

Building Coalitions: Evaluating the Collaboration¹

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Introduction

Building Coalitions is a series of publications that provide information on the needs, preparations, skills, and work required for community and other groups to establish and sustain coalitions for collaboration on common causes. This publication is one of the fifteen-part series of fact sheets compiled by The Ohio Center for Action on Coalitions. It has been adapted for County Extension Faculty in Florida to facilitate collaboration with local and regional organizations and groups, such as nonprofits, cooperatives, county Extension associations, and others that may benefit from a plan for working together to achieve mutual goals.

Evaluating and monitoring collaborative efforts are essential tasks if we are to be successful in coordinating programs for young people. Evaluation efforts become more manageable when approached from two different levels. These include 1) evaluation of the collaboration process and 2) measuring the impact of programs for targeted audiences. This fact sheet focuses on evaluating the collaboration process.

An evaluation of the collaborative process can be pursued by studying several different potential outcomes.

Potential Areas of Evaluation

Quality

- Training—What training has the group done for other youth professionals, coalition members or youth?
- Continuity—How long has the group been together? Is there still a desire to work together? What type of structure has been developed to assure the continuity of the collaboration, such as officers, membership guidelines, memoranda of understanding?
- Involvement—How active are the group's members? How often do they meet? How much volunteer and professional time is being focused on a particular problem because of the collaboration?

Comprehensiveness

- What types of individuals and organizations are represented? Are these the right type of collaborators to accomplish the work of the collaboration?

- Has there been an increase in the number of referrals between collaboration members? What has been the nature of these referrals?
- What types of databases or directories have been created to facilitate the sharing of information and assistance related to youth issues?

Access and Equity

- Do all youth in the community have equal access to collaboration efforts?
- How do other non-collaborators obtain access to the information and services of the collaboration members?

Information and Advocacy

- How has information been increased for parents, public, policy makers and youth?
- To what extent do member organizations promote each other's efforts, workshops and conferences?
- How is the group serving as an advocate for youth issues in the community?

Cost-Effectiveness

- Have existing funds been used more effectively? How?
- Has duplication of services been reduced or eliminated?
- Has the group been able to access new funds because of working together? If not, what can be done to change the situation?

Additional General Questions

- What is working well?
- What are the major problems?
- Are there unanticipated outcomes because of working together?

To explore the questions in the proposed areas of evaluation, many methodologies can be used. Some most common include

- Surveys/Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Structured Observation
- Review of Records and Reports

- Focus Group Interviews
- Interaction Analysis

Acknowledgment

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