based on identifying the desired outcomes of the project. It uses a logic model approach to plan out this process.

Background

Evaluating Collaboratives is a manual produced by the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Program Development and Evaluation. A description of their work, taken from their website, states that “the Program Development and Evaluation Unit provides training and technical assistance that enables Cooperative Extension campus and community-based faculty and staff to plan, implement and evaluate high quality educational programs.”

“The process can be applied on a small scale to an individual workshop; on a larger scale to a comprehensive community initiative or to a county or state-wide program of action.”

Details

University of Wisconsin - Extension produced the resource *Evaluating Collaboratives, Reaching the Potential* (1998) which states:

“Readers looking for a 'cookbook' or 'best method' for evaluating collaboratives will be disappointed. Our purpose is to provide a compendium of ideas and research for you to think about and choose from as you help your collaborative reach its potential”

(p.1)

In this approach, based on the *logic model*, the collaborative group will need to identify the specific outcomes they are trying to achieve. It is through this part of program planning design that the group defines the indicators and measures for those outcomes.

“Some collaboratives are focused on outcomes for communities, including changes in norms, policies or actions at a community-wide level, for example, changes in zoning or land-use policy; attitudes toward youth or approaches to poverty alleviation.”(p.112)

Determining the desired outcome and developing a set of indicators to measure progress and achievement of the outcome can be uncovered through the following questions for after the program begins:

Typical Questions

- *Has anything improved as a result of our work? Changed? What? How? For whom?*
- *To what extent are we achieving desired outcomes? Keeping our promise?*
- *What difference has resulted from our working as a collaborative?*
- *Was the collaborative effort worth the time and costs to achieve its results?*

Final outcomes or impact refers to the highest level outcome. These results usually take a long time to achieve and have wider socioeconomic and /or environmental benefit. Outcome assessment focuses on two components:

- a) Changes to individuals, families, groups, organizations, systems, or communities
- b) Value that is added as a result of the collaborative process

The *Evaluating Collaboratives: Reaching the Potential* resource provides useful information about developing and measuring outcomes.

For Further Reading

Ellen Taylor-Powell, Boyd Rossing and Jean Geran, *Evaluating Collaboratives: Reaching the Potential*, 1998:

<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/G3658-8.PDF>

This paper is the result of several years of group discussion and information gathering about how to evaluate collaboratives aimed at filling the gap left when traditional evaluations were not working well to evaluate them. It includes a comprehensive description of the various components of evaluation. The document also includes worksheets and tools which may be adapted to many projects.

University of Wisconsin – Extension, Program Development and Evaluation, *Evaluation*
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/index.html>

The section of the University of Wisconsin – Extension, Program Development and Evaluation website contains a wealth of resources to understand the types of models and tools this program is using for evaluations. Included are examples of the Logic Model, Program Development Model, as well as other evaluation publications, worksheets, booklets and tips.

Evaluating Collaboratives, National Extension Family Life Specialists Conference April 28, 2005:

[http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/powerpt/05aprilconfcollaboratives.ppt#347.1,Evaluating Collaboration](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/powerpt/05aprilconfcollaboratives.ppt#347.1,Evaluating%20Collaboration)

This is a presentation made at a conference named which is an overview of the evaluation process for collaborations discussed above.

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Tom Wolff - Evaluating Community Collaboratives

Summary

Tom Wolff & Associates have developed surveys which measure and analyze collaborative groups on a variety of attributes including the group's structure, inclusivity effectiveness, and communication. This website provides free tools and surveys to assist groups in assessing themselves.

Background

Tom Wolff is a consultant on coalition building and community development based in the United States. He has over 30 years' experience training and consulting with diverse groups including communities, individuals, and organizations.

Details

This approach enables the evaluation to be done either by the group or an external evaluator. Wolff stresses that the collaborative group will be able to integrate evaluation processes into their regular operations.

The collaboration is the primary consumer of the evaluation, so the collaboration needs to be heavily engaged and invested in the evaluation process

(Evaluating Community Collaboratives p.2)

Table 1. Evaluation Breakdown

Type of Evaluation	Main Question	Focus	Methodology
Process	What activities took place?	-day-to-day activities of your collaboration.	-activity logs -surveys -interviews
Outcome	What was accomplished?	-accomplishments. -number and type of changes in policies or practices in the community -development of new services...	-surveys of self-reported behaviour changes -surveys rating significance of outcomes -number of objectives met
Impact	What were the long-term effects?	-impacts on the community -over and above specific outcomes.	-Statistical Indicators

(Information used from *Evaluating Community Collaboratives* p.5)

Information is gathered using a variety of surveys and working through charts and checklists within the group. A sample of the surveys and attributes measured appear below:

- Group Satisfaction Survey
- Assessing the Group including:
 - clarity of coalition's vision and goals
 - effectiveness of outreach & communication
 - opportunities for responsibility/growth for members
 - effectiveness in doing projects
 - use of research and external sources
 - sense of community within group
 - relationship of group with elected officials, and other external leaders
- Climate Diagnostic Tool: The Six R's of Participation (recognition, respect, role, relationship, reward, results)
- Inclusivity Checklist
- Sustainability Benchmarks

For Further Reading

Tom Wolff, *A Practical Approach to Evaluating Coalitions*, T. Backer (Ed.) *Evaluating Community Collaborations*, Springer Publishing, 2002:
<http://www.tomwolff.com/resources/backer.pdf>

This is the fourth chapter in the book *Evaluating Community Collaborations*. This chapter is available online with the extensive worksheets and surveys which makes this an extremely useful tool.

Tom Wolff, main website. <http://www.tomwolff.com/>

This is the Tom Wolff and Associates website and provides an overview of their work on building collaborations and coalitions, plus access to resources and research publications. Also accessible from this site are biannual newsletters and under the "tools" tab are assessment tools for groups.

Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory

Summary

The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory is an online tool which evaluates collaborative efforts using a questionnaire completed by participants. The tool automatically calculates a score based on the responses by a group or individuals in the group. This score can be used to guide the collaborative understanding of the process they are/were involved in. This is a free and easy to use tool.

Background

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation is a non-profit health and human services organization founded by Amherst H. Wilder and his family. Paul Mattessich is the Executive Director of Wilder Research, a non-profit research and evaluation group dedicated to practical research in the field of human services and part of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory is a free product of Wilder Research.

Details

The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory is an online questionnaire which measures collaboration at the following levels:

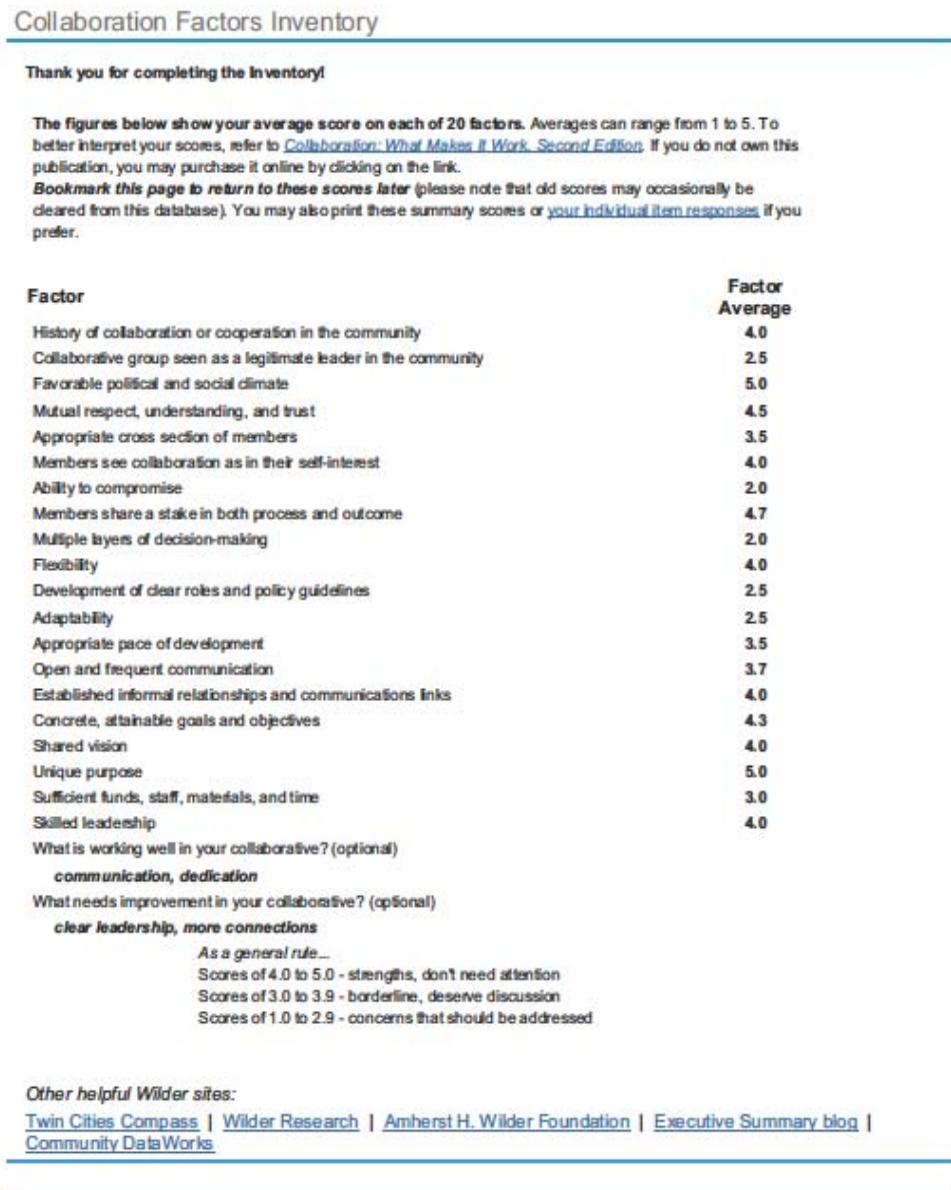
- the effectiveness of a group, including leadership, decision-making ability and ability to achieve goals
- the level of collaboration achieved within the group
- group members belief in the credibility and image of the collaborative within the greater community

The questionnaire can be completed at any stage of the collaboration, although some questions may seem less applicable at the onset because no opinion or data may be yet available. After completing the questions, a report is generated with a score on each of 20 factors.

The report generated by the online tool can then be used in dialogue with the group to build on strengths and develop weaker areas. Although this tool may be used by any individual as well, a better result will be found when a good portion of the group members complete the assessment. Fig 2 gives you a sample of what the completed report looks like, with the factors and scores listed.

For the best interpretation of the scores, the creators recommend purchasing the book *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*, (2nd Ed.).

Figure 3. Sample Report



For Further Reading

Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory, <http://wilderresearch.org/tools/cfi/index.php>

This is an online tool for assessing a collaborative group. Groups can register for this assessment, then members can complete the online questions and when completed the tool will generate a report with scores on different attributes within group work. There are 42 questions to be completed either individually or with all group members participating which rate the collaboration.

Wilder Research. <http://www.wilder.org/research.0.html>

This is the Wilder Research section of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation website. There are a number of articles and publications available on topics including collaboration, engagement and evaluation.

Can This Collaboration Be Saved?

<http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/129/savecollab.html>

In *Collaboration: What Makes It Work* 20 factors that have been shown time after time to make or break a group effort are identified. Those factors fall into six general categories: general environment, membership, structure and process, communication, purpose and resources.

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Collaborative Learning and Innovation

Summary

Collaborative Learning and Innovation determines the level of social capital within groups to measure more collaboration. This approach offers a unique perspective on collaboration. This study may serve as an example to help build collaboration efforts.

Background

Ann Svendsen is the executive director of Collaborative Learning an Innovation Group (CLI) of the Centre for Sustainable Community Development, Simon Fraser University.

Details

Svendsen and Boutilier developed some metrics to evaluate a particular collaboration which occurred in Clayoquot Sound which provide a useful continuum:

Confrontation → Power Struggle → Exploration → Cooperation → Collaboration³

Svendsen and Boutilier document the journey from conflict to collaboration among multiple groups in Clayoquot, including environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), First Nations, and the logging industry, and evaluate the process using a series of surveys, meetings and interviews. Among their findings as measures of more collaboration in the community were:

- Increased social capital – more specifically building/developing trust between the groups
- Increased networks between the groups through bridging and bonding relationships
- Shared meaning, norms and values

This approach offers another way to look at more collaboration from the perspective of building networks and social capital within groups. The source document in the reading list provides comprehensive information about the study.

For Further Reading

Collaborative Learning and Innovation, Simon Fraser University:
<http://www.sfu.ca/cscd/cli/default.htm>

This is the main website of CLI which accesses several publications and resources on such topics as collaborative processes, engagement, building social capital and “Co-creative Engagement.”

³ See tables 1 and 2 on p.47-48 of *From Conflict to Collaboration* from the reading list.

Robert G. Boutilier and Ann C. Svendsen, *From Conflict to Collaboration: Stakeholder Bridging and Bonding in Clayoquot Sound*, 2000:
<http://www.cim.sfu.ca/folders/research/8%20-%20Conflict%20to%20Collab%20Jan%2016.pdf>

This document details the study completed by Boutilier and Svendsen. The authors explain the concepts of bridging and bonding in relationships between groups that are useful for building collaborative relationships between conflicting groups. The authors break down the stages into manageable parts detailing the process which took place between the main stakeholders.

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Conclusions

There are significant challenges in measuring *more collaboration in communities*. Most examples provided measure the impact of the collaborative effort from the perspective of the individuals involved but don't measure the overall impact on communities. Most approaches to evaluating collaboratives measure the value and success rather than measuring:

- increasing collaboration in communities or groups
- numbers of pre-existing collaborations or collaborative projects
- the collective community impact of multiple collaborative efforts

Self-assessment tools seem to be the approach used most often for measuring collaboration. Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory and Partnership Self-Assessment attempted to capture: how much collaboration was occurring; and, the level of co-operation and working together actually taking place within the group. The Vibrant Communities example measures collaboration in terms of numerical data, quantifying both the collaborative effort and impact on individuals.

Other significant themes from the examples provided include:

- more than half of these approaches use subjective questions (thoughts, feelings, opinions) to evaluate through feedback either in self-evaluation or external evaluation
- more than half also used standardized measures (measures all projects with same criteria)
- more than half used community specific measures (developed by initiative) either with standardized measures or exclusive to other measures
- all the examples used at least some of their own data with only one including national statistical data. (The most common approach to measuring collaborations involves an internal versus external or community perspective.)
- only two of the approaches attempted to measure the impact or long-term effects of their collaboration
- only two approaches were specifically multi-sector, most did not specify as they were designed to be used in any type of project

Final Thoughts and Questions:

There are a number of questions which have emerged from this research. These include:

1. Are there communities which are measuring the collective efforts and impacts of many collaborative planning processes on the effectiveness of the community to solve social problems?
2. Why are there so few examples using quantitative data for measuring collaboration or greater collaboration?
3. Are there benchmarking tools which determine where and what collaborations are occurring in communities and how they can be tracked?

Collaboration is increasingly important in community work as community planning attempts to draw more stakeholders into decision-making. The questions above provide an opportunity to identify key elements of emerging practices for measuring more collaboration in communities.

