

Models of Cooperative Relationships Defined

Collaboration is the most complex form of partnership. At its core, it entails sharing responsibility and authority. Steps leading to collaboration include many of the stages below.

- Collaboration is . . .** creating something that is greater than the sum of its parts. It is developing common policies and procedures, investing resources toward a defined common goal. It is putting aside competition, sharing a common vision, and working in a shared decision-making structure.
- Coordination is . . .** developing more formal ways of doing business together, beginning with accommodating each other's policies and procedures, and understanding them on a more than superficial level. However, distinct goals and ways of doing business are maintained. It is in this stage that most informal, as well as legal partnerships exist.
- Cooperation is . . .** beginning to work together informally by sharing information, sitting on committees together and staying connected, but remaining separate in policies and procedures.

- Communication is . . .** the second stage of building a relationship. This is the creation of a dialogue between the entities involved. This is the “feeling out” stage where organizations check for areas of common interest.
- Contact is . . .** the very first stage of building a relationship. It is the acknowledgement that other organizations exist.
- Competition is . . .** the antithesis of relationship building. It sees the work as a zero-sum game vis-à-vis the other service providers in the community. At its extreme, it sees other service providers as enemies and prevents any relationship which can help the people of the communities. While it may encourage single agencies to improve their programs or services in the short run, it has limited long-term impact since no single organization can meet every need and competition, but its nature, prevents working together. ¹

¹ Credit is given to the Urban Strategies Council of Oakland, California for the first three definitions above.