



GUIDES TO COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Building Villages To Raise Our Children: Collaboration



THE HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Building Villages To Raise Our Children: Collaboration

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"It takes a village to raise a child" is a fundamental theme in family support and education efforts. This African proverb is so powerful because it conveys what children and families need: personalized, accessible, and interconnected support. The village is an inclusive concept built on the idea of mutual responsibility. It captures the fact that the whole community and all its members, not just a particular program or agency, are responsible for what happens to children and families. The village theme explores anew a vision of family support services: No longer is it sufficient for a community to increase self-contained programs; instead, a community needs to develop a system of interrelated services. Such a system encourages agency collaboration and public-private partnerships, while nurturing the capacity of individuals to help themselves and each other.

The *Building Villages* series includes an overview volume and guides on five topics: collaboration, funding and resources, evaluation, community outreach, and staffing. The goal of the series is to provide information that will help you create a caring community for children and families, a village of services that will give children a healthy start and the family a supportive and comprehensive network of services.

Each guide provides a framework for thinking about its topic and information to apply to your own program planning effort. The guides contain practical suggestions based on the experiences of many programs. The guides also describe typical problems and the ways practitioners have chosen to resolve them. The information is relevant for programs in the process of being designed, as well as those already established.

A core group of family support principles lays the foundation for each guide. The series provides a set of building blocks for a community approach to supporting families.

COLLABORATION – working out how to work together—is not an easy task. It is worth striving for, however, as a comprehensive family support system benefits an entire community. In this guide we do not present "the way" to build a collaboration. Instead we present the lessons behind the experiences of people who have been involved in them. In spite of the formidable challenges, collaboration has an overriding benefit in its favor: It builds and reinforces mutual responsibility and community participation on behalf of all children and families.

Acknowledgments

Building Villages to Raise Our Children grows out of a decade of research about programs and policies to strengthen and support families with young children and the communities in which they live. The Harvard Family Research Project sought to capture the voices of those who work intimately with families across a broad range of settings — schools, social service agencies, youth-serving organizations, daycare centers, and various types of nonprofit entities. Because so much of what is contained in this series is practitioner based, we acknowledge the cooperation of directors and staff of the family support programs we were privileged to know. We thank our informants for the time they spent answering the many, many questions we posed in telephone and on-site interviews. We appreciate their allowing us to conduct field visits and the opportunity to observe first-hand the different facets of their work. Their reflections on their experiences are invaluable in helping us understand what good programs are all about as well as in framing the future directions of family support and education.

The *Building Villages* series evolved as a team effort within the Harvard Family Research Project. We met bimonthly with Heather B. Weiss, the project director, to define the issues, elaborate the themes of the series, and learn to write with a single voice. We involved other project research staff who shared information with us and commented on the manuscripts as they went through several revisions. Their challenges as well as support contributed to a much better synthesis of emerging issues in child and family services. Marji Erickson Warfield, Julia Lieblich, Ann Rittenburg, and Vicki Magee gave their critical analyses of our manuscripts. Our series coordinators and editors, Anne Pender, Elena Lopez, and Katherine Wrean, did a fine job of nurturing the writing process and keeping us to our timelines. Our research assistants went about their work with persistence and careful attention to detail. Anya Bernstein spent many hours conducting telephone interviews, summarizing documents, and preparing drafts of sections of this report. Mia MacDonald assisted with the minute details that go into completing a manuscript.

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Introduction

When the family support program got a call from the Department of Mental Health (DMH), they knew they had to act quickly. A young single mother whose children were in their preschool program finally agreed to enter an in-patient alcohol treatment center. But the DMH had no capacity to make arrangements for the children during the 30-day program. Their only quick option was to place the children in foster care, which the mother refused to do. Child care funds were available through the Division of Alcohol but the application process was far too long to make it feasible.

"When someone is ready for rehabilitation you have to act fast," explains the family support program director. "What we were able to do essentially was quick footwork." First the staff arranged for a relative to care for the children. When the relative backed out, they found a child care provider from the community to stay with the children. They also arranged for transportation for the children to visit their mother weekly and enrolled them in extra play groups and preschool activities for the duration of their mother's absence.

Perhaps the most crucial point of this story is how extraordinary it is. It is not the way the "system" usually works. If the DMH did not have an unusual relationship with such a resourceful family support program, the mother simply would not have received in-patient treatment. No one would have arranged for the care of her children in time to capitalize on her motivation to address her problem. And if someone had, they most likely would have given up once relatives backed out of the arrangement.

The fact of the matter is that the substantial resources that were available for the young mother were not coordinated in a way that made it possible to use them effectively. The DMH and the family support program had to bypass regular procedures to respond to the mother's situation in a common sense, rational, and efficient manner. That is a tragedy not only for families, but for staff members of agencies and programs who must labor against formidable obstacles to get their jobs done. And it is an incredible waste of public resources.

Success stories cannot just be stories of how to bypass the system. It is clearly critical to restructure systems of social support in ways that truly work for families. This is the case for collaboration in family support and education services.

Essentially, collaborative strategies attempt to provide families with pathways through complex arrays of overlapping services and to build bridges between



disjointed programs and resources. They try to coherently bring together the wide range of resources complex family problems require. And they build in the necessary flexibility and discretion to suit services to individual families and communities. And, perhaps most important, they hold the promise of better outcomes for children and families.

THE SAME OLD THING?

Collaboration holds the promise of mending a broken system. But it is not a magic formula for change. Those of us working in human services and education know collaboration is not a new or untried idea. While efforts to formally integrate services began in the early 1970s, it is undeniable that the past 20 years have yielded little systemic change.¹

This track record, however, should not breed an easy cynicism. Instead it should force us to recognize what collaborative strategies can and cannot do. Collaboration is not a budget-cutting measure — it involves start-up costs and may even reveal a need for more resources over time. And it is never a substitute for quality services.

Collaborative strategies also struggle against a political policy-making process that perpetuates a fragmented family support system. When problems are defined by categories, scattered policies and programs inevitably result. Ultimately, the policy-making process must be reformed for a truly collaborative system to be built.

REASONS TO HOPE

There are reasons to hope for more success for the next round of attempts at collaboration.

First, a healthy dose of realism pervades recent efforts. The successes and failures of the past 20 years have provided opportunities for learning and tempered the expectation that a simple plan to coordinate services would alone mend the system.

Second, the focus of collaborative efforts has shifted. Initially lodged in federal agencies and aimed at integrating services for individuals, more recent reforms



span federal, state, and local systems. They emphasize serving families and their communities rather than just serving individuals.

Third, there is a new appreciation for the range of partners needed. The need for significant participation in planning and developing programs from the communities served is now acknowledged. An understanding of the complementary roles local and “system-level” partners can and must play also bodes well for more lasting and comprehensive change.

Fourth, economic downturn has forced planners to think about how to use scarce resources more creatively and efficiently.

And *fifth*, the stakes have risen. With most indicators showing an increasingly desperate situation for children and families, it is much harder to make a case against change. This has engendered an openness to experimentation among those traditionally wary of reform. The recognition that it simply must be done adds a sense of urgency and energy to the efforts.

This guide rests on the belief that no one program can provide all the services a family may need. Community-based service organizations will have to work together to achieve the desired outcomes for children and families. The way services are delivered can be changed and it can be done by school personnel, teachers, social workers, health workers, social service administrators, early childhood educators, and others.

Our aim here is not to document the case for collaboration. It is to move discussion from “why” to “how.” We address concrete questions and issues facing program directors attempting to make the system work better by working together. We provide no academic answers or recipes to follow — our advice is guided by the experiences of those working out the nuts and bolts of the collaborative process.

Part 1 discusses what collaboration is and draws distinctions between different stages. Part 2 lists common ways of implementing collaboration. Part 3 discusses the planning process and the planning tasks. Part 4 describes and discusses strategies for overcoming common pitfalls of the process. And Part 5 raises the broader, and as yet unanswered, questions about collaboration as a long-term strategy for reforming the system of family support and education services. We also include a Resource Guide for further reading and information.



1

What Is Collaboration?

Collaboration means working out how to work together.

A DEFINITION

Collaboration is the process of combining and coordinating financial, human, and administrative resources and activities to deliver more comprehensive, coherent, and humane services to children and families.

Programs enter into collaborations for different reasons. One reason may be to overcome adversity resulting from budget cuts or a community crisis. Another might be a funding or program opportunity — a new grant, an offer of services. A leader might emerge who provides a vision so compelling that partners are drawn to the table to implement it. Or a state, county, agency, or piece of legislation may mandate the creation of an interagency task force or program.

Whether spurred by vision, opportunity, adversity, or mandate, all collaborations strive to do something similar. Essentially, they try to work out how to work together. And they work together to create the kind of “village” of services described in the overview to this series. That village tries to give every child a healthy start and every family a supportive network of services. While the village provides an ideal to strive for, collaboration is more the dynamic process of reshaping and refitting services and systems to meet and respond to the evolving needs of families.

Why Collaborate? To:

- attain better services and outcomes for children and families
- gain access to resources
- benefit from a wide range of expertise
- make services more comprehensive
- share information
- streamline bureaucratic procedures
- avoid duplication of services
- avoid competing with other service providers
- identify service gaps



So what might this collaborative village look like? One version might be a city where families are introduced and welcomed into a new community of parents and parent support providers as soon as their children are born. Parent educators visit them in the hospital and give them information about how to contact needed services now or in the future. They are invited to join other new parents in support groups, child care cooperatives, and neighborhood play groups.

The families can choose to have their names passed on to their local school. The school contacts them regularly about the wide variety of child and family services and educational and recreational activities it houses. The school also offers flexible child care in house, provides referrals to other providers in the area, and recruits the children for its Head Start program if they are eligible when they turn three. Different agencies and programs that deal with the family share information about the families within the boundaries of carefully worked out confidentiality agreements. They develop strategies for serving them and continue to monitor family well-being through a child's entire school career.

KINDS OF COLLABORATION

In this guide, we distinguish between two types of collaboration: program-centered and system-centered. *Program-centered* collaboration involves one program reaching out in many directions to gain access to resources for its own participants. It is usually driven by local initiative.

System-centered collaboration describes the attempt to create a multipartner system to address the needs of a particular population. This often involves the creation of a new entity or the designation of a new governance structure for existing entities. It might evolve from a program-centered collaboration or might develop in response to a mandate or political priority of a higher level of government or administration. System-centered collaborations typically involve government agencies, which sometimes have less operational flexibility than the local programs engaged in program-centered collaboration.



A PROGRAM-CENTERED COLLABORATION:

Early Education Services (EES) in Brattleboro, Vermont is a school-based program that offers home visits, parent support groups, and a preschool for families with young children. It also coordinates a range of services for families through informal and contractual arrangements with community service providers. This collaboration brings families services such as home-based adult education, developmental screening and therapy for children, child care, health and mental health services, and employment training.

A SYSTEM-CENTERED COLLABORATION:

New Beginnings is a cross-agency school-based initiative sponsored by the city of San Diego, San Diego City Schools, the county of San Diego, and the San Diego Community College District. After spending two years surveying the people and services in one school district, this collaboration is developing an integrated system of services for all the children and families served by one school. The Hamilton School is serving as a pilot for all the other schools in the district which are slated soon to implement New Beginnings reforms.

COLLABORATION AS A CONTINUUM

It is useful to understand the process of building collaboration as a continuum. While it is clearly not a linear step-by-step process and family support programs may “enter” at any point (and do depending upon their initial goals and resources), a continuum suggests the need to progressively build a base for increased collaboration and to institutionalize collaboration as a way of working. Each stage includes different types of activities and requires different kinds of governance.

It is also notable that as collaboration becomes more comprehensive, the goals shift from providing preferential treatment for select groups of participants to creating a better overall system for everyone. As Connie Bussie, San Diego County liaison to the New Beginnings evaluation team, notes: “Before something is institutionalized, it is just a ‘special’ arrangement. But in a real collaborative model you don’t make special deals.”



We can identify four distinct stages of the collaboration continuum:

STAGE 1:

COMMUNICATION -- Creation of an Informal Network

Goals are to gather information about other services and to refer participants who may need more services than your program can provide. Activities include networking and meeting other providers, planning joint activities, and informal referrals. Program planning is conducted through informal networking and communication.

STAGE 2:

COORDINATION -- Formalizing a Linked Network

Goals are to formalize a procedure for referring participants to other services, as well as to find ways of working regularly with other service providers and enhancing the services and resources of your program. Activities include formalizing interprogram referrals, creating common calendars, creating resource guides, and linking program activities. Program planning is conducted through the formation of a planning committee that meets periodically.

STAGE 3:

COLLABORATION -- Operating a Comprehensive Network

Goals are to create more comprehensive systems of services for specific groups in the community. Activities include pooling funds, defining common agendas of comprehensive activities, and interweaving activities. Program planning is conducted through the formation of an advisory body or group as well as planning committee.

STAGE 4:

COMMUNITY PLANNING -- Creating a Village

Goals are to most effectively use all the resources a community has to serve all its members. Activities include restructuring community services based on a needs and resources assessment of the community. Program planning is conducted through the formation of a community planning and governing board either as a new entity, an equal partnership of participating groups, or a partnership led by a lead agency.



Let's look at two of the many different ways programs might move through this continuum.

PATH 1: A PROGRAM-CENTERED COLLABORATION

Suppose a preschool program operates in a church basement across the street from an elementary school where a parenting program takes place each morning. Neither program works with each other but both know of each other's existence.

Perhaps the preschool teacher contacts the parenting teacher about a child who is having difficulties and whose parent participates in the parenting program. The two realize they have common interests and begin to informally keep in touch. Although confidentiality prevents them from sharing all available information about the family, they discuss how the parent's progress relates to the child's.

The teachers of the two programs begin to refer to each other's programs, and confer regularly with children and mothers in their programs. After identifying access to health care as a common problem, they reach an agreement with a local clinic to designate a particular nurse to work with parents and children enrolled in the two programs. The nurse "liaison" also begins to work with the program directors to add health education to their programs and makes special visits to the sites to introduce herself. She suggests working with the elementary school nurse.

The parenting program then decides to apply for a grant to expand its activities to include job counseling. The grant requires the provision of child care for parents in the program so the parenting program asks the preschool to participate. They budget an additional aide for the preschool in exchange for an agreement to include children of participants in the new job counseling program in an afternoon play group.

Because planning meetings go so well, the preschool teacher begins to think about working more closely with the elementary school on other projects. She stops by the kindergarten class to discuss ways of helping her children make the transition into kindergarten.

This process of building a relationship might lead to a collaborative of services and programs for young children and their families based in and around the elementary school. The story represents one path of collaborative service reform — one that grows from small-scale cooperation between local programs. This program began at stage one and moved up. Increasing levels of cooperation are possible because of trust and mutual respect and the informal interactions that build over time. The other typical path to collaboration is to restructure the entire system of service delivery.



PATH 2: A SYSTEM-CENTERED COLLABORATION

Suppose in the same city, a new mayor is elected with a promise of improving services to the city's children. One of her first actions in office is to create a task force on children. The task force identifies teen parents as the priority group for the first year. A committee of representatives from all the different agencies and programs that serve teen parents comes together to discuss what can be done to improve the system. These representatives include school counselors, the department of public assistance, child care providers, parenting program teachers, a representative from the local private industry council, teachers, and two teen parents.

A theme of the discussion is the fragmentation of services throughout the city: Many frightened and overwhelmed teens have difficulty piecing together the services and supports to raise their children and keep their own lives on track. The city's high school dropout rate is the highest in the state and the two teens on the committee attest to the fact that pregnancy is a leading cause of dropping out.

The committee decides it is crucial for the city to provide the services to allow teen parents to stay in school. They decide to create school-based resource centers for pregnant and parenting teens. The city's two high schools volunteer space for the centers and the other agencies agree to begin to work out a plan to either house or link their resources to the school center. The parenting program in the first example is also contacted to discuss training and technical assistance options. The mayor's office agrees to fund a new coordinator position at each school but the programs and agencies are left to work out other resources themselves.

The creation of a school-based center for pregnant and parenting teens represents an attempt to change the way a whole system of services are delivered for all city teens and their children, rather than just for those in a particular program. Unlike the first example, they start at stage three. While it is a different starting point, both programs are moving toward the same goal of building a comprehensive service network, not just a single comprehensive program.



2

Collaborative Mechanisms

This section describes ways for programs to work together. The list conveys a sense of what elements of collaboration can be formalized. While progression through the stages of collaboration requires different kinds of formal arrangements, we cannot stress enough the importance of building personal relationships and organizational histories of working together to support these arrangements.

Several Early Education Services administrators in Brattleboro claim the town's agencies had a history of involvement with projects, representation on each other's boards, and informal networking breakfast meetings that made them support EES' comprehensive family program. Raymond Sugai, principal of Waiahole Elementary School in Hawaii, makes a similar point. He is convinced that much of the success of the Waiahole Parent-Community Networking Center was due to the fact that the first parent facilitators had close ties to other community organizations such as the Lion's Club and the Key Club.

Successful collaboration, then, really combines an informal cooperative process among people with the institutionalization of mechanisms that underpin that process. It is a balance between informal and formal processes.

With this balance in mind, we present a far from exhaustive list of mechanisms to formalize collaboration. The length of the list illustrates the diversity of approaches to collaboration. It also provides a base of common terminology. We divide the list into five different areas of collaboration: administration and information, service delivery, staffing and work organization, resources, and institutional arrangements.

ADMINISTRATION AND INFORMATION

Mutual recognition of eligibility documentation. This is an agreement between programs or agencies to accept eligibility for one program as a proxy for proof of eligibility for another. Alternatively, common enrollment forms can be developed to gain access to different services. The goal in either case is to reduce both administrative work for the staff and duplication of paperwork for families.



The Department of Mental Health in Ventura County, California has convened all the providers of mental health services in the county and created a common paperwork and tracking system. The effort was a response to the finding that most of the city agencies were spending a large percentage of time on the same 30 or so families.

Common needs assessment. A common needs assessment is a procedure by which different agencies assess a family's situation. A common process assures that agencies proceed with similar information and screen a family for a range of needs, not just ones that their services meet. Each agency can refer a family to other agencies that offer different services the family needs. In addition, a common procedure means a family does not need to provide the same information again and again to a number of different agencies.

Common exiting procedure. A common exiting procedure is similar to a needs assessment but it occurs as a family leaves a service system. Before the family is "terminated" from certain services, the agency serving them would assess their needs again and refer them to other agencies if deemed necessary. In addition, the agency would collect the data necessary to follow up on the family periodically.

Referral networks. Referral networks link agencies and programs by referring participants in one program to other programs that provide services they need. Referral networks range from informal "resource lists" to formalized referral procedures. Some agencies arrange appointments at other agencies, designate point people, make brief contacts at the referred agency about a family's situation, and follow up on the referral.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Joint outreach. This is an arrangement to make information about a community's services and enrollment in programs easily available and accessible to families. Community-based service providers come together in a school, park, or other convenient gathering place to disseminate information, provide demonstration activities, and enlist families to join programs. Alternatively, a van with information, referral, and enrollment services can be sponsored by different organizations to make the rounds of neighborhoods.

One-stop shopping. One-stop shopping is the term for bringing together social and other services at one location in a community. Primarily meant to improve access to services, schools and neighborhood centers are the most common locations. One-stop shopping makes other forms of collaboration more likely simply by bringing providers into proximity with each other.



The Murphy School District in Phoenix, in partnership with the Arizona Department of Economic Security, has created a family assistance center located next to one of the district's four schools. Families have access to a whole range of social services including Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Food Stamps, JOBS, and Arizona's Medicaid program at the center. In Florida, the state legislature created Full Service Schools in 1989, which locate medical, social, and support services in public schools throughout the state.

Co-delivery of services. Co-delivery is a strategy to link the delivery of different services needed at the same time. A mother attending a particular job-training program would automatically attend a co-delivered Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) program and, perhaps, enroll her child in a designated preschool program. Co-delivered programs often coordinate calendars, time schedules, and eligibility requirements so that the same family can jointly participate.

Flow of services. A flow of services links different programs chronologically. It differs from co-delivery in that a service flow is created to meet the evolving needs of those being served. Graduation from a GED program might then lead to entry into a linked job-training program. Graduation from Head Start might mean a child is then enrolled in a particular kindergarten.

STAFFING AND WORK ORGANIZATION

Case management. Case management involves organizing an agency around cases rather than around service categories. A case manager coordinates a range of services for a family. Rather than leave the family to negotiate various agencies and to identify and secure a range of services and supports, the case manager guides the family through the process.

Joint training and inservice for staff. Programs can collaborate on staff training in a number of different ways. Staff members of different programs can be brought together for training on issues of common concern such as new federal or state regulations or new research in the field. They can also learn about each other's organizations. Staff members of one agency can teach the staff of another agency.



Sharing staff. One way to ensure linkages between programs is to have the staff divide time between two or more programs. This sometimes enables different groups to benefit from a multidisciplinary staff.

RESOURCES

Co-location. An increasingly popular way of saving rental space costs, co-location is the practice of two or more programs sharing the same space. Often the programs operate on completely different schedules. A GED program that offers night classes would not interfere with a daytime child care program. Other programs co-locate at the same time in a shared space.

Sharing materials and other resources. Programs can do more than just share space. They can share office equipment, toy- and book-lending libraries, and even staff members and staff expertise.

Decategorized funding. Removing categorical boundaries on funding is a more radical means of collaboration. The creation of a common pool of money allows a program, agency, or school to restructure funding and programs to be more in line with the real needs of the children and families they serve. Decategorization is usually a state- or district-driven effort as it requires waiving categorical requirements. The state of Iowa began to decategorize the social service budgets for counties in 1988. Now five Iowa counties have reevaluated the structure of their social service system and restructured their services. New services have been added, too, such as a discretionary Family Assistance Fund for basic living expenses in Scott County. Polk County paid particular attention to building linkages between public schools and the juvenile justice system.

Matching funding. A common funding strategy of grantors, matching funding ensures that a mix of agencies and groups all contribute to a project. The funding agency grants funds with the stipulation that 50 percent or 100 percent matches in funds must be secured from other sources. The matching funds often include in-kind contributions of staff, space, materials, and other resources.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Interagency agreements. These are agreements between agencies to cooperate, honor each other's procedures, or sponsor joint initiatives.

Coordinating bodies. These are committees created specifically to coordinate services in a community or to coordinate various innovative programs.



3

Planning Collaborations

This section analyzes the process of planning a collaboration. Planning sets a tone, focuses goals, and creates a barebones structure for a project. How it proceeds is a crucial indicator of how a project itself will unfold. Part 4 continues this discussion of the collaborative process by analyzing how programs respond to and overcome common pitfalls of collaboration.

Many collaborations happen spontaneously or informally, particularly during stages one and two. Other more comprehensive projects tend to require a more formal planning period. Frequently funders assume this time period is integral to the planning process.

We approach collaboration planning as a process that operates on three levels. On one level, it is a technical process of setting timelines, creating work plans, and writing grant proposals. On a second level, it is a political process of deciding who should participate, who should govern, and who should be held accountable. On a third level, it involves personal relationships and trust among decision makers. Many decisions involve a trade-off between technical and political considerations, and we do our best to present the issues as such. Our discussion focuses first on planning as a process and then as a set of tasks.

PROGRAM-CENTERED VS. SYSTEM-CENTERED PLANNING

Planning is a very different process for different groups and different kinds of collaborations. Program-centered planning involves fewer partners, creates a single program, and does not require broad restructuring of organizations. Systems-centered planning involves a larger pool of partners, implies restructuring a range of services and programs, and necessitates the designation of a new authority structure for coordinating and linking services.

Consider how our two examples described earlier — the job counseling program and the school-based services for teen parents — would go about planning these projects. The differences illustrate fundamental distinctions between program- and system-centered efforts. Table 1 outlines different steps these two projects might go through in planning. We refer to it throughout this section.



Table 1. Types of Collaborative Planning

Planning Features	Program-Centered	System-Centered
Partners	Preschool Parenting Program	Mayor's Office City hospital City high school Elementary school parenting program United Way mentoring program Department of Social Services Teen parenting support group
Proposed Project	Job counseling for parents in program with child care provided by preschool	School-based services for teen parents
Planning Group	Director and one staff member of parenting program and preschool. Two parents join a few of the meetings. When a counselor for the new program is hired, he joins the meetings as well.	Twenty-two people representing each partner agency plus two teen mothers, two school teachers, and a representa- tive of community programs.
Planning Timeline	Meetings begin in June one month before grant proposal is due. Program scheduled to begin on September 1.	Meetings begin in Septem- ber. Set goal of hiring project coordinator in February, renovating center over summer, and offering services the following September.
Staffing	Director of parenting program assigned responsibility for grant writing and scheduling meetings.	Staff person from the mayor's office assigned 50 percent time to project until coordinator is hired. Mayor agrees to fund coordinator position from discretionary city budget.

Table 1. Types of Collaborative Planning

Planning Features	Program-Centered	System-Centered
Information Gathering	Director of parenting program calls other programs in city with similar partnerships to interview them about what arrangements they should consider. Daycare teacher holds meetings with parents in parenting group to discuss how daycare component of job training should operate.	Four-person study committee appointed to draft report surveying all city services for teen parents. Report expected to document service overlaps and gaps. High school distributes survey to all students to inquire about their knowledge of and preference for health and counseling services. Group of teen mothers convened to discuss what they see as necessary for a school center.
Proposed Governance Structure	Project would be joint responsibility of the two programs. While each group of staff members has jurisdiction over their arena of the project, they would meet bimonthly to review progress.	Project coordinator would report to the mayor's office. Advisory board created from representatives of each partner agency. Board has advisory and fiscal monitoring authority. High school principal and mayor continue to co-chair the board. Operation authority given to committee of co-located staff at the school center.
Proposed Fiscal Arrangements	Grant would go to parenting program. Daycare center would subcontract daycare services. Daycare center office manager adds 10 hours per week to manage grant. Grant also funds salary for trainer and additional daycare aide.	Several programs would collocate services at the school without changing their agency budgets. Programs and agencies would contribute varying amounts in-kind, in staff hours, or in funds to support the renovation and operation of counseling and health center with a case manager.

Choosing who to work with is important. Sometimes the choice of partner does come down to personality. As Marcia Hunker of the Early Childhood Project in Greenfield, Massachusetts notes: "It's hard to bring change unless you have people who want to change."

THE PLANNING PROCESS

CHOOSING COLLABORATION PARTNERS

Project goals, the pool of potential partners, and the politics and history of the community of service providers dictate decisions about which organizations to work with.

Many factors influence and narrow the choice of partners for program-centered collaborations. Programs usually prefer to collaborate with groups they already know well. As they also often need to provide accessible and conveniently located services, there may not be many potential partners available. This is particularly true in small cities and underserved areas of larger ones. The parenting program, for example, did not agonize for long. Faced with a grant application requiring child care, it turned to the preschool across the street whose staff and quality it knew.

System-centered collaborations face a different situation. The goal of restructuring a system means everyone in the "system" needs to be included. Of course, it is not always clear which agencies and programs constitute the system. Planners draw lines for logistical and political reasons. The mayor in our example decides not to include the many small programs serving teen parents simply because of the impossibility of including dozens and dozens of people. Yet she does not want to exclude them. So she asks several of the directors of programs not participating to critique the planning proposal once it is complete. She also suggests establishing a community council on teen pregnancy with representatives from each local program. A council representative would sit on the task force.

Political biases also often play a role in deciding who constitutes the system. While this is a reality, it is always a good ground rule to think in terms of being as inclusive as possible without causing logistical problems or political conflicts that would block progress.

Clearly there is no formula for choosing partners, but some questions to ask are:

- *Does your potential partner provide a service, resource, or expertise that is necessary for the partnership? Does the partner meet criteria established by a grantor or collaboration mandate?*
- *Will the benefits of involvement make them committed partners?*
- *If you worked with your potential partner organization before, were the staff members good team members?*
- *Is your potential partner organization respected by the service community? Will its reputation be a problem for your collaboration or might it add legitimacy to your effort?*



- Does the partner have a stable funding and staffing base? Is this a good moment for the organization to embark on a new project?
- What is the staff of the potential partner organization like? Who leads the organization or agency? If you do not know him or her, is there anyone you could ask what he or she is like to work with?
- Do you think the partner could work well not only with your agency and staff, but with the other partners that might be a part of the team?
- How does this partner compare with your other options? Do you have other options?

Note: When approaching groups with a collaboration proposal, it is important to be clear about what you would expect from the partnership in terms of time, financial commitment, staff commitment, and follow up. Sometimes no program or agency seems prepared or enthusiastic about taking on these responsibilities. If that is the case and you have the option, you might hold off on the project or reformulate it so as to include different partners. Collaboration requires dedication and hard work. If you do not think your potential partners can offer that, it is not wise to set yourself up for failure.

CHOOSING A PLANNING GROUP

Choosing a planning group is a second opportunity to bring together the best possible set of resources for your project. It is a different process from choosing a partner organization.

A planning group can include people other than representatives of partner organizations. By inviting “outsiders,” you can infuse the group with expertise or a perspective you deem important. This can mean bringing in academic experts, organizational consultants, community representatives, school teachers, or parents. Expertise might also be added by bringing in people with different functional roles in their organizations — perhaps frontline workers or a fiscal department representative. Many seasoned collaborators also suggest that you make sure that the people invited to planning meetings are people who have the authority to make decisions and commitments for their respective organizations. The process is much slower if everyone sends representatives with little authority. This also indicates lack of resolve.²

Other people might be invited as a strategy to prevent problems in the planning process. Outsiders or certain individuals can sometimes neutralize power conflicts within a group and are often invited expressly for that purpose. Giving representation to certain groups or people during planning can also prevent resistance to a project once it reaches the implementation stage. Middle management, frontline workers, and program participants are notoriously excluded from planning projects that have an impact on their jobs and their lives. Inclusion



helps these groups “buy-in” to the process. Finally, political figures or business leaders are sometimes invited to aid in fundraising and resource sharing. Sometimes the choice of planning group is not an issue. But if the make-up of the group does not seem entirely straightforward, it may be useful to consider the following questions:

- *Is there anyone who may be more of a problem to exclude than include?*
- *Is there anyone who must be included who may be a problem? Are there any strategies to diffuse possible problems?*
- *Is the group a working group of compatible people and personalities?*
- *Is there representation from enough perspectives and areas of expertise?*
- *Are innovative and strategic thinkers included?*
- *Is the group a manageable size?*
- *Does the group include people who may be able to offer assistance developing financial strategies?*
- *Who might offer advice about the make-up of the group? Is there anyone who may be able to alert you to interpersonal or organizational conflicts you may not be aware of?*

Some groups have organized their planning process so that there are different committees — one might be the executive committee, another might be the community involvement committee, still another the health care committee. Having different committees is a way to separate people or factions that might prevent progress.

The Uplift Project in Wayne, North Carolina helps communities organize more effective service delivery systems. The project recommends including community, government, and business leaders as well as community residents in all of its planning groups. The reasons are:

- **Community residents.** To ensure that programs and services are based on the real needs of residents; to educate task force members about the realities of life; to create a forum for people to get to know each other as people not just stereotypes.
- **Business leaders.** To help bring new groups into the process; to bring business principles and perspectives into the design of the project; to gain access to funding from the business community; to ensure that economic development issues are addressed; to make certain business leaders advocate for change.
- **Local government officials.** To gain access to funding streams for services to children and families; to encourage collaboration among those funding streams.
- **Community leaders.** To tap into the resources of a community with credibility and following.³



DECIDING ON LEADERSHIP

Leadership issues become more complex as the number of partners at the table increases. When representatives of the parenting program and preschool meet, they easily slip into an equal working partnership. Both focus on their own goals: the parenting program wants to add a new component to its program for parents and the preschool is anxious to add staff members and children. The two directors also get along well. That is not always the case, however. Leadership issues often need to be confronted more directly, particularly for groups who have not worked together before. Responsibilities might need to be assigned on a case-by-case basis until a stable pattern of leadership is worked out.

In projects involving broader coalitions, leadership often falls to the project initiator. The person or agency with the vision is given responsibility for seeing that it is implemented. Yet sometimes the initiator does not want to take on this role or thinks a project might be better positioned to achieve its objective with a different leadership arrangement. For example, the school-based teen parenting services decided on a committee chaired by the high school principal. Other leadership options include:

Ask a well known or respected leader to take on the role of chairing or facilitating the planning process. A community leader might add political weight to your project and give it legitimacy in the community. A school superintendent or principal might lead to school district endorsement, while asking a public official may hook the collaboration into funding streams.

Open the question of leadership at the first planning meeting. You might let the planning committee decide who should run the process. It might choose to elect a chair or ask for a volunteer. The group — if small, ambitious, and amenable — could also run the process by consensus. Anne Darling of EES endorses this approach: "You have to be very sensitive about taking...too much of a leadership role over anybody else. You don't want to walk in and assume that you're the facilitator of a meeting."

Bring an "outside" facilitator in to manage the process. An "outside" facilitator (or an outsider with some expertise) may be useful if the planning group lacks expertise in planning a collaborative effort. Sometimes a facilitator can neutralize a highly politicized group. Someone perceived as nonpartisan might be a good choice. One program director explained that planning reached an impasse at a school where the principal and faculty had a hostile relationship. The faculty hesitated to support the program in meetings as it made them appear to support the principal. Bringing in a neutral facilitator "really helped not to put anyone in particular in the hot seat. It allowed everyone to be a participant."



Qualities of a collaboration leader: "Leaders of collaborations must...possess a strong ability to mobilize and neutralize differences. Because of latent differences in intent and turf of collaboration members, the leader must be particularly adept at conflict resolution. Moreover, the leader must be sensitive to the conflicts that individual members face as they attempt to be true both to their home organization and the collaboration. Truly effective leadership occurs when it is shared and nurtured."⁴

Sharon Kagan
United We Stand

SETTING A TIMELINE AND STRUCTURE

There is no formula for deciding how to plan. It is a task of assessing project goals and deciding how to best use your available resources to achieve them. Resources and outside deadlines impose restraints on the options for the planning process and you need to be realistic about what can be achieved in that time. If you have no outside deadline, it is usually best to set one.

As a general rule, be thorough during the initial phase of a project. The longer and more intensive the planning period the more likely that anticipated implementation issues can be negotiated up front. Yet there are limits. There is always a danger of "overplanning" — spending too much time trying to preempt problems and not starting the project. This breeds cynicism and frustration among planning group members. One planning veteran also warns against "projectitis" — getting bogged down in technocratic details of planning.⁵

Different kinds of projects also require different amounts and types of up-front work. The job counseling program sets its timelines around the date the grant is due and the projected start date of the project. The directors complete the proposal and do some general preplanning but hold off on technical tasks until the money is secured. The restructuring of services for teen parents entails a much longer process. As the program components are not yet concretely defined, some planning must involve clarifying program goals. Subcommittees may need to be formed.

Staffing is often a crucial factor in determining what type of process can be carried out. Unlike the job counseling project, which plans without additional



It may be useful to call some other projects or cities that organized similar efforts and quiz them about their planning process.

staff, the mayor's office agrees to devote some funds to the planning and pays for a staff person to work with the high school principal to coordinate the process.

There are many ways to staff a project. If there is no funding in your budget to hire new people, there are some other options to consider. You can reassign staff, get staff on loan from other agencies or from executive volunteer programs, and use college or graduate student interns or short-term consultants. Of course, you need to carefully consider what roles people can play effectively.

Some questions you might ask to determine what sounds right for your project are:

- *Is there a deadline — imposed by a grant application date, a political priority (a politician's reelection), or a scheduling priority (the beginning of the school year) — that you need to structure the process around?*
- *Is it better to have a shorter intensive planning period or a longer one? Which is possible?*
- *Do you want to differentiate your planning process between before and after funding is secured?*
- *Do you need to set aside time to study an issue and define a project or will planning be devoted exclusively to implementing a specific project?*
- *What kind of resources do you have at your disposal for staffing or for research?*
- *Do you have the staff to work on planning? Can you arrange for any groups to "donate" staff time?*
- *Can different agencies assign a point person to contact for monitoring and problem-solving purposes?*

BUILDING OWNERSHIP

It is crucial for partners to have a sense of ownership of the project. Ownership develops when partners play a key role in formulating and implementing a project and understand the benefits of participation. The recognition by each partner that he will be better able to achieve his own goals by collaborating and helping his partners reach their respective goals is the best way to ensure that partners are committed for the long haul. As Penny Robinson, director of the Goose Rock, Kentucky Family Resource Center, says: "I think you have to be willing to help [your partner] make his program work as well as your own."

Finding common ground in mission can also help break down barriers between planners who have not worked together before or are at odds as to the best way to address community problems. One report quotes an agency director:

What broke the ice was the recognition that all participants were committed to the same end — producing drug-free, nonabusive families able to help their children avoid problems like adolescent pregnancy and juvenile delinquency, and to succeed in school.⁶



The planning period is a unique time to gather data. It is the only time during a project's life that there are so few costs to revising plans to accommodate new information.

While this sense of joint ownership is an elusive goal to strive for, it develops when all partners are treated equally and when each has a crucial role in shaping the collaborative project. It evolves from a participatory planning and management style. Some strategies collaborators use to build this sense of ownership and trust are:

It is important to stress from the outset that your collaboration is a participatory, democratic process. You need to follow through on this promise and translate this from rhetoric to reality. Leaders of a collaboration need to set examples of respect and interest in equalizing power relationships and convey a sense of a shared learning process. Judie Jerald, director of EES, notes: "Several heads always think better than one. I learn everyday from everybody here, from everybody in the community. I wouldn't want to be making these kinds of decisions alone."

Provide opportunities for partners to get to know each other and each other's organizations. You need to do presentations and share information. If you think it's appropriate, social activities can be planned. If relations are too formal or too new for socializing, bring food and drink to meetings. It usually makes people more comfortable. Hold meetings at each other's offices and schedule site visits as a way for people to get to know one another.

Discuss goals. Goal discussions can open people up to each other and make people realize they have common interests in working together. It may also make them more aware of the competing interests and needs in the community. The reality is that resources must be balanced among all these interests. If people are brought into the process of balancing resources, they often are more accepting of the trade-offs.

Be patient. People need to work together and know each other to build trust. It helps to build a history of working together. Over and over again program people stress the importance of personal relationships in building what are often risky collaborations between organizations. It's always a long process.

THE PLANNING TASKS

GATHERING INFORMATION

The informational needs of collaborative projects vary widely. Needs may be as straightforward as finding particular statistics for a grant proposal to much more complex tasks such as determining which social services families use and what the community's service gaps are. There are different reasons why you gather information, including to:



The New Beginnings project in San Diego, California spent two years assessing the needs and resources of the community before beginning any new initiatives.

- *prove your case to funders*
- *complete information gathering requirements of a particular grant application*
- *identify the most pressing needs and gaps in services in your community*
- *learn about community and staff attitudes toward a proposed project*
- *find out how other people and communities handled similar issues*
- *determine feasibility of a particular project*

Look at our two examples. The parenting program has already established that job counseling is a need. But it may be useful for them to "prove" this to their potential funders. They survey participating parents and collect census information on the unemployment rate in the community, particularly among parents with young children. They also set aside time to call other programs to find out about the problems they encountered.

The school-based services project needs to engage in more intensive information gathering. They plan to collect statistics about numbers of teen parents, the usage rates of different services by these parents, and the number of teens who leave school because of child care problems. The data collection also involves interviews with providers in the city to hear about their ideas for improved service delivery and focus groups with high school students and teen parents.

Be creative in thinking about how to get the information you need. Go to the local library, city hall, or the city planning agency to find relevant statistics. The library may also have the names and numbers of other organizations planning similar types of collaborations. Survey local officials and community leaders to see if their perception of community needs matches yours. Perhaps a local college or university will have information or researchers for you to use. Talk to other providers, workers, and above all, the people you are serving. Make contacts not only to get information, but to build support for your project.

CREATING A GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Deciding how a project will be set up and managed is a crucial task in planning. This decision influences the answers to many other questions that come up — how to manage finances, or who should conduct evaluations. Governance is also a pivotal dividing line between types of collaborations. Smaller-scale program-centered collaborations usually are able to "fit" a new project into their current



structure while larger-scale system-centered collaborations require the creation of new structures.

Take the two programs we are following. The parenting and preschool programs decide to designate the director of the parenting program as the primary contact for the new partnership. As parents will actually receive counseling at the parenting center site, they decide the parenting program should be the grant recipient and will "subcontract" child care services to the preschool. They budget money to increase the parenting program director's hours so she can manage the new grant. The preschool aide will be paid directly by the parenting program.

The restructuring of services for teen parents faces a different set of decisions. With a coalition of groups co-locating and providing services in the local high school, it is unclear what the authority lines will be within the school or who the co-located staff will report to: the principal, their agency heads, or a new coordinator or governing entity?

The planning committee decides the project coordinator should report to the mayor's office so as to guarantee some form of oversight of the whole project. An advisory board, however, would be chaired by the high school principal and the mayor. Operational authority would be given to a committee to be created of co-located staff members and chaired by the principal.

A number of governing structures are emerging among the many large-scale collaborations being initiated around the country. A more in-depth discussion of emerging options and types of governance structures for collaborations is included in Part 4.

A key concern in creating a governance structure is creating fiscal arrangements. While these arrangements reflect the governance structure, they can also take on a life of their own. Financial issues range from who will cut checks to who is in charge of the budgeting process. The kind of issues that need to be discussed up front are:

- *What entity will receive grants?*
- *Will services be subcontracted to other agencies?*
- *Will funds be pooled or will separate organizations maintain responsibility for their own funding?*
- *Who will be responsible for auditing and financial monitoring?*
- *Which guidelines need to be met for state, federal, and foundation procedures?*
- *Who proposes and who approves budgets?*



CREATING AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Planning involves shaping all the information and resources available into an action plan. While all experienced planners know that any plan worth its salt must be flexible and open to change as the project proceeds, it is important to create a concrete plan with clearly drawn responsibilities for each partner to provide at least a framework for beginning work.

The elements that should be included in an implementation plan are:

- *timeline for implementation*
- *timeline for hiring new staff*
- *plan for training or orienting current staff to new procedures or frameworks*
- *plan to revise or streamline paperwork or monitoring procedures*
- *communications plan, a schedule of continuing meetings, and of written updates*
- *plan for publicity of the project (or decision not to publicize the project)*
- *procedures for problem solving during implementation — this may merely be the designation of point people in partner organizations to handle questions or problems*

It is also important to consider the pace and style of implementation. Many times a project pilot phase is scheduled. This means different things for different kinds of programs. For the parenting program, it might mean planning for only 20 participants for the first semester of the program and then expanding to 40 by the next term. For the teen parents project, it means starting at one high school during the first year and then expanding to a second the next year. Marcia Hunker of the Early Childhood Project admits: "I feel like we've been fairly successful because we started very small and have grown."

PLANNING FOR ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

It is important not to neglect the issue of evaluation as planning proceeds. While it might not be a top priority when trying to get the program off the ground, it is crucial that you are clear about what the program is trying to achieve and think early about what will be needed to measure these achievements.

Working evaluation procedures into your program from the beginning is useful for two reasons: 1) it allows you to collect data and document activities to prove your program's worth to funders and 2) it institutes a process of analyzing, assessing, and reflecting about how the project can be improved.

A collaboration poses special challenges to evaluators. You may need to first consider the evaluation and monitoring requirements of each partner organization before developing plans for the collaborative. There may be ways to avoid



California's Healthy Start initiative sends technical assistant to project sites to help programs plan how to structure their services for evaluation.

duplication of effort for partner organizations by structuring paperwork and record keeping so that it easily accommodates both sets of requirements. The partner organizations may be able to create a single new way to keep and share data.

For more details about why and how to institute evaluations, please see the evaluation guide in the *Building Villages* series.

PRODUCING A DOCUMENT

Finally, you should give some thought to what should be produced at the end of the planning process. Sometimes it is clear that a grant proposal needs to be written. Other times planning committees decide to write a mission statement or to publish a study of the community that they commission. When deciding upon a type of document, it is worth thinking about how to make the best use of it.

Think in terms of a required document fulfilling multiple purposes. For example, a report or grant proposal can help build a coalition of support as well as provide information to the community. The following are reasons why it is useful to produce something concrete:

- *If you are a small organization hoping to attract future funding, documents are useful pieces of evidence that can be used to justify what work you've done*
- *Documents are useful to release to the press or send to organizations and people interested in your work*
- *Writing a summary document sometimes helps the committee itself organize its thinking*
- *A document gives you something to circulate for critique by other people and organizations*
- *Documents are often required by groups funding the planning process or loaning staff to the effort*

Some useful things to produce:

- mission statement
- description of project
- summary of information gathered to justify project
- implementation plan
- press release



4

Overcoming the Pitfalls

What is perhaps most striking about programs that work for children and families...is that all of them find ways to adapt or circumvent traditional professional and bureaucratic limitations when necessary to meet the needs of those they serve.⁷

Lisbeth Schorr
Within Our Reach

Collaboration is far from "home free" once it passes the planning stage. This section lists and discusses some stumbling blocks in the implementation and development of these initiatives. We present some strategies for addressing, overcoming and sidestepping these pitfalls. And again, we try to distinguish between the impacts the same problems have on different kinds of collaboration.

RULES THAT DON'T WORK

Conflicting regulations are probably the most frequently cited impediments to successful collaboration. Often, program managers talk about conflicting or restrictive eligibility guidelines. Other issues include criteria about program components, timelines of funding, and assessment criteria.

Not every conflict can be resolved, but some of the ways programs have worked around these barriers include:

Reexamining the rules. The authority to change the rule may actually lie at your (or your partner's) doorstep. Sometimes rules and procedures become so entrenched that no one remembers why and when they were created. Before creating an uproar elsewhere, make sure you can't just change the rule yourself. If you can't do anything on your own, you should research the origins of the rule. Sometimes agency rules are developed with narrow interpretations of city, state, or federal guidelines. If you think your project fits the "spirit" of the guidelines, it is worth a discussion with your funder to see if anything can be done.

Requesting waivers. Another option is to request a waiver. Waivers are exemptions from certain rules or requirements granted by public agencies, often to "demonstration" projects. Legislators or local politicians can sometimes help



sway agency heads to grant waivers — another reason why it is so important to cultivate their support. The mayor of the city creating school-based services for parenting teens, for example, might be particularly instrumental in getting certain eligibility criteria waived for the high school program.

Appealing to funders or regulators. If a waiver will not meet your needs, you might take your case to those enforcing regulations anyway. You might be able to persuade them that your situation warrants a policy change or reinterpretation. Private nonprofits or foundations are often more flexible than public agencies since they do not need to adhere to legislated guidelines. Yet even though public agencies distribute money in conjunction with legislated restrictions or requirements they cannot change, much is still open to interpretation. The trick is to pick your arguments. It may be impossible to fund five-year-olds with a funding stream that specifies the funds must only be spent on children birth to age three. It may, however, be possible to make an argument to expand the definition of “educationally disadvantaged” children to include a group not usually included.

Lynda Fosco, director of the Family Resource Center (FRC) in Killingly, Connecticut recounts efforts to have legislative guidelines changed. Recognizing that “the existing guidelines restricted the type of adult education activities that could be implemented,” Fosco and her FRC colleagues throughout the state appealed to officials at the Department of Human Resources to change the wording of the legislation. Fosco said that because the project was new and untested, the officials were more willing to be flexible.

Shifting source of funds. Sometimes if rules cannot be changed, the source of money can. Most public agencies allocate different funding streams to fund different kinds of projects. If your project’s requirements shift because of participation in a collaborative venture, sometimes it is possible to shift the funding source to accommodate these requirements. Some agencies also reserve a small portion of funding for discretionary projects or projects that fit no other category. It may be possible to fund your project, or the portion of it that no longer meets your traditional guidelines, from here. Private foundations also have specific funding guidelines for different areas of their funding and sometimes can transfer your project to a different program. The possibility of arranging such funding shifts underlines the importance of cultivating contacts in the agencies that fund you who can advise you about what is possible.

Political advocacy. Sometimes, programs are able to actually get rules changed by appealing to local legislators. A legislator, particularly one involved with your project, can amend legislation or propose new legislation. This power is a central reason why you should strive to involve legislators in planning and advising the program. You should be forewarned that this route generally does not offer immediate solutions.



Linda Cantrell, director of the Family Services Center in Gainesville, Florida, notes: "I have always seen that there are ways to make things happen in spite of the rules."

Adhering to the rules, but... If it proves impossible to actually get a rule waived or changed, it still may be possible to go forward with your program by planning creatively. You can sometimes find a way to meet a requirement while not impeding your program. For example, one school program, which found it impossible to check the income eligibility of all persons attending weekend programs, struck a compromise. It certified a requisite number of income eligible participants but allowed additional people to participate who either did not meet or did not provide the documentation to meet these income guidelines.

INTEGRATING BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

Quite often it is not the rules or restrictions that cause problems for collaborators, but just the ways different organizations work. Differing and sometimes conflicting bureaucratic procedures can make collaboration difficult for staff members and participants. It can make the new project seem "more trouble than it's worth."

Here are some tips on how to avoid frustrating or unnecessary duplication of work:

Integrate paperwork. If possible, it makes sense to combine paperwork from participating organizations. A common enrollment form can ask for all the information the participating organizations need to meet their requirements.

Create a common calendar. Participating organizations should try to work on the same timeline. Schools, for example, work on an academic year calendar and have longer vacation periods scheduled. A parenting program may need to take into account the fact that children are home during the summer months.

Create common expectations of different agencies. Some agencies may offer participants transportation to and from appointments, provide daycare services, or call families to remind them about appointments. Others do not. These discrepancies are confusing for families taking advantage of multiple services, particularly when these services are presented as a unified, collaborative project. It is important to create some common policies for these kinds of supports. If a common system cannot be arranged, then make efforts to provide clear information to participants about what to expect.

Create common policies on eligibility. Many programs create their own procedures and criteria for selecting participants from a pool of eligible applicants. When working together, it is important to discuss whether these procedures



Connie Bussie of the New Beginnings evaluation team thinks sharing information across agencies is an important step. She jokes that "...the consummation of a marriage of collaboration is when you're into one another's databases."

conflict or if new common procedures need to be developed. Agencies also find that it is useful to discuss and streamline policies for handling participant emergencies, asking participants to leave programs, or referring participants to other agencies.

Coordinate computer and MIS systems. While it may seem minor, the computer systems used by different organizations and agencies can make it difficult to integrate or coordinate information and forms. The same holds true for different management information systems (MIS). In San Diego, New Beginnings has established a system to match data from schools with welfare department rolls so the school can determine which students qualify for reduced-price or free lunches without needing to involve parents and school workers in a time-consuming application process.

Heather Weiss, director of the Harvard Family Research Project, suggests a technique to sift through conflicting or repetitive procedures. "Walk through the program as a participant — Mary Jones — and try to identify which procedures make sense and which do not. Start Mary at registration. Does she need to fill out six different forms with the same information? What documentation is Mary asked for and where is she told to bring it?" You can use the same technique to try to figure out the most sensible procedures for the staff. Even if you do not change all your procedures, you are at least aware of what you are asking of your participants and your staff.

Others have come up with creative ways of conveying to policy makers and practitioners how the system "feels" to families. One state task force sent members into the field undercover with the assignment of compiling a list of services in the community. To make a point, another group organized a conference and designed its conference registration procedures to be similar to the frustrating bureaucratic procedures families must follow to register for needed services.



Sometimes confusion arises from the different jargon people use. One program director recounts meetings held to bring together education and health services: "We had a school board person, we had a school nurse, and we had some mental health counselors all trying to communicate in one language."

DIFFERING PHILOSOPHIES AND APPROACHES

Even when various organizations come together with the best of intentions, fundamental differences in philosophy sometimes make it difficult to initiate or operate a collaborative project. A classic example is thinking of a school as a place to teach, not a place to provide social services and supports. Other examples are more subtle: a doctor may look at a child's problem by focusing on the child himself, while a social worker may start with a family-centered perspective.

Working together is the best way to overcome these differences and to see how it takes many perspectives and areas of expertise to serve children and families. Sometimes it is still useful, however, to employ techniques to bring about faster learning. Some possible ones are:

- *inservice training that stresses the broad needs of children and families*
- *partner organizations doing presentations about their work and their approach to problem solving*
- *job shadowing between different professions involved in your project*
- *rotating staff members between different jobs or areas of your project*
- *distributing information about other schools, cities, or agencies that have begun to work collaboratively*
- *presentations by the staff of peer organizations about the benefits and drawbacks of collaborative projects*

Warning note: Program directors warn that some people will never accept a new approach. The best you can do in that case is to work around them.

RESENTMENT FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations outside a collaboration sometimes harbor resentments against it. Sometimes these reflect misperceptions about goals or a lack of understanding about its complex structure. Collaborations may be viewed as big and powerful initiatives that threaten other agencies. This may arise from an impression — sometimes true — that collaborations receive funding while the budgets of other service providers are cut. Whatever the reason for ill-will, programs always fare better when they maintain good community relations. Some approaches that programs use are:

Educate the community about what you are doing. Simply explaining your project and what you hope to accomplish to the community goes a long way toward overcoming resentment. Brattleboro's EES program spent one year holding weekly meetings with different groups and agencies in the city just to



inform them about who they are and to learn about the other agencies. EES social worker Anne Darling explains: "I think it's often hard for other agencies to understand how we work because it's...a different model of services."

It is also useful to cultivate contacts in the community who can serve as spokespersons for your project. There are conflicting views about when to commence public relations. While some suggest starting immediately, others recommend "lying low" for a while. They prefer to talk to the community at a point when they can point to some accomplishments rather than merely list promises.

Include other parties in your activities. Informal or one-time partnerships with different groups can go a long way toward building good will. A school program, for example, might agree to advertise for the Boy Scouts or arrange for a community group to have a meeting in the school cafeteria. Inviting speakers from different groups and agencies to give presentations or lead discussions is another way to break the ice. These kinds of gestures underline the fact that your project is aimed at making the whole community function better. In a purely strategic sense, you can also impress funders by the linkages you develop with partners outside your initial coalition.

One word of warning: Sometimes a collaboration's goals actually do threaten established groups in the community. If a collaboration stressing preventive care for children receives major funding, for example, it may threaten more treatment-oriented providers. While public relations may cushion the tension, sometimes the perceived threat is real and it is hard to retain cordial relations.

TURF BATTLES

Just as resentments can emerge from organizations outside your coalition, they can emerge from within it as well. Working together means sharing control and accountability for helping children and families. For many, this is a radically different way of working and some staff members or organizations find their roles and jurisdiction undercut by collaboration. They worry they will lose hard-fought-for autonomy over a particular geographic area, group of participants, or approach toward treatment. Strategies for containing these so-called turf battles include:

Be prepared. These reactions are inevitable. Change is always scary for people. Quite often fears are unsubstantiated and fade away quickly. Hold orientations and discussion sessions to answer questions and work out concerns before a new project starts. Also schedule more meetings and opportunities for your staff to voice concerns and work out issues once the initial implementation period begins.



Stress new opportunities. Collaboration usually brings with it new roles and responsibilities. These new opportunities can be stressed rather than the roles and authority that are lost. Case management, for example, allows the staff to work more closely with families and may allow social service workers to feel they are having a more lasting impact on the lives of family members. As Ruth Primmer of Mental Health Services in Gainesville, Florida notes: "It's very frustrating for people who work in schools to identify problems children have and to not have access to resources to help solve these problems." Co-location of services can provide the staff with these resources.

Provide forums for the staff to work out jurisdictional lines on an operational level. Sometimes it is not just a question of fighting over turf, but an issue of who decides the new turf arrangements. If staff members are involved in setting up the new rules, it may be an easier transition because they will be "bought into" the new arrangements and because they may have more knowledge of how things work on the front lines.

EQUITY CONCERN

Collaboration can also raise tensions about equity. Partners may question each other's contributions to a collaborative project. Does one group commit more funds? Does another shoulder the administrative burden of the project? Does a certain group claim credit for the project but do very little actual work?

Some complaints emerge from misperceptions about the varying resource bases, capacities, and goals of partner organizations. While most partnerships are not premised on the notion of all organizations contributing equally, the rationales behind different partners' varying roles and contributions are not always clear. Making sure everyone involved — not just the planning group but the staff that interacts every day — understands the roles and constraints of different team members is important.

The process of bringing staff members from different organizations together can also lead to other concerns about equity. There may be substantial discrepancies in salary and benefits between staff members of different organizations who seem to do quite similar work. It is important to acknowledge these inequities and figure out what can be done from your end.



CHANGES IN WORKERS' JOBS

Collaborative projects often have profound effects on frontline workers' jobs. If attention is not paid to preparing workers and organizations for these shifts, staff members may become unhappy with the new projects. What might seem like minor issues to planners can make a huge difference to workers.

These concerns are particularly apparent when staff members are "outposted" to other locations — often to participate in "one-stop shopping" systems. Some questions that should be considered when implementing any type of collaborative that involves changes in the way employees work are:

- *Do "outposted" staff members have a place to sit? To keep their belongings? To eat lunch? To make telephone calls? To make copies or send faxes?*
- *Is it clear to the staff what the new lines of supervision are? If a social worker is placed in a school, does he know what authority the principal has over his work? Should he go to the school principal or to his old supervisor at social services if there is a problem?*
- *Have personnel in the new place of work been prepared for the new staff person's arrival? Do they know why she is there and what her job will be?*
- *Do the new opportunities of the job compensate for the loss of peer support the worker had before posting? Are there ways of continuing to provide support even when a staff member no longer works primarily at a central office?*

AUTHORITY ISSUES

Authority can become a sticky issue in collaboration. The basic premise of collaboration — that many different agencies are jointly responsible for the well-being of children and families — makes it difficult to structure and define lines of authority.

The problems that arise are usually of two varieties: those caused by ill-defined authority structures and those caused by frustration or resentment over lines of authority that may be perfectly well defined but are just difficult for staff members to work under. The kinds of authority problems that can emerge are:

No one in charge. Sometimes a collaborative project is so complex and involves so many people that it seems no one is in charge. It is difficult to know who is responsible for making sure certain things are taken care of or who needs to approve operational procedures. In this case, staff members tend to either take things in their own hands and work without proper supervision or they are stalled.



Authority lines that undermine professional roles of staff. Authority lines that are worked out sometimes actually undermine staff authority. This might mean a co-located social worker being able to pull a child from class without approval from the teacher. Often these kinds of loopholes were not predicted when procedures were thought through and are amended on a case-by-case basis.

Authoritative or centralized leadership. Some projects try to overcome the complexity of a collaborative operation by creating a rigid or highly centralized authority structure. This management style usually just doesn't work. More so than other kinds of projects, collaboratives mean people are doing their jobs in different ways. Professionals need to have the authority to make decisions and the discretion to do their jobs in a way that suits an individual situation. Many projects that start out with this type of authority arrangement eventually evolve more participatory procedures.

No middle-level authority structure. Sometimes the problematic aspect of a project is not an overcentralized or confusing structure but the lack of a midlevel structure. It may be clear that a school principal is in charge of a project, but operational guidelines are left to the staff to work out. What might be needed is a consultative position under the principal. If an issue comes up that does not have to be addressed to the principal, teachers can get feedback from a person in the consultative position. Designating peer support personnel, lead teachers, or project coordinators can also make operations run much more smoothly.

No knowledge of authority lines. Finally, some planners go to great lengths to work out these structures beforehand, but neglect to educate the staff. Staff people need to know who is in place, where they should go to discuss problems, who has authority for what aspects of the project, and what their own sphere of responsibility is.

FUNDING CUTBACKS

All programs are threatened by funding cutbacks. As collaborative projects are still viewed as experiments or "extras" by many, they are sometimes at greater risk for funding cutbacks than traditional service delivery systems. Yet they also have more resources at their disposal to compensate. The broader issue of how to sustain collaborative programs will be addressed in Part 5, but there are also approaches to dealing with the short-term funding delays, cutbacks, and pull-outs that inevitably occur.

Collaboration simply puts together more minds and more organizations to come up with creative responses. Some approaches for dealing with funding problems are to:



In Vermont, 13 separate Parent Child Centers (PCCs) used to compete every year for funding from the state Children's Trust Fund. Finally, they decided to band together and form the PCC Network. They won a commitment for permanent line-item funding for the entire network from the state budget.

Rely on your partners. Since the fates and fortunes of collaborative partners are intertwined, a funding crunch in any one organization has an impact on all the others. Incentives exist for partners to help out. Your partners may be able to help you find other funding or may provide some in-kind support until a crunch is over.

Approach new populations. Working in a coalition might allow each organization access to new populations to recruit as members, fee-paying clients, or volunteers. One health center director notes that locating staff members in a community health center in a public school gives him a new base from which to find more fee-paying clients for his central health center.

Scale back temporarily. While scaling back on an initiative is often considered a defeat, collaborators are better positioned than others to bounce back. Because the collaboration rather than the specific agencies are defunded, it is often possible to scale back temporarily without disassembling any of the participating organizations, putting people out of work, or cutting off dialogue. The same project can be reassembled when more funding is found.

Use your funders and contacts as strategic planning partners. As collaboration is an important national strategy for reform, funders and agency staff members have a strong incentive to help collaborations work. They are apt to think creatively about how to find substitute or contingency funding. Think of them as partners and ask for their help.

Use the weight of your coalition to leverage other resources. Don't underestimate the power of a partnership. A unified coalition of city agencies has more lobbying power in a city than any one agency alone. You may have a better chance at getting services funded equitably by presenting your case together than by competing against one another.

Think about what can be done without funds. Sustaining the parts of a collaboration that can be maintained without funds or initiating projects that can take off with no new funds may be an important strategy to keep a project from falling apart and convince funders of your commitment. Starting something "on the ground" can also help you learn more about how to run the project.

While these factors position a collaborative project to "tough out" bad economic times better than many other kinds of projects, the reality still is that funds are limited and that planning must take place in this context. A longer-term strategy for preventing collaborative projects from being the first on the cutting block is to work hard to institutionalize aspects of the project. Collaboration should be the way organizations do business, not just an extra pilot project.



MAINTAINING COMMUNICATION

Maintaining effective and ongoing communication between partners is a real challenge. Collaborations that maintain a participatory and open planning process sometimes neglect to institute mechanisms for continuing communication and information sharing once the project begins. This is a formula for disenchantment of staff and workers and a refragmentation of services. It also often leads to one organization bearing the burden of the project whether by default or because it is the only organization that communicates with everyone else. Here are some ideas for how to structure communication into the project:

Staff the collaboration. No matter what the financial constraints of the partner organizations, it is crucial to include coordination and monitoring of the collaboration itself in someone's job description. This may mean hiring full-time permanent staff or it might mean freeing up a portion of a current staff member's time.

Staffing a collaboration is not the same as staffing the new areas of service a collaborative project might entail. The collaboration itself must be staffed — whether by creating a coordinator position or preparing for more administrative work. The job counseling program, for example, does not just fill a new counseling position and a child care aide position. A bookkeeper is also made available to administer the grant and the director of the parenting program is designated a contact person and coordinator for the counseling project.

For system-centered efforts, it is increasingly recognized that staffing of collaborations is not a temporary task. Indeed, the very notion of integration implies the need for continuous assessment and coordination of the service system.

After Polk County, Iowa spent a full year decategorizing and replanning its social service delivery system, the one-year coordinator position was phased out according to plan. Seven months into the first year of operation, however, the county realized a coordinator position would be needed permanently to ensure that the county periodically reassessed and restructured its social service system.

Designate contact people at each partner organization. Often collaborators find it useful to designate contact people at each organization. Rather than each partner organization trying to figure out the appropriate person to contact if a problem arises, the organization contact person can figure out who to contact within his or her own organization.



Issue periodic updates. Updates should include what has been accomplished, what issues are being worked out, and what issues remain. This information should be made available to the range of people involved in the project, not just senior project personnel. A common complaint among frontline workers is that a new collaborative project is implemented with much up-front discussion and orientation, and then they never hear anything about it again. They have no sense about how well it is perceived to be working, what future "phase-in" plans might be, and how their feedback might affect these plans.

One administrator notes that some groups involved in grant writing and planning "...felt left behind..." once the project began. She notes that "...it wasn't anything intentional. I think new programs just sprout up and go off in the direction they are supposed to. But I think continuing to keep planners involved and informed is real important."

Schedule regular informational and problem-solving meetings. Not only should the advisory board meet, but the staff involved in implementing the project should meet regularly. You should have informational meetings with participants and community groups as well.

CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUES

The need to maintain client confidentiality while creating structures for service providers to share and pool their information about families can pose stumbling blocks for collaboration between agencies. Confidentiality procedures are a more important issue for organizations that deal with highly sensitive information about families. Mental health agencies and child protective services are the most obvious candidates.

It is a problem both for the agencies who must figure out how to abide by each partner's procedures and guidelines, and for families who may hesitate to sign waivers to release personal information to several sources. It also can become a problem when services are being co-located. If mental health counselors are situated at, say, a public school, a mother may not want to risk her neighbors or her children's friends seeing her visit the center.



EES has a family worker who contacts the agencies children and families are referred to and fills them in on relevant details of family histories. The family worker can explain some family circumstances — within confidentiality guidelines — that can help the staff at the referred agency understand the child and family better.

Issues include:

- *how to collaborate and share information within restraints imposed by agency, city, or state guidelines*
- *what information is appropriate to share and what information is not*
- *what kind of information sharing should be required legally and what kind of information families should have authority to release or withhold*
- *who should keep and have access to information*

The approaches being worked out to these dilemmas usually include:

Waiver forms. Some participants being served by pilot collaborative programs are asked to sign waiver forms allowing different agencies to share information about them.

Interagency agreements. Many agencies are painstakingly analyzing their confidentiality requirements and drawing up new guidelines that meet the needs and constraints of all partners.



5

The Challenges Ahead

This section examines the challenges facing those implementing collaboration. If collaboration is to be a broad strategy for reforming our system of family support and education, complex questions need to be addressed. These include:

- *How can you avoid categorical collaborations?*
- *How do you sustain collaboration?*
- *What does it mean to bring collaboration "to scale"?*
- *How can collaborations be governed?*
- *How can you think about assessment and accountability?*

The section is structured as a series of questions to underline the fact there are no definitive answers. What we do here is offer a preliminary look at the issues and provide an idea of how practitioners are grappling with them.

HOW CAN YOU AVOID CATEGORICAL COLLABORATIONS?

We must think of collaboration as more than a way to provide a wider array of family-focused services. If efforts are not made to create systems to serve entire families and entire sets of family problems, there is a danger of reinforcing the fragmentation and duplication of the current system.

We are moving away from a service system based on specialization to one based on collaboration. Keep in mind, however, that we need to avoid collaborations *that run parallel* to each other. It is quite possible for several collaborations to develop in a community, each around a categorical issue such as dropout prevention, protective services, prenatal health care, or substance abuse rehabilitation. Instead of taking a holistic approach to family issues, these collaborations once again relate to families in a piecemeal fashion.

Let us look at the example of a family with an alcoholic mother, an unemployed father, one child in the juvenile justice system, and another child in preschool. Even if the mother's alcohol rehabilitation program offers her job training and mental health services for her family, a whole other system of people need to be



involved with finding the father training or a job, and two entirely different systems may provide services for their children.

Each of these four systems may offer family counseling and support services, but probably in an unintegrated, overlapping, and confusing manner. And none of the systems has a responsibility to link the family to the other services it needs. There is no overall case manager either for the family or even the individual.

Unfortunately, such a situation arises in a community when funding streams are organized around categorical issues. A critical step toward reform is for local directors to educate legislators and state agency administrators. They can identify the barriers to collaboration that would serve entire families as well as recommend the incentives for teamwork. This information is fundamental to initiate change.

Collaborations must reach across systems and focus on families and all their problems, rather than individuals in families and single sets of problems. However idealistic it may seem, the goal remains to create systems that support all the family's needs in a timely manner.

HOW DO YOU SUSTAIN COLLABORATIONS?

Another challenge is to build programs that both last and positively affect the systems they are part of. Collaborative programs that last tend to have three key features:

- a stable funding base
- a goal of systemic change
- a management style that combines entrepreneurship with nurturance

Stable funding. While no program has an easy time securing funding, there are reasons why collaboratives sometimes have a particularly hard time. First, they are usually innovative programs that deliver services differently from the "regular" system. Being perceived as experiments puts them in danger of losing funding when the budget becomes tight. And second, collaborations often require money for coordination as well as for specific services or programs. While this kind of funding is available up front as a planning grant, it is hard to sustain for long. Politicians often prefer to fund direct services rather than what is sometimes understood as bureaucratic and unnecessary overhead expenses.

Three ways collaborative projects are able to achieve a stable resource base are: securing funding for core program needs; redirecting existing stable funding streams; and using federal entitlements. A good example of core support is



Minnesota's Learning Readiness initiative. Minnesota offers school districts "glue money" to encourage them to work with existing service providers to meet the needs of children and families. A district is guaranteed money to bring together a range of services. These might include contracting with child care providers, supplementing Head Start with full-day programs, or joint activities with the Nutritional Education Program. What is important is that Minnesota recognizes the need for continuing funds in order to sustain school-based service delivery.

Collaboratives are also able to secure funding by redirecting current funding. The Family Service Center (FSC) in Gainesville, Florida is a typical case. In order to serve families at school sites, staff members from various social service agencies are "outposted" at the school and other services are "co-located" at the school site. The FSC involves teachers from the school district, an education counselor from a local community college, health professionals from the state university, and eligibility specialists from the social services agency to process WIC (Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children) and AFDC. The services that are provided at the FSC are already guaranteed funding by the government and other organizations. The task facing the FSC is not to win funding for special service, but to convince providers to deliver their services in a different setting.

Federal entitlements are another way to put together the staffing and services for comprehensive family support. The federal Medicaid program is a common example. The FSC offers health services primarily through a part-time nurse practitioner. His salary is supplemented by Medicaid reimbursements. School districts are also eligible for federal education funds — particularly Chapter 1 — that can be creatively combined with state initiatives in family support. At the Covington Early Childhood Center in Kentucky, Chapter 1 funds a home visiting program for three-year-old children and a preschool classroom for four-year-olds.

In North Carolina, Uplift is a foundation-funded nonprofit organization that organizes local community development efforts. Randy Johnston of Uplift explains the kind of strategic planning needed to sustain the funding of projects: "We're always thinking how to perpetuate our activities after [a specific] grant runs out. We got a grant from the Center for Disease Control...which we gave to the local health department to hire a public health nurse. Now we're trying to build up her caseload to a point where Medicaid reimbursements will pay for her to remain in the community for some time."

Finally, another funding issue specific to collaboratives is the emergence of entities committed not to delivering services, but to strategic planning and



coordination of service in communities, cities, and states. Most of these new entities are funded for the short term by foundation grants. As Angela Glover Blackwell of the Oakland, California Urban Strategies Council puts it, these organizations help “staff the change process.” The Urban Strategies Council has convened social service representatives, coordinated a community resources assessment process, and begun to develop a city plan for implementation.

Whether our communities and cities need these kinds of groups to plan and coordinate services for more than just the short term is open for discussion. We do know, however, that collaboration is not easy. It requires continuous hard work and ongoing investment in planning and monitoring.

Goals. Along with a funding strategy that involves long-term planning and a permanent coordination role, successful programs understand their goal is to change a system rather than merely create a single program, no matter how outstanding that program is. This goal is crucial from two perspectives. First, it allows programs to think differently about how to gain access to funds and how to institutionalize features of the program. And second, equity issues emerge when programs focus only on the creation of special systems of services for the select groups of individuals lucky enough to be in their programs. Real reform will only result from strategies that aim to improve overall systems.

While this goal is crucial, programs should not be overwhelmed by the idea of changing the system of family support services. As the collaboration continuum in Part 1 suggests, this is an ongoing building process. Creating even informal linkages between providers is a start in the right direction.

Management style. A particular approach to managing programs seems a key ingredient to longevity. The directors and staff of programs that succeed have a management style that combines entrepreneurship and nurturance. They exhibit creativity and flexibility and never simply “follow the rules.” What they do is creatively work around the barriers that prevent them from delivering comprehensive services to families.

HOW DO YOU BRING COLLABORATION TO SCALE?

The goal of the current wave of collaboration is to reform how the child and family services system does its business. But how can collaboration become a more widespread strategy of service delivery? Several different approaches to bringing collaboration “to scale” seem to be emerging across the country:



Veronica Garcia of the New Futures School in Albuquerque, New Mexico warns about trying to replicate entire program models. "So many of our services have been added on as needs were identified, which is why I discourage people from trying to replicate an entire model but rather to add it on piece by piece as your community and school identify needs."

Intensify collaboration at a particular site or in a particular community. One strategy suggests creating a model collaborative that would involve intensified efforts to bring together a range of services and would create collaborative mechanisms at one particular site. There are two rationales for this approach. First, some very needy communities may need an intensive "dose" of resources in order to make any noticeable dent in the problems they face. And second, creating a model site allows practitioners and policy makers to learn how to bring about successful efforts at other sites. It allows an expansion of the knowledge base. And as collaboration has not been brought to scale completely in any particular setting, it may be extremely useful to clarify the process and goals of collaboration by creating and studying intensive cases.

Expanding model programs statewide. Another typical way of taking a program to scale is to disseminate a pilot or model program across the state as opposed to focusing on a single site. An increasingly popular approach is for states to develop goals and broad guidelines for a program and to allow local sites to design services to fit local conditions. Another strategy is to weave collaboration into existing family support programs that had a more self-contained approach at their inception — more an attempt at local adaptation than replication. This is exactly what Minnesota did when the Learning Readiness initiative was introduced. Learning Readiness provided the school district operated Early Childhood Family Education programs with funds to develop partnerships with other agencies serving young children.

Community-based service delivery. Community-based service delivery is a strategy that begins with the premise that social problems are interrelated and therefore need to be addressed in a coordinated manner. Coordination is more likely when services are delivered in communities where they are accessible to families. Staff members of different service agencies within the same community can work together and deliver services together. Community-based service delivery can take many forms: neighborhood family centers, co-located services in schools, and service systems with multiple entry points. This is the goal for states like Florida that are trying to house health and family services in local schools across the state.

Community-level planning. Community-level planning is based on the idea that collaboration means taking stock of all the resources in a community and jointly determining how best to use them. It is more about a transfer of authority to community-level planners than about adopting a particular community-level strategy. Some localities have begun to institute community planning by creating committees and task forces of service providers to agree upon common agendas. Others are trying state-level budget strategies. Colorado created block funding streams for children which require counties to plan their own systems of services with one pool of funding.



The Annie E. Casey Foundation's New Futures Initiative comes closest to any national attempt to create genuine community-level planning across all child and family support services. What is clear from the initiative's preliminary efforts in six cities across the country is that new governance structures are necessary for such planning. While membership in such a governance structure gives many organizations authority for a higher level of decision-making, it also implies handing over some of their own authority. How to create and support such community-wide governing authorities is a central issue being grappled with in communities across the country.

HOW DO YOU GOVERN?

The importance of governance arrangements in supporting collaboration is only now being recognized. As collaboration implies a whole different way of working, it requires a new way of governing and of managing. Sometimes the structures in place are not adequate to support this modified way of working.

While all collaborations face management issues, it is usually the larger-scale system-centered collaborations that are forced to create new governance arrangements. Many smaller-scale program-centered collaborations can maintain traditional lines of authority and resolve collaboration issues informally. Some larger program-centered efforts develop informal committee structures.

System-centered collaborations, though, usually create new formal mechanisms for governing. This sometimes involves the creation of a new entity, but often involves a restructuring of existing organizations. Table 2 shows some of the typical mechanisms created.



Table 2. Governance Arrangements

Governance Structure	Description	Program Example
Lead agency	Program under jurisdiction of the school	Family Services Center Gainesville, Florida
New office for children	Legislation created Cabinet on Children and Families, which then created a proposal process	West Virginia Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families
Interagency council	Council of representatives of all city agencies	New Beginnings San Diego, California
Nonprofit organization	Nonprofit organization with governing board of community, government, and business representatives	New Futures Little Rock, Arkansas
Coordinating board for collaboratives	Board composed of representatives from different collaborative entities in same geographic area	Shared Service Network Leon County, Florida Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board Minneapolis, Minnesota
Site-based management	Each local site created own nonprofit organization to manage site operations	Child Welfare Reform Initiative North Dakota

Some preliminary lessons have been drawn from the last few years of organizing larger-scale collaborations:

No matter what overall governing structure is created, there is a need to build in site-based operational authority and room for professional discretion. Even efforts that begin with statewide authority structures usually devolve significant authority to local entities. The North Dakota Child Welfare Reform Initiative (CWRI) began with a statewide governing council. After two years, all but overall fiscal authority was transferred to local nonprofit organizations.



The structure needs to be crafted so that responsibilities are assigned to people who can be held accountable for these responsibilities. There is no use creating a governing council of people who have no power to change the parts of the program that are not working.

No one structure works everywhere. There is a diversity of answers in different communities. Many governing structures are carefully designed to mesh with the people and organizations specific to a community.

HOW CAN COLLABORATIONS BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE?

It is difficult to separate out responsibility and goals of interdependent projects. When different agencies and groups decide to work together to meet family-centered goals, they are in a sense deciding they are all collectively responsible for meeting family needs. Collective responsibility, however, is difficult to measure and to assign responsibility for. Much thought needs to be given to deciding who is responsible for what.

Ira Cutler of the Annie E. Casey Foundation stresses that there must be different criteria for joint and individual accountability. He uses a simple story to explain why.

"You and I want to pick up a big box and put it on a table. It is too heavy for either of us to pick up alone. We agree on our goal, and we agree that we will pick it up together. We try and it drops. We need to know, particularly since we are going to try again, what went wrong. Did I lift too high, or you too soon, or did one of us not do what we said, or was it in fact too heavy even for the two of us? The fact that we have agreed to do it together does not free us of the responsibility for each doing our part — in fact it increases that responsibility. We need, it seems, to measure both what we did together and what we each did. There is no activity so collaborative that it does not include both individual and collective responsibility, and we cannot give up one for the other."⁸



A clear example of this dilemma is the case of the referral networks so common in family support and education programs. Questions of accountability arise immediately. Who is actually responsible for the referral? Is it the family support worker's responsibility to check that the family contacts the referred agency? Is he or she responsible that the advice or service of the referred agency is sound? Who is responsible for helping the family take that advice? Is anyone responsible for making sure that the advice families receive from different agencies is not contradictory?

Clearly, there is no single best answer for these issues. They are the kinds of questions that need to be resolved on a case-by-case basis depending on the circumstances of a particular agency or family.

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As policy makers and practitioners work out the challenges that face them, it is important to remember that collaboration is really about humanizing the system that serves children and their families. It is about recognizing the need for creativity and flexibility in shaping and delivering these services. And it is about accepting that family issues are too complex to be addressed by services that are not comprehensive.

Collaboration is hard work. It requires a steadfast and continuous commitment to working out services for families whose needs change constantly. It demands a steady faith that better services, systems, and communities will result from the process and the practice of working together.



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A Note on Research Methods

This series is based on data collected from a variety of sources. We did an extensive review of the family support literature using the Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC). Using the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) database we identified programs that would provide good examples of funding, staff development, evaluation, collaboration, and community outreach. We then wrote these programs to send us up to date information from annual reports, unpublished manuscripts, brochures, and other forms of descriptive literature.

HFRP's *Raising Our Future: Families, Schools, and Communities Joining Together* provided a wealth of information about programs. We did a secondary analysis of the original survey data on 75 programs. We also did a follow-up telephone survey of a sample of these programs to analyze patterns of change in their service delivery.

The series also utilized data collected from telephone and in-person interviews. A number of the series writers were simultaneously involved in field-based case study research. Their research yielded an enormous amount of taped interviews that were transcribed at the HFRP office and coded on Ethnograph software. The coded data as well as notes from telephone interviews with other programs provided a rich source of material. Statements from program staff that are quoted throughout the texts come from these two types of interviews.

Each of the volumes in the series contains a resource guide that provides the reader sources of additional information on a topic. The resource guide lists and annotates references and gives the addresses and telephone numbers of organizations where further information can be obtained.

Resource Guide

Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students. (1991). *Working smarter in a shared service network: A resource and planning guide*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Education.

This guide outlines the development of a community-based shared-service network. It emphasizes the need for a strong, centralized organization and efficient delegation of duties. The guide discusses organizational techniques, client assessment, data linkages, and analysis within the context of the community. For more information contact:

Leon Shared Services Network
1950 West Tennessee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32304
(904) 487-4319

Center for the Future of Children. (1992). *The Future of Children*, 2(1).

This journal edition contains articles comparing community-based and school-based service models, suggesting funding strategies for building school-linked services, and identifying key services in planning and implementing school-linked services. For more information contact:

The Center for the Future of Children
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
300 Second Street, Suite 200
Los Altos, CA 94022
(415) 948-7658

Education and Human Services Consortium. The following two publications can be obtained from:

IEL
1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036-5541
(202) 822-8405
(202) 872-4050 FAX

Bruner, C. (1991). *Thinking collaboratively: Ten questions and answers to help policy makers improve children's services*. Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium.

This article offers insight and advice about developing, organizing, and evaluating collaborative family support programs. The author describes a collaboration "continuum" and principles for sustaining it.

Melaville, A. I., & Blank, M. J. (1991). *What it takes: Structuring interagency partnerships to connect children and families with comprehensive services*. Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium.

This booklet provides brief practical information about programs and "systemwide" collaboration with numerous examples. The booklet concludes with 10 key points of advice for collaboration builders.

Family Resource Coalition. (1991). *A guide for use by applicants for Family Resource Network grants as established by the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families*. Charleston, WV: West Virginia Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families.

This guide summarizes the Family Resource Network program philosophy. It helps applicants through the process of developing and funding collaborative programs with in-depth examples. It is helpful for practitioners looking for advice and examples of well-written grant applications. For more information contact:

Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families
Two Players Club Drive
Charleston, WV 25311
(304) 348-0600
(304) 348-0596 FAX

Joining Forces, American Public Welfare Association, Center for Law and Social Policy, Council of Chief State School Officers, and Education Commission of the States. (1992). *Confidentiality and collaboration: Information sharing in interagency efforts*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

This booklet addresses issues behind information sharing. It outlines an approach to confidentiality and legal issues. For more information contact:

Education Commission of the States (ECS)
Distribution Center
707 Seventeenth Street, Suite 2700
Denver, CO 80202
(303) 299-3692- ask for #AR-92-1

Kagan, S. L. (1991). *United we stand: Collaboration for child care and early education services*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

This book examines collaboration in early child care and family support programs. Kagan discusses the evolution of collaboration as a solution to the dilemmas facing family support. Case studies describe the conditions which foster successful collaborations.

Levy, J. E., & Copple, C. (Eds.). (1989). *Joining forces: A report from the first year*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

This report provides an evaluation and summary of the results of collaborations between education and human services. It discusses the rationale for Joining Forces, summarizes the proceedings of a conference, and outlines the results of a survey sent to all state education and human service agencies. For more information contact:

National Association of State Boards of Education
1012 Cameron Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 684-4000

Payzant, T. W. (1992). New Beginnings in San Diego: Developing a strategy for interagency collaboration. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 74(2), 139-146.

This article describes New Beginnings in San Diego, an interagency forum to bring leaders of various government agencies together to exchange ideas about jointly serving the needs of low-income children and youth and their families.

Rigden, D. W. (1991). *Business/school partnerships: A path to effective school restructuring*. New York, NY: Council for Aid to Education.

This article describes how partnerships can be a vehicle for genuine school reform, if they are linked with the restructuring efforts of schools and school districts. Clear guidelines are provided for designing partnerships that can have a long-term, systemic impact on teaching and learning. For more information contact:

Council for Aid to Education
51 Madison Avenue, Suite 2200
New York, NY 10010
(212) 689-2400

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General. (1991). *Service integration: A twenty-year retrospective*. Washington, DC: Author.

This booklet examines the history of the service integration strategy focusing on past barriers and future alternative efforts. A chronology of major federal services integration initiatives is provided. For more information contact:

Office of the Inspector General
Room 1407, JFK Federal Building
Boston, MA 02203
(617) 565-1051
(617) 565-3750 FAX

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General. (1991). *Service integration for families and children in crisis*. Washington, DC: Author.

This report identifies new, effective approaches for integrating services and includes case study examples. It discusses the benefits and major obstacles to service integration. The case studies provide interesting, detailed examples of problems and approaches. For more information contact:

Office of the Inspector General
50 United Nations Plaza, Room 151
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 566-6950

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About the Harvard Family Research Project

The Harvard Family Research Project was established in 1983 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education by Dr. Heather B. Weiss, who continues as its director. The project conducts and disseminates research about programs and policies to strengthen and support families with young children and the communities in which they live.

The project's mission is to examine and assist in the development of policies and programs to empower families and communities as contexts of human development.

The project is nationally recognized for providing much of the research proving the value of preventive, comprehensive, collaborative, and family-focused services.

The project's outlook encompasses the view that to educate the whole child, parents, schools, and other community agencies must redefine their roles to include partnerships with each other in order to support child development from infancy through adolescence. It firmly believes that to sustain gains, support initiatives need to be continuous over a child's life.

The project's diverse research agenda, supported by public and private funders, is designed to inform and shape national policy debates, advance evaluation practice, and encourage progressive program development.

The audience for the project's work ranges from national and state policy makers to researchers and local practitioners, many of whom have benefitted from the project's ability to provide new perspectives and suggest creative solutions.