

Fostering Collaboration

Welcome to the Student Activities' Online Leadership Toolbox. My name is Imad Mohamed, and I am a Graduate Advisor at Student Activities at Minnesota State Mankato. I am going to be your podcast guide. This podcast is about learning how to approach and foster collaboration. We will discuss what collaboration is, how to prepare for collaboration, and skills and strategies to foster collaboration.

The important question is what is collaboration?

Collaboration is a structured process where two or more people or organizations work together toward a common goal. Collaboration is a relationship that requires teamwork between parties and that promotes knowledge sharing, learning, skill sharing and consensus decision making to meet a particular interest, mission or goal.

Before you begin the collaboration process, it is important to know your organization in terms of skills, resources, and everything between strengths and limitations. Knowledge on this information will allow you to identify when you need collaboration. Furthermore, being aware of the limitations of your organization helps you identify the characteristics and strength traits that you look for in collaboration.

When choosing collaborators, it is important to be mindful that the outcome of successful collaboration depends on the purpose, how it relates to those who are involved, and promoting positive relationship. Communication is critical when seeking collaborators. If your organization is initiating the collaboration, be prepared to present why others should partner with your organization.

When you have identified that you are in need of collaboration. Do your research about your collaborators, know who they are, the work they do. Understand why they should participate and how this relationship is compatible to their values, interest and mission. If the purpose for collaboration is not in line with the interest of the collaborators vision, the relationship may lack motivation. There has to be a common interest that is valued by all parties involved in order to begin the process and stay motivated.

When searching for collaborators keep in mind to search for diverse talents and skills that complement the purpose for collaboration. Diversifying your talents, skills, and resources allows you to bring different perspectives and groups that may complement your organization's strengths and limitations. Furthermore, try to search for organizations that are accountable and open to possibilities. Accountability and being open to possibilities limits conflicts and creates a relationship where people can exchange ideas and meet goals. Finally, choosing partners to collaborate with is just a start. However, fostering collaboration is journey that requires skills and patience.

Here are some skills that are helpful in fostering collaboration

- a. Communication
 - b. Open to negotiation
 - c. Problem solving
 - d. Encourage and be open to feedback
- Process
- a. Set ground rules to minimize conflicts
 - b. Be respectful

- c. Search for opportunities and encourage participation
- d. Stay organized
- f. Identify goals and specific objectives to meet the purpose for collaboration

This podcast was presented by Student Activities at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Find other podcasts at mnsu.edu/activities/toolbox.