Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration


(Note – the number in parenthesis indicates the number of times the factor is referenced in research cited in the book).

1. Factors Related to the ENVIRONMENT (11)
   a. History of collaboration or cooperation in the community.
      A history of collaboration or cooperation exists in the community and offers the potential collaborative partners an understanding of the roles and expectations required in collaboration and enables them to trust the process.
   b. Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community. (3)
      The collaborative group (and, by implication, the agencies in the group) is perceived within the community as reliable and competent – at least related to the goals and activities it intends to accomplish.
   c. Favorable political and social climate. (6)
      Political leaders, opinion-makers, persons who control resources, and the general public support (or at least do not oppose) the mission of the collaborative group.

2. Factors Related to MEMBERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS
   a. Mutual respect, understanding, and trust (27)
      Members of the collaborative group share an understanding and respect for each other and their respective organizations: how they operate, their cultural norms and values, their limitations, and their expectations.
   b. Appropriate cross section of members (18)
      To the extent that they are needed, the collaborative group includes representatives from each segment of the community who will be affected by its activities.
   c. Members see collaboration as in their self-interest (15)
      Collaborating partners believe that they will benefit from their involvement in the collaboration and that the advantages of membership will offset costs such as loss of autonomy and turf.
   d. Ability to compromise (6)
      Collaborating partners are able to compromise, since the many decisions within a collaborative effort cannot possibly fit the preferences of every member perfectly.
3. Factors Related to PROCESS AND STRUCTURE
   a. Members share a stake in both process and outcome (9)
      Members of the collaborative group feel “ownership” of both the way the
      group works and the results or products of its work.
   b. Multiple layers of participation (17)
      Every level (upper management, middle management, operations) within
      each partner organization has at least some representation and ongoing
      involvement in the collaborative initiative.
   c. Flexibility (10)
      The collaborative group remains open to varied ways of organizing itself
      and accomplishing its work.
   d. Development of clear roles and policy guidelines (15)
      The collaborating partners clearly understand their roles, rights, and
      responsibilities, and they understand how to carry out those
      responsibilities.
   e. Adaptability (7)
      The collaborative group has the ability to sustain itself in the midst of
      major changes, even if it needs to change some major goals, members,
      etc., in order to deal with changing conditions.
   f. Appropriate pace of development (7)
      The structure, resources, and activities of the collaborative group change
      over time to meet the needs of the group without overwhelming its
      capacity, at each point throughout the initiative.

4. Factors Related to COMMUNICATION
   a. Open and frequent communication (15)
      Collaborative group members interact often, update one another, discuss
      issues openly, and convey all necessary information to one another and to
      people outside the group.
   b. Established informal relationships and communication links (10)
      In addition to formal channels of communication, members establish
      personal connections - producing a better, more informed, and cohesive
      group working on a common project.

5. Factors Related to PURPOSE
   a. Concrete, attainable goals and objectives (10)
      Goals and objectives of the collaborative group are clear to all partners,
      and can realistically be attained.
b. **Shared vision (15)**
Collaborating partners have the same vision with clearly agreed-upon mission, objectives, and strategy. The shared vision may exist at the outset of collaboration, or the partners may develop a vision as they work together.

c. **Unique purpose (4)**
The mission and goals, or approach, of the collaborative group differ, at least in part, from the mission and goals, or approach, of the member organization.

6. **Factors Related to RESOURCES**
   a. **Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time (20)**
The collaborative group has an adequate, consistent financial base, along with the staff and materials needed to support its operations. It allows sufficient time to achieve its goals and includes time to nurture the collaboration.

   b. **Skilled leadership (13)**
The individual who provides leadership for the collaborative group has organizing and interpersonal skills, and carries out the role with fairness. Because of these characteristics (and others), the leader is granted respect or “legitimacy” by the collaborative partners.