



The Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations gratefully recognizes the contributions of individuals in Edmonton's nonprofit community who participated in discussions about

Accelerating Impact

ECVO has compiled highlights from these discussions into a series of five resources.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

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Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations

Moving to Action



Introduction

This resource is the summary of a community conversation about the third condition of Collective Impact, Mutually Reinforcing Activities. Members of the Edmonton nonprofit community participated in this conversation in April 2014.

Discussions are also scheduled in 2014 for the two remaining conditions of Collective Impact:

- Continuous Communication
- Backbone Organizations.

Each conversation explores a local Edmonton case study followed discussion questions. The responses to these questions are summarized in a resource similar to this document. If you are interested in collecting the series of resources, please visit the ECVO website and look under Our Work / Moving to Action.

“How do you get organizations interested in activities that are mutually reinforcing?”

Participants asserted that organizations will tend to engage in mutually reinforcing activities when they each have a desire to solve a common problem.

As the discussion delved deeper into the question, the notion of organizations entering into a merger evolved. This notional idea highlighted practical opportunities to:

- transfer knowledge
- transfer expertise
- merge ideas
- share success



Participants will be more likely to engage in mutually reinforcing activities when they feel they truly have the ability to make a difference for their ‘population’. It is important that individual organizations all have a voice in the outcomes and can clearly see where and how their accomplishments are tied to something bigger.

Further Reading

[How to Move the Needle with Collective Impact? Mutually-Reinforcing Activities.](#)

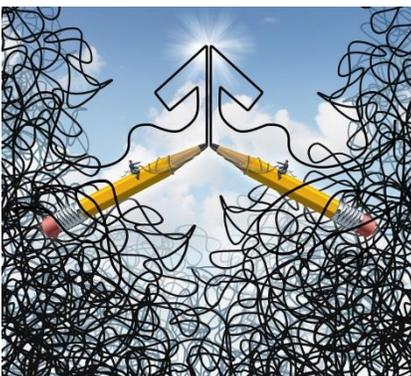
Insightformation.

[Collaboration Factors Inventory Tool.](#)

Wilder Research.

[Four Keys to Collaboration Success.](#) Carol Lukas and Rebecca Andrews.

“How do organizations experience benefit from participating in reinforcing activities?”



Sharing strengths within a collaborative, serves to increase the capacity of the sector.

- ✓ Decreased pressure on individual organizations.
- ✓ Decreased competition between organizations.
- ✓ Benefit from shared wisdom.
- ✓ The collaborative can allow organizations to let go of pieces of work they don't do well, and allow other groups who are stronger to do a specific type of work.
- ✓ The reinforcing activities of a collaborative can better sustain services and supports in a community.
- ✓ A collaborative helps organizations to look at what is missing in a community and determine the best way to add in the missing pieces.

Successful collaboration requires trust, understanding and sometimes a champion to keep the momentum going.

Further Reading

[Archetypal Practices for Collective Wisdom: Timeless Ways of Evolving Personal and Collective Capacity,](#) Thomas J. Hurley.

[Creating Good Work With Social Emergence: Aligning Interaction and Intention,](#) Ron Schultz.

[Working Better Together: Building Nonprofit Collaborative Capacity,](#) Grant Makers for Effective Organizations.

“Why is engaging in mutually reinforcing activities so challenging?”

Relationships are Key

Collaboration is about relationships. Practically speaking, organizations don't have relationships, people do. When people come and go from organizations and collaboratives, so do their relationships.

Further Reading

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[Working Better Together: Building Nonprofit Collaborative Capacity](#), Grant Makers for Effective Organizations.



Here's what people involved in collaborations in Edmonton are saying about "mutually reinforcing activities"

- ✓ There's a lot happening in Edmonton.
- ✓ Collaboratives are having an impact at the program level, but aren't changing systems Yet.
- ✓ Some of our best lessons have been learned from failure. We need a culture of risk-taking to support what we are doing. We need permission to fail ... if we really want to succeed.
- ✓ The early years of an initiative may be slow, but stuff is happening.



Book Reviews

[Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future](#) Reviewer, Meg Wheatly. 2009. Reviewer: Caleb Weinbrenner.

[The Power of Collective Wisdom](#), John Ott. 2009. Reviewer: Bob Morris.

[Leading from the Emerging Future](#), C. Otto Scharmer. (2013). Reviewer: Patrick McNamara.

[Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changed](#), Frances Westlye, Brenda Zimmerman and Michael Patton. 2006. Reviewer: Anton Hart.

The Art of Hosting. Website.
<http://www.artofhosting.org/home/>

Supporting collaboration is a cultural shift. It requires leadership from Boards and Executive Directors.

- ✓ Perceptions about success need to change. Funders need to hold Boards and Executive Directors accountable for being strategic and actively supporting collaborative outcomes.
- ✓ The traditional role of the Executive Director to protect and sustain their organization at all costs needs to transition. EDs should be expected to lead their organizations into collaborative efforts that will create a better future in the community.
- ✓ Leaders need to create an organizational culture that encourages, supports and rewards change.





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