Effective Strategies for Interagency Collaboration

Presented by:

Joe Jarret
Attorney At Law
Federal & State Mediator
“Politics is an honorable undertaking and public service is among the highest callings open to members of the human society.”
Diapers & Politicians should be changed often both for the same reason.
What is Interagency Collaboration?

- A mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more [individuals or] organizations to achieve common goals.
What is Interagency Collaboration?

• Includes a commitment to:
  – a definition of mutual relationships and goals;
  – a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility;
  – mutual authority and accountability for success;
  – sharing of resources and rewards.
Why Collaboration is Important

• Recreation and park services are citizen-oriented.

• Services are generally administered by professionals who have their own:
  • categories that reflect a particular focus
  • sources of funding
  • guidelines
  • accountability requirements
  • outcomes
Why Collaboration is Important

• Sufficient funds are often not available to provide necessary recreation and park services to a diverse population.
Barriers to Effective Collaboration

- Lack of shared information across agencies
- Piecemeal approach to providing services
- Ineffectual interagency agreements
- Inefficient and ineffective management practices for establishing interagency teams
If the governor finds that two (2) or more adjoining counties would be better served by an inter-jurisdictional arrangement than by maintaining separate emergency management agencies and service, the governor may delineate by executive order a joint emergency plan, a provision for mutual aid, or an area organization for emergency planning and services.
Some essential elements of comprehensive service delivery made possible through interagency collaboration:

- Easy access to wide array of support services, no matter who provides those services

- Techniques to ensure that appropriate services are received and are adjusted to meet the changing needs of citizens

- A focus on the whole community
Some essential elements of comprehensive service delivery made possible through interagency collaboration:

• **Agencies are empowered within an atmosphere of mutual respect**

• **Continuity in delivery of services and support, with trust-building relationships between agencies**

• **Emphasis upon improved outcomes for citizens.**
Is Interagency Collaboration the Solution?

Questions to ask:

- **Do I need help?** Is my organization able to achieve the desired outcome single handedly?
- **Is there someone who can help?** Are there agencies or organizations that desire similar results with whom I can partner?
- **Will they want to help?** Will this collaboration also help the other organization achieve their goals?
- **Is it worth the effort?** Can I afford (or not afford) to spend the time developing this relationship?
- **Can I use the help when it is provided?** What about my organization will have to change to work effectively with other organizations?
These questions underscore:

• Need to identify **common interests** among the organizations that will be expected to collaborate.

• Need to assure that **each organization has something to gain** from the process.

• Fact that collaborative planning **takes resources and time** as the potential collaborating organizations have to learn about and establish trust with one another.

• Recognition that interagency collaboration is **a means to an end** and not an end in itself.
Levels of Collaboration

- Networking
- Cooperation
- Partnership
- Coalition
- Collaboration
Networking

- Most informal level of collaboration
- Individuals network to
  - Share information and dialogue
  - Create a common understanding
Cooperation

Staff or agencies cooperate to

- Limit duplication of services
- Match Needs
- Ensure tasks are done
- Leverage resources
Partnership

Partnerships:

- Agencies share resources to address common issues
- Involve the decision-makers of organizations
- Maintain autonomous leadership of collaborating organizations
Coalition

Coalitions:

- Pull together resources from existing systems
- Define roles and formalize relationships
- Share leadership
Collaborations:

- Are based on a shared vision
- Establish clear goals
- Work towards an interdependent system
- Practice consensus in decision making
- Have written interagency agreements
- Evaluate progress & outcomes
Risk Avoidance by Reducing Agreements to Writing
Risk Avoidance by Reducing Agreements to Writing

• Your written agreement should:
  • Clarify whether leadership will be shared between one or more agencies, as well as the roles and responsibilities of affected personnel
  • Clarify which agency will act as a lead agency and who within the lead agency will be in charge by name or position
  • Clearly define short-term and long-term outcomes
  • Determine the best way to track and monitor progress toward the short-term and long-term outcomes
Risk Avoidance by Reducing Agreements to Writing

• Outline a means by which assisting personnel are recognized and rewarded
• Provide for common terminology and definitions
• Further, the agreement should determine:
  • How leadership will be sustained over the long-term
  • A commitment that the assisting agency has the ability to commit requested resources.
Guidelines for Effective Collaborative Planning

• **Involve all key players** - Commitment to change must be broad-based and should include the participation of not only those with the power to negotiate change, but representatives from the citizenry whose lives will be affected.

• **Choose a realistic strategy** - Partners need to choose a strategy that reflects the priorities of service providers, the public, and key policymakers; the availability of resources; and local needs.
Guidelines for Effective Collaborative Planning

- **Establish a shared vision** - Cooperative ventures are based on a recognition of shared clients. Collaborative partnerships must create a shared vision of better outcomes for the citizens they both serve.

- **Agree to disagree** - Participants need to establish a communication process that gives them permission to disagree and uses conflict/resolution as a constructive means of moving forward.

- **Make promises you can keep** - Setting attainable objectives, especially in the beginning, is necessary to create momentum and a sense of accomplishment.
Guidelines for Effective Collaborative Planning

- **Build ownership at all levels** - commitment to change must extend throughout the organizational structure of each participating agency. In-service staff training should allow staff time to air feelings about proposed changes and to predict resulting outcomes of the changes.

- **Avoid "red herrings"** - Partners should not let "technical difficulties" impede the development of a shared vision. Most differences usually result from misunderstandings or from policies that can be changed or otherwise accommodated. They should not be allowed to become convenient excuses for partners not fully committed to working together.
Guidelines for Effective Collaborative Planning

• **Keep your eyes on the prize** - It is easy for collaborative initiatives to become so bogged down in the difficulty of day-to-day operations and disagreements that they lose sight of the forest for the trees. We are striving for better outcomes and more successful futures for our citizens.

• **Institutionalize change** - Participants must incorporate partnership objectives into their own institutional mandates and budgets, and earmark the permanent flow of adequate resources to keep joint efforts going.
Guidelines for Effective Collaborative Planning

- Publicize your success - Interagency partnerships are a promising conduit for the large-scale creation and delivery of comprehensive services to citizens.

- Well-publicized results that consistently meet reasonable objectives will go far to attract the funding necessary to replicate and expand innovation.
Frontline service providers must be prepared to:

- Listen to and understand needs of whole community
- Establish relationships with citizens so you can meet these needs
- Develop and implement strategies that empower citizens to make appropriate decisions leading to self sufficiency
- Know the resources available within the community to meet special needs which they cannot be meet
Frontline service providers must be prepared to:

- Communicate with other service providers who can provide resources to your citizens
- Establish teamwork with other workers when citizens need services from several organizations at once
- Build community relationships and connections with organizations and individuals who can help support your citizens
To be successful, frontline workers must:

• Receive training so they can respond to a wide variety of citizen needs
• Have access to professional advice and support on new issues as they arise
• Be treated with professional respect and rewarded for using discretion
• Have job expectations which recognize the time it takes to identify and involve community organizations