



# A Guide to Standards of Practice Supporting Youth and Families

## *Introduction*

As many citizen leaders and service providers know from experience, the problems facing families and communities today are complex, and so are the solutions. Because a wide array of people, organizations, agencies, groups and businesses are taking responsibility and getting involved in finding solutions, the process of working together also is complex. Building and maintaining effective community-based collaborations is hard work, demanding the civic, professional and personal skills of all involved. Given this, the National Network for Collaboration developed the publication called “Community Collaboration: A Guide to Standards of Practice Supporting Youth and Families.”

This guidebook offers resources that users can employ to “tailor” solutions and strategies to their own specific communities and issues. Community leaders and staff will find it most useful in:

- **DESIGNING PRACTICAL HELP** to deal with youth and family issues.
- **IDENTIFYING ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS** of successful community efforts.
- **IDENTIFYING STANDARDS OF PRACTICE** important to programs and services.
- **COMPLEMENTING** other education resources developed by the National Network for Collaboration.

## *Purpose*

### ■ **TO STRENGTHEN THE PROCESS OF COLLABORATION**

This guidebook builds on the belief that effective collaboration is only the *process* to help people and organizations mobilize and organize community resources to strengthen families. Once it is clear *what outcomes* are desired and *what actions* must be taken, collaboration can address the question of *how* action can be mobilized.



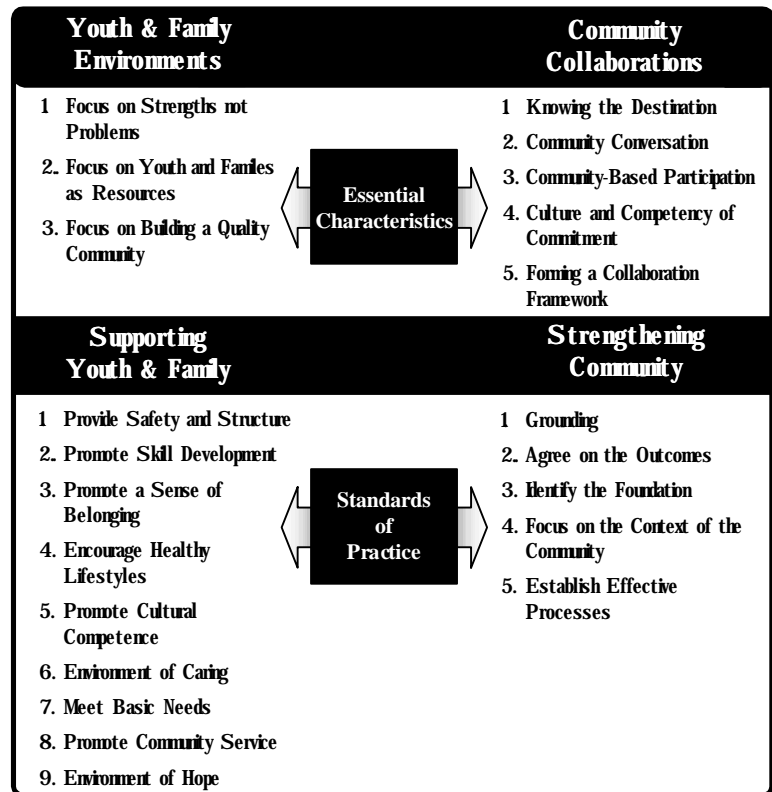
**To STRENGTHEN YOUTH AND FAMILY ENVIRONMENTS**

This guidebook suggests standards of good practice for strengthening young people and families. Communities facing complex issues require complex solutions. “Cookie cutter” formula approaches will not substitute for the enthusiasm, commitment and leadership of people and their organizations within each community.

The National Network for Collaboration is an organization of specialists who have researched the issues surrounding collaborations and have been involved with collaborative efforts in communities across the country. The resources offered in this guidebook are based in research and development from 16 universities that are members of NNCO.

This guide is divided into two parts:

- The first addresses essentials and standards of practice for strengthening the environments of youth and families.
- The second addresses essentials and standards of practice for strengthening environments for community collaboration.





# Strengthening Youth and Family Environments: *Essentials for Success*

Dramatic social, demographic and economic changes during the past 30 years have transformed America’s youth and their families. Generally young people and families are coping well; however, an increasing number are facing new and complex challenges.

Whatever the challenge may be – divorce, marriage, teen pregnancy, poor education, or lack of financial support – schools, communities, businesses and civic leaders are agreeing that when young people and/or families are in trouble, so is their community. Strengthening families and fostering community collaboration increasingly have come to be seen as interrelated and complementary approaches to solving social problems.

This section of the guide describes the essential community conditions for implementing standards of practice that strengthen youth and families. The following section details the standards of practice themselves.



- **Focusing on Strengths Not Problems**
- **Focusing on Youth and Families as Resources**
- **Focusing on Building a Quality Community**



real people impacts

## Essential: *Shifting the Focus from Problems to Strengths*

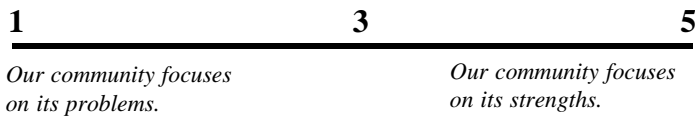
Researchers, citizens and policy-makers these days all are asking the question: “What can be done to promote the well-being of our young people and families?” This is a dramatic and exciting shift from government reports, newspaper headlines and television news reports focusing on the many problems youth and families face. Focusing on problems can contribute to a sense of hopelessness that encourages fragmentation of efforts rather than attempts to provide comprehensive solutions.

Shifting the focus from problems to strengths concentrates efforts on empowering youth and families to build the capacities and skills they need to be healthy and contributing citizens. A medical analogy would be focusing on preventing illness rather than on treating illness after it happens. For example, a person



**CHECK THE ENVIRONMENT**

As a group, place an "X" on the scale to identify where you believe your community is today. Then place an "O" to indicate where you believe the community realistically can be in three years.



who catches the flu might take medicine to feel better or keep the disease from getting worse. Or a person might take the preventive step of getting a flu shot to strengthen his or her immune system in the hope of avoiding the flu. Going a step farther, an individual might strengthen his or her resistance through exercise and a wholesome diet.<sup>1</sup>

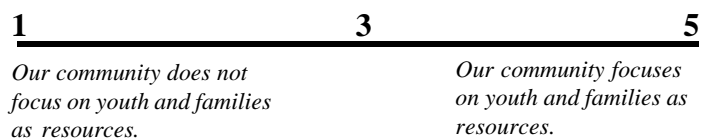
# Essential: *Shifting the Focus to Youth and Families as Resources*

Greater success within communities in strengthening youth and families is noted when there is an ongoing process in which people are engaged and invested in issues that affect them. When people interact with other people – their peers, family members and community – they often understand the issues better and can better contribute to positive solutions.

In turn, people who are involved in finding and applying positive solutions use and improve their skills in successfully addressing complex issues. As people connect and focus their efforts, they gain understanding and appreciation of the diversity the community offers. In this way, people become the producers of their own development.

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<sup>1</sup>Perkins, Haas, & Keith, 1997

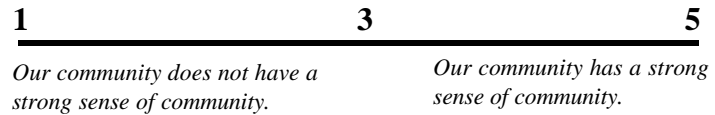


# Essential: *Focusing on Building a Quality Community*

The quality of the community that young people and families live in plays a major role in promoting their health. The quality of the community begins with meeting the basic physical needs such as food, shelter, water and warmth. Beyond these basic physical needs, healthy communities are ones that meet people’s needs for safety, for places and opportunities to interact and connect with one another, and to develop a “sense of community.” Collectively, when members of a community work together on these issues, the community is better equipped to address new and emerging issues confronting young people and families.

## **■ CHECK THE ENVIRONMENT**

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## Exercising Standards of Practice... *Supporting Youth*

# Practice: *An Environment That Provides Safety and Structure*

Successful youth live in environments that are safe. Young people need to feel that their environment is a safe place and that it cares for and values them. In addition, they need to feel there is some predictability about daily events. Safe environments include designated places (e.g., parks, community centers and meeting halls) that promote positive interactions among adults and youth. A variety of youth programs (e.g., 4-H, YMCA, Scouts, Boys and Girls Club and religious clubs) and extracurricular activities (e.g., interscholastic sports, intramural sports, school yearbook and drama club) provide supportive learning and social environments for young people.



# Practice:

## ***An Environment That Promotes Skill Development***

Successful youth live in environments that provide opportunities for them to contribute to others through community service. Engaging in community service enables youth to develop a sense of interdependency with the community. Further, it gives them opportunities to confront real-world problems and create solutions. This helps them build their problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, and social competencies. Successful youth live in environments that give them useful roles in community life. They are involved in decision-making bodies of the community. Instead of simply being objects or recipients of programs, they have opportunities to lead, make decisions, and provide input to the programs and activities that involve them.

# Practice:

## ***An Environment That Promotes A Sense of Belonging***

Youth need to have a sense of belonging to a community — a feeling that they are not only accepted in the community, but a valued part of it. “Community” is defined as the social group with whom you identify. Thus, communities that provide opportunities for youth to engage in programs, extracurricular activities, leadership, and service activities enable them to develop an attachment and a sense of ownership to a specific group. These groups give young people the positive relationships with peers and adults that they need to succeed. Positive relationships with adults provide youth with positive role models.

# Practice:

## ***An Environment That Encourages A Healthy Lifestyle***

Physical and mental health are important attributes of youth who are successful. Environments that provide opportunities for physical activity and exercise foster a healthy lifestyle among youth. Communities that foster positive youth development provide places and recreation facilities where such activities can occur. In addition, environments that guard against alcohol and tobacco advertisements are taking a stand to encourage healthy behavior.



## Practice: *An Environment That Promotes Cultural Competence*

Successful youth respect and respond positively to differences among people of diverse backgrounds, interests and traditions. Communities that promote cultural competence provide opportunities to become knowledgeable about and comfortable with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds and establish a climate of sharing and understanding.

## Practice: *An Environment of Caring*

Youth are able to draw strength from an environment that maintains an atmosphere of caring, hope, and high expectations. Through various programs and positive interactions with adults, young people develop their sense of values, equality, and justice. Youth who are in a safe environment and feel valued are empowered to act on their own convictions and stand up for their beliefs. A climate of caring gives youth the opportunity to develop values of integrity, honesty, responsibility, and spirituality. Indeed, research has demonstrated that spirituality is an important quality of youth who are resilient.<sup>2</sup>

Youth are able to draw strength from an environment that maintains an atmosphere of caring, hope, and high expectations.



<sup>2</sup> Bernard, 1991; Werner, 1990.



# *Exercising Standards of Practice ... Supporting Families*

## Practice: *An Environment That Meets Basic Needs*

Families have specific basic needs that must be met to ensure the positive development of all family members. Every family requires these minimal and basic needs be met before it can even begin to promote positive development of its children and youth. At the most fundamental level, communities must support families by providing opportunities for them to meet these basic needs.

## Practice: *An Environment That Provides Safety and Structure*

Successful families live in environments that are safe. This includes a perception that the community is a caring place where people look out for each other. Communities that are safe environments provide designated places (e.g., parks, community centers and meeting halls) that promote positive interactions among adults and youth. There is some predictability about local events and social gatherings. Family nights are a part of the community's culture.

## Practice: *An Environment That Promotes A Sense of Belonging*

Families need to feel they belong to a community and are a valued part of that community. Communities that provide opportunities for families to engage in community leisure and service activities enable them to develop an attachment to and a sense of membership in the larger group. Further, these groups then become built-in social support networks. The more supportive networks that families have surrounding





## Standards of Practice Menu

them, the more resistant they are to breakdown in the face of risk factors or crisis.

Families are social institutions and cannot effectively exist alone. They need to have a sense of belonging to a community. Community is defined as the social group with whom you identify. Such a community may be a faith community, a school community or a neighborhood. Belonging to a community that cares about the well-being of the family promotes the success of a family by building an infrastructure of social support that meets the needs of families in times of crisis.

*Social support* can be thought of as “social capital,” and the more types of support a family has — i.e., the more social capital it has — the more likely it is to weather a period of crisis without faltering or breaking.

Social support has five dimensions, including:

- ❑ *Emotional support* - sharing of information about caring;
- ❑ *Esteem support* – sharing of information affirming the importance of family members and what they do;
- ❑ *Network support* – sharing information among members that belong to a larger group;
- ❑ *Expectations* - sharing information of evaluation that give members a sense of expectations and boundaries.
- ❑ *Altruistic support* – sharing of information indicating the importance of giving of oneself for the benefit of others.<sup>3</sup>

## Practice: ***An Environment That Provides Skills***

To build their capacity to deal with challenges, families need informal and nonformal educational opportunities to develop their coping skills, communication skills, money management skills and problem-solving skills. Research has provided evidence that successful and resilient families possess these skills.<sup>4</sup> Communities need to provide opportunities for parents to develop their parenting skills, to advance their learning, and to master hobbies. Children and youth need multiple opportunities to develop a sense of mastery, employability skills and expressive skills.

<sup>3</sup>McCubbin et al., 1997, p. 9

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



## Practice: *An Environment That Encourages Healthy Lifestyles*

Physical health plays an important role in a family's level of stress. A family faces more challenges when its members are not healthy. Communities that foster positive development of families provide recreation and other facilities and services that promote current and future physical health.

## Practice: *An Environment That Promotes Community Service*

Communities that strive to create an atmosphere of caring engage individual citizens and families in community service. Such communities establish a climate of sharing and community responsibility. Being involved in community service translates the abstract idea of caring into real-world actions that have a tangible outcome and are grounded in real human relationships. Caring fosters the ability to form relationships and commitments, and an attitude of concern for and acceptance of others. In addition, family members gain esteem and a sense of belonging by getting involved in altruistic acts that are important to the community.

## Practice: *An Environment of Hope*

Families are able to draw strength from a community that maintains an atmosphere of hope and high expectations. Through support networks and their community's hope and high expectations, families cope with the sense of helplessness that they feel in a crisis situation.

In addition, family members seem to draw hope from their spirituality. Research has demonstrated that spirituality is an important component of families' ability to successfully deal with crisis.



# Strengthening Community Collaborations: Essentials for Success

As the challenges facing families change, so do the needs and resources of collaboration. It is unrealistic to expect one style of collaboration to be effective in all circumstances. Each community, like any other large human organization, has its own unique culture, and within that there typically exist several subcultures, each with its own patterns of process and communication. Users of this guide should employ the standards of practice suggested here in ways that respect the culture of their communities and their processes of collaboration.

The most-often-asked question about community collaborations is: “What will make our collaboration successful?” Through years of experience coupled with research, evaluation and development, we have learned that there is no single answer to this question. But there is an identifiable set of essential elements that form the basic ingredients for success.



- *Knowing the Destination*
- *Community Conversation*
  - *Community-Based Participation*
- *A Culture and Competency of Commitment*
- *Forming a Collaboration Framework*

## Essential: *Knowing the Destination*

An old Irish proverb sums it up best: “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.” Collaboration is the process of gathering people and their organizations together to help bring about a desired condition in the community. But before the process can work, the community must answer the question:

*What is the desired condition?*

Clearly defining the desired community condition is one of the single best investments that can be made to ensure successful collaboration. The desired condition will vary with each community and its problems. For example, a community threatened by youth gangs and



initiating the collaborations



understanding collaborative systems



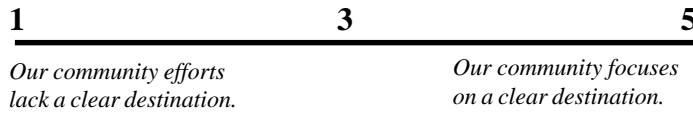
violence may define its desired condition as “a safe and secure community for youth and families.”

*Who is responsible?*

Defining the desired condition will help spark a community conversation about another important question: “Who is responsible for bringing about this condition in the community?” Citizens ultimately come to the conclusion: “We all are responsible, but let’s figure out what each of us will contribute.” Thus begins the community conversation about roles and responsibilities.

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The greater the diversity of people and opinions involved in developing and sustaining a collaborative effort, the greater the potential for tailoring solutions and strategies to the community. Citizens from different backgrounds often perceive the same issue differently. Bringing a wide cross-section of citizens — both youth and adults — together in conversation builds an important bridge between perception and reality.

*How complex is/are the solution(s)?*

Three important principles play into successful community problem-solving efforts. First, communities must recognize that complex issues require complex solutions. Second, agencies and organizations that traditionally have dealt with the problems must realize that many of the problems grow faster than they have the capacity to address them. Third, citizens must be willing to increase their investment of time and leadership to improve the quality of community life.

Grasping these three principles helps the community shape practical and realistic solutions. The participation of citizens along with agency and organization staff often opens up the possibility of solutions that previously may have been seen as unobtainable.

Community solutions may be as straightforward as sharing information or as complex as defining whole new “systems” of services. For example, one community found the source of a perceived problem among social service



providers to be duplication of services and turf issues; another community identified child abuse as the issue. The solution in the first case proved to be a collaboration in which information and decisions from all member organizations were shared. In the other community, a community dialogue addressing the issue of child abuse and the lack of care for children led to the creation of a diagnostic, treatment and counseling center entirely built, owned and operated by the community. This center was established within five years, and was the fruit of a collaboration that involved some 200 people, 23 civic organizations and more than 100 businesses. Public agency staff provide services at the site in partnership with private providers. This community found the solution to its problem involved building on existing resources and creating a whole new system of services.

*What community connection will serve best?*

To help people decide what connection or relationship will best serve the goal of bringing about the desired community condition, the **COMMUNITY LINKAGES CHART** has been developed. (See example on following page.) Often, members of a group will label the group a “collaboration” when in fact the definition and type of commitment may be very different for each. Understanding community linkages helps support and clarify the relationships among groups. In all cases, the defined linkage should serve the best interests of the group. In no case should the goal be to make all groups become collaborations; rather, in some cases, a coalition or a network or an alliance may best serve to support the group’s needs.



*“Community solutions may be as straightforward as sharing information or as complex as defining whole new ‘systems’ of services.”*



community linkages



find your group

# Essential: *Community Conversation*

Communities today have no shortage of problems or situations that require new or revised answers. Communities are stepping up their efforts at forging collaborations to invest existing community resources wisely, realign fragmented resources, increase common understanding and ownership of problems and solutions, and strengthen the community’s capacity to effect positive change.

While traditional solutions have often focused on using “model” programs, communities are recognizing the value



communication



opening dialog



defining relationships



communication



## *Community Linkages - Choices and Decisions*

<b>Levels</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Process</b>
<b>Networking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialog and common understanding</li> <li>• Clearinghouse for information</li> <li>• Create base of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-hierarchical</li> <li>• Loose/flexible link</li> <li>• Roles loosely defined</li> <li>• Community action is primary link among members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low key leadership</li> <li>• Minimal decision making</li> <li>• Little conflict</li> <li>• Informal communication</li> </ul>
<b>Cooperation or Alliance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Match needs and provide coordination</li> <li>• Limit duplication of services</li> <li>• Ensure tasks are done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central body of people as communication hub</li> <li>• Semi-formal links</li> <li>• Roles somewhat defined</li> <li>• Links are advisory</li> <li>• Group leverages/raises money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitative leaders</li> <li>• Complex decision making</li> <li>• Some conflict</li> <li>• Formal communications within the central group</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination or Partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share resources to address common issues</li> <li>• Merge resource base to create something new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central body of people consists of decision makers</li> <li>• Roles defined</li> <li>• Links formalized</li> <li>• Group develops new resources and joint budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous leadership but focus in on issue</li> <li>• Group decision making in central and subgroups</li> <li>• Communication is frequent and clear</li> </ul>
<b>Coalition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share ideas and be willing to pull resources from existing systems</li> <li>• Develop commitment for a minimum of three years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All members involved in decision making</li> <li>• Roles and time defined</li> <li>• Links formal with written agreement</li> <li>• Group develops new resources and joint budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared leadership</li> <li>• Decision making formal with all members</li> <li>• Communication is common and prioritized</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplish shared vision and impact benchmarks</li> <li>• Build interdependent system to address issues and opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus used in shared decision making</li> <li>• Roles, time and evaluation formalized</li> <li>• Links are formal and written in work assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership high, trust level high, productivity high</li> <li>• Ideas and decisions equally shared</li> <li>• Highly developed communication</li> </ul>

Source: Community Based Collaborations – Wellness Multiplied 1994, Teresa Hogue, Oregon Center for Community Leadership

Figure 1



of customizing or “tailoring” solutions specific to their unique circumstances. Although the research supporting the model program is important, the application to each community may be different. For example, a crime prevention solution that is very successful in New York is not easily adaptable to a rural community in Oregon.

Constructive community conversation is essential to the process of building and sustaining healthy collaborative efforts. Specifically, two types of community conversations are important:

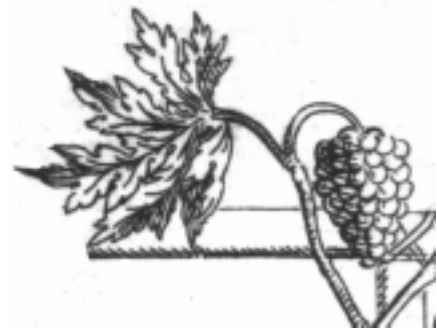
*Dialog* — the conversation of *exploring* — opens the road to developing effective solutions by bringing out options and opportunities for problem-solving and “laying them on the table.” Dialog helps shape strategies that build on previous successes and the use of current resources including talent, leadership and commitment, and helps stage a positive course of action affecting a wide cross-section of people.

Successful dialog means facing the facts. It involves, first, recognizing that the problem exists; second, recognizing that the problem is really an opportunity to improve; and, third, recognizing that the real obstacle is not the problem itself, but finding the right approach for solving it.

*Discussion* — the conversation of *decision-making* — provides the basis for implementing practical solutions. While dialog brings out the options and in a sense prepares the “seedbed” for creative ideas, discussion lays the foundation for the implementation of solutions.

Effective dialog and discussion help communities strengthen their capacity to bring about positive change. In balance, dialog and discussion improve the likelihood of:

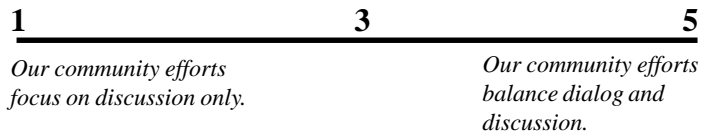
- **applying effective assumptions** to a problem
- **taking an effective approach** to a problem
- **involving effective people**
- **clarifying the perception** of the whole problem, rather than focusing only on the visible part of the problem, or on the wrong problem
- **addressing** the problem with appropriate timing
- **exerting effective control** over the search for solutions
- **focusing** on broad, effective and comprehensive solutions, rather than accepting a predictable (but wrong) or incomplete solution.



*“Constructive community conversation is essential to the process of building and sustaining healthy collaborative efforts.”*

### CHECK THE ENVIRONMENT

As a group, place an “X” on the scale to identify where you believe your community is today. Then place an “O” to indicate where you believe the community realistically can be in three years.



systems thinking

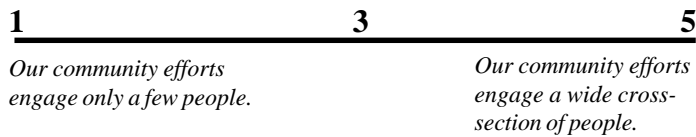


# Essential: *Community-Based Participation*

While the catalysts driving a collaborative effort may be varied — a crisis, funding, interests, leadership, etc. — gaining participation from a wide range of individuals and groups is critical. Collaborative efforts that have successfully woven themselves into the fabric of the community are those that include a broad cross-section of people and organizations. This does not just happen; rather, it must be carefully planned as a core element of the collaborative effort.

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defining relationships

First, the “community” must be defined. Is the issue best addressed by people who make up a community of interest? Is it best addressed by those within a specific geographic area? Or does the issue call for a combined effort including a community of interest *and* a geographic community?

In the early stages of building and maintaining collaborative efforts, identifying the people and groups who currently contribute in a meaningful way and the people and groups who potentially can contribute is often as valuable as the work itself.

This process can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Developing a **PARTICIPATION MATRIX** (*see Appendix A*) not only identifies people and groups within the community, but also generates expectations and helps start the process of defining roles and responsibilities.





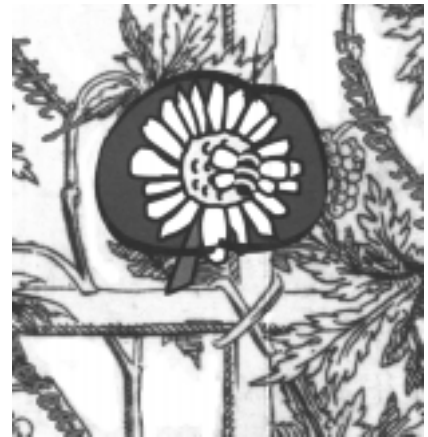
# Essential: *A Culture and Competency of Commitment*

Individual and group commitment to a desired condition and to a collaborative effort to achieve that desired condition goes well beyond signing a memorandum of agreement, confirming attendance at meetings or agreeing to serve as a committee chair. While these are important, a culture and competency of commitment is essential. The ultimate goal is to create a climate in which broad-based citizen commitment to community problem-solving is expected, and in which a wide range of individuals and groups have the opportunity, skills and resources to act on that commitment.

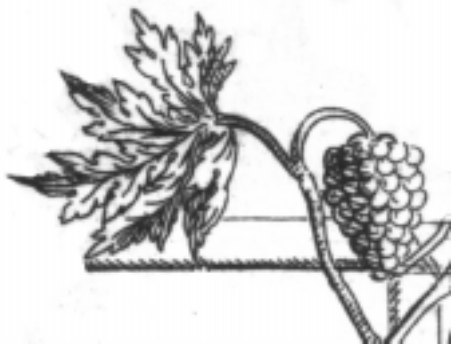
Throughout the process of collaboration, giving people and groups who will be affected by the solution opportunities to take part in its development increases the potential for a high level of “buy-in” to the solution and a higher level of competency. The criteria for community competency have been broadly identified by the Aspen Institute. Competent communities and their collaborations are characterized by:

- PARTICIPATION:** Expanding, diverse, inclusive citizen participation.
- LEADERSHIP:** Expansion of the leadership base through participation, skill building, and opportunities to practice leadership in a safe and nurturing atmosphere.
- SKILLS:** Strengthening individual skills and expectation of participation.
- SHARED VISION:** A widely shared vision of the community and its direction.
- STRATEGY:** An accepted strategic community agenda.
- PROGRESS:** Consistent, tangible progress toward goals.
- SYSTEMS:** Effective community organizations, institutions and systems.
- RESOURCES:** Effective resource utilization within the community.

Again, a community culture of commitment and competency does not simply happen; it has to be carefully fostered. One way to do so is to help citizens perceive that their participation benefits not only their community, but also themselves.



*“Throughout the process of collaboration, giving people and groups who will be affected by the solution opportunities to take part in its development increases the potential for a high level of ‘buy-in’ ... and a higher level of competency.”*



*“First, people will participate in something that is meaningful to others and will make a positive difference; second, they will participate if their involvement helps them expand their skills and expertise.”*

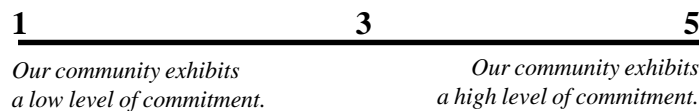
Recently, a survey was conducted asking Oregonians about their values and beliefs. Of 20 personal activities listed, “attending public meetings” was least valued; however, at the top of the list was “learning new skills for advancement.” The study also indicated that the driving forces behind citizen participation is twofold: First, people will participate in something that is meaningful to others and will make a positive difference; second, they will participate if their involvement helps them expand their skills and expertise.

When members of a collaboration were asked “What has kept you involved?” the answers typically fell into three categories:

- RESPECT AND VALUE: “The group respects my opinion and provides positive ways for me to contribute.”
- EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS: “The roles and responsibilities are clearly mapped out and everyone does his or her job. Together this makes the whole collaboration valued among the participants and valued in the community.”
- ACCOMPLISHMENT: “The collection of people are really committed to their goals and work hard toward them. As time goes on people recognize the value of working together on common agendas rather than in competition.”

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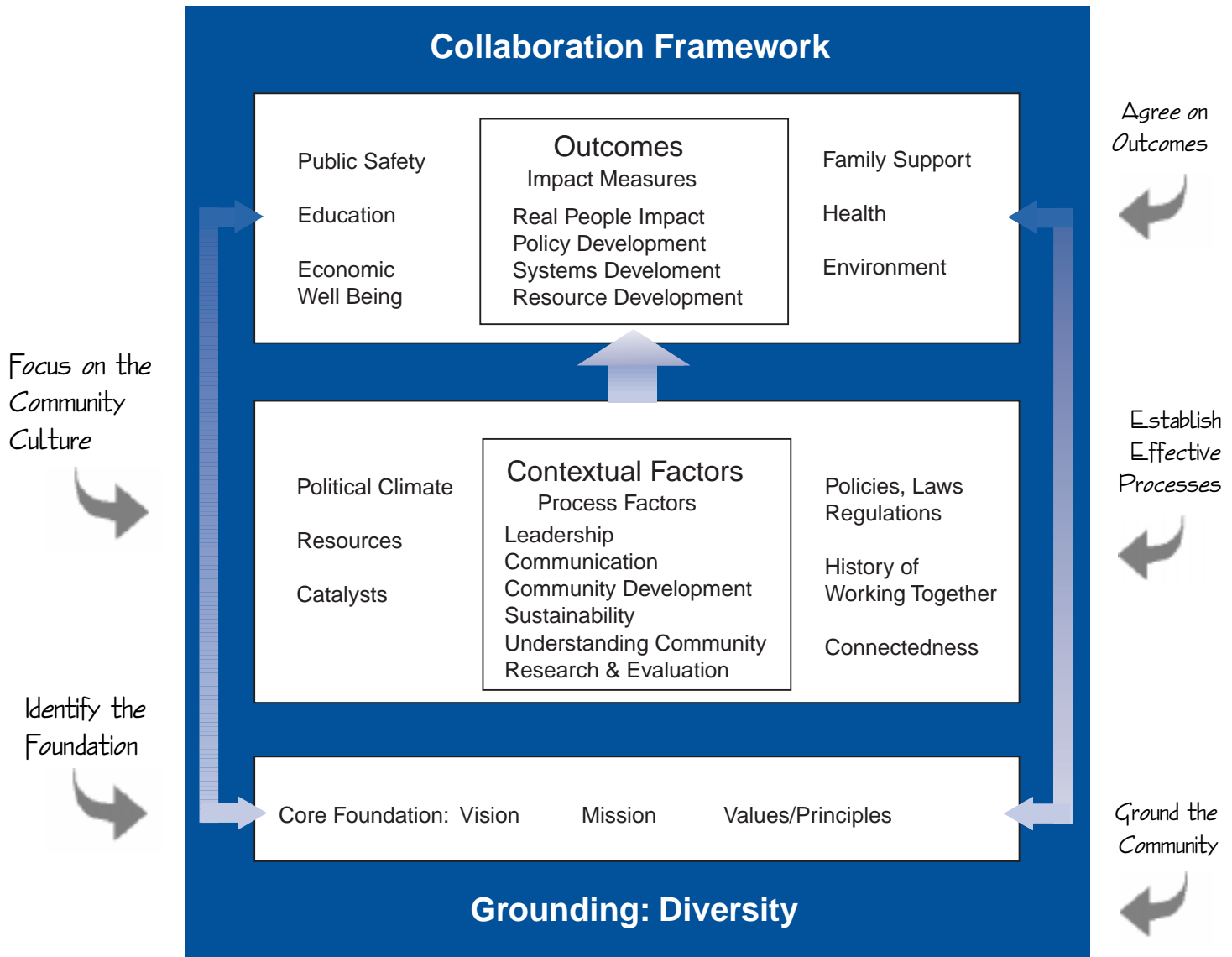
# Essential: *Forming a Collaboration Framework*

Any type of collaborative effort is like any other complex human enterprise. It has its own unique culture, and typically, within that, several subcultures, each with its own patterns of process and environment.

Collaboration members face a variety of challenges. When little risk is involved, the time it takes is usually the principal challenge. Participants in a collaborative effort often report that the culture of the collaborating group is different from that of the agency or group they represent. As the collaboration matures, its own culture develops and becomes more of an influence.



# The Collaboration Framework



The **COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK** serves as a guide for communities in establishing or advancing their culture of collaboration. The standards of practice should be regarded as a tool to help the community, rather than a restriction.

### **■ CHECK THE ENVIRONMENT**

As a group, place an “X” on the scale to identify where you believe your community is today. Then place an “O” to indicate where you believe the community realistically can be in three years.

**1** **3** **5**

*Our community efforts are not based on any of the collaboration framework elements and are fragmented.*

*Our community efforts are based on the elements in the collaboration framework and have a clear course of direction.*



# Exercising Standards of Practice... *Strengthening Community Collaborations*

## Practice: *Grounding*



grounding



importance of grounding

**GROUNDING** is based on the principle that every person and community network has the right and responsibility to contribute to the well-being of the community.<sup>5</sup> Mutual inclusiveness builds the bridge between perception and reality, provides greater opportunity for resource advancement and supports new and creative thinking.

Grounding serves as an investment in sustaining the collaboration well beyond delivering a specific service or product. The mix of people and organizations who call the collaboration “home” serves not only to represent the community (defined as either a community of interest, a geographic community or a combination of the two) but also to embody the culture and the diversity of the community. They ground the collaboration in the reality that exists within the community. They may bring issues affecting the community into focus and serve as a neutral forum where community conversation about the issues is encouraged.

Putting together the appropriate mix of people and organizations is critical to the ongoing success of the collaborative effort.

The **PARTICIPATION MATRIX** (*see Appendix A*) is a tool to support effective “grounding.”

Two broad categories should be considered in developing a community participation matrix:

1. Networks within a community — the private, public and citizen sectors or “pockets” of people
2. Leadership within the community



The “leadership” of a community is often defined as the body of citizens who “believe in themselves, in others and in the community.” This inclusive definition brings in a wide cross-section of people who contribute in a meaningful way and have particular skills beneficial to the community. Constructing this cross-section may involve considering, among other things, the age ranges within the community, the ethnic diversity represented, and the culture represented.

With the exceptions of survival and achieving personal satisfaction, all human activity can be categorized according to one of five fundamental purposes. These broad areas of purposeful human activity are:

**OPERATION AND SUPERVISION** — controlling and maintaining successful systems.

**PLANNING AND DESIGN** — creating new systems or restructuring ones that no longer work effectively.

**RESEARCH** — seeking information and generalizations to satisfy curiosity concerning natural or human phenomena.

**LEARNING** — gaining knowledge and skills by transmission from one mind to another and/or by experience and repetition.

**EVALUATION** — measuring success in achieving our purpose.

Shaping the characteristics of the Participation Matrix helps the collaborative effort to:

- develop an effective collection of people and community systems;
- define expectations, roles and responsibilities;
- chart the course of developing the collaborative effort.



*“The mix of people and organizations who call the collaboration ‘home’ serves not only to represent the community ... but also to embody the culture and the diversity of the community. They ground the collaboration in the reality that exists within the community.”*



# Practice:

## *Agree on the Outcomes*

Focusing on **OUTCOMES** is based on the principle that people continue to focus on building and maintaining quality of life — in work, play and family — for themselves, their families and their community.

Futurists and researchers have pointed out that communities and states are continuing to shift from “activity-based” to “outcome-based” approaches in solving community issues. Community collaborations with an outcome-based focus work backward from the ideal condition or desired outcome. Having a targeted outcome to work toward gives direction to near-term actions and infuses them with a larger purpose.

For example, one community that began by being concerned about increasing crime now aims at the broad outcome of a “safe and secure community for its citizens, businesses and community infrastructure.” This has extended the community discussion beyond just providing Neighborhood Watch, a neighborhood safety program, to a wide range of safety awareness, education, prevention, intervention and treatment activities.

*What are the general outcomes communities tend to work toward?*

The shift to an outcome-based focus parallels the increasing emphasis on accountability within communities. As issues such as safety and security, quality education, economic security, supporting families, health and environmental concerns become more visible, more citizens are holding the community and its leadership accountable. Focusing on the outcome — the desired community condition — provides the opportunity to line up a range of activities for a common purpose. In turn, this supports the principle that everyone is responsible for the quality of the community, not just one person or organization.



*“... one community that began by being concerned about increasing crime now aims at the broad outcome of a ‘safe and secure community for its citizens, businesses and community infrastructure.’ ”*



impact measures



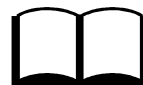
planning for change



how change comes about



understanding collaborative goals



shared vision and outcomes



outcomes and accountability



Standards of Practice Menu

*How are outcomes commonly measured?*

Four types of impacts are commonly used to measure outcomes. They include:

**REAL-PEOPLE IMPACTS** - Measurable ways in which individuals, groups, families and communities have changed behaviors.

**ADVANCING SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT** - Not only the number of people, organizations, agencies and groups involved in contributing towards a common outcome, but also the ways in which they work together for a common cause can be an important gauge of community capacity. Often, initial collaborative successes can be measured by the degree to which services previously offered in a fragmented way are now coordinated.

**RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT and DEVELOPMENT** - Existing community resources such as skills, time, people and money can be assessed in relation to a common desired outcome. This assessment may then be used to leverage new resources and in turn raise the confidence and commitment of people and groups toward reaching the desired outcome.

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT** - Established policies, practices and procedures contribute to sustaining efforts to achieve a desired common outcome. This development occurs in three environments - within the collaboration, within the groups who are members of the collaboration, and in the community at large.

The **“SPIDER WEB”** (*see Appendix B*) is a useful tool for helping members of a community agree on where their community is at in terms of 12 important variables, where they want it to be three years in the future, and how large the gap between the present situation and the desired situation is.



real people impacts



developing outcome measures



force field analysis



understanding and identifying outcome measures



# Practice:

## *Identify the Foundation*

*Maintaining a common ground.*



core foundation



building a core foundation



shared vision and outcomes



understanding and  
identifying impact  
measures

Identifying the **FOUNDATION** is based on the principle that every community is unique, and so are the issues it faces.

Whatever the apparent similarities to other communities and issues, each requires an initial approach based on its own established culture. Simply copying solutions designed elsewhere often proves ineffective. Such solutions can be successfully transferred when they are adapted to the particular community's commonly held vision, mission, and set of values and principles.

The **VISION** is the portrait of the desired future condition. While the desired outcome may be defined as "to have a safe and secure community," the vision expresses how the community will look when that outcome is realized — e.g.: "All of our citizens contribute to the safety of our community, they respect people and places, protect the investments they make, and safeguard their sense of security."

The **MISSION** is the purpose of the collaborative effort. The mission states the fundamental reason for the collaboration's existence, who benefits from it, and how.

**VALUES** and **PRINCIPLES** are the beliefs commonly held by the group. Values serve as a guide for reaching outcomes and working relationships, while principles describe how the group operates on a regular basis.

Establishing the foundation of the group allows the uniqueness of the collaborative effort to become clear. It helps strip away nonessential aspects to avoid duplication of effort, turf conflicts, fragmentation of services and/or disenfranchising the community.





# Practice:

## *Focus on the Context of the Community*

Focusing on the **CONTEXT OF THE COMMUNITY** is based on the principles that everyone has something to contribute, and everyone who will be affected by the outcome and vision should have the opportunity to take part in its development.

Recognizing, respecting and valuing the culture within the community provides a base of resources unlike any other. Gathering 50 community members together often accumulates 600 to 1,000 years of experience in the community.

Assessing the community in terms of six broad contextual characteristics sets the stage for framing solutions while allowing flexibility for those who must apply them.

These six characteristics are:

**CATALYSTS** - What are the events, incidents, or actions that serve to bring an issue into focus? Who are the people/groups involved in the issue? How can the events, incidents, or actions that brought the issue to the forefront contribute to its solution?

**HISTORY OF WORKING TOGETHER** - How have people/groups come together in the past? Is there a sense of cooperation or competition? Do people trust each other and work well in teams? Do members of the community continue to build working relationships?

**CONNECTEDNESS** - Do established partnerships already exist among groups, organizations, agencies and businesses? Do people generally know each other? Is it common to communicate openly — both formally and informally?

**POLITICAL CLIMATE** - How is power perceived in the community? Are decisions that affect the community made in a shared way? Is the political climate valued as a resource? Is a wide cross-section of people involved in public policy development? Does the community foster new and emerging leaders?



*“Recognizing, respecting and valuing the culture within the community provides a base of resources unlike any other.”*



contextual factors



what collaboration means



catalysts that initiate collaborative efforts



progress checklist



**POLICIES, LAWS and REGULATIONS** - Are existing policies, laws and regulations supportive of the issue and/or collaborative efforts? Do they serve to help or hinder the processes involved in creating a positive condition? Is the community open to establishing new policies, laws and/or regulations that will contribute to community well-being?

**RESOURCES** - Does the community recognize and value the way in which people in the community work together? Does the community value the skills and abilities people and groups bring? Does the community respect “in-kind” contributions — what each person/group offers? Does the community consider all financial sources when developing new solutions?

# Practice: *Establish Effective Processes*

Focusing on **PROCESSES** is based on two principles: one, an emphasis on working together toward the future rather than staying fixated on the problems of the past; two, the idea that each person involved can make a difference, and the impact can be enhanced by working together and applying common sense.



process factors



progress checklist

Adopting a standard of practice addressing processes advances what is to be accomplished, generates a larger number of imaginative and original solution options, and helps develop the systems to implement successful solutions.

Six areas need to be considered in defining the general processes helpful in communities and assessing the community’s capacity to engage in reaching the desired outcome. These areas include:

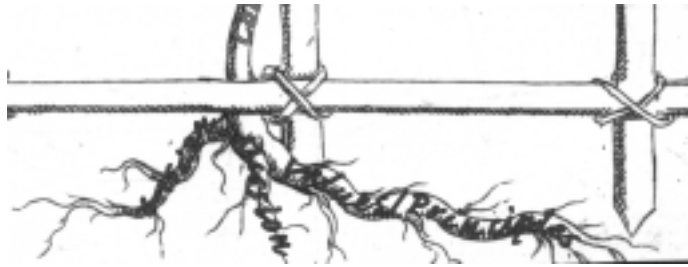
**UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITY** — What are the community habits? Who influences the quality of life in the community? How are diverse cultures woven into the community?



**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** — How does the community mobilize itself to address existing and/or emerging issues? What are the short- and long-term goals within the community? Who is involved in leading and advocating for the community health and well-being? Why is community development important to the community?

**LEADERSHIP** — How do people bring about change in the community? Who is valued in leading positive change? Why are people investing in their community? What influences people to serve as leaders?

**COMMUNICATION** — Is communication among groups open and clear? Are formal and informal networks of communication a regular part of the community? Are existing systems of communication used to the greatest advantage before developing new ones?



**RESEARCH AND EVALUATION** — Has information been collected that will contribute to the community’s solution? What are the measures of success? How and what is evaluated? What are the previous experiences in this community and others that contribute favorably to the community?

*“Are the community systems in place that support the collaborative effort and the desired outcomes? ... How will the effort be sustained?”*

**SUSTAINABILITY** — Are community systems in place that support the collaborative effort and the desired outcomes? Who is committed to sustaining efforts in the short and long term? Why should this community effort be sustained? How will the effort be sustained? How will the community know when the effort is being sustained? What trends and changes in the com-



organization of information



evaluating your efforts

**MERGING THE ESSENTIALS AND PRACTICES**

*Throughout this guide, essentials and practices have been offered that address the process of collaboration and the content of youth and family development. Simple graphics have been provided as tools to help people and groups apply this information.*

*Additional support and education is available through the National Network for Collaboration. These resources may be accessed through the web site: <http://www.cyfernet.org/>*



## Appendix A: Participation Matrix

		<i>Community Leadership</i>																
		<i>Private</i>					<i>Public</i>					<i>Citizen</i>						
<i>Community Networks</i>		Local Company	Attorneys	Private Schools	Spiritual Community	Medical Community	Non-Profit	Public Safety	Education	Natural Resources	Human Services	Art Centers	Civic Groups	Senior Services	Youth Groups	Sports Groups	Spanish Clubs	
	<i>Age</i>	Youth																
		20-35																
		35-65																
		65+																
	<i>Diversity</i>	Native American																
		Hispanic																
		Caucasian																
		Asian																
		African American																
<i>Styles of Leadership</i>	Visionary																	
	Strategist																	
	Communicator																	
	Peacekeeper																	
	Mobilizer																	
	Organizer																	
<i>Geographic</i>	N. Neighborhood																	
	S. Neighborhood																	
	E. Neighborhood																	
	W. Neighborhood																	



defining  
relationships



checklists for  
working together



spider web

## Using the Participation Matrix

Defining who participates in any collaborative effort is a process that is *inclusive*, *strategic* and *ongoing*. Each adjective supports the core principle of community-based collaborations: *The community is responsible for the issues it faces*.

When communities recognize the issues they face are complex and no one agency or organization can solve them alone, a door is opened to engage a wide cross-section of people in addressing community issues. Being *inclusive* of a broad array of people and organizations helps align existing resources and create new and dynamic ways to address issues.

Determining who should be involved and how is a basic *strategic* element of the collaboration process. If people are allowed to do what they do best and if their tasks are clear, then effective participation and collaboration is ensured. Assembling an array of people who are personally and/or professionally committed to an issue is a challenging but worthwhile investment.

The Participation Matrix serves as a worksheet to “map” the community. Mapping the community begins by asking: “*What ‘pockets’ or networks of people make up our community?*” How do people earn their money? Where do people gather for leisure activities? Who leads the community? Who are the people/groups who get things done? Who are the “hidden” groups of people within our community? Asking questions like these will fill in the blanks on the horizontal axis of the Participation Matrix.

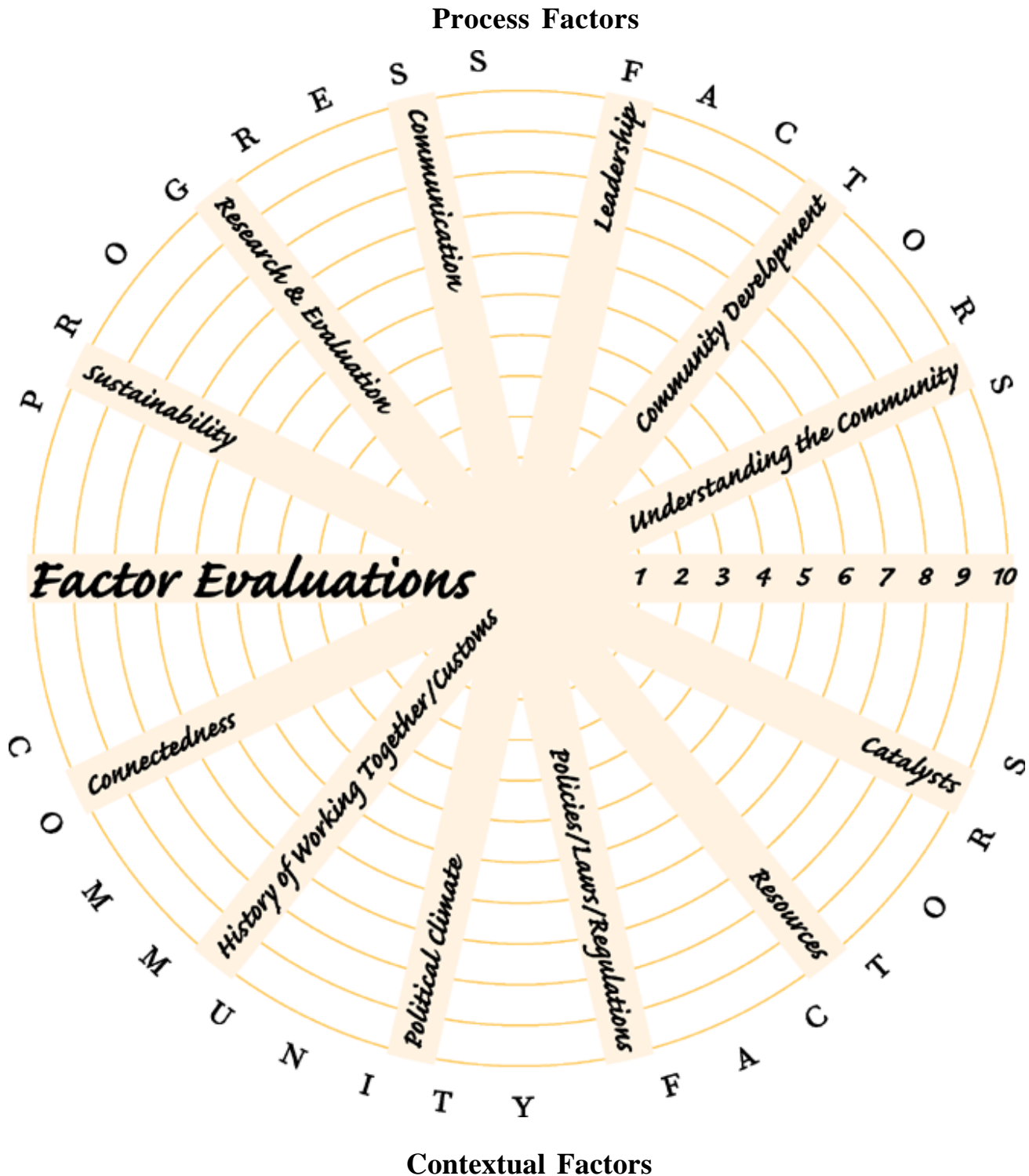
The second broad question to ask is: “*What kinds of skills and backgrounds do we need?*” What are the neighborhoods/towns that should be represented? What ethnic groups, age brackets, etc. groups are in our community? What type of leadership skills do we need? Asking questions like these helps fill in the blanks on the vertical axis.

As names of people are filled in on the grid, more than one person often will come to mind for a particular category. Record as many people on the grid as possible. Use the matrix as a guide to include the wide range of people in the community in a strategic way. This matrix not only will help identify people who should be part of the collaboration process, but it will also will clarify the role of each person and how you view his or her connections to the community.

Filling in the Participation Matrix is not a “one-shot” undertaking; rather, it becomes the basis for an *ongoing* planning effort. As more people become involved, more resources will be identified.



# Appendix B: The 'Spider Web'





6 process factors



6 contextual factors



analysis of  
process &  
contextual factors



spider web

## Using the "Spider Web"

The Spider Web is a tool specifically designed to develop an understanding of where the community is today and where it would like to be in three years. Specifically, the Spider Web helps the group:

- Review each of the 12 factors important to any level of collaboration;
- Discuss which factors are most important to the group, without losing sight of all factors;
- Target future desired outcomes; and
- Measure progress

### STEP 1: IDENTIFYING WHERE THE COMMUNITY IS TODAY

Following a brief definition of each factor, group members give their assessment of the strength of influence each factor currently has in the community. This is accomplished by individuals placing a red dot on each spoke of the spider web. The center of the spoke indicates little strength and the outer rim of the spoke indicates great strength.

### STEP 2: IDENTIFYING WHERE THE COMMUNITY IDEALLY COULD BE IN THREE YEARS

While it is important to recognize and appreciate perspectives of the current community, it is equally valuable to reach a common agreement on where the community ideally could be in three years. Individuals place a green dot indicating their realistic hopes for where they would like the community to be in the future.

### STEP 3: CREATING THE WEB

Two strands of the spider web can now be filled in — one (in red) indicating the current perspective and the second (in green) indicating where the group believes the community can be in three years. The gap on each spoke should be discussed. Some gaps will be narrow, while others may be very wide. Obviously, wider gaps indicate that more effort may be required to bridge them.

### STEP 4: DEFINING AND MEASURING ACTIONS

Seeing where a community is now and where it would like to be in terms of the 12 factors can help the community chart positive courses of action for collaboration. But, like the Participation Matrix, the Spider Web is not a "one-shot" exercise; it is most effective when used as a continuing working tool for the group. The Spider Web helps identify success and chart new courses of action based on changes within the community.



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