BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY THROUGH COLLABORATION

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In the current globally economic environment, the push to consider various partnerships and collaboration to be more efficient and effective in addressing issues in civil society is great. Collaboration does allow organizations to often provide new or improved services. In the overview paper, Dwight Burlingame will cover the different types of collaboration: Information sharing, joint programming, administrative consolidation, joint ventures, management service organizations, group structures, and mergers. This overview will set the context for the three other papers of the panel.

Four major theories are often used to explain why organizations work together.

- Resource dependency theory, transaction cost theory, institutional theory and network theory are covered. Further the main motivations for partnering will be explored as is evidenced from the literature and research of practices. These motivations are financial, mission, and environmental.

In this paper, implementation issues to be considered when an organization is seeking a collaboration are broken down into two-layer process categories: the information stage and the planning and implementation stage. Major elements of the information stage are:

- a. Determining the goal of the collaboration.
- b. Do missions align?
- c. Is the collaboration feasible? Do benefits outweigh the costs?
- d. Are both staffs and boards kept in the loop?

Major elements of the planning and implementation stage are:

- a. What is the new role of staff and board in the success of the collaboration.
- b. What programs are to be emphasized?
- c. What are the legal steps needed to complete the undertaking?
- d. What are the expected changes that are to occur over the next few years?
- e. How is effectiveness to be evaluated?

This paper sets the context for understanding the potential benefits as well as weaknesses of collaboration. The next three papers of the panel explore the various collaboration examples between institutions and countries.
Models of Collaboration: Analysis and Implications from the National Collaboration Prize

Research Problem: There are many challenges and opportunities facing third sector and civil society at the end of the first decade of the new millennium. Strategies to address challenges and embrace opportunities almost always includes a call, often by funders, for organizations to collaborate in ways that improve efficiencies, increase the effectiveness of service delivery, and achieve the attainment of their missions. While prior research studies have explored some collaborative models, this grounded theory approach within the context of a first ever U.S. based national collaboration prize process holds promise for understanding contemporary approaches to collaboration emanating from the field of practice in ways not previously explored.

Aim of Research: This paper will illuminate eight models of collaboration that emerged through a review of selected Collaboration Prize nominees with implications for both theory building and NGO/nonprofit practice.

Research question: What models of collaboration emerged from the Collaboration Prize nomination process that helps illuminate the theories and practice of collaborations within contemporary nonprofit organizations?

Theories and concepts that inform the research: Theories about collaboration occur across sectors and include the works of Austin (2000), Bennis and Ward (1999), Bernard (1989), Gray (1989) and La Piana (2000, 2001). Prior studies contribute to a framework for understand the collaboration phenomenon as emerging from this study of selected Collaboration Prize nominees. As a result, this paper contributes to an understanding of collaborative models with implications for the conditions, challenges and benefits of such models as part of a growing literature base that illuminate models of collaboration specific to NGO/Nonprofit leadership and management theory and practice.

Research Methods: A review of archival data from nomination applications, supporting materials, and selected site visit field notes was the research method chosen to address the research question.

Key theoretical and empirical findings: The top 44 nominations for the 2009 Collaboration Prize from more than 600 nominees were dissected and diagrammed utilizing the research methods previously noted. Commonalities and differences emerged that informed eight models of collaboration as posited in this paper. Conditions, challenges and benefits of each model are explored for each model. The eight models are 1) Fully-Integrated merger, 2) Partially-Integrated Merger 3) Joint Program Office, 4) Joint Partnership with Affiliated Programming, 5) Joint Partnership for Issue Advocacy, 6) Joint Partnership with the Birth of a New Formal Organization, 7) Joint Administrative Office and Back Office Operations, and, 8) Confederation.

Interestingly, the Phoenix, Arizona (USA) based Lodestar Foundation, initiators of the Collaboration Prize, sought the support of a collaborative known as the Arizona-Indiana-Michigan (AIM) Alliance to publicize and promote the prize, review nominations and select semi-finalists. The AIM Alliance is collaboration comprised of The Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation at Arizona State University, The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, and The Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Grand Valley State University (Michigan). As part of the goal of the AIM Alliance, the centers collaborate on creating articles, white papers and research specific, in this case, about the phenomenon of collaboration and nonprofit organizations.
The costs and benefits of collaboration: an analysis of the AIM collaboration

Research Problem: It is often suggested by donors and funders that nonprofit organizations should collaborate to improve their effectiveness and/or lower their costs to their constituents. However, there seems to be little or no effort to include the costs of collaboration itself.

Aim of research: we intend to carefully articulate some of the costs and benefits of collaboration among several research universities.

Research question: Do the benefits of the AIM collaboration exceed its costs?

Theories and concepts that inform the research: In theory, there could be significant economies of scale and scope that would enable collaborators to realize lower costs. On the other hand, there are transactions costs that are also potential inhibitors or negative aspects associated with actual or potential collaborations.

Research Methods: There has not been cost accounting of the AIM collaboration, but we can evaluate these costs and benefits through introspection and interviews.

Key theoretical and empirical findings: The AIM collaboration achieved several successes:

1. It developed a shared research protocol which it implemented in three states. It has promulgated this shared protocol as an archetype for the nonprofit sector.
2. It has shared the flagship programs of the key institutions. The Fund Raising School has been offered by IU in collaboration with the other partners GVSU and ASU.
3. Similarly, the Grantmaking Institute was offered by GVSU at the other partners’ places.
4. ASU included IU and GVSU in its evaluation of the Lodestar Prize for collaboration.
5. The partners have co-authored papers that are under review at academic journals.
Networks for Change: Two examples from the Arab Region

A major obstacle to significant reform and advancement in the Arab region has been stagnant political structures providing weak protection of basic rights. These are problems of state-building that have tended to appropriate a large amount of scholarship and civic activism in the past decade, while little progress can be identified among the 22 countries comprising the League of Arab States. As a region, indicators of democratic selection of rulers, application of the rule of law, and protection of civil society freedoms are among the lowest in the world.

However, in recent years, hopeful trends can be identified that are located in the spaces occupied by private philanthropy and civic engagement. These include the steady growth of modern foundations and citizen action groups, and the appearance of some pan-Arab funding institutions in fields that are sparsely served such as human rights and arts and culture. Another hopeful trend is the emergence of small but promising cross-border networks of institutions sharing common goals and values.

Two examples will be explored further in this paper, the Arab Foundations Forum, a membership organization of funding agencies that voluntarily meet standards of pluralistic governance and transparency, and the Maan Alliance of Arab Universities for Civic Engagement. Both have been formed within the past three years, both underwent an intensive process of participatory planning, and both are embarking on ambitious programs of capacity building, knowledge creation, and policy work to improve the sectors in which they operate. Both maintain significant international ties, both formal and informal, and both are committed to global processes of inclusion and creating greater equity.

The paper notes challenges facing each network and ways in which research and evaluation are being employed in areas previously dominated by dogma or ideology.