

THE COLLABORATION CONTINUUM

Collaboration refers to a process in which two or more groups work together toward a common goal by sharing expertise, information, and resources. The continuum represents a range in the level of possible collaboration and defines where respective collaborative activities have occurred along this process.

Points along the continuum mark shifts in the collaborative process as activities become more complex until convergence is attained.

Contact

Shared Ideas & Information

Open, honest dialogue encourages the exploration of commonalities and the development of relationships to facilitate discussion of potential activities.

Cooperation

Shared Goals

Relationship building fosters the development of cooperative activities. Because this is a process, it often begins with informal engagements that offer small, yet tangible benefits. It sometimes occurs only one way. For example: Information or data sharing.

Coordination

Shared Achievement of Goals

Cooperative activities move beyond "as needed" or "ad hoc". A framework organizes efforts and ensures that everyone in the group understands who does what, when, and where. The activities are planned with consideration given to schedules and staff availability. Communication tools may be developed to support coordination efforts. Relies on formal or informal agreements to achieve a desired common outcome.

Collaboration

Shared Resources

Information is not only shared, but something new is created. It is a new way of doing things that involves change. The change required is more ambitious than cooperation and much more difficult to develop and sustain.

Convergence

Synthetic Infrastructure

Collaboration around a specific function or idea has become so extensive, engrained, and assumed that it is no longer recognized by others as a collaborative undertaking; instead it has moved to the level of infrastructure and becomes a critical system that is relied upon.

Investment, Risk, and Benefit