Framework for Group Initiatives:

Principles and Processes for Working Together

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Developed collectively by
Representatives from the
Family and Sexual Violence Sector,
Calgary Alberta

CONTENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2005, representatives from Calgary's Family and Sexual Violence (FSV) sector came together to identify values and processes for joint and group initiatives.[1] Our work together is varied and complex, spanning a broad continuum of formal and informal relationships. This Framework is intended to support a range of relationships and initiatives by formalizing our agreements around values, expectations, and successful practices.

The Framework was developed through an iterative group process. In the course of several meetings, we identified key principles and practices for working together. We also reviewed and adapted various tools and templates. Notes from these sessions were used to draft an initial version of the Framework. This and other drafts were brought before the group to review and revise. The principles documented here reflect the agreements reached by the group during this process. Ideally, this Framework will continue to develop as our work together changes and evolves.

This document is divided into three parts:

- *Part One: Ethical Standards* articulates the core values that govern our work together, as well as the attitudes and behaviours that demonstrate those values.
- *Part Two: Group Processes* outlines principles to guide the following:
  - How group initiatives are started
  - How decisions are made
  - How commitment is formalized and sustained
  - How communication is managed
  - How conflict is managed
  - How group initiatives are monitored or evaluated
- *Part Three: Tools and Templates* is a compilation of helpful resources

The work we do together spans a broad continuum, from networking and information-sharing to partnership and collaboration. The values, standards and principles outlined in this document apply across this continuum. Some of the specific tools or processes, on the other hand, may depend upon the type of group initiative or working relationship. We have noted this where applicable.

[1] The meetings took place in Feb-April 2005, and were initiated by three funders: *The City of Calgary Family and Community Support Services, Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority* and the *United Way of Calgary and Area.*

PART ONE: ETHICAL STANDARDS

Our aim is to be intentional about the culture we create when we work together on behalf of our clients and their families. For this reason, we have articulated values and behaviours to which we hold ourselves and others accountable.

2.0 Values

Our work together is governed by the following core values:

- Openness and Transparency
- Personal Responsibility
- Respectful Interactions
- Commitment and Follow-through
- Flexibility
- Equity and Inclusion
- Integrity
- Learning and Growth
- Client Focus

3.0 Attitudes and Behaviours

We demonstrate these values through the following attitudes and behaviours:

3.1 Openness and transparency

- We communicate inclusively: information is shared with stakeholders[2] at meetings or via meeting notes, documents and electronic communication.
- Information is shared in a timely manner.
- When "off-line" conversations take place, important details are summarized and shared with the group.
- We "lay our cards on the table" by identifying:
    - How we expect to benefit from a potential partnership or group process (see "Self-Interest" text box below)
    - Potential limitations to our contributions (e.g., time and resource limitations, organizational hurdles)
    - What we want to see happen (i.e., "our agenda")
- We clearly define our respective roles and responsibilities and acknowledge the variety of ways that we contribute.

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[2] The various types of stakeholders and levels of communication will be identified and agreed-upon early in our group initiatives. See Section 7.0 *How Communication is Managed*.

- We say what we mean and mean what we say.
- We are open about past conflicts and experiences that could "derail" our process.[3]
- We understand that our perceptions around past experiences may be limited; we remain open to other perspectives.
- We openly share contextual information (e.g. other initiatives, potential conflicts of interest) that may affect our work together.

Self Interest

Partnerships should and do serve our self-interests, whether on a personal or professional level. There's always something in it for us, and knowing what it is ahead of time, and being able to talk about it openly, helps build a partnership. Self-interest is the primary motivation of people and should be acknowledged. What each individual may gain as a result of the partnership will vary, but it could include things such as recognition, financial reward, connections, advancement, good will, influence or inclusion. We should encourage discussions about how the partnership serves our own personal interests as well as our organization's. If you ask each person in the group why they are really there, the answers will go a long way to building trust and mutual understanding within the partnership.

Source: Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC),1997.
http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml

3.2 Personal responsibility

- We hold ourselves personally responsible for creating an environment in which people feel safe to express their views, make mistakes and take risks.
- If we hear misinformation, we correct it.
- We actively seek to repair damaged relationships and learn from past experiences.
- If we have concerns, we go straight to the source (not to others) in a timely manner to discuss them.
- We participate by bringing our voice to the table, and take responsibility for sharing our needs, concerns, limitations, hopes, and expectations.
- We maintain confidentiality.

[3] "Having a history with various members of the partnership will have an impact on the current partnership [or group process]. A positive or a negative history may carry over into the new relationship. It is a good idea to discuss any previous history, good or bad, with partners to make good use of the experiences gained and to avoid negative experiences. This should be approached as a constructive exercise to let others know that there is or has been a working relationship in place between some of the members." Source: Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), 1997.
http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml

- We use our power and resources in a way that respects the dignity of others and increases the power of all partners in our common work. (See “Power” text box below).

> **Power**
>
> Partnerships are about power: individual power and collective power. For some, the word power has a negative connotation and implies control, force or undue influence. […] Power also has a very positive side in the sense of strength, wisdom and ability. Partnerships combine powers and direct them in the best way possible for the benefit of all. Power is always present and is rarely equal. We should value and acknowledge, openly and honestly, the different types of power that each individual or organization brings. By acknowledging it, we are able then to deal with any issues or conflicts that arise from the use of power.
>
> Source: Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC),1997. http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml

3.3 Respectful interactions

- We choose our actions and words intentionally, and ask ourselves whether they help to:
  - build trust
  - enhance understanding
  - demonstrate respect
  - further our objectives
- We listen actively and show signs of respect towards our partners and other stakeholders. This includes exhibiting positive non-verbal cues.[4]
- We use language that is non-violent and respectful.
- We discuss our concerns with others using “I’ statements, rather than blaming “you,” "we" or "they" statements.
- We give each point of view sufficient time for discussion, rather than dismissing it quickly and moving on.
- We are respectful of people’s time, understanding that everyone is stretched.
- We give credit where credit is due.

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[4] There are four major categories of nonverbal communication: 1) eye contact; 2) body orientation (posture, facial expressions, movements); 3) verbal quality (tone matches message); 4) energy level (lets others know we are interested in what they are saying). For more information, see: Beckham, K. King, J. *Communication in Coalitions.* Ohio State University Fact Sheet. http://ohioline.osu.edu/bc-fact/0006.html

- We work from a spirit of generosity, good will and positive intention.
- We recognize and validate one another's personal and organizational strengths, challenges and expertise.
- We explore diverse interests, perspectives and ideas through genuine curiosity and by asking open ended questions.
- We encourage one another and help to sustain the passion for our work.

3.4 Commitment and follow-through

- We focus on the changes we seek to make for our clients. These goals sustain our commitment through barriers and challenging processes.
- We document our discussions and share decisions and action items in a timely manner.
- We do what we say we will do, following through on the commitments we make.
- We attend and actively participate in discussions and meetings when we are involved in a group process.
- We accept that there will be differences of opinion in group processes. We commit to exploring and directly addressing differences in order to strengthen our work and the outcomes for clients.
- When our opinions differ or we require clarification, we openly discuss these issues with our partners. We work to productively solve problems and get outside help if we need it. We ensure that throughout the problem solving process we maintain effective working relationships.
- We actively contribute to moving things forward. We do not act in ways that are counterproductive or stall initiatives that are not going our way.

3.5 Flexibility

- We attach ourselves to the end goal, but are flexible about how we get there.
- We enter into group processes knowing that our vision and ideas for the project will change. ("Vision evolution")
- We are always willing to negotiate and demonstrate flexibility to achieve the greatest gain.

3.6 Equity and inclusion

- We ensure enough time for effective decision-making (i.e., we don't push through decisions too quickly).
- We actively solicit diverse points of view, knowing that individual and organizational insight and diversity strengthen outcomes.
- We build in opportunities to reflect and ask key questions.
- We seek to include stakeholders in our processes (i.e., those who will be influenced by, and can contribute towards, our decisions).

3.7 Integrity

- We continuously demonstrate and work from principles that reflect positive intent and action.
- When we decide to leave a project, we openly and honestly discuss our reasons with our partners. We act in ways that support our collective goals through our words and actions. We do not intentionally initiate parallel efforts, processes or projects that will sabotage the initial effort. We openly share our intentions.
- Our language and actions are aligned with, and reflect, our core values.

3.8 Learning and growth

- We are a community of people with diverse skills and areas of expertise. We work from the premise that there is much we can learn from one another.
- We create environments conducive to shared learning and demonstrate openness to new approaches, solutions and ideas.
- We integrate existing and new information and tools to support our clients.
- We commit to building upon our existing knowledge and understanding.

3.9 Client focus

- We commit to actions that best serve our clients. This is the ‘filter’ that informs all decision-making.
- We open meetings with a reminder that the client has convened us.
- We define the client and bring the client’s voice to the table.

PART TWO: GROUP PROCESSES

In Part One, we outlined the core values that govern our work together, as well as the attitudes and behaviours that demonstrate those values. Part Two focuses on the processes that support effective working relationships.

We work together in a variety of capacities. Examples include:

- A small group of agencies implementing a men's treatment program
- A coalition working with a broad number of agencies to develop cultural competency
- A group of agencies collaborating to deliver volunteer training
- A large group of representatives from various agencies drafting policy briefs for provincial action
- Agencies from this sector coming together with law enforcement, justice, health and social services to develop a coordinated community response to those involved in domestic violence

Despite the diversity of our work together, common principles and standards apply. We have developed principles in six areas to guide group processes.[5]

1. How group initiatives are started
2. How decisions are made
3. How commitment is formalized and sustained
4. How communication is managed
5. How conflict is managed
6. How group initiatives are monitored or evaluated

Each of these is discussed briefly below.

[5] In this document, we broadly refer to our work together as "group processes," or " group initiatives." By this we mean any kind of work that brings organizations together for a common purpose in this sector. This may include any of the examples included in the first paragraph above.

4.0 How Group Initiatives Are Started

Needs, opportunities, goals, resources, and a host of other factors inform the structure and composition of our groups – and this, in turn, impacts how projects get started. The principles outlined below take into account the range and diversity of group initiatives in this sector. Sample questions are provided to assist decision-making when initiating small or large group activities.

4.1 Principles that guide our work

- We verify the need for a project before initiating the work.
- Agencies that are directly affected by a project or initiative are consulted and represented in some way.
- Projects that are broad in scope merit broader participation.
- When inviting participation, we are clear about the purpose and timelines of the project. We ask potential participants about available resources (including time), interest, potential concerns, and organizational fit.
- When deciding whether to participate, we assess our own resources, limitations, skills, potential contributions and opportunity for gain. We openly share our ability to contribute to the project with our partners.
- Our time is limited. Therefore, we are strategic about the processes we engage in.
- We respect others' right to determine whether or not to participate in a project.
- We actively seek out a range of perspectives, skills and resources for our initiative, knowing that diversity strengthens processes and outcomes.
- We recognize the value of different levels of involvement. We build this flexibility in where possible.

4.2 Critical assessment: Convener

In order to ensure that our processes for convening a project are strategic and inclusive, we will be guided by the following key questions:

- Is there strong evidence to support the need for this project?
- What similar projects or activities are currently taking place? How does our strategy or project contribute to, or complement, other processes? What is the impact of our project on other similar initiatives? What value is added?
- Does our group appropriately represent those who have an interest in, or will be affected by, the partnership's vision?
- Are there other interests or individuals who should be involved?
- Who isn't involved that could make a contribution to our greater goal?
- What are the different levels of involvement or ways for people to contribute? (e.g., short term, consultative, information-only, partner)

- Are there different or dissenting opinions that need to be brought forward? By whom? What channels can I provide for this information or input?

As a convener, we have the professional responsibility to:

- Be as clear as possible about the commitment required when inviting someone to participate.
- Listen to feedback from those who decline participation.
- Bring the questions and concerns of others back to the group when appropriate (i.e., when confidentiality has not been requested).
- Maintain confidentiality when requested.

4.3 Critical assessment: Potential member

Similarly, when we are invited to participate in a group process, we will evaluate our needs and expectations so that we can be strategic about our commitments. We will be guided by the following key questions:

- How does my involvement assist in achieving the outcomes?
- How does the project vision fit with our organizational mandate and values?
- What are my personal and organizational limitations in terms of my participation?
- Can I invest the time it will take?
- Is this a good use of agency resources?
- What will happen if I don't participate? What are the risks? What are the advantages/disadvantages?
- Are there other ways I can participate or contribute?

We have the professional responsibility to:

- Communicate our questions or concerns to the group if we wish them to be considered. We might do this via a memo, email or telephone call to the convener or another group representative.

Self, organizational and group assessments related to partnership involvement are included in *Part Three: Tools and Templates* (Section 10.0: Convening Tools).

5.0 How Decisions Are Made

Thoughtful decision-making is key to successful initiatives. When we build in sufficient time and methods for gathering and integrating members' diverse perspectives into our decision-making, we generate strong and creative solutions and build shared commitment.

5.1 Principles that guide our work together

- At the onset of our work together, we determine how decisions will be made and define these processes clearly.
- We try to anticipate the various factors that can affect decision-making and build these into our processes.
- We commit to open and inclusive dialogue *before* decisions are made (i.e., we don't rush the decision-making process).
- As a group, we decide how minority opinions will be recognized in meeting minutes and other documents.
- We discuss and determine expectations of group members and/or organizations. All group members commit to talking about and acting in ways that are supportive of group decisions even when decisions do not align with their preferred approach.
- We intentionally build in sufficient time and opportunity to reflect and ask key questions.
- We revisit our vision and goals often, and use these as a guide in making decisions.

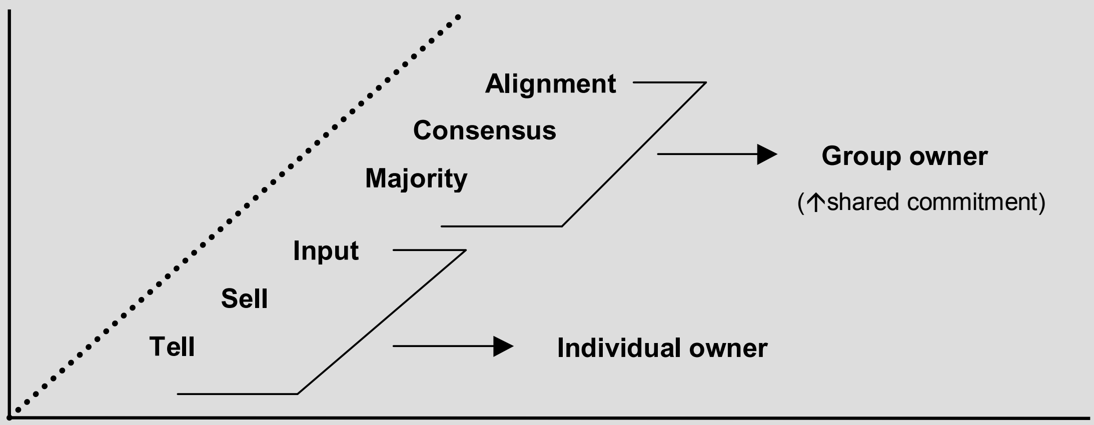
5.2 Decision-making continuum

We recognize that there are a number of ways to approach and make decisions. In general, we commit to using shared decision-making models for group work. (See *Decision-making Continuum* box below). The following tools and resources can be used to facilitate shared decision-making:

- Steps to consensus
- When there's no consensus
- Hearing all voices

Each of these can be found in Section 11.0 in *Tools and Templates*.

The Decision Making Continuum



Individual Owner	
Tell	I make the decision without input
Sell	I have a position and try to get others to agree before making the decision
Input	I make the decision after hearing your input
Group Owner	
Majority	Group vote; majority wins
Consensus	We all agree about how to proceed, even though some of us think a different decision might be better
Alignment	We all agree this is the best decision.

Source: Anderson, D. Ackerman-Anderson, L. How to Use Decision Making as a Tool for Successful Transformation.
http://www.beingfirst.com/changeresources/articles/200210/200210Decision.pdf

5.3 Deciding on our decision-making process

Early in the process of forming our group, we will decide on a decision-making process and outline this in our agreement or terms of reference. Our discussion will address some or all of the following questions:

- What kinds of decisions require consensus?
- How are we defining consensus?
- What will be the process for building consensus? (See *Tools and Templates)*

- How much time will we allow for major decisions? (e.g., will we take more than one meeting if we can't reach consensus?)
- What happens if we can't reach consensus? (e.g., do we go with a majority vote?)
- Under what circumstances will we use another method?
- Who is ultimately responsible for the decisions being made?
- Will any decisions be left to an individual? (e.g., Chair or convener)
- Can representatives send alternates if they're unable to attend a meeting at which an important decision will be made?
- What happens if decisions need to be made in a compressed timeframe? (See example, Table 2 below).

Table 2: Example of agreement around decision-making when timelines are compressed

Timeframe in which the decision has to be made	Type of decision and medium	Person(s) responsible for making the decision
2 hours	*Tell:* Decision is made and circulated to group via email	Representatives (e.g. Chair and Vice-chair)
8 - 48 hours	*Majority:* Input is solicited electronically	All stakeholders who respond in timeframe
1 week	*Consensus* via face to face meeting; Majority rules if consensus cannot be reached in time.	Key stakeholders attending face to face meeting or their alternates
1 or more month	*Consensus* (face to face meeting)	Key stakeholders attending face to face meeting or their alternates

5.4 Building consensus

Consensus is a term that is often misunderstood or misused. Too often, people rush the process so that what appears to be "consensus" is really decision by one of the following methods [6]:

- *Decision by minority rule*: where two or more members come to a quick and powerful agreement on a course of action and then ask if anyone objects. Silence is taken to mean consent and group members feel railroaded.

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[6] Source: Schwartz, Andrew E. "Group decision-making." *The CPA Journal.* http://www.nysscpa.org/cpajournal/old/15703015.htm

- *Decision by the 'plop' method*: where ideas are raised by one member and dismissed or modified by another before they are fully discussed. They get "plopped" on the floor because people move on to the next idea.
- *Decision by majority rule*: where everyone is polled and, if a majority of participants are in agreement, the decision stands. Often this does not allow for enough discussion time to allow people to have their concerns addressed. It also does not inspire the kind of win-win creativity that consensus building does.

Consensus building is a process for arriving at a mutually acceptable agreement that integrates the interests of all group members and addresses all of their major concerns. A consensus decision does not mean that everyone agrees. It means that all members have had an opportunity to express their opinions and feel that they have been listened to by the group. Consensus has been reached when:

1) All members understand the proposed alternative clearly
2) All members feel that they have had an opportunity to raise their interests and concerns
3) All members are prepared to support the decision (even if it is not their preference)

A consensus process can be used for any of the major steps of decision-making, including:

- Defining the problem or opportunity
- Identifying assumptions about the situation
- Establishing criteria for evaluating solutions
- Choosing the final solution
- Setting priorities

Consensus is about looking for a win-win decision. We often arrive at more thoughtful and creative decisions when we have worked through the concerns and interests of all parties. We also generate increased buy-in from group members because we avoid a win-lose dynamic.

The consensus process is certainly not the ideal solution for every occasion. It takes a considerable amount of time to do it properly, and in some circumstances, it is impossible to achieve. However, for important decisions that potentially impact all group members, it is an important tool.

For more information on consensus building, see *Tools and Templates* (Section 11.0 Decision-making Tools).

Key guidelines for consensus decision-making

1. Come to the discussion with an open mind. This doesn't mean not thinking about the issue beforehand, but it does mean being willing to consider any other perspectives and ideas that come up in the discussion.

2. Listen to other people's ideas and try to understand their reasoning.

3. Describe your reasoning briefly so other people can understand you. Avoid arguing for your own judgments and trying to make other people change their minds to agree with you.

4. Avoid changing your mind only to reach agreement and avoid conflict. Do not "go along" with decisions until you have resolved any reservations that you consider important.

5. View differences of opinion as helpful rather than harmful.

6. Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as majority vote. Stick with the process a little longer and see if you can't reach consensus after all.

Some difficulties with consensus

1. Achieving consensus can take considerably longer than a simple majority vote.

2. People who don't actively try to find a decision that is acceptable to everyone (all-win) can dominate a group's discussion by trying to make everyone else go along with them (win-lose).

3. A group can coerce or manipulate individuals into saying they accept a decision, even when they don't. That is groupthink, not true consensus.

Consensus and groupthink are different. Groupthink occurs when everyone expresses agreement with a decision, but some people are just going along because they feel obligated to reach an agreement and avoid conflict. Although there appears to be a consensus, some people have not resolved disagreements they consider important. In consensus, all agree with the decision and all important disagreements are resolved.

The time required to reach consensus can't usually be avoided. Look at it as an investment in better decisions and a healthier, more egalitarian, more participatory organization.

The other pitfalls can best be dealt with through openness and continuous effort on everyone's part to do what is ethical and right for the group. A willingness to take risks and to give and receive honest feedback are key to developing the trust required to let the process work.

Source: http://www.casagordita.com/consensus.htm

6.0 How Commitment is Formalized and Sustained

The degree to which our commitment needs to be detailed and formalized through written agreements will depend on the type of work we're doing. However, all work requires some form of commitment, and documenting this (even through a letter or email) can be helpful.

6.1 Principles that guide our work

- The initial vision of the convening organization will be revisited by the group so that everyone at the table agrees on and understands the vision, goals and outcomes.
- If there is no real agreement, we will return to the vision and goals and clarify any areas that are problematic. Once clarity has been achieved, we will ask for agreement once again. If someone does not wish to be involved at that point, they will communicate their desires to the members of the group. All members will ensure that they fully understand the reasons for the departure and will respect the departing party's wishes.
- Based on our goals, needs and resources, we will decide on the structure of our group.
- For group initiatives, we will collectively decide on our:
    - Purpose and objectives
    - Timelines
    - Membership
    - Standards for ethical conduct
    - Roles and responsibilities
    - Decision-making processes
    - Leadership or management
    - Resources
    - Dispute resolution processes
    - Communication processes
    - Confidentiality
    - Evaluation
- We review this Framework when group processes are initiated and include components of it in our terms of reference.
- We will articulate our agreements through a letter or email or more formally through Terms of Reference (TOR), a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or a Partnership Agreement, as appropriate.
- We will revisit agreements regularly to ensure our effectiveness in working together.

6.2 Determining the type of agreement needed

The type of agreement needed will depend on the structure we are developing. For less complex relationships and committees (e.g., coalitions, advisory committees, information-sharing networks), we may only need to develop Terms of Reference. For service-delivery partnerships that are limited in scope (e.g., one agency offers a workshop to another), we may require only an email outlining the agreement or a brief MOU. For more complex and highly integrated work, we will need detailed Partnership Agreements. The table below outlines some of the components that we may want to consider including. These components are expressed on a continuum of increasing complexity and integration.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">→ Increasing Level of Complexity and Integration →</th></tr>
<tr><td>Format: Email, Letter of Agreement</td><td>Format: MOU, TOR</td><td>Format: Contract or partnership agreement</td></tr>
<tr><td>▪ Activities/ Deliverables
▪ Timeframe
▪ Resources/Compensation</td><td>▪ Vision, Goals and Objectives
▪ Values/Guiding Principles
▪ Strategies and Activities
▪ Membership
▪ Roles and Responsibilities
▪ Timelines
▪ Meetings
▪ Decision-Making
▪ Information/Communication
▪ Resources
▪ Conflict Resolution
▪ Monitoring/Evaluation</td><td>▪ Vision, Goals and Objectives
▪ Values/Guiding Principles
▪ Strategies and Activities
▪ Membership
▪ Roles and Responsibilities
▪ Accountability and Reporting Requirements
▪ Timelines
▪ Management and Operational
▪ Processes
▪ Decision-Making
▪ Information/Communication
▪ Confidentiality
▪ Ownership
▪ Resources
▪ Conflict Resolution
▪ Risk Management (e.g., liability, insurance, volunteer mgmt)
▪ Outcomes and Evaluation
▪ Financial Arrangements/Responsibilities
▪ Monitoring/Evaluation
▪ Conditions for Partnership Termination/Withdrawal</td></tr>
</table>

6.3 Formalizing and sustaining commitment

When we have reached agreement on all of the applicable aspects of our commitment to a group initiative, we will document the commitment. The partnership agreement template in *Tools and Templates* (Section 12.0 Commitment Tools) can be used as a framework.

In order to sustain commitment, we need to monitor group processes and periodically review our vision and objectives to make sure that the expectations of group members continue to be met or addressed. (See 9.2 Evaluating results and processes).

We also need to make sure that the project is supported with adequate resources. Once a group has been convened and an action plan has been developed, it is helpful to consolidate resource requirements into a resource plan. A resource plan should consider not only financial requirements, but also human resources (time, leadership, skills, administrative support) and physical resources (facilities, equipment).

7.0 How Communication is Managed

Clear, timely and appropriate communication is essential to building good working relationships and moving projects forward. We acknowledge that communication almost needs to be "overdone," and build this into our work plan and/or processes.

7.1 Principles to guide our work

- We commit to open, honest and respectful communication with one another (See Section 3.3 *Respectful Interactions*, pp. 4-5).
- We commit to excellence in communication and information sharing.
- We consider various levels of communication, including:
  - One-on-one communication
  - Communication with partners or members
  - Communication with the sector or broader stakeholder group
  - Communication with the public
- Early in a group process, we make decisions around communication and, where appropriate, develop a formal communication strategy.
- We establish a plan for external communications, including feedback mechanisms, where appropriate.
- Only those who have been given the responsibility to speak for or on behalf of the group will do so.
- We designate liaisons for our group (e.g. for funders, politicians, etc.) and information about the initiative is communicated through these channels.
- We discuss what terms or words require common understanding or agreement and work together to define our key messages.
- Where appropriate, we seek to keep the rest of the sector and other stakeholders informed of our group work through brief email updates.
- We seek to constantly improve our own communication and technological skills, and ask for feedback for improvement from those we trust.

> Of course, formal and informal communication will take place with or without a plan. So, while concentrating on what should be said to whom and at what time, it is important to be clear about who has authority to speak for the group and about which topics. Assigning responsibility for communication and discussing openly what information will be shared is the way to avoid problems before they start.
>
> Source: Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), 1997.

7.2 Developing a communications plan

Discussing our communication strategy can be very helpful, even in informal partnerships. In more formal or complex work, we will need to develop a plan that details our agreements on the following:

- Key messages.
- Type and frequency of communications to various stakeholders (“Output”). This may include strategies for sending information to partners, funders, clients, politicians, members of the media, the general public, and to regional, provincial or other forums (including conferences).
- Type and frequency of consultation with various stakeholders (“Input”). This may include strategies for gathering input from partners, clients, sector members, funders, the public, and other stakeholders.
- Person responsible for various types of communications. It may be helpful to designate a person(s) who is responsible for communicating with the following:[7]
    - Funders
    - Politicians
    - Group members
    - Sector and other stakeholders
    - Public
    - Media
- Confidentiality (i.e., What, if anything, should not be communicated beyond the partnership).

The communications matrix, below, offers an example of a communications plan overview. It accounts for two way communication (output *and* input), outlines the methods and frequency of communication, and identifies the person responsible.

[7] Note: It is also helpful to discuss parameters and make sure that all group members are aware of them. (e.g., that only designated person(s) will speak on behalf of the group or talk to politicians, funders, etc. about the project)

Table 3: Example of a Communications Matrix						
	INPUT			OUTPUT		
Audience	**Method**	**Frequency**	**Person(s) Responsible**	**Method**	**Frequency**	**Person(s) Responsible**
Group Members	Verbal feedback via meetings	Every six weeks	Group members	Minutes	Every six weeks	Chair
	Written feedback via email to group	As needed	Group members	Email communiqués to group	As needed	Chair
Sector or stakeholders	Informal consultation via questionnaire	Annually	Chair	Brief email update	Every six months or as needed	Chair
				Information session	One time (unless more are needed)	Communications Sub-committee
Public	Town hall meeting	Annually	Communications Sub-committee	Press release (reviewed by group members for sign off)	As needed	Communications Sub-committee

7.3 Interpersonal communication

Effective interpersonal communication is critical to healthy group dynamics. Key components include:

- Listening to understand.
- Checking our assumptions and asking for clarity.
- Using positive non-verbal cues.
- Acknowledging another's point of view.
- Empathizing.
- Using 'I' statements to discuss concerns.

The Communications Skills Chart in *Tools and Templates* (Section 13.0) further outlines communication skills that can enhance a partnership or group process.

8.0 How Conflict is Managed

Conflict is a normal and anticipated part of working together. When we manage conflict in a positive and purposeful way, we open up opportunities for improved understanding and generate better solutions for our programs and services.

8.1 Principles that guide our work

- We separate people from the problem.
- We accept that what might be threatening to one person may not be to another and we commit to exploring and clarifying issues that are important to our partners.
- We recognize that there are differences in power and that these need to be acknowledged. We commit to identifying our power sources and to using these productively (See Section 14.0).
- We focus on interests (instead of positions) and on understanding underlying issues and concerns.
- Our goal is mutual gain.
- We ensure that we take time to think of all of the possibilities before deciding what to do.
- Our decisions are based on objective criteria.

8.2 Types of conflict

There are a number of different types of conflict. Understanding these sources support us in productively negotiating and solving differences with our partners. The table below outlines various sources and suggested strategies for each.

Source of Conflict	**Strategies to Resolve Conflict**
Communication: misunderstandings, assumptions, lack of information, misinformation, different languages.	▪ Define terms ▪ Clarify assumptions ▪ Check interpretation of information
Structural: poor processes, inappropriate structures or systems, time constraints	▪ Design process to satisfy both parties ▪ Adjust timelines and deadlines ▪ Analyze the context of the conflict
Relationship: stereotype, fear, distorted perceptions, unrealistic expectations, use of power, gender differences, personal conflicts	▪ Show concern for others point of view ▪ Remain non-defensive ▪ Keep emotions in check ▪ Check power imbalances
Interest: differences in needs, interests and preferences	▪ De-emphasize positions ▪ Look for common interests ▪ Be ready to accommodate and compromise
Value: opposing beliefs, views, values or philosophies. Cultural differences of individuals or groups, cross cultural conflicts	▪ Look for common goals/values ▪ Acknowledge value differences ▪ Show respect for differing value systems

Source: http://www.nisha.org/TKWEB/tools/rconflict.html

8.3 Creating an environment conducive to managing conflict

An affirming and supportive environment is the foundation for successfully managing conflict. Improved trust, integrity and security enhance opportunities for successful outcomes.

We accept that in some situations we lack trust and must consider how to work together in spite of this.

An environment more conducive to managing conflict can be created through:

- Naming our fears, problems and challenges.
- Establishing ground rules.
- Sharing our hopes and desired outcomes for our work together.
- Identifying what has gone right in the past and what we hope to carry forward as key themes and values (e.g. appreciative inquiry).
- Recognizing the importance of the context in addressing the specific concerns.
- Understanding that conflict management takes courage. It requires us to confront and acknowledge our fears and face our threats.

Ground rules

Below are examples of ground rules that support an environment in which mutual gains are made.

- One person speaks at a time.
- We make a sincere commitment to listen to one another and to understand the other person's point of view before responding.
- What we discuss is held in confidence unless there is explicit agreement to do otherwise.
- We agree to talk directly to the person involved and not to seek involvement of others.
- We agree to try our hardest and trust that others will do the same.
- We agree to focus on the issues, not the people with whom we disagree.

8.4 Conflict management process

We recognize that there are a number of approaches or methods to effectively manage conflict. In general, we commit to enhancing our understanding of others' perspective. Table 4 outlines a possible process for managing conflict.

Table 4: Conflict Management Process

Know and Take Care of Yourself
• Understand your "perceptual filters," biases, triggers • Create a personally affirming environment (eat, sleep, exercise)
Clarify Your Personal Needs Threatened by the Conflict
• Understand your Various Needs (substantive, procedural and psychological)[8] • Look at your BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement), WATNA (Worst Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement) and MLATNA (Most Likely Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement). This means asking the following: What is the <u>best</u> I can expect if we don't come to a negotiated agreement? What is the <u>worst</u> I can expect if we don't come to a negotiated agreement? What is the <u>most likely</u> alternative if we don't come to a negotiated agreement? • Identify "Desired Outcomes" from a Negotiated Process
Identify a Safe Place for Negotiation
• Appropriate Space for Discussion/Private and Neutral • Mutual Consent to Negotiate/Appropriate Time • Role of Support People (Facilitators, Mediators, Advocates), as needed • Agreement to Ground rules
Take a Listening Stance into the Interaction
• "Seek first to understand, then to be understood" (Covey) • Use Active Listening skills (See 13.1 Communications Skill Chart in *Tools and Templates*)
Assert Your Needs Clearly and Specifically
• Use "I-messages" as tools for clarification • Build from what you have heard - continue to listen well
Approach Problem-Solving with Flexibility
• Identify Issues Clearly and Concisely • Generate Options (Brainstorm), While Deferring Judgment • Be open to "tangents" and other problem definitions • Clarify Criteria for Decision-making
Manage Impasse with Calm, Patience, and Respect
• Clarify Feelings • Focus on Underlying Needs, Interests, and Concerns • Take a structured break, as needed
Build an Agreement that Works
• Ensure the agreement is fair, reasonable, balanced, realistic and future oriented. (These are the “Hallmarks” of a good agreement. • Implement and Evaluate - Live and Learn

<u>Source</u>: http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/stepsoverview.htm

[8] **Substantive** needs relate to the problem we think needs to be resolved. **Procedural** needs are those related to the process of addressing the substantive needs (e.g. ground rules). **Psychological** needs are related to the fostering of a safe environment. In any dispute all three types of needs are present and must be addressed.

8.5 Power imbalances

We recognize that everyone has power and that it is an important and complex issue when managing conflict. It is important for us to understand our power and to acknowledge the potential impact our power has on our partners. (Types of power are outlined in *Tools and Templates* in Section 14.0).

In our work together it is important that we:

- Recognize and address power imbalances in our Terms of Reference (e.g. one vote per organization, membership, etc.)
- Monitor ourselves and our use of power. (See *Tools and Templates*, Section 14.2, for what to do when you have less or more power than others).
- Openly discuss existing power imbalances.
- Take time to clarify different sources of power prior to initiating negotiations in order to better understand the conditions we need to negotiate.

8.6 Dealing with someone unwilling to negotiate

We recognize that there are situations in which our partners may not want or be able to problem-solve. Potential strategies to transform the situation into one in which the person unwilling to negotiate is able to recognize the benefits of a negotiated process include:

- Actively listening to the other person.
- Seeking to understand the sources of their resistance.
- Clarifying the conditions our partners require in order to talk things out (e.g. the procedural and psychological needs).
- Focusing on the things that can be done to influence future conflicts.
- Remaining relatively flexible about the topics of discussion.

8.7 How we handle impasses

In some situations we are unable to identify any effective solutions. These are the times when we feel frustrated, stuck, angry and disillusioned. In difficult situations like these, we tend to want to "dig in our heels" or "take our marbles and go home". Sometimes we withdraw from the process altogether.

We agree to view this point in the process with calmness, patience and respect. Our efforts can be refocused on the underlying needs, interests and concerns of the conflict by clarifying our feelings. We can ask ourselves these questions:

- What do I really need?
- What do I want out of this discussion/process?
- What alternatives do I have if I decide to withdraw from further negotiations?
- Does impasse mean that we have to forget about other issues that we need to discuss and other agreements or solutions we have already negotiated?

Understanding what is happening in the situation and creating a safe space is important to us. We agree to be patient, to stay open to new ideas, to reflect on our own opportunities, to extend these opportunities to others, and to look for new ways to have discussions at another time. (See Section 14.3 in *Tools and Templates* for further strategies for handling an impasse).

8.8 When an impasse can't be overcome

We recognize that, in limited and extreme situations, some issues cannot be resolved. When we have attempted all of the conflict resolution strategies and tools and are still at an impasse, we may have to consider alternatives.

These alternatives are openly discussed with the group, ensuring that all parties are respected.

- Groups may need to revisit guiding documents (e.g. Terms of Reference, Framework for Group Initiatives) to review decisions regarding conflict resolution.
- Where the conflict is personality-based and there appears to be no resolution, it is the responsibility of the involved parties to respect the progress of the initiative and take steps to allow the project to move forward. For example, the parties in conflict may agree to disagree or, at the extreme, may need to remove themselves from the project (e.g. they may need to opt out).
- When a conflict or impasse is holding up the project, the group may need to have an open discussion and identify the steps necessary to ensure that the progress of the project is not affected.
- Where appropriate and deemed necessary, the group may opt to involve a dispute resolution professional (e.g., a mediator).
- In extreme circumstances where all alternatives have been exhausted, the group may choose to ask those at the core of the conflict to leave the project.

Questions the group might ask themselves at this stage include:

- Are our actions in line with our Terms of Reference? Do our Terms of Reference clearly outline our expectations?
- Are our actions in line with the *Framework for Group Initiatives*?
- Have I looked at how I operate? How am I contributing to the problem?
- Have we done everything possible to negotiate a resolution?
- Have we focused on the interest (vs. the person or position)?
- Has there been a breach in any agreements (e.g. Terms of Reference, Memorandum of Understanding, Professional and other Codes of Conduct, bylaws)? If so, what was our response? How many times? How was the breach documented? Is there a pattern of unethical behavior?
- How have we addressed the conflict to date? Do our actions reflect our principles?
- What other actions should be considered? What is the potential impact of each action we are considering?
- Who needs to be involved (e.g. boards, Calgary Community Mediation Society, legal representatives, elders, funders)?

- Who should deliver messages? Who will be the spokesperson (e.g. to the parties involved, to funders, etc.)? At what point do these key messages need to be conveyed?

9.0 How Group Initiatives are Monitored or Evaluated

Evaluation helps us to make sure that we are achieving what we want to achieve. It is something that needs to be considered at the *beginning* of a group initiative so that we are working towards measurable, clearly defined goals. By building in review points and creating opportunities for strategic refinement and revision, we help to ensure greater effectiveness when we work together.

9.1 Principles that guide our work

- We think about evaluation at the beginning of our projects and build evaluation criteria into our goals.
- We document our vision, goals and objectives, and use this as a tool for managing group processes and gauging success.
- Early in the process, we decide upon a schedule for periodic review of our vision, goals and action plan. We build this into our terms of reference.
- If things aren't going according to plan, we fix the problem or revise the plan.
- We conduct periodic assessments of group processes to determine whether the vision and expectations of each of the group members are being met. This is also a time to review roles, responsibilities and contributions.
- We actively create an environment that supports frank and open discussion of successes, failures and needed improvements.

Benefits of Evaluation

Effective evaluations can:

- Account for accomplishments of program funding
- Promote learning
- Provide feedback to inform decisions
- Contribute to knowledge
- Assess cost-effectiveness
- Position high quality projects for future funding opportunities
- Increase the effectiveness of project and program management
- Contribute to policy development
- Identify successes
- Provide a plan for future work

Revised from Health Canada. (1996, August). *Guide to Project Evaluation: A Participatory Approach.* Population Health Directorate.

9.2 Evaluating results and processes

There are two aspects of group initiatives that we need to monitor:

1) Our results: Are we meeting our goals?
2) Our process: Are we working together effectively as a group?

9.2.1 Evaluating Results

In order to assess results, we need to ensure that we create clear, measurable goals and objectives that focus on what we want to achieve. The following are useful considerations in developing well defined goals and actions. The action plan should be:

Specific: Develop concrete ideas for action related to each goal. Make a step-by-step action plan.

Measurable: How do you know when each step is completed? How do you keep an accurate record?

Achievable: Are you prepared and can you meet this challenge? Is it a sensible plan?

Realistic: Are you able to attain your goals through reasonable efforts?

Time-targeted: When can each step be started and completed?

Supported: Who could help? How could they help? [9]

We need to plan for periodic review of these goals and objectives so that we can make adjustments and ensure that our actions continue to be relevant and effective. Using our action plan as a basis, we will periodically consider the following questions:

- Did we do what we were supposed to do? (actions)
- Did we achieve what we were supposed to achieve? (outcomes)
- How effective have our actions been? (impact)
- If we did not achieve what we said we would, why not?
- What will or should we do differently in the future?[10]

The responses to these questions may cause us to refine or revise our approach.

Developing Objectives

"We want to be accountable for *results*, not activities. Being busy is not good enough. Objectives, therefore, should focus on outcomes and results rather than activities. They should state specifically what you will achieve…"

Source: ©1999 Pacific Community Resources Society
http://www.pcrs.ca/TKWEB/tools%5Caccount.html

[9] Source: Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC),1997. http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml

[10] Source: ©1999 Pacific Community Resources Society, http://www.pcrs.ca/TKWEB/tools%5Caccount.html

9.2.2 Evaluating processes

We also need to monitor our group processes to ensure that we continue to work together effectively. This may include:

- Periodically reviewing roles, responsibilities and contributions
- Periodically reviewing the initiative to determine whether it is serving the vision and objectives of all partners
- Periodically reviewing group decision-making and communication processes to ensure they are effective

The *Team Fitness Test* (see *Tools and Templates, Section 15.0*) can be used to evaluate group processes. The questionnaire helps groups to evaluate their work along five dimensions: shared leadership, group work skills, climate, cohesiveness and team members' contributions.

Lessons from Experience

- Evaluating results and impact is important. Be sure there is a clear understanding of what success looks like and a concrete way for evaluating it over time.
- Action plans must be established and then reviewed, revised or replaced if they are not producing the results for which you had hoped.
- Remember partnerships operate in a dynamic environment. Make sure you are aware of changes within your environment, and that you confirm that your goals and action plans remain relevant and meaningful.
- Assess the effectiveness of your partnership structure and process on a regular basis. Revision and renewal can take place at any time, although it generally takes place after an assessment or evaluation.
- New people and ideas should always be welcomed and partnerships should make an effort to have a way for people to join. Any change in the personalities in the partnership will change the dynamics of the group.

Source: Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC),1997.
http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml

9.3 Closing a partnership or group process

Partnerships and committees have endings (e.g., when a group has reached its goals or served its purpose). On these occasions, we need to take time to recognize our efforts and accomplishments. The following suggestions from *The Partnership Handbook* might guide us as we seek to formalize and recognize closure:

- What have been the major successes of the partnership?
- What have we learned?
- What can be done to acknowledge all the hard work?
- Recall what each person or organization contributed.
- Who needs to be recognized within the group and outside?
- What needs to be conveyed outside the partnership regarding the ending or closure of the partnership?
- How will you capture the history of the partnership?
- Solicit ideas about a celebration or recognition party or ceremony.
- Pick a time, place and event to which all can agree.
- Who should be included?
- Celebrate and prepare to move on![11]

Some partnerships are dissolved because they are unable to meet their objectives. It is important in these situations that we dissolve the partnership with integrity and commit to learning from the experience. Section 15.2, *Dissolving Partnerships Honourably*, offers suggestions for this.

[11] Source: Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC),1997. http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml

PART THREE: TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

10.0 Convening Tools

10.1 Self-Assessment[12]

You may wish to assess your current situation by answering the following questions. Keep in mind that if the answer to any of the questions is negative, there is more work that needs to be done on your part, either before or during the partnership relationship:

- Why am I interested in this partnership? What is my motivation to be involved?
- Do I have the time it will take to be a productive member?
- Do I value team work and have a good attitude about shared responsibility?
- What skills and resources do I bring to the group?
- What will I require from my organization to be effective and feel supported?
- Are there any work or personal issues that might affect my partnership involvement (e.g. conflicts of interest, time constraints)?
- What (if any) unresolved conflict, past history or baggage do I need to sort out related to the partnership?
- What opportunities and advantages do I see professionally or personally?
- What fears or insecurities (if any) do I have about working with others in general?
- What fears or insecurities (if any) do I have about working with this particular group of organizations and individuals?
- Can I communicate and express my ideas, concerns and feelings in a group?
- Who or what am I representing? With what authority? Do others agree that I can represent them well?

10.2 Organizational Assessment

Many organizations are beginning to think that partnerships may be the route to success and, given some of the changes taking place, they may even be seen as a necessity. Before entering into a partnership, however, it is important to ensure that the organization you represent is ready, willing and able to be a partner. One key issue faced by organizations is who to choose to represent them in the partnership. Usually this will be determined based on what the partnership is addressing and what the organization needs or wants from the person representing it. Selecting someone who is available, has the skills and who will do a good job for both the partnership and the organization is most

[12] Source: All three assessment tools are taken from Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC),1997. http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml

desirable, as is knowing in advance how the organization will support its representative in the partnership. As partnerships are sometimes considered secondary to the main work of the organization, it is useful to have ongoing communication about how both the representative and the partnership activities are doing. The following questions might help sort some of this out.

As an organization, these things should be considered before entering a partnership:

- Does the organization's mandate fit with the proposed partnership?
- Are the organization's values compatible with the work that will be undertaken?
- What resources (e.g. time, money, materials, space, equipment) from the organization might be available for the partnership?
- Is there someone who can represent the organization in a responsible way, and can that person be spared at this time? How will the organization support their representative in the partnership?
- How will the partnership benefit the organization? How will the organization benefit the partnership?
- How much time will it take and how will that time connect to the other activities of the organization?
- Is there any reason why the organization would not wish to be involved?

10.3 Group Assessment

Partnerships are sometimes formed with very little attention given to how prepared the group is to proceed or if the community context has been given appropriate thought. The partnership group and the host community need to be considered from the outset. The following exercise may be useful when addressing these two components.

Answer the following questions about the potential partnership:

- What is the need for the partnership? How do you know it is needed?
- Who are the individuals, groups or organizations that might be interested and appropriate to have involved?
- Are there some organizations that don't seem like obvious partners that should also be considered?
- How do you know there is support for this partnership from the community, other organizations and the people who will most benefit from it?
- What form might this support take?
- Is the political climate favorable for this venture?
- Where are the resources coming from to operate the partnership and anything that might result from it?

- How do you know that a partnership, and not any other vehicle, such as a committee or task force, is the right approach to use?

- What are the implications to others (if there are any) doing similar things in the vicinity of the partnership?

- What is the best that will happen if all goes well?

- What is the worst possible outcome if it doesn't?

- What are other initial factors that need to be considered?

11.0 Decision-Making Tools

11.1 Steps to Consensus[13]

The following is taken from an article entitled *Consensus: Tap into a powerful decision-making tool.* The article is very informative and worth reading in its entirety. It can be found online at http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/tools/t-oct97.pdf

The group . . .

- Discusses the topic, raises questions and concerns, and presents data and options for solutions.
- Decides whether consensus is appropriate for this decision, how much time will be needed, and what to do if consensus is not achieved.
- Explores differences and similarities, agreements and disagreements.
- Makes suggestions or modifications on the proposed solutions.
- Generates a new solution based on the discussion.

At this point, facilitators determine each person's willingness to support the decision by polling each person in the group.

This is an opportunity to ask questions like:

> Knowing what you know now, would you be willing to support the decision? (If not, what would have to change for you to be able to support this decision?)
>
> Even if this isn't your first choice, do you think that this is a viable decision? Do you believe this solution has a good chance of working?

Facilitators cannot wait for members to volunteer their opinions. Going person-by-person around the table ensures that every person voices his or her position and prevents opponents from hiding behind silence.

Responding that "I can live with it" is not satisfactory. Saying "I can live with it" is the lowest form of consensus. […] Consensus has been reached when all members can comfortably say they support the solution or decision.

11.2 When there's no consensus

If polling reveals a lack of consensus, consider these suggestions:

- Create a compromise position and ask everyone to react to that.
- Provide private 'think time' and begin discussion again.
- Leave the issue and return to it later.

[13] All three tools in this section are from: Richardson, J. Consensus: Tap into a powerful decision-making tool. Tools for Schools. October/ November 1997. http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/tools/t-oct97.pdf

- Organize small groups to reach consensus and then begin large group discussion again.
- Create a contradictory statement to refocus the discussion and identify real concerns.
- Choose another facilitator.

11.3 Honouring all voices

Individuals who block consensus are likely to feel as if they haven't been heard by the group. They probably aren't objecting to the whole solution, just to part of it. Your mission is to ensure that their concerns are heard and that the group responds to them.

Here's a series of questions the facilitator can ask to help move the group towards consensus.

- Under what conditions would you support this solution?
- What part of the solution do you oppose?
- What parts of the solution would you modify so you'd be more comfortable with the solution?
- What would be necessary for you to agree with this solution?
- Would you be willing to live with the solution for a limited time?
- What would be a reasonable time before we reassess the decision?
- Under what conditions would you be willing to put aside your differences?

In addition, ask the team members who support the recommendation:

- What are you willing to do to adjust your views to respond to the discomfort of those who are not yet in agreement?
- If you were not in agreement, what parts of the solution might be troublesome to you?

One caution: Individuals who feel as if they haven't been heard can become uncomfortable by being singled out for this kind of attention. The facilitator needs to be sensitive to that issue as well.

12.0 Commitment Tools

12.1 Framework for a Partnership Agreement[14]

The following text provides a list of the information required for signatories to a partnership agreement.

General information

1. Name of partnership, purpose, location.
2. Term of partnership: start date and termination date (or ‘will continue until terminated as outlined in …below).
3. Type of partnership (for example, consultative or advisory, contributory, operational, collaborative).
4. Structure of partnership (for example, steering committee with individual working groups, coalition, or other).
5. Operating principles (for example, shared governance, shared management, equal authority).
6. Assumptions about standards of professionalism and conduct.

Specific information (append terms of reference and/or other relevant documents)

1. List of partners.
2. Description of partnership task, including expected deliverables and associated timelines.
3. Contribution of each partner, including human and financial resources, and in-kind contributions such as space, administrative and logistical support.
4. How the finances of the partnership will be set up and maintained, including bank account, budgeting and accounting practices, salaries (if relevant).
5. Process(es) for decision-making.
6. How products will be produced, shared and owned.
7. Accountability and reporting processes.
8. Conditions for voluntary termination of the partnership, or for withdrawal by a partner.
9. Conflict resolution protocol.
10. Issues of risk management, including liability, insurance, volunteer management (as appropriate).

[14] Source: Capacity Consulting. “Understanding Partnerships.” Adapted from Partnership Dialogue, Canadian Cancer Society.

13.0 Communication Tools

13.1 Communication Skills Chart[15]

This chart sets out various verbal communication skills that can enhance a partnership. While this skills chart has been developed from the basis of the dominant culture, it may be helpful to a wide range of different cultural groups to assist them in understanding and communicating in the dominant culture.

SKILL	PURPOSE	WHAT TO DO	EXAMPLES
Clarifying/questioning	Get more information	Ask questions	"What do you mean when you say…"?
Paraphrasing	Check understanding	Reflect message in your own words	"So what you're saying is…"
Acknowledges feelings	Check knowledge and understanding of feelings	Reflect the feelings from speaker's words and manner	"You seem very upset…"
Empathizing	Show understanding of speaker's meaning/feeling	Reflect your perception of speaker's feelings and meaning	"You feel hurt by…"
Summarizing	Pull together key issues	Recap major points	"Let's see what we've covered…"
"I" language	Express your own feelings	Describe your experience without judgment	"My experience has been…"
Descriptive language	Describe the behaviour that is part of the conflict	Describe the situation do not judge	"When you walked away I…"

[15] Source: Conflict Resolution, Tenth edition July 1999 Centre For Conflict Resolution, Justice Institute of BC. Can be found online at http://www.pcrs.ca/TKWEB/tools/commun.html

13.2 Common ways to hinder communication[16]

- Advice giving.
- Blaming others — e.g. "You should have called sooner".
- Changing the topic inappropriately. People often change the topic to cope with their own rising anxiety.
- Defensiveness.
- False reassurance.
- Judging the other person.
- Leading statements. Putting words in the other person's mouth.
- Moralizing — specific form of judging. Occurs when one judges another based on one's own values.
- Multiple questions — e.g. "Where do you live? Is it an apartment and what is your neighborhood like?"
- Over-use of close-ended questions.
- Parroting — continual repetition of a person's phrases in an effort to paraphrase.
- Patronizing the person — talking down to them, voice tones too sweet.
- Placating the person — agreeing with everything, taking the blame for everything and avoiding "no".
- Rationalizing feelings — finding an apparently reasonable excuse for having the feelings, to explain away whatever is being felt.
- Stumped silence — both parties are stuck. Try to summarize what took place, comment on own confusion.
- Why questions — imply that others should come up with the underlying motivations of their actions. The other may feel he or she is being tested or may be perceived as accusatory.

[16] Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC),1997. http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml

14.0 Conflict Management Tools

14.1 Types of Power

Position power: power associated with the "carrots and sticks" that come with certain roles.
Institutional power: power associated with financial and human resources, the type of service provided (direct vs. indirect), type of issue represented, profile of the issue and of the organization (perceived credibility) and individuals involved (including status or power).
Coercive power: supported by contracts or statute that compel you to behave in certain ways and to take on certain task associated with your role.
Expertise power: knowledge associated with doing your job over a period of time.
Normative power: power coming from knowing "the lay of the land" in your agency, department or area of expertise. You know how to get things done and are familiar with cultural norms.
Referent power: the power that comes from earning the respect of others; this is generally associated with integrity, competence and the manner in which you conduct yourself.

Source: Academic Leadership Support: Office of Quality Improvement & Office of Human Resource Development.
http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/commonproblems.htm

14.2 Handling Differences in Power

When you perceive that you have *more* power, you can:	**When you perceive that you have *less* power, you can:**
▪ Select a location most comfortable to the other party to work through the conflict. ▪ Share resources that you have such as information, expertise. ▪ Be willing to listen to the other party first - genuinely listen. ▪ Speak in a friendly, welcoming and open manner. ▪ Do no intimidate or retaliate. ▪ Respond non-defensively. ▪ Seek a "level playing field" so that the process feels fair to both parties. ▪ Back off from your position and be willing to look at a variety of ways to meet the needs of both parties. Look for alternatives.	▪ Find ways to increase your own power and influences and lessen your dependence on the other party's source of power. ▪ Identify your own resources and skills. ▪ If timing affects the balance of power, consider waiting for a time that may work better. ▪ Bring the power imbalance into the open and discuss it with your partner. ▪ Assert yourself and continue to keep your interests on the table, while continuing to listen and acknowledge the other party's interests. ▪ If asserting yourself results in the other party exerting his or her power over you, shift temporarily from a focus on your own interests to a focus on the other party's interests. ▪ Ask an outsider to assist, if you cannot deal with it on your own.

Source: http://www.nisha.org/TKWEB/tools/rconflict.html

14.3 Strategies for handling an impasse

Reaching an impasse is a common challenge in the evolution of a conflict. Below are a number of strategies we can use in these instances:

- Set aside the issue and talk about how it feels to be stuck.
- Reframe the issue.
- Break the problem into more manageable chunks.
- When in doubt: RESTATE…RESTATE…RESTATE! Be sure the other person knows you are making reasonable efforts to understand his or her point of view. By doing so, you greatly increased the likelihood that the other person will sense the integrity of your efforts, and respond positively.
- Stay flexible - generate new options. Affirm the value of continuing to explore better responses when people feel trapped.
- Validate and affirm areas of agreement and common values and interests.
- Clarify decision-making criteria.
- Reaffirm the ground rules.
- Take a structured break with "homework"
- Explore alternatives.[17]

[17] Source: Academic Leadership Support: Office of Quality Improvement & Office of Human Resource Development. http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/step7.htm

15.0 Evaluation Tools

15.1 Team Fitness Test[18]

Step One: Rate each of the following statements as it applies to your team using the following rating scale:

This statement definitely applies to our team.	4
This statement applies to our team most of the time.	3
This statement is occasionally true for our team.	2
This statement does not describe our team at all.	1

Enter the score you believe appropriate for each statement beside the statement number on the Scoring Sheet.

____ 1. Each team member has an equal voice.

____ 2. Members make team meetings a priority.

____ 3. Team members know they can depend on one another.

____ 4. Our mandate, goals, and objectives are clear and agreed upon.

____ 5. Team members fulfill their commitments.

____ 6. Team members see participation as a responsibility.

____ 7. Our meetings produce excellent outcomes.

____ 8. There is a feeling of openness and trust in our team.

____ 9. We have strong, agreed upon beliefs about how to achieve success.

____ 10. Each team member demonstrates a sense of shared responsibility for the success of the team.

____ 11. Input from team members is used whenever possible.

____ 12. We all participate fully in team meetings.

____ 13. Team members do not allow personal priorities/agendas to hinder team effectiveness.

____ 14. Our roles are clearly defined and accepted as defined by all team members.

____ 15. Team members keep each other well informed (principal of mutuality, where everyone takes responsibility for the group)

____ 16. We involve the right people in decisions.

[18] Source: http://www.gitt.org/files/team_fitness_test.doc

_____ 17. In team meetings we stay on track and on time.

_____ 18. Team members feel free to give their honest opinions.

_____ 19. If we were asked to list team priorities, our lists would be very similar.

_____ 20. Team members take initiative to put forth ideas and concerns.

_____ 21. Team members are kept well informed by the chair or facilitator.

_____ 22. We are skilled in reaching consensus.

_____ 23. Team members respect each other.

_____ 24. When making decisions, we agree on priorities.

_____ 25. Each team member pulls his or her own weight.

Scoring Table
Step Two: Record your score for each question in the corresponding columns below and total each column.

I		II		III		IV		V	
Stmt #	Score	Stmt #	Score	Stmt #	Score	Stmt #	Score	Stmt #	Score
1		2		3		4		5	
6		7		8		9		10	
11		12		13		14		15	
16		17		18		19		20	
21		22		23		24		25	
Total		**Total**		**Total**		**Total**		**Total**	

Interpretation Matrix

Step Three: Record your total score for columns 1 to 5 and then rank them in order from lowest score (1) to highest score (5). Add all of the group members scores together for each column and compare team scores and ranking to individual ones. Discuss the findings.

Column	Your Score	Your Ranking	Team Score	Team Ranking	Team Fitness Element
I					Shared Leadership
II					Group Work Skills
III					Climate
IV					Cohesiveness
V					Team Members' Contributions

15.2 Dissolving Partnerships Honourably[19]

Partnerships allow organizations to combine their resources and build on their respective strengths. They allow organizations to compensate for their weaknesses. They provide an opportunity to learn from each other.

Partnerships usually come to an end at some time. Most often, they end because they have reached their objectives or have gone as far as they can toward their objectives. Sometimes they end because there is no longer funding to allow their work to continue. Sometimes they end because the organizations are so different that they simply cannot work together any longer.

At that time, partners have two choices:

A. They can let the partnership simply fade away and disappear; or

B. They can dissolve the partnership in way that acknowledges their accomplishments and sets a foundation for working together again in the future.

Purpose

The purpose of this tool is to outline a process for dissolving a partnership in an honourable way.

In cases of conflict

1. The dissatisfied partner(s) should provide written notice of its (their) intention to dissolve the partnership. The letter should outline its reasons in some detail although it should attempt to be positive rather than acrimonious or bitter in tone.

2. The partners – or the funder if it is involved – should organize a special meeting of the partnering team to consider the notice. The meeting should take place within one month of the funder receiving the letter identified above.

3. The partnering team should explore whether there is any way to repair the differences or any alternatives to dissolution. If not, the team should establish a date – perhaps three months – when formal dissolution will take place. It should also explore what service alternatives are available and can be recommended. The partnership's dissolution should not be allowed to hurt clients or the community.

In all cases, regardless of whether there is or is not conflict, the partners should undertake the following as the partnership nears its date for dissolution:

- Identify the partnership's major accomplishments and acknowledge those people and organizations who have contributed to these accomplishments;

- Determine how to inform people - both inside and outside the partnership – of the decision to dissolve;

- Document the partnership's history and the lessons which can be drawn from its operations;

[19] Source: Pacific Community Resources Society,http://www.pcrs.ca/TKWEB/tools%5Cdissolve.html

- Recommend an appropriate alternative to the current partnership; and
- Select a time, place and event to celebrate what has been accomplished and to move on.

The Partnership's Final Report

Questions to be answered by the partners:

- When was the partnership initiated? What were its goals and objectives?
- What were the partnership's major accomplishments?
- Who contributed to these accomplishments?
- What lessons can we learn from the partnership's successes?
- What lessons can we learn from the partnership's shortcomings?

Dissolution Checklist

1. Document how any assets are being disposed of
2. Prepare final report on partnership
3. Final report and financial statement
4. Final report and financial statement provided to funder and Boards
5. Final report shared with staff and others as appropriate
6. Files organized so the partnership's history is not lost
7. Inform all stakeholders including clients if appropriate
8. Refer clients to other services if need be
9. Host a "Moving on" celebration for partnership staff and funders

16.0 Continuum of Working Relationships

The work we do together spans a broad continuum, from networking and information-sharing to partnership and collaboration. The tools below are offered as a starting point for discussing and defining the nature of our relationships as we work together.

16.1 Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration[20]

There is a continuum of interdependency recognized in the literature, ranging from co-operation at one end (most independent), co-ordination in the middle, and collaboration at the other end (most interdependent).

Cooperation
Kagan et al (1990) describe co-operation as the least complex type of interagency effort, characterized by informal relationships that exist without any clearly defined structure. Participants retain their autonomy, resources are not pooled, power is not shared, and interactions are episodic.

Coordination
Co-ordination refers to formal institutionalized relationships among existing networks of organizations. Co-ordination is characterized by the sharing or exchange of some resources by participants, and is considered to be typically bilateral, occurring between two groups that come together around a specific task or program.

Collaboration
Barbara Gray defines collaboration as a "process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible".

Collaboration moves beyond cooperation and coordination. Collaboration involves a higher degree of intensity where members;

- Commit to a common vision and goals
- Create new channels of communication
- Commit to planning together
- Determine authority and share power
- Contribute both resources and reputation;
- Jointly share in all risks, outcomes and rewards.

Collaboration is distinguished by the importance of the developmental nature of the process, its “dynamic evolutionary character”. Collaboration connotes a more durable and pervasive relationship than either cooperation or co-ordination. Collaborations bring previously separated organizations into a new structure that transcends individual or episodic interaction.

Melaville and Blank suggest that " a collaborative strategy is called for where the need and intent is to change fundamentally the way services are designed and delivered. By contrast cooperation merely involves coordinating existing services."

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[20] Source: Action Committee Against Violence. Based on the following: Barbara Gray, Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems, May 1989, Jossey-Bass; Atelia I. Melaville and Martin J. Blank: What it Takes: Structuring Interagency Partners to Connect children and Families with Comprehensive Services, Washington DC: Education and Human Services Consortium, 1991;
Kagan, S.L., Collaboration in Action, Reshaping Services for Young Children and Their Families, New Haven CT,Yale University, Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy, September 1990;
BeBevoisse, W. 1986. Collaboration:Some Principals of Bridgework. Educational Leadership 43 (5) 9-12.

Networking, coordinating, and cooperating all lead to collaborating. They build on each other to develop increasing commitment. Both co-operation and co-ordination often occur as part of the process of collaborating, and may in fact be important groundwork for subsequent collaboration.

Goal of Community Collaboration
The goal of community collaboration is to bring individuals and members of communities, agencies and organizations together in an atmosphere of support to systemically solve existing and emerging problems that could not be solved by one group alone. While this is easily said experience has shown that it is not easily done. It has been likened to "teaching dinosaurs to do ballet" (Schlechty in DeBevoise, 1986)

Successful Collaborations:

The W.H. Kellogg Foundation identified the following characteristics of successful collaborations:

- Are open, inclusive and diverse;
- Build upon individual, organizational and community assets and strengths;
- Take time;
- Work in more than one stage at a time;
- Accomplish more than any one partner might achieve alone;
- Are flexible and adaptable;
- Empower stakeholders in a positive, non-threatening way;
- Are based on a compelling shared vision;
- Employ strategies and tactics that directly relate to that vision;
- Are well timed;
- Are based on tangible, visible commitments of resources by the stakeholders;
- Have the power to implement their own recommendations;
- Use consensus to reach desired outcomes
- Focus on root causes and underlying values
- Value the process as well as the results;
- Measure outcomes regularly;
- Celebrate milestones and achievements; and
- Sustain the momentum

16.2 Types of interagency efforts[21]

TYPES OF INTERAGENCY EFFORTS			
FEATURES	**COOPERATION**	**COORDINATION**	**COLLABORATION**
Objective	Narrow focus; short term	Broad focus; short or intermediate	Broad focus; long-term
Policy	No interagency policies required	Interagency policies are dictated by single agency policies	Interagency policies are determined by the collaborative unit
Structure	No new interagency structure is required; agency personnel are assigned to achieve the objectives	Requires development of a new interagency unit; staff may be directly assigned to the new unit	Requires development and maintenance of new unit; staff must be assigned directly to the new interagency unit
Resources	Supported with discretionary funds which remain within the control of the individual agencies	Supported with dedicated funds from the individual agencies that remain within the control of the individual agencies	Supported by pooled resources that are largely within the control of the collaborative interagency unit
Loyalty	No loyalty to the interagency effort is required; loyalty is to the individual agencies	Primary loyalty is to the individual agencies; secondary loyalty is to the interagency effort	Primary loyalty is to the interagency effort; secondary loyalty is to the individual agencies
Agreement	No major single agency territorial issues arise; agreement is not an issue	Disagreements about territorial issues are resolved through majority rule voting procedures	Disagreements about territorial issues are resolved through the development of consensus
Decision Making	Interagency decisions are made by the single agencies; interagency needs are secondary to agency needs	Interagency decisions are consistent with single agency decisions; interagency needs are secondary to single agency needs	Interagency decisions are made by the collaborative unit; single agency needs are secondary to interagency needs
Personnel Roles	Carried out by personnel whose primary function is to represent their individual agencies' interests and who are assigned responsibility for the interagency effort on a short term basis	Policy issues are decided by interagency committee whose primary function is to represent their individual agencies' interests, but who also demonstrate commitment to the interagency objective	Carried out by personnel whose primary responsibility is to accomplish the interagency objective; committee members actively promote interagency needs and concerns in their home agencies

[21] Source: Factors that Enhance Collaboration among Education, Health and Social Service Agencies. Paper presented at the 1990 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association by H. Goldman and B.A. Intriligator, p. 9.

17.0 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Frank, F. Smith, A. *The Partnership Handbook.* Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC),1997. Available online in PDF or MS Word at http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml

Wild Rose Foundation. *Working in Partnerships – Recipes for Success*. Available in PDF at http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/building_communities/volunteer_community/resources/partnership_kit/index.asp