



# SEARCH Canada Collaboration Charter

## ***Charter Purpose***

This document outlines what is needed for SEARCH Canada to engage in a successful collaboration with another organization, group or network at the program level. This document will assist SEARCH Canada in determining whether to engage in a potential collaboration, identify the type of collaboration and outline the elements required for a successful collaboration at each of the following four phases of a collaboration.

- Assembly – the earliest stage spans exploratory discussions on collaborative opportunities between potential collaborators through to the determination of rules of organizational engagement, e.g., project and partner identification, negotiation, through to some form of agreement
- Ordering – detailed planning for policy, structures and processes
- Performance – moving to action, programming is operational
- Transforming – the evaluative stage where the collaboration learns/rethinks itself

Collaboration tools such as intellectual property agreement, project plan and collaboration evaluation tool templates are provided to assist program-level collaborations that move forward.

## ***Collaboration Defined***

Collaboration is a significant means through which SEARCH Canada does its work. As outlined in SEARCH Canada Partnership Policy Development Backgrounder (2008), SEARCH has engaged in every major form of organizational collaboration. Collaboration is not only the corporate structure of SEARCH Canada, but also its culture, operating principle, and means of accomplishing organizational goals.

While SEARCH Canada has not adopted a single definition of collaboration, the following definitions provide convenient and useful terminology to describe SEARCH's approach to collaboration. The terms 'partnership' and 'collaboration' are used synonymously.

- A partnership is a relationship where two or more parties, having compatible goals, form an agreement to work together in a mutually beneficial manner, often doing things together that might not be possible alone
- A cooperative arrangement between two or more parties to serve a common purpose, in which the partners share resources, responsibilities, and decision making
- A voluntary collaboration among two or more organizations to achieve clearly identifiable goals involving a number of key elements: shared authority and responsibility, joint investment of resources, shared risk and shared benefit
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In engaging collaboratively, it is assumed that the collaboration will add value and make a difference in outcomes for those involved. By working collaboratively and therefore 'differently', it is expected that those collaborating will experience gains that create benefits on the issue at hand (Goldblatt, 2007).

### Type of Collaboration

Because collaboration is a term loosely attached to many kinds of collaborative arrangements among two or more parties, the decision of whether to collaborate ranges from a simple nod to weighing a complex set of implications (Goldblatt, 2007). There are many different types of collaboration; the appropriate type depends on the purpose and functions of the collaborative venture.

The University of Wisconsin (in Goldblatt, 2007) created a useful framework that outlines structures and purposes for each process of integration. At one end of a continuum of cooperation, players exchange information, an arrangement light on responsibilities and accountabilities but potentially of great benefit to maximize limited resources. At the other end, entering into a legally binding partnership agreement that integrates decisions and activities has multiple implications.

Scale of Integration (University of Wisconsin)			
Integration	Process	Structure	Purpose
LOW ↓	Communication	Network, round table	Dialogue and common understanding. Clearing house for information. Explore common and conflicting interests.
	Contribution	Support group	Mutual exchanges to support each other's efforts. Build mutual obligation and trust.
	Coordination	Task force, council, alliance	Match and coordinate needs, resources, and activities. Limit duplication of services. Adjust current activities for more efficient and effective results.
	Cooperation	Partnership, consortium, coalition	Link resources to help parties achieve joint goals. Discover shared interests. Build trust by working together.
HIGH	Collaboration	Collaborative	Develop shared vision. Build inter-dependent system to address issues and opportunities. Share resources.

The above scale should not be viewed as a hierarchy, wherein highly integrated collaboration is necessarily the ideal. Rather, the structure has to fit the need and may change over time.

Bailey and Koney (2000) also provide a framework to conceive and organize a spectrum of organizational collaborative relationships. The many kinds of organizational relationships can be generally classified as cooperation, coordination, collaboration or coadunation; the classifications varying predictably across the spectrum with respect to complexity, length of association, risk in association, legal formality, interdependence/ organizational autonomy, and structural accommodations required in collaboration.

<b>Kinds of Organizational Relationships (Bailey &amp; Koney, 2000)</b>				
<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>Cooperation</b>	<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Coadunation (union)</b>
EXAMPLES	Affiliation	Federation, association, coalition	Consortium, network, joint venture	Merger, consolidation, amalgamation
COMPLEXITY	Low	—————→		High
RISK IN ASSOCIATION	Low	—————→		High
AUTONOMY	High	←————		Absent
STRUCTURAL ACCOMMODATION	Very few if any	Modest	Moderate to high	New highly integrated structures and systems
FORMALIZATION	Very limited	Legal agreement very likely in place, including the contribution of resources	Articles of incorporation, bylaws, formal contracts, may be new joint governance board, a separate entity may be formed	New legally defined entity (e.g. new corporation) with new governance
OTHER CHARACTERISTICS	Mutually supportive, but an organization's interest is the primary reason for relationship Decision	Alignment of activities by otherwise autonomous organizations Goal is improvement on what a single	Integration of larger pool and proportion of organizational resources Requires joint strategies Must plan to manage	"Having grown together" When one new organization makes more sense Missions fully

	making is decentralized and generally unaffected e.g., exchange information, provide endorsements	organization can do (organizational self interest is still a factor) Some (relatively minor) loss of autonomy Parties are task focused, e.g., implement common services or events, engage in common fundraising or advocacy or training	organizational differences and build consensus goals Interdependence is acknowledged by Parties	aligned Melded work, staff, resources
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Flexibility in form and function for collaborative ventures is important for SEARCH Canada. It is not possible or desired to set out non-varying rules for program-level collaboration.

### ***Factors to Determine Collaboration Engagement and Continuance***

Risks in engaging in program-level collaboration to the integrity of SEARCH Canada are important to consider. Risks are financial, legal and reputational, including the risk of drain on an organization’s resources for little value (SEARCH Canada, 2008). As such, the following factors (adapted from Goldblatt, 2007 and SEARCH Canada 2007, 2008) will guide SEARCH Canada in determining whether to engage in a possible collaboration as well as whether to continue engaging in an existing collaboration.

#### **Factors Related to the Environment**

- History of collaboration or cooperation in the community
- Collaborative group seen as leaders in the community
- Political/social climate favorable
- There is a recognized need for collaboration
- SEARCH Canada has strong expertise/connections in focus area; can be value added
- Presents an opportunity to engage both academia and health practice



- Members are able to appropriately manage their own stakeholders that have an interest in the collaboration
- Strong support at the appropriate levels of participating organizations

### **Factors Related to Membership Characteristics**

- Mutual respect, understanding, and trust
- Appropriate cross-section of members
- Members see collaboration as in their self-interest
- Ability to compromise
- Truly collaborative with shared decision making
- Member involvement is voluntary and eager
- Shared understanding of the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of each member

### **Factors Related to Process/Structure**

- Members share a stake in both process and outcome
- Multiple layers of decision-making
- Flexibility
- Development of clear roles and policy guidelines
- Adaptability
- Distributed leadership (based on specific areas of strength) and recognition
- Monitor, measure and learn
- Robust and clear collaboration working arrangements
- Timeline is feasible
- Willingness to participate on collaborative committee to guide initiative
- Initiative is evaluable

### ***Factors Related to Communication***

- Open and frequent communication
- Structured comprehensive reporting requirements
- Established informal and formal communication links
- Communication mechanisms exist across member organizations; mechanisms in place to connect with key organizational decision makers



### ***Factors Related to Purpose***

- Concrete, attainable and realistic goals and objectives
- Shared vision and ownership
- Unique purpose
- Builds on SEARCH frameworks, principles and approaches
- Learning and capacity building orientation; presents opportunity build enduring capacity<sup>1</sup>
- Focus is of substantive interest to all
- Longer term initiatives can be sustained/integrated

### ***Factors Related to Resources***

- Sufficient funds
- Skilled convener
- Clear project management role
- All members contribute resources including staff time and other organizational resources (can include in kind and/or financial); development and implementation stages require resources
- Resource requirements and how they will be met are clear and realistic
- Clear representation on financial matters (liabilities of each member and clear procedures)

## ***Templates***

### **Collaborative Agreement Template**

The development of clear roles and responsibilities is one of the factors that leads to the success of collaboration. An agreement helps solidify everyone's roles and commitments. As the collaborators discuss their roles and responsibilities prior to beginning the effort, it helps to put the decisions into a written document. An agreement can often prevent or reduce future conflicts. The individuals with decision-making authority

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<sup>1</sup> Builds evidence-informed practice capacity among Alberta health professionals. Capacity building is defined as activities which strengthen the knowledge, abilities, skills and behaviour of health professionals and improve organizational structures and processes so that the organization can work in a more evidence informed way. The main focus of the project reflects at least one of the following elements: (1) Relationship building; networking; (2) Human resource development - the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge, and training that enables them to perform effectively; (3) Organizational development, the elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, not only within organizations but also the management of relationships between the different organizations and sectors (public, private and community); and (4) Policy change.



in the collaborating organizations should sign the agreement. While an agreement may at times seem too formal, it is helpful to have a written record of the collaboration. This information can be useful to a variety of individuals, including (Public Health Institute, 2007):

- A new person who becomes involved in the project/initiative
- Current or potential funders who are interested in how the effort is structured
- Organization managers or board members who want to know what role the organization is playing
- Another group or organization interested in replicating the project/initiative

Such an agreement typically contains the following (adapted from Public Health Institute, 2007):

- Background or a brief description of the project or initiative
- The specific activities that each collaborator will perform (e.g., specific services to be delivered, activities associated with participation in the collaboration) and outcomes to be achieved
- Other agreements related to how the partners will work together, communication methods, division of authority, etc.
- Terms of Reference for the advisory committee outlining the collaboration project/initiative including objectives, procedures, roles, authorities, etc.
- Mechanisms to detect early signs of problems and corrective measures
- Financial, human resource, communication/information management, and accountability needs
- Evaluation requirements, performance measures, and reporting arrangements
- Terms under which either partner could exit the agreement
- Flexibility is built into the agreement to allow it to be adapted to changing external/internal circumstances

### Advisory Committee Terms of Reference Template

Terms of Reference	
<b>Committee Name</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	
<b>Objectives/Indicators of Success</b>	
<b>Chair and Other Leadership Roles</b>	
<b>Member Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<i>[project management role, budget management role, chairing role, secretariat role, roles pertaining to all members related to collaborative project]</i>



<b>Composition</b>	<p>Membership <i>[list of members including positions and organizations]</i></p> <p>Alternates</p> <p>Committee members will be encouraged to identify one alternate from their constituency who can be appropriately briefed and replace them when absent.</p> <p>Ex-Officio Members  <i>[details on ex-officio members]</i></p> <p>Replacing Outgoing Members</p>
<b>Sub-Committees</b>	<p>To meet the ongoing needs and timelines of the collaboration while ensuring appropriate consultation and communication with stakeholders, working groups and task groups may be established as needed to advise on specific matters and between meetings.</p> <p>Working groups will be sub-committees with responsibility for advising on specific areas related to the collaborative project/initiative throughout the term of the committee. Task groups will be ad-hoc groups with focused short-term objectives to address specific topic areas identified by the Advisory Committee. These groups will meet as needed. Sub-committees will be chaired by a member of the Advisory Committee and will include additional people as necessary from inside and/or outside the Advisory Committee.</p>
<b>Decision Making</b>	<p>The Committee will use the following guide to decision making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A consensus decision making model shall be used for decisions pertaining to the work of the Committee;</li> <li>• It is the members' responsibilities to respond to decisions within deadlines or forego the opportunity to be involved in that decision.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframes and Meetings</b>	<p>Monthly meetings starting                      and ending                      .</p>
<b>Reporting and Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•                      <i>[circulation of minutes]</i></li> <li>•                      <i>[reporting requirements, financial and other]</i></li> <li>•                      <i>[other communication mechanisms]</i></li> </ul> <p><i>[Three important levels of communication: within the Committee, from the Committee to community/member organizations, from the community/member organizations to the Committee]</i></p>
<b>Resource Requirements</b>	
<b>Review of Terms of Reference</b>	<p>Bi-annual review of the Terms of Reference by the Committee.</p>
<b>Evaluation and Exit Plans</b>	



## Project Management Template

The following is a sample project plan template to outline objectives, activities, stakeholder involvement, budget and evaluation related to the collaborative project.

Objective	Activities	Who	Budget/Resources	Outcomes	Indicators	Evaluation Methods

The following is a sample Gantt chart to track the completion of various activities:

Activities	Lead(s)	Timeframe							
		Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	etc.			



## Budget Reporting Template

The following is a suggested template to track the budget related to the collaborative project/initiative. It is suggested that both financial and in-kind contributions be tracked on a monthly basis.

Budget Items	Contributing Organization	Timeframe					
		Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	etc.	

## Collaboration Evaluation

The following are possible tools to assist with evaluation of the collaboration. It is suggested that the collaboration be evaluated by those involved on a bi-annual basis.

- Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory  
[http://surveys.wilder.org/public\\_cfi/index.php?startover=Yes](http://surveys.wilder.org/public_cfi/index.php?startover=Yes)
- Partnership Self Assessment Tool (Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health)  
[http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/project%20site%20final.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/project%20site%20final.pdf)
- Partnership Member Survey (El Ansari, W., University of Wales College)  
[http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/EI%20Ansari%20Partnership%20Questionnaire.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/EI%20Ansari%20Partnership%20Questionnaire.pdf)
- Assessing Strategic Partnership Assessment Tool (Leeds Nuffield Institute for Health) [http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/ahln/pdfs/Partnership\\_Assessment\\_Tool.pdf](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/ahln/pdfs/Partnership_Assessment_Tool.pdf)
- Evaluating Collaboratives: Reaching the Potential (University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension) <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/G3658-8.PDF>



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(Prepared by the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, as an excerpt from Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, <http://www.opc.on.ca/pubs/collab/index.html>)

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