

**WE's Networking and Professional Development Series - April 11, 2016**  
**Role of Evaluation in Supporting Transformative Organizational Partnerships**  
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**What are the considerations for characterizing organizational partnerships?**

1. Defining transformative partnerships – cooperation is not the same as collaboration
2. Recurring themes in productive partnerships – common needs, respect, communication, flexibility
3. Dimensions of quality in partnerships – partnership composition, organizational structure, operational guidelines, & qualities of the partnering relationships
  - **Partnership Composition** - Who staffs the partnership? What's the environment for the partnership? Is the participation of stakeholders from collaborating organizations different?
  - **Organizational Structure** - What is the structure/governance of the program? How are decisions made? By whom? How has the governance changed over the course of the program? Is there an advisory board?
  - **Action Plan & Operational Guidelines** - Have any formal agreements been put in place to define, establish, and support communication and collaboration between partners this year? Have existing formal agreements been changed? If so, how and why?
  - **Quality of Partnerships** -  
*Mutuality and trust:* Do the goals and objectives of the partnership address mutual needs across partners? What are the perceptions of trust across partners? What steps have partners taken to build trust? What is the nature of most interactions between partners? How respectful is the partnership to differences in cultural and organizational norms, values, and beliefs? How transparent are the operations?  
*Leadership:* Who are the leaders of the partnership? Who led the development of the initial partnership? Are there one or more persons taking leadership? What are their roles? Is there participation from the top levels of the organizations?

**What does the evolution look like?**

1. Beginning stages are represented by articulated plans but no actions. Outcomes are not possible because no plans have been put into action.
2. Emerging stages are represented by clear and articulated plans with some initial actions setting the stage for implementation, but not enough substantive activity to establish implementation. Outcomes are not imminent or predictable.
3. Developing stages show clear, strong implementation is in place, although corrections for barriers, changes to plans, or consistency/satisfaction across stakeholders might be mixed. Positive outcomes are evident but all goals are not fully realized or not on track.
4. Transformative stages show such a clear, strong enacted plan. It can be considered a model for others to use. Positive outcomes associated with the partnership seem inevitable or highly predictable.

## **How does evaluation best support transformative partnerships?**

1. Employ mixed methods for complex questions in order to
  - Provide relevant information to address articulated and emergent needs
  - Incorporate a diverse range of relevant stakeholders
  - Negotiate and renegotiate evaluation purpose balancing structure with agility
2. The process is a conversation that blends presentation of data (e.g., survey, extant, interview, observation) with a dialogue to put the results into a bigger context. Special attention is given to:
  - Explicitly attending to the values underpinning the culture of the individuals and organization
  - Meaningful processes and products that encourage reflection by stakeholders
  - Timely and appropriate communicating and reporting according to the needs of the organization
  - Guarding against misuse and negative consequences

## **How do leaders need to evolve to shape and influence transformational collaboration?**

1. Learning – Leadership development needs to be relevant, accessible, on-going.
2. Implementation – The relationship between what leaders know and what they do is not a straight line. Technical support to implement new skills needs to compliment learning.
3. Reflection – Taking stock of progress, strengths, opportunities for improvement are important steps. Reflection builds confidence in the ability to achieve a goal, which in turn translates into higher rates of learning, although given the choice to either reflect or practice, research shows people act first, think later.
4. Dissemination - Communicating vision and progress to key stakeholders shouldn't be overlooked.

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