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ABSTRACT

"Vision for the Nineties...A Plan of Action" (1991) noted that, to achieve excellence in schools, school-based coordinated services needed to be enhanced by improving interdependent and interagency coordination. It was further noted that school jurisdictions needed assistance to improve the availability of a range of coordinated, school-based family and community services to enhance teaching and learning. An extensive study was conducted across Alberta in 1992 to examine how the province was faring in its efforts to improve interdepartment and interagency coordination. Study methodology included a literature review, a telephone survey of key informants such as planners and managers with experience in and responsibility for group coordination, a questionnaire sent to 135 interorganizational groups, and site visits made to 10 selected locations where projects were underway. This guide translates the findings of the study into implications and suggestions for practice. One section of the guide explains the study methodology and the instruments used. Other sections correspond to stages of group development: Before You Begin; Getting Started; Maintaining Momentum; and Looking Back, Planning Ahead. Relevant materials are appended, including a set of evaluation worksheets which can be duplicated for copies or overheads. The guide is intended as a tool for managers or staff who wish to coordinate activities among their own organization or agency and others with a similar interest, objective, or goal. (Author/NB)

# THE ART OF WORKING TOGETHER

## A Guide to Interorganizational Coordination In the Community



Sp.Ed
Special Education Branch
Alberta Education

# The Art of Working Together

## A Guide to Interorganizational Coordination in the Community

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This document is intended for:

| | |
|---|---|
| Students | |
| Teachers | |
| Administrators | ✓ |
| General Public | |
| Community Groups | ✓ |

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See Appendix E.

*The art of working together: A guide to interorganizational coordination in the community* was developed by the Special Education Branch, Alberta Education, under the direction of:

Harvey Finnestad, Director
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# FOREWORD

> *. . . to achieve excellence in schools we must enhance school-based coordinated services by improving interdepartment and interagency coordination and assist school jurisdictions to improve the availability of a range of coordinated, school-based family and community services to enhance teaching and learning (e.g., health, social, and recreational services offered by other agencies and organizations).*
>
> *Vision for the nineties . . . a plan of action* (1991)

How are we faring in our objective to improve interdepartment and interagency coordination as set in *Vision for the nineties . . . a plan of action* (1991)? To answer this question and to clarify the understanding of "interorganizational coordination" in Alberta, an extensive study was conducted across the province during 1992. The study began by identifying what academics and experts have written and said about interorganizational coordination. Then, using a questionnaire and site visits, the study examined what groups in Alberta are saying and doing.

Four different approaches were used: a review of the literature, a telephone survey of key informants such as planners and managers with experience in and responsibility for group coordination, a questionnaire sent to 135 interorganizational groups, and site visits made to selected locations where projects were underway.

This guide translates the findings of the study into implications and suggestions for practice. It includes findings of the survey, makes reference to examples of interorganizational coordination in Alberta, and provides strategies and tools for developing an interorganizational group.

# INTRODUCTION

## WHY STUDY COORDINATION?

Today, the term "coordination" is beginning to figure prominently in the vocabulary of managers and their staff as private and public sectors alike strive for greater efficiency and economy in their products and services. Coordination in planning and delivery is seen as a means to improve results, reduce duplication, and eliminate costs. There is growing awareness that parties can achieve more working together than each can individually. Consequently, individuals in government, business, and non-profit organizations are increasingly being expected to work with other departments, agencies, and sectors.

The call for coordination is not new: the concept has been popular at various times in recent history. Examples of effective coordinated planning in Alberta, and elsewhere in Canada, can be cited from the late 1960s and early 1970s and experiences provide valuable lessons in what makes coordination work. In light of a renewed interest in coordination, a study of current examples could provide helpful information for those engaged in similar efforts.

What drives this renewed interest? Some of the factors cited by proponents of coordination are:

- The time has come when no discipline or interest group can operate in isolation. The well-being of individuals is determined by a number of factors including social and economic circumstances, beliefs, culture, and the environment. Those in human services recommend coordinated approaches to program planning and delivery. Recent evidence indicates that individuals and families are best served by disciplines and organizations working closely together.

- Societal changes such as those related to the economy, the structure of families, and demographics have altered needs for education, health, and social services. Government and non-government organizations must change their thinking and their planning to respond to these changes. At the same time, organizations are considering cost cutting measures, which may affect the ability of all sectors to continue to provide a full range of goods and services. A coordinated approach in planning and service delivery is essential for reducing duplication.

## WHY PRODUCE A GUIDE?

Despite the enthusiasm for the concept of interagency coordination, few managers, professional and technical staff, or service providers understand what coordination is and how it works. Although case studies of interorganizational coordination are cited in literature related to social policy, organizational development, and administration, few sources help the reader translate the empirical findings to practice.

People practising in the fields of health care, education, psychology, and social work seldom have a background in building and working with teams, yet they are being expected to respond to policy directives requiring collaboration with other departments and sectors. Consequently, they often feel they are "flying by the seat of their pants" when forming partnerships and planning joint initiatives, particularly those between groups representing different perspectives and interests.

A practical, "how to" guide could help practitioners who wish to coordinate activities between their own organization or agency and others with a similar interest, objective, or goal.

## ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THE GUIDE

This guide was based on several beliefs and assumptions about the role of coordination in community services and the need for practical information.

1. Managers, community workers, and other practitioners need a better understanding of the process and dynamics of interorganizational partnerships.

2. The complexity and time consuming nature of coordinated planning and delivery in human services can discourage interorganizational partnerships.

3. Many of the barriers to coordination can be overcome when individuals understand the community and can demonstrate skill in group processes.

4. Persons experienced in working in interorganizational settings possess expertise and knowledge which, if documented, could contribute significantly to the understanding and development of interorganizational coordination.

5. Information is most useful when it is practical, accessible, and makes the job easier.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE GUIDE

The information for this guide came from several sources:

- a literature review
- telephone interviews with ten key informants, all of whom were senior officials who had responsibility for interorganizational planning and implementation in education, health, social services, or community-based social services in Alberta
- a questionnaire survey of 135 interorganizational groups operating in Alberta that met the following criteria:
  - they had been operating for at least a year
  - their functions included networking, consultation, cooperative planning, resource sharing, and collaborative service delivery
  - two or more organizations were involved
  - the target groups were children and their families.
- site visits to ten selected interorganizational groups drawn from those that responded to the survey.

## HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

Each section of the guide pulls together the findings and other information from the sources cited above. If you are interested in details about how this information was collected and compiled - the methodology and the instruments - please read the section beginning, **How We Did It**. However, you do not have to know this information to use the guide.

This guide translates the findings of the study, into implication and suggestions for practice. References are made to examples of coordination in Alberta and direct quotes are taken from the survey results. The guide is intended as a tool for managers or staff who wish to coordinate activities among their own organization or agency and others with a similar interest, objective, or goal.

In addition, there are several evaluation tools which have been duplicated in Appendix F to be used to make copies or overheads.

The development of an interorganizational group is visualized as a continuum. The sections of the guide correspond to the stages of group development: **Before You Begin**; **Getting Started**; **Maintaining Momentum**; and **Looking Back, Planning Ahead**. However, the reader is assured that it is not always necessary to start at the beginning and work through each of the four stages. Just use the sections where you think there might be some information to help you.

## INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION . . . WHAT IS IT?

We all know what coordination is . . . or at least we think we do. It is being able to rub your tummy and pat the top of your head at the same time! The Oxford English Dictionary defines this type of coordination as "a harmonious combination of agents or functions toward the production of results." Another definition that has been used in the literature describes coordination as involving:

> **a process of concerted decision making or action in which two or more organizations participate with some sort of deliberate adjustment to one another to achieve a common goal.**

How does this apply to organizations? Those who responded to the survey described "coordination," as activities with purposes ranging from networking to joint delivery of services. Some writers have described interorganizational coordination as:

> *a management of interdependencies.*
>
> *communication, not necessarily cooperation.*
>
> *a process, not necessarily a product . . . a means to an end.*
>
> *pooling resources to develop goals, strategies and work together; networking.*
>
> *more than one agency working toward a common goal and making a conscious effort to share resources.*
>
> *forming partnerships, for example, between businesses and schools.*

These comments – and the observations of survey participants – suggest that the process of two or more working together is central to coordination, and this holds true regardless of the different objectives involved.

**INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION . . . WHAT IS IT? (cont'd)**

Several variables affect the nature of coordination:

***function*** - why the group has come together and what it plans to do.

***structure*** - the degree of procedural formality adopted by the group and which tends to vary with the group's function.

***organizational commitment*** - what is the extent of the organization's involvement? How much of the organization's mandate and resources are committed?

***resource requirements*** - some interorganizational groups require no additional resources, while others have substantial operational budgets.

***level of occurrence*** - is the coordination taking place in individual case management? program planning? policy and organizational strategic planning?

***coordination strategies*** - what structures and processes are being used to facilitate coordination? Multisectoral advisory councils? Staff exchanges? Joint programs?

Coordination is more clearly understood when seen as a continuum of activities involving increasingly complex relationships. The table on the next page describes this continuum, shows the major features of each approach, and offers some examples drawn from the survey.

## Continuum of Coordination

→ → → Development usually moves from left to right → → →

| Sharing Information | Needs Identification | Cooperation | Collaboration | Integration |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *functions:* networking, education | *functions:* advocacy, identifying community needs and service gaps | *functions:* program planning, resource sharing | *functions:* policy and program planning, resource distribution | *functions:* joint planning, resourcing program management, and service delivery |
| • little structure<br>• no budget<br>• no staff<br>• field level membership | • semi-structured<br>• no budget<br>• no staff<br>• middle management membership | • semi-structured<br>• small committee budget<br>• shared, seconded staff<br>• middle to senior management membership | • structured<br>• full program budget from a single source<br>• program staff<br>• middle to senior management membership | • structured<br>• resourced by a partnership<br>• program staff<br>• senior management membership |

**Groups fluctuate over time in their coordinating role. Generally speaking, they come together in an ad hoc fashion and become more structured as function and degree of responsibility changes.**

## WHAT ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION?

Despite variations in the structures and functions of interorganizational groups, the principles guiding their working relationships are not dissimilar from those of relationships in any other group system, such as a family or an organization. The survey of provincial interorganizational groups suggested that coordination is more likely to be successful if the following elements are in place:

- **Effective Leadership**

  Building a working group requires the inspiration and guidance of someone who is credible in the eyes of the stakeholders, influential with power brokers, and committed to the concept of coordination. The leader must be able to build consensus among individuals and organizations. This requires skills in organizing, communicating, and facilitating.

  The survey showed that 85% of the groups had leadership positions identified. As well, a number mentioned that effective leadership was an important key to their success.

- **Interorganizational Support**

  The organization must believe in the value of working closely with other stakeholders, be prepared to commit resources, and cooperate in planning and implementation. The directors and management of the organizations should be clear about their representative's role in the interorganizational group.

  Forty-four percent (44%) of the participants in the survey believed they had a high level of support from their own organizations, while a further 42% described the support as 'moderate.' A variety of methods for building interorganizational support were suggested, including reporting back on a regular basis to other staff in the organization, and demonstrating the benefits of the particular interorganizational effort.

  In larger organizations, it may be necessary to seek the support of other units and divisions for the interorganizational project because, if their resources and priorities become implicated, they should be involved in the decision to make a commitment.

**WHAT ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION? (cont'd)**

- **Commitment of Group Members**

It is important that members agree to support the group as the group sees necessary. Whether or not this commitment can be made is contingent on the organization's understanding of what is being required and why.

One of the interagency groups interviewed was in the process of reviewing its position related to the issue of family violence. Several agencies, including the police, had expressed their support in principle, but before they would make a commitment, indicated that they would need a clear idea of the group's objectives, and their role in meeting those objectives.

Eighty-two percent (82%) of the organizations surveyed indicated that all or most of their members were very committed to the purpose of the interorganizational group. Commitment of the members was also highlighted as one of the most important keys to success in this type of venture.

- **Agreement on the Need for Joint Action**

Organizations must agree that a need exists and that it is best addressed by all working cooperatively. The most important key to a successful interorganizational group, mentioned in the survey, was the realization that with teamwork and commitment more could be achieved when organizations worked together.

An interorganizational initiative in Edmonton, to address the food needs of lower income groups, had difficulty recruiting membership from the food industry, because they were unable to reach a common understanding of the problem and agreement on the need for joint action.

Forty percent (40%) of the organizations had carried out some form of needs assessment in the community to support the decision for further action on the particular issue they intended to address.

**WHAT ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION? (cont'd)**

- **Involvement of Key Stakeholders**

  At the outset, every effort must be made to contact all stakeholders to determine who will be part of the coordinated approach and to involve them as appropriate in the planning and implementation.

  About a quarter of the interorganizational groups surveyed mentioned that there had been a previous attempt to establish a similar group in the past. One of the reasons for the failure of the group was that the original membership involved was too narrow. Groups also emphasized the importance of including all relevant stakeholders when considering who should be included in the early discussions. Notably, 41% of those surveyed mentioned that there were organizations which had a particular vested interest in the activities of the interorganizational group but had chosen not to participate.

- **Clear, Achievable Goals and Objectives** for addressing the problem are essential for focusing the planning of the group and guiding action.

  The need for clear, achievable goals and objectives was also highlighted by the survey. It was demonstrated that the commitment of both participating individuals and the member organizations was likely to be much higher if there was a clear statement of purpose and related goals and objectives in place.

  One of the interorganizational groups reported that they initially developed a more precise statement of objectives and identified priorities. They indicated that initial discussion is necessary and should precede formation.

**WHAT ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION? (cont'd)**

- **Clear Roles and Shared Responsibilities** will ensure that group members are able to make a commitment in good faith, and assume ownership of the group's activities.

  Almost two thirds of the groups surveyed indicated that the roles and responsibilities of their members were either "very clearly" or "quite clearly" specified. It was these groups that were also more likely to report that the commitment of their members was higher. In all, 20% of the groups mentioned that they had formal terms of reference for membership. An additional 46% indicated that their roles and responsibilities were unwritten, but agreed to by mutual consent.

  An interagency group in northern Alberta, formed to address the issue of suicide and its prevention, functioned well from the outset. Their beginnings had been carefully planned, with a clear statement of purpose and terms of reference for the membership and formal commitments signed by member organizations.

- **Open Communication**

  This is important to ensure that all group members are heard and information is shared equitably. In the survey, groups suggested that more open, honest communication and discussion would have helped redress functional barriers such as lack of time and commitment. The need for open communication was mentioned as the third most important lesson learned from respondents experience in interorganizational coordination.

- **Democratic Decision-Making Processes** will help to balance the power and influence of group members. Theorists in the field of interorganizational relations suggest that successful information processing is the key to sound coordination. The groups surveyed mentioned that an inclusive, democratic process for decision-making was the most important lesson they had learned from their experience working with other groups. In all, 92% of the groups who responded to the survey said that they thought their members were satisfied that they had sufficient opportunities to influence decisions made by the group.

**WHAT ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION? (cont'd)**

- **All Parties Must Gain** from the association, whether it be credibility, power and influence, or resources. Individuals or groups about to enter an interorganizational enterprise will base their decision on whether their participation is likely to be beneficial to their organization or to the clients they serve.

  Individuals interviewed through the survey also commented frequently on the personal satisfaction they had felt as a result of their involvement, and the successes that had been achieved. They had expanded their knowledge, broadened their experience, developed relationships that had helped them in their current jobs, and shared their frustrations and their accomplishments.

- **Positive, Concrete Results** will enhance the commitment of members to the group, and increase the likelihood of it continuing.

Virtually, all of the groups interviewed reported targeting specific issues and/or target populations in their action plans. Successes identified through the survey included the development of a specific project, the holding of a conference or workshop, improved exchange of information, better coordination of services, more opportunities to work together cooperatively, and success at getting additional resources into the community. Groups also commented on how pleased they were that their group had gained recognition and profile in the community as a result of their successes.

Processes such as involving stakeholders, defining the problem and the need, and deciding on the goals and objectives of the group can be difficult and time consuming. However, in the end, the effort will save resources, relieve stress, and increase the likelihood of beneficial outcomes for all involved.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS TO INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION?

The provincial survey and the literature review also identified several factors that may act as possible barriers to coordination efforts.

- **A Competitive, Adversarial Model of Problem Solving**

  The problem commonly known as territoriality and turf protection can undermine a group's success. When groups and organizations are intent on achieving excellence in their field, they understandably protect their resources. In their eagerness to be the best, they may fail to recognize the consequences their unilateral actions may have for others trying to solve the same problem. Fortunately, less than a quarter of the groups mentioned that territoriality or turf protection were problems for them at the moment. However, the potential for these issues to arise was certainly recognized.

- **Lack of Time and Resources**

  Coordination requires taking time to negotiate. This may be considered a luxury in a restricted economic environment where the bottom line is delivering the same product with fewer resources.

  Interorganizational groups who responded to the survey frequently mentioned that their major stumbling blocks were limits on the time that members could commit and the shortage of financial resources.

- **Specialization Over Generalization**

  Our society and its institutions have become highly specialized and less able to respond to multifaceted problems. While there has always been a strong belief in the need to address multi-dimensional problems through coordinated, comprehensive programming, such planning efforts are often hindered by demands for specialized services.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS TO INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION? (cont'd)**

- **Inflexible Bureaucratic Structures**

  Bureaucracies are organized to focus their resources and maintain an efficient operation. Such efficiency can result in a narrow definition of what is to be done and how. Past experiments in single point of entry and "one stop shopping" models of service delivery have failed because of difficulties overcoming the structural and procedural differences between organizations.

- **Bureaucratic Reorganization** resulting in changes in management, priorities, and policies can often affect participation of the organizational community.

- **Geographic Barriers** can make the logistics and cost of coordination prohibitive.

- **Lack of Know-How** regarding the process of interorganizational relations is a problem in all levels of planning and implementation. This problem presents new challenges to professionals who have not usually been trained to think interdisciplinarily and work cooperatively.

## WHEN SHOULD COORDINATION BECOME COLLABORATION?

What is the difference between collaboration and coordination? Often the two words are used interchangeably. Both refer to the process groups use to attain a goal together that each could not reach individually; however, collaboration implies extensive joint planning and pooling of resources.

When do we go beyond "sharing information" and "cooperating," into collaboration? This is one of the questions asked by program planners and managers when challenged with coordinating programs or projects with other departments and agencies. The results of the literature and project surveys suggest there are a number of conditions which, when they occur together, indicate that collaboration is called for.


***Think about collaboration when . . .***

- *you serve the same people for the same reasons*
- *you think alike*
- *you can't do it alone*
- *you have something to contribute*
- *you have something to gain.*

- **when two or more organizations serve the same target population, relate to the same type of need, or provide similar services to the public.** In Alberta, community agencies and Alberta Mental Health have found it advantageous to pool their efforts in addressing the issue of suicide and suicide prevention.

- **when organizations have complementary resources.** Organizations and agencies addressing the same problem or target population with different resources can often do a better job if they work together. For example, public health nurses, teachers, and social workers, using different skills, knowledge, and support systems, may be able to tackle the problems associated with child poverty together.

- **when organizations and agencies have compatible philosophies.** A similar set of beliefs about how to tackle an issue or problem is critical in a cooperative effort.

- **when a problem cannot be solved or a need cannot be met by a single group or organization.** An example of this would be meeting the need for food, clothing, and shelter following a tornado.

**WHEN SHOULD COORDINATION BECOME COLLABORATION? (cont'd)**

- **when everyone will gain more than they will lose.** When police departments, businesses, and social agencies come together to address the issue of crime, their policies and programs can complement rather than compete with one another. The support they are able to lend one another may help increase the benefits to each.

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .


*Know yourself.*

*Know your organization.*

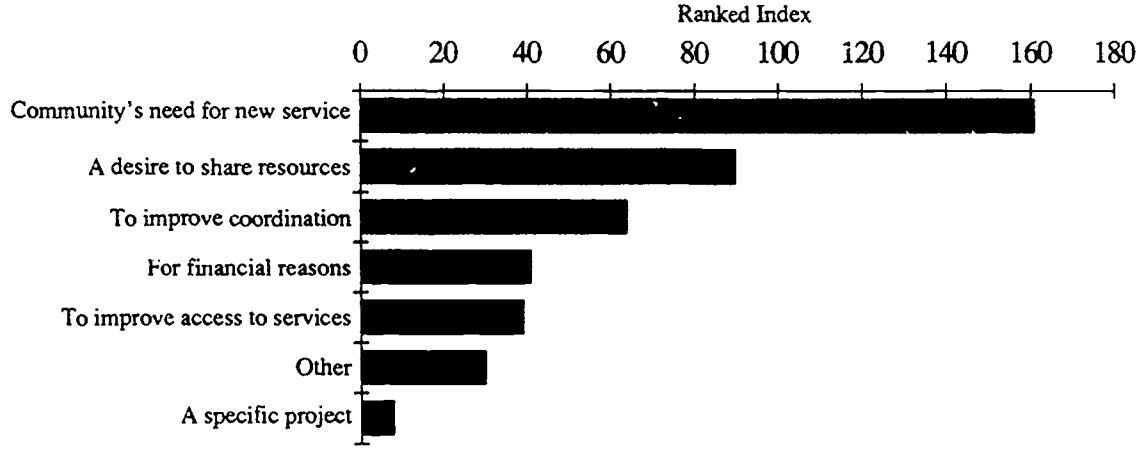
*Know your environment.*

The "before" phase of a group is the time for reflecting, planning, and nurturing an idea. You may be a member of an existing interorganizational group with a desire to introduce a new initiative, or you may be wondering about how to pull a new group together. In any case, you are wise to take steps to prepare the way. The most basic and important tasks are getting to know your organization and its community, and learning how the initiative would be received and the role it would play. You may also need to decide how you feel about being involved in an interorganizational group. Those tasks are discussed in this section.

## WHY DOES COORDINATION USUALLY OCCUR?

Through the survey of interorganizational groups in Alberta, it was found that the most common reason for a group to come together was the community's need for a new service that was presently not available. The second most important reason identified was a desire to share resources. These and other reasons are shown in the following table.

**Reasons Interorganizational Groups Were Formed**



## WHO ARE THE KEY PLAYERS INVOLVED?

The survey also identified the major players in each of the interorganizational initiatives. About half of the groups had less than ten member organizations, while a further quarter had over 20. Health units, non-profit community organizations, the local Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program and school districts were mentioned as the major players in over 50% of the groups surveyed.

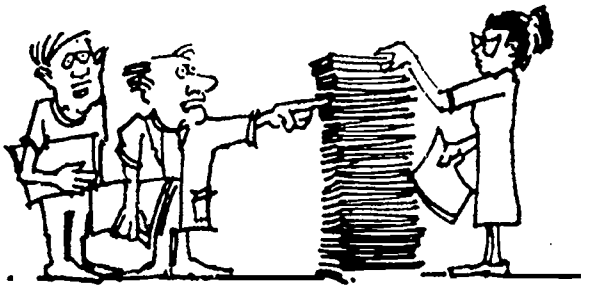
When asked to name the initiators of their particular initiative, just over half the groups mentioned professionals in the community. This was followed by a specific group in the community, such as the Health Unit or hospital and the local FCSS program.

## ASSESSING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ORIENTATION TO INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION


***If you don't have the full support of your organization, you might as well forget it.***

*If you don't have the full support of your organization, you might as well forget it.*

This is as true of an interorganizational initiative as it is of any other. It is a good idea to find out if support is possible, and if so, how to go about getting it. You will need to assess your own organization's attitude and performance in the field of interorganizational relations. It is also important to understand the current priorities of the organization, and decide whether an interorganizational strategy would fit with those priorities. The groups surveyed indicated that the support of the member organizations was a critical factor in their success.



## ASSESSMENT OF INTERORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE


The following worksheet will act as a guide for a review of your organization's orientation to interorganizational relations:

1. Has your organization worked cooperatively with other organizations in the past? If so, with whom and in what capacity?

2. If your organization has worked with others, what was the outcome?

3. Are the staff of your organization encouraged to interact with other disciplines and organizations?

4. Do the managers and staff of the various divisions and/or programs of your organizations work and plan together?

5. What is the style of decision-making among the management of your organization? Autocratic? Participatory? Democratic?

6. Does your organization share and/or pool resources frequently? Sometimes? Never?

## DEVELOPING SOME STRATEGIES FOR GETTING SUPPORT

Once you have determined the enthusiasm of your organization, you can develop a plan for promoting your ideas and garnering internal support. Your strategies will depend on the formal and informal communication and decision-making patterns of your organization.

Important considerations are:

- **lines of reporting in the organization** (Are they clear? Who should be informed about your intentions? Who will become involved? Who will have ultimate responsibility? Who will support your plan? Oppose it?)

- **informal power and influence structures** (Who do you need on side to have your proposal seriously considered?)

- **the potential impact of your proposal** on your program and your organization as a whole (What are the benefits to becoming involved? The liabilities?).

Your strategy should be guided by the following considerations:

- **open communication** with all stakeholders will minimize the surprises and reduce potential opposition because issues can be identified early.

- individual staff of your organization are more likely to support the initiative if they expect to **gain from their participation.**

## BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT: A CASE STUDY

The Women and AIDS Project initiated by the Edmonton Board of Health in partnership with the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) and the Edmonton Women's Shelters provides an example of building organizational support and commitment for an interorganizational initiative. The process undertaken by the Executive Director of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters demonstrates an effort to sell an idea to a rather sceptical Board of Directors.

The Executive Director of the Council had been approached by a senior health promotion consultant from the Edmonton Board of Health with a proposal to jointly address HIV/AIDS prevention among women whose life circumstances may compromise their capacity to protect their health and their children's health. The Executive Director of the Council was immediately attracted to the project for the following reasons:

- She recognised that the women using shelters were usually highly stressed, lacking in confidence, and vulnerable to a variety of emotional and physical risks.
- In particular, she was concerned about the growing risk of HIV/AIDS infection to women. She believed that those served by shelters were particularly vulnerable.
- She viewed the project as an opportunity to work preventively and proactively. This was a significant departure from the traditional crisis response pattern of the shelter program.
- She had a strong belief in the value of agencies working together to enhance each others' resources, thereby creating a better outcome.
- She admired and respected the work of the consultant from the Board of Health and welcomed an opportunity to work with her.

Shortly after their initial discussions, the Executive Director and the health promotion consultant engaged one of the shelter directors from the Edmonton region in the process. She, too, had a strong track record in working with other agencies and strongly supported the initiative. A meeting with directors from shelters throughout Alberta was subsequently scheduled to discuss the project. The responses from the directors were mixed. Some expressed guarded interest, while others viewed the idea as being too far afield from the mandate of shelters. All believed that present input from the public health nurses was satisfactory, and questioned the expenditure of additional time and resources. However, they were swayed by the position of the Executive Director of ACWS, the compelling data on the rise of HIV infection for women, and their colleague that the project could have positive outcomes for their clients.

The experience with the shelter directors was repeated with the Council's Board of Directors. The Board consists of representatives of the boards of shelters throughout the province. The Executive Director had learned valuable lessons about what she could

**BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT: A CASE STUDY (cont'd)**

expect in the way of resistance, and how she could dispel it. Chief among the issues she expected to be raised were the following:

- the relevance of the project to the mandate of the shelters
- the potential of the project to have relevance at a provincial level
- the need to expend additional resources on health initiatives.

The Executive Director saw her role as one of salesperson for the project. She needed to convince her Board of Directors that

- there was potential for substantial gain and minimal risk for shelters throughout the province
- the cost was minimal
- the activity would not demand alot of her resources, to avoid jeopardizing other Council activities. It is noteworthy that the Executive Director did not try to convince the Board to assign high priority to the project. She was content to have their approval in principle, and permission to become involved on the steering committee. She believed that the success of the initiative would demonstrate its value most persuasively.

While these various negotiations were proceeding, the Executive Director and her colleagues in the project finalized a proposal for the project. She was able to brief her Board with a summary of the proposal, which outlined the goals, objectives, and work plan. After lengthy discussions in which many reservations were raised, she was able to gain their approval to proceed on the basis that the shelters stood to gain substantially and lose nothing. Her strongest points were:

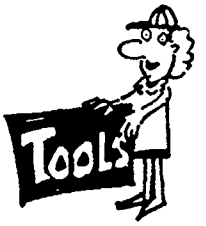
- the project is being financed by a grant and the resources of the Edmonton Board of Health and the Council would not have to provide any funding
- she had the required time available
- the project presented an opportunity to work collaboratively using health promotion strategies as opposed to those of crisis intervention.

Throughout this process, the driving force was the Executive Director's belief in the value of collaboration among agencies and groups, and her desire to form a partnership with the particular health promotion consultant concerned. These factors, along with her preparatory meetings to address the issues, and clear presentation of goals, objectives, and action plans, were key to her success gaining approval and support.

## YOUR OWN IDEAS ON INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION

If you are being asked to become involved in the development of an interorganizational group, it is also very important to think about your own attitudes about coordination. Are you prepared to make the commitment that's involved? To add extra work to an already full calendar? Do you enjoy dealing with other members of a team who may have quite different ideas to yours? What has your previous experience been when you got involved in an interorganizational group? Is it something you would rather not repeat, or does it have possibilities? Obviously our own values and experiences will influence the way we respond to an invitation to "get involved." The following questionnaire is intended to help you sort out how you feel about the idea of interorganizational coordination and how you think you would deal with some of the issues that are likely to arise.

## WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TO INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION?




The statements below are designed to make you more aware of your values and beliefs and the way they come into play in our style of working. Choose the response that best describes your position and assign the value of the response to that statement.

1. I prefer to work by myself; I believe I am able to be more efficient.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

2. I am more comfortable working with a team where the responsibility for the ideas and the work load is shared.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

3. I feel frustrated when I have to adjust my schedule and pace to accommodate others. It really slows things down!
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

4. I don't mind having to accommodate other schedules, even though it may mean taking longer to get things done. The benefits are worth it!
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

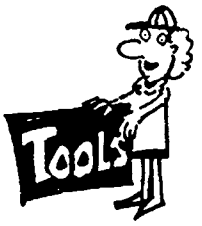
5. I feel like a "fish out of water" in interdisciplinary settings, and work best with persons whose background and training are similar to mine.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

6. I feel stimulated and challenged when working with people whose knowledge and training are significantly different from, but complementary to mine.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

7. Sometimes you have to compromise on quality in order to produce the finished product as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

8. Long-term quality should not be compromised for the sake of a "quick fix."
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

9. I think boundaries are becoming more and more hazy, resulting in several organizations assuming responsibility for the same or similar programs and services. The solution is to clarify and narrow the mandates to reduce the overlap.
   usually _1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_




10. I think boundaries are becoming more and more hazy, resulting in several organizations assuming responsibility for the same or similar programs and services. The solution is to develop more comprehensive programming by bringing the organizations together to coordinate planning and service delivery.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

11. When you bring people of different orientations together to work on a project, a lot of productive time is lost sorting out the differences.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

12. The time lost in sorting out differences in interagency meetings is a small price to pay for what the members learn from one another.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

13. Collaboration often involves compromise, and I think our programs, services, and the needs of our clients are too important to compromise.
usually_3_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

14. If we are involved with others, there is a greater chance we will be able to share their resources.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

15. We are just a small fish in a big pond, and if we get involved with the "sharks" we will be eaten alive.
usually _1_ sometimes _2_ rarely _3_

16. Being involved with others will increase my profile and support in the community.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

17. Coordination takes too much time, and the people we serve will be unhappy if things aren't done quickly.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

18. The time devoted to coordination pays off in a better quality product, happier staff, and a better service.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

To determine your orientation, add the totals of the even numbered statements, and of the odd numbered statements. Your values tend to side with the group with the lowest score.

Odd numbered statements indicate strong reservations about the value of coordination.
Even numbered statements indicate strong support for interorganizational coordination.

## ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY'S READINESS

Just as you need to know your own organization and how you feel about interorganizational coordination, it is important to learn more about the local community's attitudes about initiatives of this kind.

### History of Coordination

Important features to consider include the community's experiences with previous efforts at coordination. In almost half of the groups surveyed it was found that most members had worked together previously. As well, over two thirds of these groups said they had been positively influenced by their past experiences.


*Communities and organizations with a strong history of collaboration, saw it as the normal way to do things.*

It is important to understand the nature of these past experiences. If they were primarily positive, why were they? Who was involved? What was the nature of the leadership? Similarly, if they were negative, why? Reasons for past failures cited in the survey included lack of focus, a limited membership, and uncertain commitment.

An analysis of the past experiences will reveal knowledge about the community and its receptivity to interorganizational coordination. Questions such as these will give you information about how much knowledge will be required in order to convince reluctant participants.

### Political Climate and Dominant Values

The present political climate and the dominant values have an important influence on the success of an interorganizational initiative. Is it open to new ideas? New memberships? Is it flexible or rigid? The notions of power and influence, and trends in the planning and decision-making of those in governing positions should be included in an analysis of the political climate. Is the trend towards protectionist behaviors, such as guarding resources? Is the leadership style consultative and accessible, and does it encourage a similar approach by community players?


*AN ACTION PLAN*

1. *Research the history.*
2. *Read the political climate.*
3. *Assess the personality and resources of the community.*
4. *Identify needs and gaps in service.*

**ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY'S READINESS (cont'd)**

A chart developed by a U.S. group, Community Partners, is helpful in reviewing the present political climate and dominant values in your community. It depicts seven characteristics of a community along a continuum. An assessment of an organizational community based on these characteristics can guide your interventions and give you some indication of the readiness of groups to work cooperatively. Where on each continuum would you place your community?

| | |
|---|---|
| Fragmented | <— — — — — — — — — —> Collaborative |
| Reactive | <— — — — — — — — — —> Proactive |
| Competitive | <— — — — — — — — — —> Cooperative |
| Inaccessible | <— — — — — — — — — —> Accessible |
| Homogeneous | <— — — — — — — — — —> Diverse |
| Powerless | <— — — — — — — — — —> Empowered |
| Exclusive | <— — — — — — — — — —> Inclusive |

When starting out, it would be helpful to get to know who talks to whom in the community. Who do you think are the formal leaders of the community? Are there others that might be considered as informal leaders? As well, are there different factions in the community that might have a difference of opinion about what you are trying to set up? How knowledgeable are they likely to be about the issues that concern you at the moment?

### Community Resources

It would be wise to get an idea of the possible resources the community has to offer that could be of help to the potential interorganizational group. Check out local directories to be sure all groups with a possible interest in your issue have been considered. Meet with them to discuss their interest and the programs and services they presently offer to the community. Are there any self-help support groups that might be interested in getting involved? Are there other potential resources in the community, such as legal experience, a planning background, or some research skills that you might be able to get on a volunteer basis?

**ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY'S READINESS (cont'd)**

### Identifying the Need

In order to cultivate interest in an interorganizational effort, you must be able to argue persuasively that it is needed. At this stage, you will need information about the nature of the need in the community as well as some possible strategies that could be effective in addressing the need. However, be sure that the need is not defined too narrowly, and plans developed so far, that further input from the community you are approaching will be discouraged.

A preliminary needs assessment should include the following:

- demographic data providing a profile of the target population
- results of recent relevant needs surveys, if available
- records of past efforts to address the issues
- lists of current initiatives addressing the problem, their outcomes, and how they relate to one another
- feedback from an informal survey of key informants identified in the assessment of the environment.

The following list of questions will help you make sure that you have considered the various aspects of the community's readiness before you proceed with your ideas.

## ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY'S READINESS


You need to know...

1. What is the problem, need, or issue you wish to address?

2. What geographic area do you want to serve?

3. What other groups and organizations have an interest in the issue?

4. What is the nature of the relationships between the members of the organizational community?
   - Which groups work together and how?
   - Which groups avoid each other and why?

5. Who are the formal and informal individual and organizational leaders in the community?

6. What impact do the policies and practices of the various community members have on one another?


7. Are the responses of the community members to one another's actions predictable? If so, what are they?

8. What is the history of collaboration in the community?

9. How would you characterize the political climate?

10. What resources are available in the community for your initiative?

The answers to these questions will assist you in identifying which individuals and groups in the community you should involve in the interorganizational initiative and how you might work with them effectively.

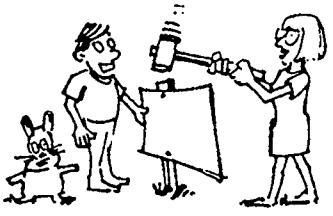
Having previously assessed your organization's enthusiasm for interorganizational coordination, reviewed your own feelings, and reviewed the likely response of your organizational community, you are now in a good position to put an interorganizational group together!

# GETTING STARTED . . .

*The work up front pays off in the end.*

*If we had a more clear sense of purpose and direction, we would not have struggled in the way that we did.*

These comments are typical of the ones made by those involved in interorganizational activities. "The work up front" refers to the exploratory assessments outlined in the previous section.



In the developmental stages, in addition to assessing the environment and the potential for members to work together, several critical elements of the group should be considered. Those identified by our survey participants and other case studies are:

***leadership***
***membership***
***agreements and commitments***
***mandate and accountability***
***communication***

These elements are important considerations when designing a structure appropriate to the needs and functions of a group. They are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

## LEADERSHIP


***The leader should be someone who is committed to working and sharing with other sectors.***

Interorganizational coordination is often seen as something that happens in order to minimize "leadership" and bring an appropriate balance to the distribution of power and influence in the community. Thus, there is often a mistaken impression that "leadership" is not needed. On the contrary, someone committed to working and sharing with other sectors is necessary to bring people together.

The leader should be a person with informal influence as well as formal decision-making power and responsibility. She or he should be seen as credible and influential by those in the same field as well as those in other organizations.

**LEADERSHIP (cont'd)**

The style of leadership required varies with the function of the group. Observations of interorganizational behavior over extended periods of time reveal that a facilitative, participatory style of leadership is most effective with ad hoc problem solving groups, while a more directive style best serves highly structured, outcome-oriented groups.

The leader of a group that is just setting up should be able to bring diverse interests together, and build group cohesion and consensus. Decisive leadership may be required at the outset as well as after the group has gelled and is undertaking initiatives. A skilled individual should be able to adopt the leadership style appropriate to the needs of the group.

**MEMBERSHIP**

Initially, membership should be broad and include all parties with an interest in the issue. However, depending on the purpose of the group, it may be desirable to narrow the list of active members. For example, the Edmonton Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (ECCAN) has a large membership including consumers and deliverers of child welfare services. However, the ECCAN's offspring, the Child Abuse Teams, has a much smaller membership with specific expertise. Terms of reference for the teams are defined by the needs of the Alberta Family and Social Services regional office. In addition, ECCAN has developed some guidelines for membership.


***A group is only as strong as its membership.***

***Members should be credible, influential, good team players, and committed to collaboration.***

**Who should be involved? When? How?**

Below are some of the things to consider when answering these questions.

- **Credibility.** Members must be seen by the community to be knowledgeable about the issues and able to make a positive contribution.

- **Influence.** Who are the key stakeholders and power brokers in the organizational community? What capacity does the organization's representative have to make decisions and commitments? While it is always wise to have strong members from the organizational community, the representative's formal influence will

**MEMBERSHIP (cont'd)**

vary with the function of the group and the nature of its decisions. For example, policy and resource decisions may require participation by an organization's senior levels of management. However, when the group's primary function is information sharing and issue identification, it may be best served by a representative at the service delivery level who is familiar with practices.

- **Ability to work well on a team.** What is the performance or background of the individual or organization you are considering? Being able to listen, contribute to an overall plan, negotiate, and compromise are important skills for team members.

- **Working relationship with other organizations in the community.** An interorganizational effort will be more successful and develop more quickly if the members have had positive experiences working together in the past.

- **Commitment.** Participating organizations and their representatives must be committed to working with other stakeholders, as well as to addressing the particular issue in question.

- **Purpose of the partnership.** The size of the group and the terms of reference will vary depending on the purpose of the cooperative effort. For example, an information-sharing and advocacy network such as the Children's Council of Red Deer can be most effective when the membership is large and includes as many interests as possible.

  On the other hand, groups formed to advocate on specific issues or for particular target populations may wish to exclude members who may be in opposition to the group. For example, an interagency group formed to advocate on behalf of low income groups may purposely exclude certain agencies from their membership in order to avoid conflict of interest and power issues.

**MEMBERSHIP (cont'd)**

Another example of appropriately limited membership is when an interagency group is created to implement a project. The "Women and AIDS" project initiated by the Edmonton Board of Health involved three very committed organizations from a much larger potential membership. The group size was limited to facilitate the process. It was a project management group large enough to reflect the interests of all contributing partners yet small enough to be efficient.

- **The political climate and sensitivity of an issue.** This includes the consideration of past working relationships. It may be important to include particular members because of their political profile. For example, an interorganizational initiative to address issues associated with AIDS would not be credible if it did not include representation from the AIDS Network as well as someone from the medical field.

**Membership Strategies**

Once you have decided the appropriate sources for membership, there are a variety of ways to choose members.

- **Open membership.** The membership of the Children's Council of Red Deer is open to any individual or group with an interest in children and/or the programs serving them. They conduct an annual membership campaign to attract new members. The Council has an extensive committee structure to facilitate their operations. Council members cite broad community ownership of responsibility and strength of lobbying voice as major advantages of an open membership. The disadvantages are the complexity of communication and coordination; the potential for divergent interests and views hampering the process; and the danger of advocacy efforts becoming diluted by efforts to accommodate different positions.

- **Unlimited membership of selected stakeholders.** The membership of the Edmonton Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect is open to any group or organization whose mandate requires them to deliver services to children who are physically or emotionally neglected or abused. The target population and issues have been fairly narrowly defined, thus limiting the community of interest.

**MEMBERSHIP (cont'd)**

- **Self-selected membership from a limited community for a group of a specified size.** This strategy is most effective when establishing a working group from a specific community of interest. It is commonly used when large groups have gathered at a hearing or forum and participants are asked to indicate their interest in a follow-up activity.

- **By invitation only.** This is the strategy most often employed when an organization wishes to initiate an undertaking with the cooperation and participation of the larger community. The lead organization conducts the feasibility studies and reading of the community, then invites others to participate. Membership selection is done strategically according to all of the considerations previously suggested.

**AGREEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS**

Clarity can be achieved through a statement of purpose, goal, and objectives, and terms of reference to guide the activities of the group members.

**Statement of Purpose**


*In order to get commitment, it has to be clear why the group is coming together and what is expected of each participant.*

The purpose of the interorganizational effort can be developed by the founding members prior to expanding the membership. The statement should include the issue being addressed, the population being targeted, and the outcomes intended. Agreement on the statement must then be sought from the whole group.

The purpose statement serves to direct the initial planning of the group. A good statement of purpose is usually brief, clear, and simple.

A well-developed purpose statement will serve as an anchor for planning ongoing activities over the short and long term, and should be referred to regularly when reviewing and evaluating activities.

**AGREEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS (cont'd)**

## Sample Statement of Purpose

The following statement of purpose was developed by the Grande Prairie Interagency Committee on Family Violence:

> **The interagency committee on family violence will be responsible for coordination of all services (outcome) directed toward the prevention, assessment, and treatment of family violence in all forms (issue), which includes spousal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, and services to adult victims (target population) of these forms of family violence.**

The statement can describe more than one purpose. It may include the mandate of the group, as does the statement developed by the Community Resource Centre in Medicine Hat. Their purpose is a part of the mandate assigned to them by Alberta Family and Social Services.

The Community Resource Centre is a Society by Ministerial Order directly responsible to the Minister of Alberta Family & Social Services. Its Board of Directors is given the mandate to:

1. Administer an information and referral service to the people and agencies of the area.

2. Effect liaison between agencies and agency personnel to facilitate coordination of programs and resources.

3. Advise the Minister respecting the adequacy of health and social service delivery in southeastern Alberta, having regard to the relevant recommendations in the report entitled "A Study of Health and Social Services, 1977."

4. Review, assess, and report on programs when requested to do so by the Minister.

AGREEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS (cont'd)

## Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for membership should state the conditions of membership. They usually include the following considerations:

- size of membership
- interests and/or organizations to be represented
- qualifications of the members
- minimum responsibilities, such as attendance at meetings and contribution to committees
- term of office.


*If we want to attract organizations it would be helpful if we had some terms of reference.*

These conditions are usually developed by the party or parties with primary responsibility for the initiative prior to the appointment of new members. Potential new members will often ask to see the terms of reference before they can commit themselves or their organization to participating.

## Sample Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the membership of the Regional Mental Health Planning Committees serve as an example of what is often included. (See Appendix A, for a Sample Terms of Reference for the Regional Mental Health Planning Committees.)

## Statements of Commitment


*It is really important that all the members contribute to the best of their ability. That way you get ownership. Without it, you may have morale problems when some get resentful because they are doing all the work.*

Commitments can range from verbal agreements made over cups of coffee to legal documents. The level of formality depends on several factors, including the following:

- **the amount of time, staff, and financial resources being asked for.** Generally, the more extensive the resource commitment, the greater the need to put it in writing.

**AGREEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS (cont'd)**

- **the need for maximum flexibility or stability.** If the requirements of the group are expected to change frequently, a formal, written commitment could present obstacles.

- **the political climate.** Some organizations may be prepared to participate but unwilling to commit themselves in writing.

- **the tradition of agreements in the community.** If verbal agreements are the norm, a request to put something in writing may be seen as affront.

Several models for terms of agreement exist. The sample agreement included here demonstrates the elements considered to be important in written statements of agreement. It specifies the parties to the agreement, the division of financial responsibility, the length of the agreement, the provision of space and equipment, the opportunity for renegotiation for future years, and the conditions for terminating the agreement. (See Appendix B, for the Westlock Family/School Liaison Programme Master Service Agreement.)

### Setting Goals

The concluding act of the **Getting Started . . .** phase is setting goals and developing an action plan to achieve those goals. This section gives guidelines for these tasks and includes samples of action plans.

AGREEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS (cont'd)

**What is a Goal Statement?**

The goal statement describes in general terms the key steps to be taken to achieve the purpose. These steps or objectives are then supported by strategies in the action plan.

Developing Goals . . . Things to Consider:

- **the statement of purpose.** The goals should specify activities and outcomes that will contribute significantly to the achievement of the purpose. They are the "action steps" of the purpose.

- **the resources available.** Will the available resources enable you to achieve your goals? This means human as well as financial resources.

- **the time available.** The goals should be achievable within the given time frame.

- **indicators of success.** How will you know if the goal has been achieved?

Armed with this information, you will be in a position to develop goal statements.

**Sample Goal Statement**

The goal statements developed for the Grande Prairie Interagency Suicide Prevention Program provide a base for the development of long- and short-term action plans. (See Appendix C, for the Grande Prairie Community Interagency Suicide Prevention Program Goal Statements: Goal A, Objectives, and related Action Plan.)

**Action Plan**

An action plan can be developed by answering the question, "If this is what we want to see happen, what do we need to do in order to get there?" The reference from the Grande Prairie Community Interagency Suicide Prevention Program exemplifies how action plans evolve from goals and objectives.

## STRUCTURE

Structure facilitates a group's functioning in communication, coordination, and task completion. Even the most familiar types of groups, such as families, have a structure that helps people understand who does what, when. In interorganizational groups, as in families, chaos reigns when there is no structure.

On the other hand, too much structure can be experienced as an unnecessary complication, which may impede free-flowing communication and formalize relationships.

**How much structure is needed?**

When trying to decide how much structure is needed, it may be helpful to compare groups to families.

- **size.** The bigger the family, the harder it is to organize. Likewise, the larger the group, the greater the need for structure to make sure everyone has the same expectations and understanding.

- **function.** The younger the children, the greater the parents' responsibility for leadership, establishing clear family rules, and coordinating individual needs and activities. Similarly, the newer the group, the greater will be its need for clearly defined terms of reference, roles, and expectations.

The need for structure increases with the amount of responsibility assigned to the group. Groups formed for the purposes of information sharing and networking will have minimal needs for structure, primarily related to coordination, and information flow. However, groups with direct responsibility for project implementation will require more elaborate policies and procedures to guide communication, decision-making, resource expenditures, and issues related to project staff.

The study revealed a relationship between structure, function, and the efficiency of the group process. The matrix below was developed on the basis of the study results.

**Interorganizational Groups Structure, Size, and Function**

**Size (No. of Members)**

| Function | Small (Less than 6) | Medium (6-15) | Large (More than 15) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sharing Information** | Ad hoc | Semi-structured | Semi-structured |
| **Needs Identification** | Ad hoc | Semi-structured | Structured |
| **Cooperation** | Semi-structured | Structured | Structured |
| **Collaboration** | Structured | Structured | Structured |
| **Integration** | Structured | Structured | Structured |

| Legend | Purpose, Goals Written | Executive Positions | Minutes, Agenda Circulated | Regular Meetings | Annual Planning Process | Written Policies & Procedures |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ad hoc** | | | | ✓ | | |
| **Semi-structured** | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| **Structured** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

**STRUCTURE (cont'd)**

Structure refers to executive positions, the committee structure of the group, and the policies and procedures governing the activities. The important aspects of these elements are discussed briefly below.

### Executive Positions

*We had a chairperson, but there was no leadership.*

*Things worked well because each knew what they had to do and did it.*

These typical statements illustrate the importance of clarity of roles and responsibilities for participants in interorganizational efforts. Establishing responsibilities for a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer saves organizational time, confusion, and stress.

Two critical positions are chairperson and secretary. These can be rotated on a regular basis to give all members experience and insight into the responsibilities involved. Large groups may wish to maximize the size of the executive or create working groups.

### Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures are used to clarify expectations and ensure that everyone understands how things are done. The following are areas where it is helpful to establish common guidelines for conduct:

- decision-making procedures. This includes the method of group decision-making (by consensus or by vote) and the decision-making authority of subcommittees
- selecting executive officers, appointing subcommittees
- selection and expectations of the membership (terms of reference)
- maintenance and distribution of official records such as the minutes of meetings and external communications

**STRUCTURE (cont'd)**

- public relations role. Who will speak publicly on behalf of the group? This responsibility is best designated to one person, with an alternative in the event that the person is not available. The designated person may delegate responsibility to another member in cases where detailed information or specialized knowledge is needed.

### Subcommittees

Subcommittees are usually established to address specific issues or needs. Most are on an ad hoc basis and function only until the task is complete. However, there may be a need for standing committees to address ongoing issues such as fundraising or personnel. For an effective subcommittee, consider the following ideas:

- establish guidelines for the committee regarding decision-making authority and procedures for recommendations
- develop a statement of purpose and plan of action
- designate a chairperson
- record minutes of meetings and prepare semi-annual reports.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Collaborative projects often involve extensive resource sharing. In such cases, issues regarding the use of resources, lines of communication, and accountability can become complex. Policies and procedures that have been openly discussed and formally agreed to play an important role in reducing confusion about roles and responsibilities. The following are some questions to ask when considering collaborative initiatives:

### Who contributes what?

In over half of the groups surveyed, the member organizations themselves were the primary providers of resources. Therefore, it is important to detail, as much as possible, the resource requirements of the initiative and have clear understanding and agreement (written down if substantial resources are involved) about who is responsible.

**SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS (cont'd)**

### Who is accountable for what?

Accountability and responsibility are determined by the mandate of the group, member organizations, and the investment of resources made by each (expertise, funds, time). For example, a group formed to implement a project requiring substantial resources is likely to be formalized, with predetermined expectations, measurable outcomes, and methods of evaluating progress. In such a case, responsibility and accountability will be clearly defined according to the roles and resources of each member.

### Who will house the project?

The organization housing the project assumes responsibility for daily management and will exert a great deal of influence on the "flavour" of the project, as well as its daily operation.

### Who will supervise the staff?

It is critical that the reporting relationships of staff to management be clarified. Ideally, staff should report to one supervisor. However, since interagency initiatives are often interdisciplinary, the partners may wish to supervise their own staff. If so, such an arrangement should be accompanied by a clearly understood agreement regarding the relationship between the host organization and the staff of the partners.

An example of a collaborative arrangement is the Louise Dean Centre in Calgary, Alberta. The centre is a partnership of three agencies – the Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Health Services and Catholic Family Services. No formal agreements have been developed to spell out reporting relationships, supervision, or accountability. The reporting relationships have been greatly influenced by the personalities filling the positions and their willingness to work as equal partners of a team.

## MANDATE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Interorganizational groups and their members come together for different reasons, some in response to requests from elected officials, others on their own initiative to address a perceived need. The origins and reasons behind membership will influence both authority and accountability.

### Legislated Authority

The Southern Alberta Community Resource Centre receives its mandate from Alberta Family and Social Services and reports directly to the Minister of that Department. The membership and activities of the Centre are influenced by their relationship with the public service. Their policies and procedures must be in keeping with those of the Department.


*What's the authority of the group?*

*What's the authority of the group member?*

### Self-Appointed Authority

Other groups, such as the Red Deer Children's Council, have no official mandate and represent a wide variety of individuals and organizations with separate, and sometimes very different interests. When doing advocacy work, the Council considers the interests of each of its members.

### Mandate of Individual Group Members

Another consideration is the authority of the individual representative. It is important to clarify the role of the individual representative vis-a-vis his or her organization. Studies of interorganizational initiatives indicate that the group effort can be undermined by opposing actions and decisions taken by a member organization despite commitments made by the representative. Meaningful support of representatives is required from the leadership and senior management of all member organizations if the partnership is going to work.

# MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM . . .

Once the group has a clear understanding of why they are meeting and what each member's responsibility is, it is time to implement the plan. In the course of turning the idea into reality, decisions will have to be made and crises managed. There may be times when the relationships will be strained and the adequacy of policies and procedures tested. These are part of the challenges of building and maintaining a working interorganizational group.


***As long as group members were able to see significant benefits for themselves and/or the community, they were committed.***

Many of the interorganizational groups surveyed talked about how positive results can motivate members and contribute to team building. As long as group members were able to see significant benefits for themselves and/or the community, they were committed. Thus, if the purpose of the group is clear, the members understand and are committed to the roles and responsibilities, and goal setting and action planning have been done well, the effort to maintain the group should be minimal.

That said, there may be some glitches in the process brought about by membership changes, an organization restructuring, or changing its priorities. Unanticipated events can affect the members and, in turn, the group. The problems we have chosen to examine below are those cited by survey participants as occurring most frequently.

## COMMUNICATION

It is hard enough to keep the people you see every day tuned in, let alone to connect with the ones you see occasionally. Communication is the crux of the operation. When group members have infrequent contact and/or are unfamiliar with one another, special attention must be given to communication.

Interorganizational groups are formed on the assumption that the expertise and knowledge resources of the members will be shared, thus creating a rich pool of information. Members must be prepared to pass on information pertinent to the purpose of the group. If appropriate, policies and guidelines

**COMMUNICATION (cont'd)**

can be drawn up to indicate how information sharing and confidentiality are handled. There are several other things that can be done to keep people informed:

- regular updates at meetings
- circulation of minutes
- newsletters
- informal gatherings
- conference calls
- computer modems and electronic bulletin boards.

**MANAGING DIFFERENCES IN PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH**

Differences in philosophy and approach were most commonly reported by groups whose purpose was to develop and implement projects. Differences may also occur where risk is involved, such as in groups with an advocacy function or a high public profile. Such differences can have significant implications for the interorganizational group.

## DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES: A CASE STUDY

The Louise Dean Centre is an interagency, multidisciplinary program for pregnant and parenting adolescents and their families. It is a partnership of three agencies – the Calgary Board of Education, Catholic Family Service who provide social workers, and Calgary Health Services who provide health care professionals.

The project has been in operation for 23 years. The key to problem solving and conflict management has been communication, understanding, and commitment.

Team building strategies have been used creatively to bond the staff, heighten their commitment to the project, and maximize their opportunities to problem-solve.

Examples of strategies they have introduced include:

- interdisciplinary case management
- intervention planning
- goal setting and case conferences
- interdisciplinary subcommittees
- high-risk support groups.

## MANAGING STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCES


***An interorganizational group should develop its own practices while respecting those of its members.***

Differences in member organization's policies and practices become relevant only if they impact the work of the interorganizational group. The most common and effective solution has been for the group to establish its own practices which respect those of the members. Each representative is then responsible for meeting the different requirements of his or her organization. For example, if one organization requires quarterly progress reports for the board of directors, it becomes the job of the representative, rather than the group, to produce them. However, if several members are faced with the same requirement, the group may decide to develop a policy that meets these needs.

## MANAGING STAFF ISSUES


***Staff issues of accountability, supervision, and professional identity are more complicated when an interorganizational group is responsible for managing a project.***

***One agency should be designated as the host and daily manager.***

The reporting must be simple while guaranteeing adequate supervision and consultation. The most effective arrangement involves designating one member organization with the responsibility of daily management and, if possible, supervision. If supervision is provided by another member, clear guidelines defining reporting must be developed. Organizations seconding staff to an interorganizational project often lose control over that person's daily practice. If an organization perceives the individual's work as being influenced by the interorganizational environment, problems can occur. Conversely, if the staff person spends a lot of time on the project, he or she may experience isolation and alienation from the parent organization.

Measures to counterbalance these impacts include:

- regular consultation and briefing sessions between parent organizations and staff
- having supervisory staff representation from the parent organization on the program advisory committee
- open houses and other social events which include the management from the member organizations.

## TEAM BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE


*Poor attendance?*

*No discussion in meetings?*

*Lots of discussion in small groups behind closed doors?*

*It's time for team building!!*

We all understand the need to get to know the people we work with in order to develop a level of understanding and trust – the foundations of an efficient team. As the survey showed, developing a statement of purpose, goals, and objectives, and evident commitment from all members contributes to team building. When these tasks are performed by the group as a whole, differences can be aired in the early stages, and each member will feel a strong sense of ownership.

However, there is a need for ongoing maintenance. As with any relationship, people and circumstances change, causing the relationship to change. In cases where groups meet infrequently and have limited interaction between meetings, extra attention may have to be paid to maintaining bonds. There are other times where special group maintenance becomes important. These include:

- new members joining
- active members leaving
- significant organizational changes
- heightened levels of stress in the community
- a crisis in group relationships such as power struggles or irresolvable differences.


*Team maintenance requires special attention when:*

- *groups meet infrequently*
- *new members are joining*
- *active members are leaving*
- *heightened levels of stress in the community*
- *crisis in group relationships.*

At these times, the group may experience problems such as sub-grouping, lack of discussion, lack of attendance at meetings, members arriving late and leaving early, and members withdrawing. There are several measures groups can take to keep their process running smoothly:

- Prepare an orientation package and procedure for new members.
- Encourage outgoing and incoming representatives to overlap for at least one meeting as part of the orientation.
- Keep members informed between meetings with minutes, newsletters, and memos.

**TEAM BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE (cont'd)**

- Allow time for updates at the meetings.
- Provide refreshments.
- Introduce new members and guests.
- Hold occasional meetings over meal times, allowing time to socialize.
- Recognize and celebrate group and individual achievements.
- Schedule planning retreats that review the group process.
- Encourage members to bring grievances to the meetings for discussion. Allow adequate time for the issue to be addressed.
- Use an outside facilitator to address particularly important or contentious issues (such as strategic planning or conflicts in leadership) requiring the full participation of all group members.

Just as group process is critical to commitment, planning is essential to obtain desired outcomes. Outcomes, in turn, affect group processes. The final section of this guide completes the process circle by looking at the role of evaluation and planning and some of the related issues.

**ASSESSING THE HEALTH OF YOUR INTERORGANIZATIONAL GROUP**

Before turning to planning, it would be timely for you to check the health of your interorganizational group. No matter how well you think you may be doing, some preventive maintenance will always be welcome. Use the organizational health checklist that follows to help you identify your current strengths and weaknesses. Once you have identified those areas where further work seems to be necessary, look back at some of the earlier exercises for helpful advice.

## ASSESSING THE HEALTH OF YOUR INTERORGANIZATIONAL GROUP


Periodic assessment of the key features and functioning of the group will help you identify strengths and weaknesses and give you some direction for planning. Choose the category that best describes your group's position with respect to each of the items listed and indicate whether you think improvements are needed.

| | Improvement needed? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No | Some | A lot |
| ***Group Structure*** | | | | |
| Is the purpose of the group clearly written? | — | — | — | — |
| Does the purpose reflect a community need? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the goals and objectives clear? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the goals and objectives achievable? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the roles and responsibilities of the members clear? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the roles and responsibilities of any subcommittees clear? | — | — | — | — |
| Do the subcommittees serve an important purpose? | — | — | — | — |
| Do the subcommittees work effectively? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Leadership*** | | | | |
| Does the leader allow for expression of differences? | — | — | — | — |
| Does the group leader encourage equal participation? | — | — | — | — |
| Is the leader able to guide discussion and maintain a focus? | — | — | — | — |
| Is the leader able to build consensus? | — | — | — | — |
| Does the leader encourage group members to be open about their concerns and agendas? | — | — | — | — |
| Is the leader able to bring about group decision-making? | — | — | — | — |
| Are there concerns about the leader's skills? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Membership*** | | | | |
| Do the members represent key stakeholders? | — | — | — | — |
| Are there groups or organizations not represented who should be? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the members committed to the purpose? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the members supportive of the goals and objectives? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the members committed to interorganizational coordination? | — | — | — | — |
| Do the members bring the skills and knowledge required? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the members able to give adequate time to the group? | — | — | — | — |


| Improvement needed? | Yes | No | Some | A lot |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Communication*** | | | | |
| Is information shared freely? | — | — | — | — |
| Is information shared equitably? | — | — | — | — |
| Are members kept informed of proceedings and developments? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Meeting Behavior*** | | | | |
| Are meetings well attended? | — | — | — | — |
| Do members stay for the meetings? | — | — | — | — |
| Is participation in meetings at a high level? | — | — | — | — |
| Are issues discussed openly and thoroughly? | — | — | — | — |
| Is there sub-grouping of members during and after meetings? | — | — | — | — |
| Are members able to accept and respect differences of opinion? | — | — | — | — |
| Are decisions made democratically? | — | — | — | — |
| Do members feel they have an equal voice? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Taking Action*** | | | | |
| Is the action plan clear and agreed to by all? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the group objectives met? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the resources sufficient for the group to do its job? | — | — | — | — |
| Do the jobs get done on time? | — | — | — | — |
| Are most of the members satisfied with the outcomes? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Evaluation*** | | | | |
| Does the group periodically assess: | | | | |
| purpose? | — | — | — | — |
| goals and objectives? | — | — | — | — |
| membership participation? | — | — | — | — |
| group process? | — | — | — | — |
| outcomes? | — | — | — | — |
| community need? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the results of the assessments incorporated into the group planning? | — | — | — | — |

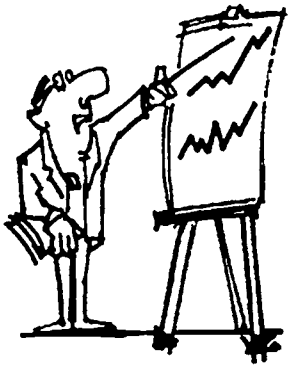
# LOOKING BACK, PLANNING AHEAD . . .

*One is always wiser in hindsight.*

The above quote is often said with a tone of regret. Yet, it is so true that one of our most valuable learning tools is the ability to critically review what has gone by. Wise planning is based on past experiences as well as visions of the future.

An interorganizational review calls for an examination of the process as well as the product. Member organizations will want to know how well cooperation with other players has worked for them, as well as whether the objectives have been achieved. In this section, the focus will be on the issues related to review and evaluation, and considerations for planning.

## EVALUATION



Evaluations give essential information for planning review, and should be integrated into the routine of a group's activity. Evaluation can range from informal reflections in a meeting to a highly structured process involving pre- and post-program measures. You can evaluate process, content, or outcomes depending on your needs and the needs of the organization or funder to whom you are accountable. For example, if your program has been funded by government, you may well be required to evaluate the success of the program and justify your use of the funds. This may involve a systematic examination of the process you went through, the content of your program, and measurable outcomes of success. Depending on the size of the funds involved, your program may be evaluated by an independent, external agency hired by the funder.

Evaluation gives you information about the appropriateness of your goals, objectives, strategies, and timelines, as well as being a tool to measure progress or success. This section gives you some information about evaluation, suggests ideas to consider before you proceed, and offers some strategies. First, let's look at some critical questions.

EVALUATION (cont'd)

**What is the purpose of the evaluation? Who wants it and why?**

Those with an interest in the evaluation may include the community served by the interorganizational group, the member organizations, the persons representing the organizations, and funders. Each will have different reasons for wanting to evaluate the project. Some of their needs may be complementary or compatible, others may not. It will be important to priorize the needs before defining the focus of the evaluation.

**What are the key issues?**

This question may help you clarify the general areas to be evaluated. The issues will be related to the stated goals and objectives of the group, as well as to the group process and the needs of group members. They might include items like group communication and decision-making, achievement of goals and objectives, member participation, and community satisfaction.

**How do you decide what to focus on?**

The focus of your evaluation will depend on these factors:

- **The group's resources.** Is money, expertise, and time available?
- **The consequences of the choices.** What will happen if something is omitted, or particular issues and questions are selected over others? Is there a risk of mis-spending extensive resources?
- **The present state of your knowledge.** What kind of information, either formal or informal, do you already have, and what more do you need?
- **Predetermined requirements.** Member organizations or funders may have evaluation needs that will determine some of the issues and questions.

EVALUATION (cont'd)

**Who should participate?**

Who takes part in the evaluation is determined by the focus. Once the issues and questions have been identified, you can decide who can best answer them. It is a good idea to brainstorm suggestions of people with an interest in the issues to help you develop as comprehensive a list as possible.

**How do you decide what to do?**

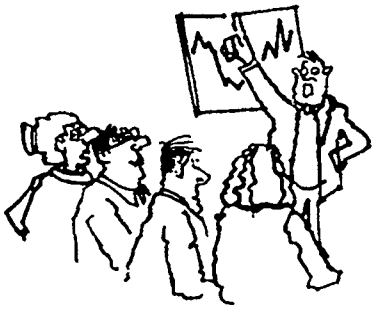
Your choice of evaluation strategies, like your decision about the focus, will be determined by a number of factors including the following:

- **Your resources,** including money, expertise, and time.
- **Your information needs and sources.** What are the issues? Do you need to conduct a research study to examine before and after conditions, or are you able to gather information from existing records?
- **Participants in the evaluation.** You will need to choose research methodology that works well with the people involved in the evaluation. For example, strategies such as mail out questionnaires or personal interviews may be effective with organizational Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) whose schedules can make group interviews difficult to arrange. On the other hand, questionnaires may be an ineffective tool with groups with limited literacy skills.
- **The use of the information.** Are you trying to justify large budgets? If so, your methodology needs to provide you with precise information about outcomes. Are you interested in periodically monitoring your progress to ensure your timelines and budget are on target? If so, a review of existing records and regular group discussions of the issues and questions may suffice.

**EVALUATION (cont'd)** **How is it done?**

The question of how to evaluate raises the issue of methodology and when to use quantitative or qualitative measures. Quantitative data involves tabulating numbers gathered from closed-ended questionnaires and other instruments of measurement. Qualitative information is more descriptive and can be gathered from existing records, such as minutes of meetings and open-ended discussions. Both types of information can be appropriate depending on what is being evaluated and the use of the information. Attitudes and perceptions regarding group processes are best examined using qualitative methods, which encourage the participant to respond openly and honestly. Outcome evaluations require more precise measures of specific indicators.

The following are commonly used evaluation strategies:



- **Questions in a group planning session.** Process evaluation is often included as part of an annual review and strategic planning session. It is important to have a clear, unambiguous set of questions prepared beforehand. Having someone from outside the group facilitate discussion allows all group members to participate equally. The discussion will depend on the number of people involved and the sensitivity of the issues.

- **Questionnaires.** Group members can be asked to respond to critical questions in anonymous questionnaires. It is advisable to discuss responses in the group. The advantage is that feedback remains impersonal.

- **Through individual interviews conducted by an external evaluator/facilitator.** This is a useful but rather expensive technique, which maximizes the quality of the information by providing an opportunity for expansion and clarification of ideas. Verbal and non-verbal feedback is available to the evaluator. This is particularly useful when a project is being reviewed that requires an in-depth look at process, or when team-building is a central goal.

EVALUATION (cont'd)

**When is it done?**

Any or all of the above can be used on a regular basis as an integral part of the review process. Frequent and informal review should occur on an ongoing basis. Some opportunities might be:

- discussions during regularly scheduled meeting (put your concerns on the agenda!)
- reporting periods (for board or division reports)
- meetings held internally by organizational members.

**What are the questions you need to ask?**

Once you have done some preparatory thinking and planning for the evaluation, you will be in a position to gather information. Each issue will generate its own set of questions. It is a good idea to allow yourself to be as creative and free in your thinking as possible when identifying the questions – you can always shorten the list later.

A review of the group process should address the following :

- leadership
- roles and responsibilities of individual members
- purpose, goals, and objectives
- subcommittee structure
- communication and decision-making behavior
- completion of tasks
- relationship of the group to the parent organizations and the community at large.

**EVALUATION (cont'd)**

It is important to keep in mind the group's purpose, goals, and objectives. Some simple but essential questions to ask include:

- Was the purpose (goals, objectives) clear to those in the group? . . . to those outside the group?
- Did the group support the purpose (goals, objectives)? . . . did those outside the group?
- Did we meet our needs? . . . the needs of the community we serve?

Information provided in other sections of this guide may be useful for further analysis of the group elements. For example, the information on leadership may provide some insight into leadership effectiveness.

The analysis should examine the implications of interorganizational coordination for the members (both organizations and individuals), the delivery of the service, and the impact on the community.

Process evaluations may be seen by those involved as evaluations of personalities and relationships and, therefore, somewhat threatening. Consequently, they are often conducted haphazardly or not at all. If these misconceptions can be overcome, you will find an open review can improve communication and build stronger working relationships.

The key questions to be addressed are:

- What happened?
- How did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- Who was instrumental?
- What did we learn?
- What would we do differently?

The answers to these questions are central to the strategic planning process.

## PLANNING AHEAD

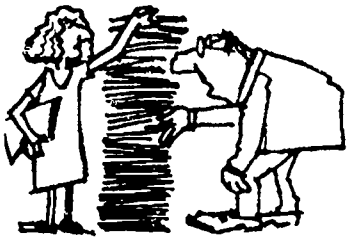
A strategic plan is a means to achieving your "end" mission or purpose. It is made up of a series of steps or goals, which together move you closer to where you want to be. The process of defining the "means to the end" is the strategic planning process.

**What you need to know . . .**

In order to develop an action plan, you need to know

- where you have been
- where you are
- where you want to be
- how you are going to get there.

The first two questions are answered through evaluation and review of goals, objectives, and actions. Deciding where you are headed involves revisiting your purpose and dreaming about what could be. To plan how you are going to get there, you need to know about resources.



**Preparing to Plan . . .**

There are a number of things you can do in order to ensure that your planning is successful. The following is a preparation checklist:

- Consider the possibility of having a person from outside the group facilitate the session. Neutral facilitators are often better able to promote and mediate discussion, particularly when the issues are contentious. Their presence also allows all group members to participate equally.

- Set aside a block of time when participants can attend and stay for the entire time. The amount of time required will vary depending on the size of the group and the issues to be covered; however, one or two working days is suggested.

- Arrange for a neutral meeting place that is physically comfortable with easy access to necessities such as refreshments. Access to telephones is not a necessity.

**PLANNING AHEAD (cont'd)**

- Seek input from participants for the agenda by distributing a draft agenda and asking for comments.

- Distribute copies of goals and objectives, action plans, and any evaluation and review information at least a week prior to the session. This will allow participants to brief themselves and do some preparatory thinking.

**Setting the Agenda . . .**

The agenda for a planning session should be developed with care and take into consideration the following:

- **the complexity of the issues.** Complex issues require time and energy, and are best addressed after the group is relaxed and in the mood of the session, but before all of their time and energy has been depleted.

- **the interpersonal dynamics** of the group members. Knowing how the group members interact will help you anticipate some of the "hidden" agendas and issues.

- **the logical sequence of events.** Each step should build on what has occurred previously and contribute to what is about to happen.

- **the planning priorities** identified by the group members.

**Working Through the Agenda . . .**

Carrying out the agenda involves employing a variety of strategies that facilitate reflection, open and honest communication, and creative thinking. Your choice of strategies should be influenced by the size of the group and the interpersonal and interorganizational dynamics. For example, a closely knit group of eight or less may want and need very little sub-grouping for discussions. However, a group larger than eight and/or unfamiliar with one another may require more individual or subgroup work to ensure that everyone participates equally. Listed on the next page are some suggestions on how to move the discussion and get through the agenda.

**PLANNING AHEAD (cont'd)**

- Consider having participants do "homework" before the sessions so that they have done some of their thinking ahead of time. For example, you can ask them to develop lists of priorities and issues.
- Have goals, objectives, and action plans well displayed for easy reference when reviewing the year's activities.
- Begin your session with something that is energizing, such as a brainstorming or visioning exercise.
- Budget your time by setting realistic limits on discussion.
- Break large groups up into smaller groups for discussion purposes. This maximizes "air time" and encourages everyone to participate.
- Make use of visual aids such as flip charts and overhead projectors, whenever possible. They are useful in maintaining a focus for discussion.
- Have recording materials such as paper and pencils, felt pens, and tape available.
- Use planning exercises such as nominal group techniques to facilitate decision-making.
- Designate an alternate time to resolve an issue that may be inappropriately dominating the agenda.
- Schedule breaks to maintain the energy and synergy of the group.

## CONCLUSION: FIVE KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. **Coordination is not a quick fix for many of the problems facing society.** It will not build affordable housing, end poverty, or stop the tragedy of abuse and neglect.

2. **Coordination is a means to an end, not an end in itself.** We must ask what problems coordination is best designed to solve prior to proposing it as the means to solve them.

3. **Collaborative strategies are not always preferred.** Developing interagency collaboration is extremely time-consuming and process intensive. The substantial resources that go into setting up and operating collaborative ventures should only be expended when the benefits are correspondingly large. While some collaborative initiatives may lever resources and deploy existing ones more creatively and efficiently, they cannot create new resources. Furthermore, collaboration may not always be the best investment of resources. Depending on local needs and circumstances, some services may be better provided without multiple agency involvement.

4. **Coordination and collaboration occur among people – not institutions.** Effective group structure and process can make or break success. Attention must be paid to group communication, problem-solving, and other group processes. Commitment – by the member organization, the employee-representative, and members of the interagency group – is critical to success. With commitment comes ownership; in its absence, poor morale and resentment can prevail.

   Similarly, organizations must support their employees' efforts towards coordination and collaboration. Time must be built into the work day, and employees must be acknowledged for their efforts. Interagency agreements or arrangements must be structured to support the representatives' interactions with all key players; including clients and the organizations they represent.

5. **Coordination and collaboration require specific skills and attitudes.** If you feel challenged by working with people whose knowledge and training are significantly different from yours, if you are able to make unprecedented decisions based on flexible guidelines, and if you are comfortable negotiating support or agreement, you may be suited to interagency activities. The interpersonal, problem-solving skills required in coordination and collaboration may be skills many people have not been previously called upon to use in their work. Not only will people need time to develop these skills, they will also need back-up support and guidance from their employers.

## OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION

Information for this guide has come from several sources, including relevant research literature, a survey of interorganizational groups, and interviews with key informants. Interorganizational groups in your community can also be a source of information. If you are interested in setting up an interorganizational group, learn as much as you can about others' successes and failures before you begin.

For example, have a look at the list of organizations in Appendix E. Are any in your area, or might any have experience with the issue you are trying to address?

Find out where they – or similar groups – are located and contact them. Be sure to have a sense of what you are hoping to achieve and why before you begin your contacts, then talk to people.

If possible, visit one of the group's regular meetings and hear the opinions of all members. Most groups will be pleased, even flattered, to be asked to share their first-hand experiences with you. After all, interorganizational coordination is about sharing.

# HOW WE DID IT

The study was undertaken to clarify the current understanding of the term, "interorganizational coordination," to identify elements common to successful efforts, and to uncover useful information about conditions, trends, and practices in Alberta.

The study involved four distinct approaches: a literature survey, a telephone survey of key informants, a questionnaire survey of current interorganizational groupings, and site visits of selected projects.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature search was to confirm and add to the survey findings and information provided by the key informants. It was hoped that the research material would also establish a background for the study of interorganizational groupings in Alberta. The following topics were reviewed:

- definitions of interorganizational coordination
- theories regarding the structural and process elements
- case studies which documented and analyzed issues, procedures, and outcomes.

The field of interorganizational studies is very broad, and includes subjects ranging from community-based interagency initiatives to those involving political and economic conglomerates. While the search focused on theories and case studies in the fields of social services and education, the material included references from public administration, business administration, political and social sciences, and social work. An annotated bibliography of the primary sources is included in Appendix D.

**KEY INFORMANT SURVEY**

The telephone survey of key informants had four primary purposes:

- to advise key individuals in the community and government organizations of our plans to study interorganizational coordination
- to learn more about how program planners and managers in the fields of education, social services, and health understand and practise "interorganizational coordination"
- to gather advice regarding key project characteristics and critical elements/issues to be explored in the project surveys
- to identify examples of good practice to be surveyed by mail and/or site visits.

Ten informed individuals, selected on the basis of their past involvement with interorganizational groups, were interviewed by telephone. All were senior officials who had been responsible for interorganizational planning and implementation in education, health, social services, and community-based social service agencies in Alberta.

**PROVINCIAL PROJECT SURVEY**

The purpose of the province-wide survey was four-fold:

- to examine and document current examples of interorganizational coordination throughout the province
- to give respondents an opportunity to describe what they believed to be important factors influencing the outcomes of their projects
- to stimulate critical thinking about interorganizational coordination at all levels of planning
- to test some of the models of interorganizational coordination discussed in the literature.

**PROVINCIAL PROJECT SURVEY (cont'd)**

The provincial survey was conducted by mail out questionnaire. Letters requesting suggestions for projects to be included in the survey were sent to CEOs of Health Units, Directors of FCSS programs, Superintendents of School Districts, and Coordinators of Further Education Councils.

When suggesting projects for the study, participants were asked to include only those that met the following criteria:

- the projects had been operating for at least one year
- the functions of the projects included networking, consultation, cooperative planning, resource sharing, collaborative service delivery
- the projects involved two or more organizations targeting children and their families.

Preference was given to projects involving partners from educational fields. The suggestions were combined with those made by the key informants to create a list of projects to be surveyed.

The questionnaire had five major sections:

1. Descriptions of membership, purpose, target population, and dates of operation.
2. The history and development of the group. To learn about the social and political circumstances surrounding the formation of the group, we asked: Who was responsible for bringing the group together? What were the precipitating factors? What were the roles of various community players? What was the history of agency cooperation in that community?
3. The group structure, documentation, resource needs, and funding sources for the group's activities.

**PROVINCIAL PROJECT SURVEY (cont'd)**

4. The group process. We were interested in learning about how membership had been selected, how commitments were secured, and how agreement on goals, objectives, policies, and procedures had been secured. We also asked about leadership, accountability, and confidentiality.

5. Evaluation. Respondents were asked to describe evaluation procedures and outcomes (both anticipated and unanticipated).

The questionnaire was mailed to 135 groups throughout the province. One hundred and sixteen (86%) were returned. Of those returned, a sample was selected for further study. The interorganizational groups that participated in the survey are listed in Appendix E.

**SITE VISITS**

Selection of the ten projects for further study was based on the duration of the project, the scope of the membership of the interorganizational group, the uniqueness of the project, and the geographic location. Included were urban and rural projects representing groups in northern, central, and southern Alberta.

The objectives of the visits were:

- to confirm and clarify the information given in the questionnaire
- to explore in more depth some of the issues raised in the questionnaire, such as barriers to interorganizational coordination
- to gather information about the training needs of groups involved with interorganizational coalitions.

A common interview schedule was not developed since many of the issues addressed and the questions asked were unique to each project. The status of the participants varied with each project, but all visits included interviews with persons involved in planning, decision-making, and implementation.

**SITE VISITS (cont'd)**

Whenever possible, one of the group's regular meetings was attended to observe group processes and discuss issues related to the interorganizational aspects of the activities. Information was also gathered from interviews with individuals involved with different aspects of the project, such as the history, policy development and direction, administration and coordination, and implementation.

The groups varied in size, stage of development, function, and degree of sophistication. Some were in transition, having reached their original goals and being somewhat uncertain of their future direction and purpose. Others were reexamining their purpose and objectives after developments in the community had significantly altered their roles. Still others were struggling to cope with "success" as represented by an increased interest in and demand for their activities.

The visits provided an opportunity for group members to share their experiences and learning. Without exception, they provided rich, relevant information about both the barriers to partnerships between agencies and sectors and the factors affecting facilitation. Each visit confirmed assumptions about the circumstances under which groups do or do not work well, and reinforced understanding of the challenges associated with bringing together organizations with different mandates, policies, procedures, and priorities. Above all, the visits affirmed the importance these relationships hold for those people involved in them.

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

## REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PLANNING COMMITTEES TERMS OF REFERENCE February 27, 1991

**Preamble:**

The Regional Mental Health Planning Committees, which will work within the intent of these terms of reference, will provide general guidance for the committees' operations. Alberta Health is open to working with the committees to ensure that their activities are relevant and appropriate to the local situation.

**1.0 Reports to:**

Established at the request of Alberta Health and will report to the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Mental Health Division who will inform the Deputy Minister and Minister of their activities.

**2.0 Assumptions:**

These terms of reference were developed under the following assumptions:

- fundamentally all partners/participants are working to promote, preserve and restore the mental health of Albertans.
- mental health programs and services must be responsive to local/regional needs and concerns.
- local residents, professionals and organizations are best able to identify needs, develop solutions and plan programs and services; nevertheless, these solutions and plans should be consistent with a general provincial direction.
- the continuum of care must be enhanced with a focus on the consumer of mental health services.
- the mental health system in Alberta could be improved by better planning and coordination and by greater collaboration among all partners.
- the approach must be fair and consistent in its treatment of all partners.
- an improved approach as embodied in these terms of reference is required.

## 3.0 Regional Boundaries

9 committees with coterminous boundaries and falling within the six mental health regions will be established.

- Edmonton – entire Edmonton mental health region.
- Calgary – entire Calgary mental health region.
- Central – entire Central mental health region (includes Red Deer).
- Medicine Hat – eastern half of the South mental health region.
- Lethbridge – western half of the South mental health region.
- Fort McMurray – nothern half of the Northeast mental health region.
- St. Paul – southern half of the Northeast mental health region.
- Grande Prairie – southern half of the Northwest mental health region.
- Peace River – northern half of the Northwest mental health region.

## 4.0 Type of Committee:

Standing Planning and Advisory Committees.

## 5.0 Committee Purpose:

- To define the mental health needs of the region's population, and determine the key problems and initiatives to be given priority.
- To coordinate the development of all mental health programs or services within its region consistent with identified needs, problems and priorities. This should include the development of a longer term (5 year) regional mental health plan consistent with the principles in **Mental Health Services in Alberta** and **Caring & Responsibility: A Statement of Social Policy for Alberta**.
- To develop a mechanism for evaluating progress in addressing regional needs, problems, and priorities as well as in implementing its plan.
- To provide advice to Alberta Health regarding mental health policies, programs, needs and other issues, especially from its regional perspective. This may include making recommendations to Alberta Health regarding the development and funding of new programs or services.
- To foster collaboration among partners/participants within the region and, when appropriate, between regions and provincial bodies.

## 6.0 Committee Authority:

The committee is established at the request of Alberta Health, thus it

- will review and endorse all proposals and plans for mental health and related programs and services within its region before submission to Alberta Health for a funding decision.
- will encourage health organizations and social services providers, community organizations in the mental health field, and others to work within any regional plans and to accept priorities it establishes for mental health services.
- will undertake projects and activities necessary to fulfill its purpose.

## 7.0 Workplan:

The committees are encouraged to develop annual workplans.

## 8.0 Membership:

**Composition:**

- The composition should include representatives from among the following:
  - health and social service providers including:
    - hospitals, mental health hospitals, and long-term psychiatric care centres
    - community mental health services
    - health units
    - long-term care facilities
    - Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission.
  - community organizations active in the field of mental health. This may include representatives from organizations such as:
    - Canadian Mental Health Association
    - Schizophrenia Society of Alberta
    - suicide prevention programs
    - other related Government departments.
  - communities, consumers, and other members of the public not represented in the above two categories.
- each distinct organization shall be represented by one member.

**Chairperson:** The Assistant Deputy Minister of the Mental Health Division, Alberta Health, will appoint individuals to serve as Vice-Chair and Chair.

**Secretary:** Alberta Health (Mental Health Division) will provide administrative support to each committee.

**Committee Size:** 15 - 18 members.

**Length of Appointment:** 2-year terms and a maximum of 3 terms for any individual.

**Observers:** May attend with prior approval of Chairperson.

**Nomination and Appointment:** Each regional mental health planning committee (initially the Regional Psychiatric Services Planning Committees) will identify the organizations, jurisdictions, agencies and other stakeholders who should be represented on their Regional Mental Health Planning Committee. This list will be forwarded to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Mental Health Division, who will request nominations from these organizations. From the list of nominees the Assistant Deputy Minister will make appropriate appointments to the committees.

**Remuneration:** No honoraria will be paid for serving on the committee.

## 9.0 Committee Meetings:

**Frequency:** At least 4 - 6 per year.

**Quorum:** Chair or Vice-Chair and at least 1/2 remaining members.

**Agenda/Minutes:** Chair will ensure agendas and minutes are prepared.

## 10.0 Relationship to Provincial Advisory Committee on Mental Health Issues:

- Collaboration between the PACMHI and the regional committees will be encouraged through appropriate means. Biannual or annual meetings of chairs of the regional committees and PACMHI is one means, but not the only one that will be pursued.

## 11.0 Reporting Requirements:

Each chairperson of the Regional Mental Health Planning Committees will provide the Assistant Deputy Minister, Mental Health Division, Alberta Health, and Chair, Provincial Advisory Committee on Mental Health Issues with the following:

- Minutes and agenda of meetings.
- Annual workplan or report (if any is prepared); the annual report will be forwarded to the Minister.
- Any other major reports or documents prepared by or for the committee.

Alberta Health will keep the regional committees informed of the status of its activities, decisions and directions related to mental health services. A suitable representative from the corporate office of the Mental Health Division will be a participant in the committee's activities.

## 12.0 Committee Support:

- Alberta Health (Mental Health Division) will provide limited administrative support to the committees subject to the availability of funding.
- Alberta Health will consider requests for funding of special projects or other activities required to fulfil the committee's purpose and fund such projects and activities subject to availability of funds.

## 13.0 Review Period:

The operation and effectiveness of the regional mental health planning committees will be reviewed and evaluated within 3 years of the date of their inaugural meetings.

Approved by:

D. Ostercamp
A/Assistant Deputy Minister
Mental Health Division
Alberta Health

Date

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# APPENDIX B

## FAMILY/SCHOOL LIAISON PROGRAMME MASTER SERVICE AGREEMENT

The Westlock and District Family and Community Support Services, in partnership with the Westlock School Division and the Westlock Roman Catholic Separate School District, will provide a Family/School Liaison Programme for the communities of the Town of Westlock, Village of Clyde, and the M.D. of Westlock No. 92.

The Westlock & District F.C.S.S., the Westlock School Division, and the Westlock Roman Catholic Separate School District all agree to follow the programme and job descriptions attached to this Agreement.

This Agreement shall be in effect as of January 1, 1990. The three parties mutually agree that the programme will be cost-shared on the following basis:

1.1 The Westlock School Division and the Westlock Roman Catholic Separate School District will determine their respective costs on a pro-rata basis, calculated by using student enrolment numbers from September 1989.

1.2 For the purposes of this calculation, the Westlock School Division will use all students within their schools from Kindergarten to Grade 9 inclusive, excluding the Pibroch Colony. The Westlock Roman Catholic Separate School District will use all students within Saint Mary Separate School from Kindergarten to Grade 12 inclusive.
Student Enrolment as of September 30, 1989:
Westlock School Division Grades K-9: 1675
Saint Mary Separate School Grades K-12: 409

2.1 The two school divisions will assume 15% of gross expenditures from May 1, 1990 to December 31, 1990. The Westlock School Division will assume 80% of this amount, and the Westlock Roman Catholic Separate District will assume 20% of this amount.

2.2 F.C.S.S. will assume 85% of gross expenditure between May 1, 1990 and December 31, 1990.

2.3 For the period January 1, 1990 to April 30, 1990 there will be no cost assessed to the Westlock Roman Catholic Separate School Division.

2.4 For the period January 1, 1990 to April 30, 1990, the Westlock School Division will assume 12.45% of gross expenditures incurred by the programme, with the balance for the period being assessed as the F.C.S.S. contribution.

3.1 All three parties agree to meet no later than September 30, 1990 to negotiate the financial aspects of this agreement for the calendar year 1991.

The three parties mutually agree to the following additional provisions:

4.1 The Westlock School Division will provide office space of a permanent nature from Monday to Friday for one Family/School Liaison Worker. The Westlock School Division will provide additional office space of a permanent nature for a second Family/ School Liaison Worker for 3 working days per week.

4.2 The Westlock School Division agrees to provide temporary space in each of its schools so that the Family/School Liaison Worker can conduct interviews in private.

5.1 The Westlock Roman Catholic Separate School District agrees to provide office space of a permanent nature for 2 working days per week for 1 Family/School Liaison Worker. Such office space will be located at Saint Mary School and will allow for interviews to be held in private.

6.1 Both School Divisions agree to provide in their permanent nature offices, a minimum of a desk and chair for the Family/School Liaison Worker, a telephone, and a locking filing cabinet. Both School Divisions also agree to make available to the Family/School Liaison Worker additional chairs for clients when interviews are conducted.

Changes to this Agreement:

7.1 This Agreement can be amended by unanimous consent of all three parties to the Agreement. Should one of the parties desire amendment they must provide written notice to all parties and request a joint meeting at least 45 days prior to the date the proposed changes would take place.

7.2 This Agreement can be terminated by any of the three parties through the following procedure:

i) The party wishing to terminate this agreement will send a written notice from their Board to the Boards of the other two parties declaring their intent to terminate this Agreement.

ii) The written notice of intent to terminate this Agreement will specify a date of termination which shall not be less than 12 months from the date notice is given.

All parties hereby consent to this Agreement.

1) Westlock and District Family and Community Support Services

Board Chairperson _____ Date _____

2) Westlock Schooi Division

Board Chairperson _____ Date _____

3) Westlock Roman Catholic Separate School District

Board Chaiperson _____ Date _____

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# APPENDIX C

## GRANDE PRAIRIE COMMUNITY INTERAGENCY SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

**Goals and Objectives** **April 1992 to March 1993**

| Goal | Objective | Action Plan |
|---|---|---|
| A. COORDINATE SUICIDE AWARENESS AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES FOR CAREGIVERS AND GATEKEEPERS IN THE NORTHWEST REGION. | Organize the provision of training in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention to crisis line personnel in Grande Prairie, Fairview, Peace River and High Level as requested | a) maintain contact with the local and regional crisis line organizations to ensure that they have current information and educational material as it becomes available. Arrange inservices for PACE crisis line volunteers as requested.<br>b) continue acting as a resource to the crisis line organizations by coordinating one-day training sessions with telephone volunteers or arranging Suicide Prevention Training Program (SPTP) Foundation Workshops. |
| | Ensure that human service agencies in Grande Prairie and area are aware of the availability of training in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. | a) contact agencies in Grande Prairie to offer the opportunity for coordination of suicide prevention inservice or SPTP training.<br>b) distribute SPTP pamphlets to human service agencies in regional communities. Advertise through the public education volunteers where available or Family and Community Support Services offices.<br>c) maintain contact with Queen Elizabeth II Hospital Inservice Coordinator to coordinate opportunities for advanced training of nursing staff.<br>d) continue contact with the Grande Prairie Regional College Nursing Program to offer training for student nurses. |
| | Coordinate 6 SPTP workshops for communities in the Region. | a) approach people in Wanham and other rural Centres to determine the need for SPTP workshops.<br>b) coordinate 2 SPTP Bereavement Workshops in the region and assess the need for additional trainers. |
| | Maintain a public education program to conduct awareness presentations. | a) recruit volunteers as required.<br>b) support volunteers by assisting with financing their attendance at conferences/training sessions.<br>c) provide updated educational information to public education volunteers, maintain training and recognition of volunteers<br>d) maintain statistics on presentations completed by public education volunteers. |

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| Goal | Objective | Action Plan |
|---|---|---|
| A. (continued) (COORDINATE SUICIDE AWARENESS AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES FOR CAREGIVERS AND GATEKEEPERS IN THE NORTHWEST REGION.) | Develop and distribute public education/ awareness materials as required. | a) investigate social marketing strategies for developing effective materials.<br>b) compile information specific to the Region's needs and resources.<br>c) increase agency awareness of Suicide Prevention Program services. |
| | Make available opportunities for training in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention to schools in Grande Prairie and the County of Grande Prairie. | a) write to principals of junior and senior high schools in Grande Prairie and the County of Grande Prairie to promote SPTP training, suicide prevention or postvention presentations for teachers, counsellors and support staff.<br>b) contact parent advisory committee chairpersons for junior and senior high schools in Grande Prairie and County to offer presentations to parents and advocate for postvention plans in schools.<br>c) contact principals in junior high schools in the Separate School District to offer assistance in developing postvention plans.<br>d) coordinate suicide awareness presentations to junior high students and provide information to high school teachers for presentations to their classes as requested.<br>e) encourage the implementation of peer support teams where they are not in place, and arrange S.P.T.P. or awareness training for peer support team members. |
| | Promote and use the Suicide Information and Education Centre as an information source available to the public. | a) access the Suicide Information and Education Centre for specific requests. Maintain files of suicide-related information. Promote resource sharing and lend books, audiovisuals and presentation manuals throughout the Region. Cross-reference material in a database (time/ personnel permitting).<br>b) maintain contacts with local libraries and the Peace Library System to ensure continuing distribution of pamphlets.<br>c) have sample database searches and other materials available at Suicide Prevention Program displays or presentations.<br>d) promote the Suicide Information and Education Centre services at Suicide Action Committee meetings, during Suicide Awareness Week activities and at other presentations.<br>e) circulate new information on a proactive basis, as time permits, including information from conferences and training sessions. |

# APPENDIX D

## STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES FOR IMPROVING INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is an annotated bibliography of the literature read to date. The items are presented according to three general categories: Definitions, Issues, and Key Elements; Impacts; and Models. They are listed alphabetically according to author in each category. Each listing includes a brief summary of the content.

### DEFINITION, ISSUES, AND KEY ELEMENTS

1. Aram, J. D. & Stratton, W. E. (1974). The development of interagency cooperation. *Social Service Review, 48(3),* pp. 412-421.

   The document reports a study of a successful planning effort involving twenty local agencies. The study examines the questions: What factors were significant in the origin of the cooperative activity? What were the aspects or factors in the planning process that contributed to the progress of the group?

   The study identifies critical events in the community such as a private service and research agency being forced to reconsider its mission or be faced with extinction, a need for service expertise on the part of another agency, and concern on the part of the community with a general lack of service. The "incidents" stimulated the consideration of coordination. The author concludes that a "convergence of interests" on the part of the participating organizations needs to be present. The author goes on to examine specific factors contributing to the progress in planning: individual leadership; agency leadership; meeting behavior; and perceived agency goals.

   ***Implications for study:*** The article has identified some interesting dynamics associated with interorganizational coordination, which could be investigated in the agency survey and onsite visits.

2. Byles, J. A. (1985). Problems in interagency collaboration: Lessons from a project that failed. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 9,* pp. 549-554.

   This paper describes selected problems and issues that arose during the struggle to implement the Community Child Abuse Team Project in Hamilton, Ontario. The author identifies issues of overlapping jurisdictions and a failure on the part of the parent organizations to negotiate their roles, which lead to difficulty in defining the mandate and goals of the project. Also, the degree to which the project was

autonomous from the parent agency was unclear, thus resulting in an ineffective decision-making process. These difficulties lead to a struggle for power. The author strongly concludes that it is critical that the persons responsible for a program must have the power to control all activities within the program's jurisdiction.

***Implications for study:*** This information suggests that the survey of projects should examine the issues of mandate, project autonomy, and decision-making processes.

3. Faulkner, L. R. et. al. (1987). Academic community and state mental health program collaboration: The Oregon experience. *Community Mental Health Journal, 23(4)*, pp. 260-270.

In this document, specific examples of successful collaborations in the areas of education, administration, research, and service are presented to illustrate how relationships that have been designed to meet specific requirements of one organization can fulfil many requirements of both. The authors conclude by identifying issues key to the success of collaborative projects: careful administration of the relationship; specific relationship objectives; multiple relationship components; bilateral relationship involvement; meaningful leadership support; and personal recognition and achievement.

***Implications for Study:*** The information identifies issues that need to be examined in the project survey and incorporated into the model of good practice.

4. Frumkin, M. et. al. (1983). Evaluating state level integration of human services. *Administration in Social Work, 7(1)*, pp. 13-24.

This document presents a model for researching interorganizational projects and initiatives. The information is valuable in planning a research strategy and methodologies.

5. Goering, P. & Rogers, J. [n.d.]. *Planning Interagency Coordination: Key Issues*; a paper written for the Social and Community Psychiatry Section, Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, University of Toronto.

This document defines coordination as a process rather than a product and stresses that coordination should originate at the grass roots and must also occur at the bureaucratic decision-making level in order for the efforts to be far-reaching and sustained. Primary benefits of coordination are identified as being improved delivery of service, gaining strength through numbers, and more efficient use of resources. The primary costs of coordination to organizations is loss of autonomy and flexibility, and the time required to establish and maintain the effort. The need to define the target population of the coordination effort is stressed.

The paper includes an outline of the major structural models and suggests circumstances under which each is most effective. The discussion of implementation suggests an incremental, evolutionary approach, with committed resources, and additional personnel,

and is preferred. It is critical that implementation strategies be based on local circumstances and account for such factors as historical roles and prior linkage experience of existing agencies, and dissimilarities between agencies. It concludes by proposing some general operating principles.

***Implications for study:*** The information in this document will be useful in identifying project features for examination and developing operating principles and a model for good practice.

6. Gray, B. & Hay, T. M. (1986). Political limits to interorganizational consensus and change. *The Journal of Applied Behaviourial Science, 22(2)*, pp. 95-112.

This article discusses the efforts of the National Coal Policy Project, a collaborative change effort by representatives of environmental groups and a firm mining and using coal, to achieve a consensus on national coal policy in a nonadversarial, nontraditional setting. The authors' study of the project explores three political issues: the role of power in the selection of participants, the role of power in each stakeholder's decision as to whether or not to participate in the project, and the power of the project participants to have the project recommendations implemented. The authors outline several implications of the findings of the study: first, before an intervention is contemplated, those involved must carefully diagnose the domain-level dynamics; second, the perceptions of legitimacy greatly affect the success of any effort to organize an interorganizational domain; third, interventionists cannot ignore the larger context within which their organizing efforts take place; fourth, those seeking to effectively facilitate collaboration in interorganizational settings must be equipped with theories and methods that consider the inherently political nature of interorganizational relations.

***Implications for study:*** This paper provides a useful background on the issue of turf protection and suggests some strategies for overcoming the problems associated with it. It will be a valuable component of principles and guidelines to good practice and suggests some issues to be addressed in the project surveys, e.g., who participated and how was that decided? How were roles negotiated? Who convened the initial meetings? Who established the lead role in developing the project?

7. Gray, B. (1985). Conditions facilitating interorganizational collaboration. *Human Relations, 38(10)*, pp. 911-936.

This document offers a brief summary of the rationale for collaboration and describes a three-stage process model of collaboration: Problem-Setting; Direction-Setting; and Structuring. The author identifies key conditions which facilitate each stage. She concludes by saying that successful collaboration depends upon the simultaneous interaction of several conditions at appropriate phases in the process, and that the ability to achieve the appropriate conditions during each phase may be the best explanation for why efforts fail.

***Implications for study:*** The information in this article is helpful in developing an effective model and tool of analysis.

8. Iles, P. & Auluck, R. (1990). Team building, interagency team development and social work practice. *British Journal of Social Work, 20*, pp. 151-164.

   This article reviews a variety of team development techniques and assesses their effectiveness. It discusses the need for effective team functioning in interorganizational efforts and focuses on the factors that help to build a functional group. It examines a case study of an interagency drug intervention team.

   ***Implications for study:*** The evidence suggests that it would be important to include team-building skills in the training package of this project.

9. Knitzer, J. & Yelton, S. (1990). Collaborations between child welfare and mental health. *Public Welfare, 48(2)*, pp. 24-25.

   The authors present a well documented argument about the need for collaborative efforts in child welfare. They demonstrate the benefits of collaboration using some brief case studies and outline the formal efforts made by various organizations and institutions to encourage the development of collaborative efforts. In discussing the conditions necessary for successful collaboration, they support the notion that three of the critical ingredients are leadership, shared goals, and a realistic sense of time.

   ***Implications for study:*** This document is most useful for the background information presented in the argument supporting collaboration.

10. Beatrice, D. F. (1990). Inter-agency coordination: A practitioner's guide to a strategy for effective social policy. *Administration in Social Work, 14(4)*, pp. 45-59.

    Neugebored, B. (1990). Introduction: Coordinating human services delivery. *Administration in Social Work, 14(4)*, pp. 1-7.

    Wimpfheimer, R. et. al. (1990). Inter-agency collaboration: Some working principles. *Administration in Social Work, 14(4)*, pp. 89-97.

    This series of documents provides an introduction to the concept of coordination through definitions and case examples. The strengths and limitations of collaborative efforts are clearly outlined, as are the barriers to effective coordination. Basic principles for guiding planning are presented and some effective general strategies are suggested.

    ***Implications for study:*** This document is a useful summary of some of the issues discussed in more detail in other papers. Many of the concepts, elements, principles, and strategies proposed by other authors are listed here.

## IMPACTS

1. Baum, J. A. C. (1991). Institutional linkages and organizational mortality. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 36*, pp. 187-218.

   This paper investigates the impact on mortality rates, of organizations' institutional linkages to legitimated community and public institutions. An institutional linkage is defined as a direct and regularized relationship between an organization and an institution. The authors investigated whether such linkages reduce the likelihood of mortality, offer some protection from competitive threats, and insulate the organization from the risk of failure from transformation. They also examined whether the characteristics of the organizations and the external legitimacy of the linkages affected the strength of the linkages.

   The results of the research suggest that institutional relations play a very significant role in reducing the likelihood of organizational mortality. Younger organizations experienced a greater benefit than did older ones. The results also implied that network ties are more likely to insulate organizations from failure when these ties have been endorsed by the wider institutional environment.

   ***Implications for study:*** The results of this study demonstrate the benefits of coordination. It also has implications for issues of coordination such as stakeholder selection, which deserve consideration.

2. Miner, A. S. & Ambergey, T. L. (1990). Interorganizational linkages and population dynamics: Buffering and transformational shields. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 35*, pp. 689-713.

   The authors propose that interorganizational linkages can buffer organizations from failure, affect the likelihood of organizational transformation, and modify the effect of organizational transformation on failure. They begin by defining institutional buffers as insulation based on access to material resources, information, or technology, and proposing that institutional linkages can be such a buffer by dampening the effects of environmental uncertainty, ensuring higher and more stable flows of resources, increasing organizational power, and reducing risks in new ventures. They also examine the relationship between organizational linkages and survival during periods of transformation or change.

   The results unequivocally support predictions that interorganizational linkages can buffer organizations from failure. The authors also found that the presence or absence of interorganizational linkages had a statistically significant effect on the impact of transformation on failure. They found that organizations with linkages were **more** likely to fail after transformation than the other organizations.

   ***Implications for study:*** The information in this paper is valuable when considering the possible consequences of networking and coordination for the organizations involved.

3. Perrucci, R. & Levis, B. (1989). Interorganizational relations and community influence structure: A replication and extension. *The Sociological Quarterly, 30(2)*, pp. 205-223.

The author examines the influence of interorganizational relations on the ability of an organization to mobilize resources. He proposes that the breadth and depth of the interorganizational network will be positively correlated with the ability of the organization to mobilize resources. He explores the implications of this for leadership behavior. The author was particularly interested in determining if there had been a change in the relationship from the time that the hypothesis was first tested in 1969. He concluded that the patterns were similar and that persons who hold upper executive positions in many organizations are more likely to be identified as influential than are persons who hold few upper executive positions. The results of his study suggested that business organizations continue to play an important role in the community, and that while organization interests are still being pursued through dyadic and triadic ties, there is some indication that the broader interests of a business class have in recent years moved to the centre of the community's influence structure.

4. Sink, D. W. & Stowers, G. (1989). Coalitions and their effect on the urban policy agenda. *Administration in Social Work, 13(2)*, pp. 83-98.

The authors examine four coalitions of community-based organizations to determine the effect of the coalition on the ability of the agencies to influence urban policy agendas. They first establish three primary purposes for coalition: (1) to allocate authority or resources (an enabling coalition); (2) to cooperatively produce services (a functional coalition); (3) to promote norms and values (a normative coalition).

The article includes a comparative chart of three types of coalition structures and their characteristics: organization-set coalition; network coalitions; and action-set coalitions. The authors then examine the four case studies from the perspective of four central themes of the policy agenda research: (1) the degree of consensus on the policy issues; (2) the presence of a policy entrepreneur (a person with willingness to invest their resources - time, energy, reputation, money - in the hope of a future return); (3) the existence of a triggering mechanism (an unforeseen event that is chief among the factors important to creating a favourable policy environment); (4) the occasion of a policy window (an opportunity for influence which occurs when political and policy processes merge to facilitate change).

The results of the study indicate that coalitional structure is not a critical characteristic for success, although lack of a defined structure may hamper progress. The existence and duration of a "policy window" was very influential on the success of the coalition. It was revealed that coalitions can be effective in shaping social problems as policy issues. It also illustrates that consensus, leadership, outside forces, opportunity, and an ability to persist are necessary elements for success.

***Implications for study:*** This article contains information that will be important for a discussion about factors affecting the success of coordination, which occurs for the purpose of politicial influence.

5. Weed, F. J. (1986). Interorganizational relations in welfare agencies as rituals of co-optation. *The Social Science Journal, 23(4)*, pp. 431-438.

   This article examines one of the motivations for coordination for welfare agencies: co-optation. Co-optation is defined as a "a process of widening support by absorbing into the leadership or policy-making segments of an organization, elements that in some way reflect the sentiments or possess the confidence of the relevant public, and which will lend legitimacy to the organization's authority to function." The author examines the nature of interagency cooperation as it relates to resource distribution and funding. He suggests that agency cooperation is a requirement frequently placed on community agencies by funders and that "funding is not in itself a pure element of a relationship between two or more organizations, rather the relationship is itself a political resource for the funding." He identifies six characteristics of welfare agency networks as developed through research, and goes on to examine the influence of the grant funding or monetary transfers on the operating characteristics of welfare agencies.

   The study focuses attention on the relationships between funding resources, client dependence, and legitimacy. While little was concluded, new questions were raised about the influence of the funding relationship on evaluation, accountability, and service within the networks.

6. Yanay, U. (1989). Reactions to domain overlap. *Administration and Society, 21(3)*, pp. 340-356.

   The author examines a case in which two different, locally based social service organizations make claims over the same domain. He suggests that theoretically, domain overlap can result in a variety of reactions including coordination, innovation, and responsiveness. He sees reactions falling on a continuum ranging from cooperation to competition. The way an organization reacts to domain overlap is partly determined by its organizational characteristics, but mainly by the environment in which it operates and the relationship it has with its environment.

   This article has information about the type of environment conducive to cooperation.

## MODELS

1. Agranoff, R. (1991). Human services integration: Past and present challenges in public administration. *Public Administration Review, 51(6)*, pp. 533-542.

   In this article, Agranoff examines the barriers to service integration from an administrative perspective. He briefly outlines the history of the integration movement in human services which, he claims, arose out of a need to serve clients with multi-dimensional needs. He outlines two or three definitions of service integration and offers one which has four dimensions: redefined, more generalist services approaches; enhanced community-level program linkages; improved efforts at policy management; and designed, more supportive organizational structures.

The author discusses the underlying elements of current administrative approaches to integration. He suggests that the greatest difference between contemporary and past efforts is the notion of targeting, i.e., integration that focuses on particular sets of problems or populations. He further suggests that three interdependent public management activities appear to be involved in successful services integration: developing policies or strategies that will support integration at the services and program implementation levels; developing operating plans which support case-by-case coordination at the service level; and development of local systems at the level where the client potentially receives services.

Agranoff examines several issues on the contemporary social agenda from the perspective of the three elements listed above. He concludes by outlining some of the major challenges to services integration: designing more coherent public policies; strategic planning and policy development that focuses on target needs or populations; operational planning, programming, and budgeting on a functional or target problem basis; creation of systems that can meet multiple needs of clients; operation and maintenance of interorganizational systems, sometimes through new "supra" organizations and sometimes as lateral overlays on existing organizations; and encouraging the development of broader perspectives by those who deliver specialized services to clients.

***Implications for study:*** This article is particularly useful in presenting the administrative barriers to services integration, thus identifying issues to be addressed in the survey of the project and the training package.

2. Coe, B. A. (1988). Open focus: Implementing projects in multi-organizational settings. *International Journal of Public Administration, 11(4)*, pp. 503-526.

In this article, Coe develops a conceptual model of collaboration which she calls "Open Focus." She begins by examining a case study in which an intersectoral partnership successfully planned an urban redevelopment using a participatory approach to planning and implementation. She identifies the key elements for success and incorporates these elements into the Open Focus model. The major attributes of the model include an openness to the metaorganization (a perception of this larger arena, rather than the individual organization, as the primary focus of concern and realm of action), and linking communication, evocative leadership, and collaborative vision. Each of these terms is defined and discussed.

***Implications for study:*** The information in this article is consistent with other findings regarding key elements to successful collaboration. It is a useful addition to the building of a practical model.

3. Lawless, M. W. & Moore, R. A. (1989). Interorganizational systems in public service delivery: A new application of the dynamic network framework. *Human Relations, 42(12)*, pp. 1167-1184.

The authors apply the four key components of the Dynamic Network Framework, developed by Miles and Snow, as a conceptual framework for interorganizational collaboration in the private sector to the public sector. The four key components are: vertical disaggregation; market governance mechanisms; broker-strategy maker; and full-disclosure information systems. The authors find that the model fits well with some elaboration, and go on to discuss each of the components in the context of the public administration sector. They make several propositions about the factors affecting the effectiveness of the interorganizational systems.

***Implications for study:*** This article also supports the findings of other research that identify elements of interorganizational process and structure which are key to success. It provides some useful insight about how these elements are developed and sustained in the public sector.

4. Miles, R. E. & Snow, C. C. (1986). Organizations: New concepts for new forms. *California Management Review, 28(3)*, pp. 62-73.

The authors examine the reality of the increasing demand for creativity in the market-place caused by scarce resources and more competition. They acknowledge the trend for organizations to share and collaborate and develop a conceptual framework to describe the phenomenon and the workings of existing strategies and structures.

The authors outline briefly the most common competitive strategies before describing the emerging "Dynamic Network" model. The three strategies are prospectors, defenders, and analyzers. The Dynamic Network is characterized by the use of joint venture, subcontracting, and licensing activities occurring across international borders, and new business ventures spinning off of established companies. The key components of the model are: vertical disaggregation – functions typically conducted within a single organization are performed by independent organizations with a network; brokers – a function of bringing together individuals, groups, or organizations in order to complete a task or obtain a goal, (linkages are made between equal partners); market mechanisms – the major functions are held together in the main by market mechanisms rather than plans and controls; and full-disclosure information systems – broad-access computerized information systems used as substitutes for lengthy trust-building processes based on experience.

This model envisions many semi-independent or autonomous specialties functioning as a loosely knit network in which there is sharing of power and a dynamic synergy which enhances creativity and progress. They suggest that the dynamic network is a far more flexible structure than any of the previous forms, can accommodate a vast amount of complexity while maximizing specialized competence, and provides much more effective use of human resources. They discuss the implications of the model for strategists, policy makers, managers, and organization designers.

***Implications for study:*** The model proposes a radical change in the structure of bureaucracies in order to facilitate efficient and effective uses of resources interorganizationally. The model addresses many of the barriers to interoganizational coordination identified by others.

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# APPENDIX E

## SURVEY OF INTERORGANIZATIONAL GROUPS

### Participating Organizations

| Organization | Location |
|---|---|
| Celebrating Families - A Parents' Convention Committee | Airdrie |
| Shared Resources | Athabasca |
| Nobody's Perfect Parenting Group | Athabasca |
| Bow Valley Committee for the Prevention of Family Violence | Banff |
| Barrhead Interagency Council | Barrhead |
| Healthy Communities | Barrhead |
| Beaverlodge & District Interagency | Beaverlodge |
| Black Diamond Interagency | Black Diamond |
| "Back to Your Future" | Bonnyville |
| Louise Dean Centre | Calgary |
| COMPASS | Calgary |
| Alberta Catalyst Group | Calgary |
| Interagency Council in Speech Language Audiology | Calgary |
| Children's Services Committee | Calgary |
| Interagency Information Exchange | Camrose |
| Family Services Action Committee | Camrose |
| Learning Resource Library | Cardston |
| Albert Best Committee | Cardston |
| Community Action Committee for Preventing Family Violence | Cardston |
| Community Awareness Project | Cardston |
| Interagency | Castor |
| Parent/Pre-School Program | Coaldale |
| Cochrane Interagency | Cochrane |
| Tri-Town Interagency Committee | Cold Lake |
| Neutral Hills Further Education Council | Consort |
| Teen Extravaganza Activity Fair | Drayton Valley |
| Family Resource Worker Program Advisory Committee | Drumheller |
| Drumheller Interagency | Drumheller |
| Child Protection Teams | Edmonton |
| Edmonton Committee on Child Abuse & Neglect | Edmonton |
| Edmonton Council Against Family Violence | Edmonton |
| Centre for Excellence | Edmonton |
| School-Community Liaison | Fairview |
| Fairview Interagency | Fairview |
| Smoky River Interagency Committee | Falher |
| Partners of Fort McMurray | Fort McMurray |

APPENDIX E

| Organization | Location |
|---|---|
| Aids Forum | Fort McMurray |
| Strengthening Community Project | Fort McMurray |
| Interagency Committee | Fort McMurray |
| Fort Chipewyan Interagency Committee | Fort Chipewyan |
| Grande Cache Interagency Association | Grande Cache |
| South Peace Interagency Committee on Parenting | Grande Prairie |
| Grande Prairie Interagency Committee on Family Violence | Grande Prairie |
| Grande Prairie Community Interagency Suicide Prevention Committee | Grande Prairie |
| South Peace Aids Council Community Response Committee | Grande Prairie |
| Supported Independent Living Program | Grande Prairie |
| Native Education Project | Grande Prairie |
| Healthy Communities | Grande Prairie |
| Hanna Community Connections | Hanna |
| High Level Interagency | High Level |
| High River Interagency | High River |
| Books for Babies | Hill Spring |
| Innisfail Interagency | Innisfail |
| Community Wellness Project | Lac La Biche |
| Parent's Place | Lethbridge |
| Children's Services Association | Lethbridge |
| Adult Training Centre | Lethbridge |
| Southern Alberta Youth Services Association | Lethbridge |
| Community Resource Centre of SE Alberta | Medicine Hat |
| Okotoks Interagency | Okotoks |
| Interagency Bi-Monthly Meeting Group | Peace River |
| Youth Services & Counselling | Provost |
| Speech Therapy Program | Provost |
| Community Service Centre | Red Deer |
| Red Deer Children's Services | Red Deer |
| Juntos Project | Red Deer |
| Children's Council of Red Deer | Red Deer |
| Red Deer Family School Wellness Program | Red Deer |
| Community Services Network | Red Deer |
| Joint Action for a Health Community | Redwater |
| Interagency to Address Family Violence | Redwater |
| Committee for Teen Health Fair | Redwater |
| Rimbey Community Liaison Group | Rimbey |
| Strathcona Collaborative Model | Sherwood Park |
| Strathcona County Interagency Committee | Sherwood Park |
| Strathcona County Youth Conference Steering Committee | Sherwood Park |
| Lifeskills | St. Albert |
| Interagency Group on Aids Awareness | St. Albert |
| Injury Prevention Initiative | St. Paul |
| St. Paul Child Abuse Prevention Society | St. Paul |
| Wheatland County Family/School Liaison Program | Standard |

| Organization | Location |
|---|---|
| Rural Health Partnership | Standard |
| National Non-Smoking Week Campaign Committee | Stettler |
| Wheatland County Interagency Council | Strathmore |
| Family School Liaison Worker Program | Strathmore |
| Taber & District Further Education Council | Taber |
| Valleyview Interagency | Valleyview |
| Akasu Regional Palliative Care | Vegreville |
| Health of School Age Children | Vegreville |
| Committee to Discuss Psychosocial Needs of Families | Vermillion |
| Local Steering Committee for Nobody's Perfect | Vermillion |
| Community Safety Committee | Vermillion |
| Interagency Inservice Committee | Vermillion |
| Pre-School Network | Vermillion |
| Interagency Group | Vulcan |
| Further Education Council | Vulcan |
| Issues of Youth Committee | Wainwright |
| Wainwright Parenting Committee | Wainwright |
| SCORE | Warner |
| Community Betterment Committee | Warner |
| Quad-Council Meetings | Warner |
| Family/School Liaison Program | Westlock |
| Westlock Interagency Mental Health Committee | Westlock |
| Collective Kitchen Project | Westlock |
| National Access Awareness Week Committee | Westlock |
| Little Pals | Wetaskiwin |
| Community Agencies Committee | Wetaskiwin |
| Wetaskiwin Mental Health Advisory Committee | Wetaskiwin |
| Whitecourt Interagency Committee | Whitecourt |


# APPENDIX F

## EVALUATION WORKSHEETS

## ASSESSMENT OF INTERORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The following worksheet will act as a guide for a review of your organization's orientation to interorganizational relations:

1. Has your organization worked cooperatively with organizations in the past? If so, with whom and in what capacity?

2. If your organization has worked with others, what was the outcome?

3. Are the staff of your organization encouraged to interact with other disciplines and organizations?

4. Do the managers and staff of the various divisions and/or programs of your organizations work and plan together?

5. What is the style of decision-making among the management of your organization? Autocratic? Participatory? Democratic?

6. Does your organization share and/or pool resources frequently? Sometimes? Never?

## WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TO INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION?

The statements below are designed to make you more aware of your values and beliefs and the way they come into play in our style of working. Choose the response that best describes your position and assign the value of the response to that statement.

1. I prefer to work by myself; I believe I am able to be more efficient.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

2. I am more comfortable working with a team where the responsibility for the ideas and the work load is shared.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

3. I feel frustrated when I have to adjust my schedule and pace to accommodate others. It really slows things down!
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

4. I don't mind having to accommodate other schedules, even though it may mean taking longer to get things done. The benefits are worth it!
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

5. I feel like a "fish out of water" in interdisciplinary settings, and work best with persons whose background and training are similar to mine.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

6. I feel stimulated and challenged when working with people whose knowledge and training are significantly different from, but complementary to mine.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

7. Sometimes you have to compromise on quality in order to produce the finished product as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

8. Long-term quality should not be compromised for the sake of a "quick fix."
   usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

9. I think boundaries are becoming more and more hazy, resulting in several organizations assuming responsibility for the same or similar programs and services. The solution is to clarify and narrow the mandates to reduce the overlap.
   usually _1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

10. I think boundaries are becoming more and more hazy, resulting in several organizations assuming responsibility for the same or similar programs and services. The solution is to develop more comprehensive programming by bringing the organizations together to coordinate planning and service delivery.
    usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

## WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TO INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION? (cont'd)

11. When you bring people of different orientations together to work on a project, a lot of productive time is lost sorting out the differences.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

12. The time lost in sorting out differences in interagency meetings is a small price to pay for what the members learn from one another.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

13. Collaboration often involves compromise, and I think our programs, services, and the needs of our clients are too important to compromise.
usually_3_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

14. If we are involved with others, there is a greater chance we will be able to share their resources.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

15. We are just a small fish in a big pond, and if we get involved with the "sharks" we will be eaten alive.
usually _1_ sometimes _2_ rarely _3_

16. Being involved with others will increase my profile and support in the community.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

17. Coordination takes too much time, and the people we serve will be unhappy if things aren't done quickly.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

18. The time devoted to coordination pays off in a better quality product, happier staff, and a better service.
usually_1_ sometimes_2_ rarely_3_

To determine your orientation, add the totals of the even numbered statements, and of the odd numbered statements. Your values tend to side with the group with the lowest score.

Odd numbered statements indicate strong reservations about the value of coordination.
Even numbered statements indicate strong support for interorganizational coordination.

## ASSESSING THE ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

You need to know...

1. What is the problem, need, or issue you wish to address?

2. What geographic area do you want to serve?

3. What other groups and organizations have an interest in the issue?

4. What is the nature of the relationships between the members of the organizational community?

   - Which groups work together and how?

   - Which groups avoid each other and why?

5. Who are the formal and informal individual and organizational leaders in the community?

## ASSESSING THE ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT (cont'd)

6. What impact do the policies and practices of the various community members have on one another?

7. Are the responses of the community members to one another's actions predictable? If so, what are they?

8. What is the history of collaboration in the community?

9. How would you characterize the political climate?

10. What resources are available in the community for your initiative?

The answers to these questions will assist you in identifying which individuals and groups in the community you should involve in the interorganizational initiative and how you might work with them effectively.

Having now assessed your organization's enthusiasm for interorganizational coordination, reviewed your own feelings, and reviewed the likely response of your organizational community, you are now in a good position to put an interorganizational group together!

## ASSESSING THE HEALTH OF YOUR INTERORGANIZATIONAL GROUP

Periodic assessment of the key features and functioning of the group will help you identify strengths and weaknesses and give you some direction for planning. Choose the category that best describes your group's position with respect to each of the items listed and indicate whether you think improvements are needed.

| **Improvement needed?** | **Yes** | **No** | **Some** | **A lot** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Group Structure*** | | | | |
| Is the purpose of the group clearly written? | — | — | — | — |
| Does the purpose reflect a community need? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the goals and objectives clear? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the goals and objectives achievable? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the roles and responsibilities of the members clear? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the roles and responsibilities of any subcommittees clear? | — | — | — | — |
| Do the subcommittees serve an important purpose? | — | — | — | — |
| Do the subcommittees work effectively? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Leadership*** | | | | |
| Does the leader allow for expression of differences? | — | — | — | — |
| Does the group leader encourage equal participation? | — | — | — | — |
| Is the leader able to guide discussion and maintain a focus? | — | — | — | — |
| Is the leader able to build consensus? | — | — | — | — |
| Does the leader encourage group members to be open about their concerns and agendas? | — | — | — | — |
| Is the leader able to bring about group decision-making? | — | — | — | — |
| Are there concerns about the leader's skills? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Membership*** | | | | |
| Do the members represent key stakeholders? | — | — | — | — |
| Are there groups or organizations not represented who should be? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the members committed to the purpose? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the members supportive of the goals and objectives? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the members committed to interorganizational coordination? | — | — | — | — |
| Do the members bring the skills and knowledge required? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the members able to give adequate time to the group? | — | — | — | — |

## ASSESSING THE HEALTH OF YOUR INTERORGANIZATIONAL GROUP (cont'd)

| Improvement needed? | Yes | No | Some | A lot |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Communication*** | | | | |
| Is information shared freely? | — | — | — | — |
| Is information shared equitably? | — | — | — | — |
| Are members kept informed of proceedings and developments? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Meeting Behavior*** | | | | |
| Are meetings well attended? | — | — | — | — |
| Do members stay for the meetings? | — | — | — | — |
| Is participation in meetings at a high level? | — | — | — | — |
| Are issues discussed openly and thoroughly? | — | — | — | — |
| Is there sub-grouping of members during and after meetings? | — | — | — | — |
| Are members able to accept and respect differences of opinion? | — | — | — | — |
| Are decisions made democratically? | — | — | — | — |
| Do members feel they have an equal voice? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Taking Action*** | | | | |
| Is the action plan clear and agreed to by all? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the group objectives met? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the resources sufficient for the group to do its job? | — | — | — | — |
| Do the jobs get done on time? | — | — | — | — |
| Are most of the members satisfied with the outcomes? | — | — | — | — |
| ***Evaluation*** | | | | |
| Does the group periodically assess: | | | | |
| purpose? | — | — | — | — |
| goals and objectives? | — | — | — | — |
| membership participation? | — | — | — | — |
| group process? | — | — | — | — |
| outcomes? | — | — | — | — |
| community need? | — | — | — | — |
| Are the results of the assessments incorporated into the group planning? | — | — | — | — |

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