

**Collaborative Governance and Leadership:
The Perspectives of Senior Executive Service (SES) Members**

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Today's public administrators are working in a new landscape that requires them to be collaborative. By collaborative we mean *the process of facilitating and operating in multi-organizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved or easily solved by single organizations. Collaborative means to co-labor, to achieve common goals, often working across boundaries and in multi-sector and multi-actor relationships. Collaboration is based on the value of reciprocity and can include the public.* (O'Leary, Gazley, McGuire, and Bingham 2009).

There are several reasons for the increase in collaborative public management both in the literature and in practice. First, most public challenges are larger than one organization, requiring new approaches to addressing public issues. Second, outsourcing has grown in volume and dollar amount. By its very nature, outsourcing is a collaborative endeavor between the public agencies awarding the contract and the organizations performing the contracted tasks. Third, the desire to improve the effectiveness of publicly funded programs is encouraging public officials to identify new ways of providing public services. Fourth, technology is helping government agencies and personnel share information in a way that is integrative and interoperable, with the outcome being a greater emphasis on collaborative governance. Finally, citizens are seeking additional avenues for engaging in governance, which can result in new and different forms of collaborative problem solving and decision making.

More than a decade ago, George Frederickson observed (1999, 702) that public administration was moving "toward theories of cooperation, networking, governance, and institution building and maintenance" in response to the "declining relationship between

jurisdiction and public management” in a “fragmented and disarticulated state.” Frederickson emphasized institutionalism, public sector network theory, and governance theory as relevant to the future of public administration.

Lester Salamon (2005, 16) observed, “Unlike both traditional public administration and the new public management, the new governance shifts the emphasis from management skills and the control of large bureaucratic organizations to enablement skills, the skills required to engage partners arrayed horizontally in networks, to bring multiple stakeholders together for a common end in a situation of interdependence.”

In earlier work we have likened this public management approach to “lateral thinking” – a phrase used to describe creativity that stems from taking knowledge from one substantive context or discipline and seeing how useful it is in an entirely different one (Bingham and O’Leary 2008). For example, Leonardo Da Vinci’s genius stems from his mastery of lateral thinking; he moved fluidly from art to science, engineering, mathematics, medicine, architecture, and beyond, finding universal rules of nature manifest in widely varying contexts (Riding 2006). He dissected the human arm and a bird’s wing, and then tried to engineer a machine to enable people to fly; in this way, he applied what he learned from human physiology and natural science to engineering. And so it is with the public administration of the 21st century: new challenges and new ways of addressing public policy problems by necessity demand collaborative approaches.

Feldman and colleagues (2006, 93) provide a vision of a new professional identity for public administrators: “The public manager as inclusive manager facilitates the practice of democracy by creating opportunities for people with different ways of knowing public problems

to work together in a collective space to solve problems.” Crosby and Bryson call this “leadership in a shared power world” (2005).

In this paper, we report on how government leaders perceive collaboration. We delve into what they see as the catalysts to collaboration, the barriers to collaboration, and the skill set needed to be a collaborative manager. Insights concerning when to collaborate and when not to collaborate are offered. Both the positive and negative results of collaboration as a management strategy are addressed, and tips from the “pros” for catalyzing successful collaborations are highlighted.

Methods

This study asked both career and non-career Senior Executive Service (SES) members to respond to a confidential, online survey with open-ended questions about their collaboration experiences. As top level leaders in federal government, SES members link between Presidential appointees and the rest of federal workforce and serve in key roles in national policy making and government activities. Since SES positions require collaborative leadership qualifications, it is especially valuable to know these leaders’ perceptions on collaboration and their collaborative behaviors in order to understand the nature of collaboration. This may justify further the choice to investigate “how the collaborators collaborate.”

We received a total of 305 usable responses. We were surprised that only SES members who answered “yes” to the question of whether they use collaboration as a management tool responded to our survey. As we read the responses, we realized that rather than a sample of SES members, we had attracted the “believers” in collaboration. While these results are biased in that regard, we found tremendous value in learning about collaboration from those who do it all the time.

Open-ended survey data were analyzed using ATLAS.ti. qualitative analysis software package (<http://www.atlasti.com/>). Codes were generated based on inductive readings of the responses as well as a priori research questions. The final codebook contains [213] codes nested in [45] code families that hold the schema. In order to facilitate quality control, the coders participated in the development of the codebook and in intensive inter-coder alignment activities over a three-month period prior to actual coding. A weekly iterative and cumulative discussion of possible codes was the main technique for coping with agreement, operationalizing and defining constructs for the codebook. With qualitative coding in ATLAS.ti, each coder uniquely delimited the unit of meaning for each quotation in each text, and so traditional methods of calculating intercoder agreement are inappropriate. In terms of intersubjective coding agreement, over the six questionnaire responses, the group agreed 80% on average about which codes to apply to give questions and close to 95% on what codes not to apply.

The coding software generated two datasets, the (qualitative) master hermeneutic unit and the (quantitative) frequency count dataset. The frequency count dataset was merged with the demographic and rating scales of the quantitative data gathered with the survey instrument.

Survey respondent Demographics

The demographic breakdown of the survey respondents is given in Table 1. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 46 and 65 (81% total, with 38% ages 46 to 55 and 43% ages 56 to 65). Significantly fewer respondents were 35 or under (2%), between 36 and 45 (10%), and over 65 (7%). Sixty-four percent of the respondents were male.

For the education level of the respondents, the largest proportion had an advanced degree (78%), while fewer had a college degree (20%) and only 2% had not completed college. Most of the respondents were located in Washington, D.C. (69%) and the vast majority had career status in the Senior Executive Service (90% responded yes, 8% responded no, and 2% did not respond).

Over half of the respondents had worked in their current organization for ten years or more (59%). A quarter of the respondents had worked for three years or less in their current organization (25% total, combining 13% with up to one year and 12% with 2 to 3 years). A smaller percentage had worked for 4 to 7 years (10%) or 8 to 9 years (6%) in the organization where they are presently employed.

On average, the respondents had spent fewer years working in their current position relative to the time spent in their current organization. The highest percentage had worked for 2 to 3 years in their current position (36%), and a fair number had held their current position for a year or less (28%). A smaller number of respondents had held their current positions for 4 to 5 years (14%), 6 to 7 years (8%), 8 to 9 years (5%), or more than 10 years (9%).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Use of Collaboration as a Management Strategy

Of the 304 respondents to this question, 303 of them indicated that as an organization leader, collaboration is one of their management strategies. When asked *why* they chose to collaborate, the answers fell into five main groups: 1) collaboration was mandated either by their boss, formal agency policy, agency culture, legislation, etc.; 2) collaboration was adopted in order to improve outcomes; 3) collaboration is viewed as the “right thing to do”; 4) collaboration was used in an effort to improve process; and 5) collaboration was utilized with the goal of building better relationships and credibility. Table 2 highlights the major reasons why SES

executives choose collaboration as a management strategy.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Collaboration was mandated.

The idea of mandated collaboration manifested itself in different ways and was mentioned 130 times by survey respondents. While 7 indicated that they were ordered by law to collaborate, 10 indicated that their boss (including the President) ordered them to collaborate, and 25 indicated that their formal agency policy directed them to collaborate, most often mentioned (88 times) was an inferred mandate that was part of the agency culture or necessary to being a highly functioning executive in their unique, complex environment.

Collaboration was adopted in order to improve outcomes.

The SES executives who responded to our survey strongly maintained that when they did choose collaboration as a management strategy, it was with the intention of increasing performance. The need for better outcomes as a driver for collaboration was mentioned 62 times by SES executives. This included goal and mission achievement, better results, effectiveness, capacity building, better service delivery, efficiency, and more sustainable solutions. Collaboration as a mechanism to leverage resources (including funds, time, staff, expertise, knowledge and networks) was mentioned 47 times. Finally, collaboration as a way to innovate to create more sophisticated and thorough work products was mentioned by 6 respondents.

Collaboration is the “right thing to do.”

Fifty-eight respondents said they chose to collaborate as a management strategy out of personal belief. Typical responses were that this was the right thing to do, the only way to run complex organizations, and a responsibility of the job.

Collaboration was used in an effort to improve process.

Forty-six SES employees who responded to our survey indicated that they use collaboration in an effort to improve process. The largest group (36) mentioned that collaborating improves problem solving by bringing in a diversity of ideas, broadening options, catalyzing boundary spanning, and integrating needs. Ten mentioned that collaboration yields organizational and trans-organizational learning.

Collaboration was utilized with the goal of building better relationships and credibility.

Twenty-seven SES executives responded that they use collaboration as a management strategy in an effort to build better interpersonal relations. Tied in with this, 5 indicated that they use collaboration as a way to build credibility.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Challenges to Collaboration

In this question, SES executives were asked “What are the challenges to collaboration?” With respect to this question, we categorized the qualitative responses into six major themes: *relational, logistical, political, organizational, personal, and other*. Figure 1 shows the frequency counts for each category.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

The first theme, *relational challenges*, included seven subthemes. Among them, turf wars/power struggles were the most commonly mentioned by respondents (86 times). Respondents also cited group characteristics, such as personalities or whether the right people were at the table, 64 times. Other responses reported were challenges in reaching consensus and achieving buy-in (40 times), communication challenges (34 times), and lack of mutual trust (23 times). Challenges concerning the sharing of resources were also mentioned (11 times), as was a

fear of loss of agency or professional reputation (2 times).

The second theme, *logistical challenges*, included six subthemes. Enough time to collaborate effectively was mentioned 81 times. The logistics of scheduling, workloads, and reporting requirements were the second most cited subtheme (26 times). Effort and money were mentioned 20 and 19 times, respectively. Follow-up, including monitoring, continued support, follow-through, commitments, and resources aligned with commitments also was mentioned (10 times). Finally, regulations were mentioned as challenges to collaboration (8 times).

The third theme, *political challenges*, included three subthemes. The political context of particular collaborations was mentioned (23 times) as were challenges concerning agenda setting (mentioned 20 times). Balance – meaning balancing long-term and short-term needs, as well as the interests of the parties – was mentioned 14 times.

The fourth theme, *organizational challenges*, included four subthemes. Different agency cultures of collaborating organizations were mentioned most frequently (58 times) as a challenge. Differences in organizational goals were mentioned 36 times. Inadequate incentives to collaboration were mentioned as challenges 18 times, and technological challenges were mentioned 6 times.

The fifth theme, *personal challenges*, included three subthemes. A clear message here is the importance of the individual in collaboration, as actor characteristics – including incompetence, lack of expertise, ego, lack of motivation or willingness, and even dishonesty – was mentioned 52 times. Lack of leadership – including both weak leadership and leadership styles that were not a good match with a collaborative approach – was mentioned 20 times. Skills – specifically the lack of skills, unsuitable skills, or skills that were not a good match with a collaborative approach – were mentioned 11 times. Finally, one respondent insisted that there are no challenges to collaboration.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Catalysts for Collaboration

In this question, SES executives were asked “What are the catalysts for collaboration?” With respect to this question, we categorized the qualitative responses into six major themes: *relational, process betterment, sense of urgency, mandate, organizational, and other*. Figure 2 shows the frequency counts for each category.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

The first theme, *relational catalysts*, included eleven subthemes. Among them, leadership – including strong, senior, or new leadership - was the most commonly mentioned by respondents (54 times). Respondents also cited common or shared view of the mission as important (mentioned 47 times). Other responses reported were attitude of participants (30 times), willingness to collaborate (23 times), and success (21 times). Having a champion or advocate was mentioned 17 times, personal relationships were mentioned 16 times, and communication was mentioned 15 times. Trust and previous collaborations both were mentioned 11 times each, and “it just happened” was mentioned 4 times.

The second theme, *process betterment*, included four subthemes. Insufficient resources (including the need to leverage resources, improve efficiency of resources, or plug gaps in resources) were mentioned 45 times. Next came the nature of the issues (including their complexity, beyond individual organizational boundaries, and cross-sector interests or work) was the second most cited subtheme (35 times). Mutual advantage was mentioned 29 times, and identification of duplicated works or overlapping jurisdiction was mentioned 9 times.

The third theme, *sense of urgency*, included five subthemes. A crisis or emergency was mentioned most often (25 times), with threats mentioned the second most often (11 times).

Failure was cited as a catalyst (8 times). Time pressure to complete tasks and increasing workloads each was mentioned 4 times.

The fourth theme, *mandate*, included six subthemes. The first subtheme was a mandate from agency culture, including agency values and organization core values (mentioned 27 times). The second most commonly mentioned answer was directives from the agency (23 times). Legislative mandates were mentioned as catalysts for collaboration (18 times), as were presidential mandates (16 times). Personal mandates or a belief that collaboration was the right thing to do was mentioned 10 times, and a mandate from a boss was mentioned 6 times.

The fifth theme, *organizational*, included four subthemes. A governance structure that was conducive to collaboration, including organization design and distributed governance, was the most often mentioned catalyst here (22 times). Second were incentives for collaboration (mentioned 21 times). Third was the work or physical environment, including work dispersal and deployment (mentioned 13 times). A study or research findings was mentioned 6 times.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

The Consequences of Collaboration

Governments have increasingly used collaboration strategies through the participation of multiple organizations to solve complex problems in diverse policy areas. Collaboration's prevalence implies "collaborative advantage," but assessing the results of collaboration is very intricate (Huxham 1996). Given the lack of empirical research (Chen 2008; McGuire 2006; Oliver and Ebers 1998), practitioners' evaluation on the consequences of collaboration may be a crucial starting point to examine the impact of collaboration.

This section documents how SES members perceive the consequences of collaboration with their own criterion. The reported results were SES executives' responses to two open-ended

questions: “What are the positive results of collaboration?” and “What are the negative results of collaboration?”

In the following, we provide the details of responses based on the three themes of outcomes (performance outcomes, process outcomes, and relationship outcomes) often examined in the research. Each theme includes a number of different subthemes, which we used as codes for qualitative analysis. Themes and representative quotes are illustrated in Tables 6 and 7. The proportion of three themes of outcomes for each question is also presented in Figures 3 and 4. It is interesting to know that performance outcomes dominated the positive result of collaboration, while process outcomes did in the negative result of collaboration.

[Insert Figure 3 and 4 about here]

The positive results of collaboration

The majority of respondents agreed that collaboration yields positive results. Only one respondent (out of 298 respondents) said that nothing was achieved through collaboration. On the other hand, in response to the question on the negative results, 38 respondents (out of 299) indicated that they did not experience any negative results of collaboration. This may support the value of collaboration in the real world.

The first theme, *performance outcomes*, appeared with various references. The quality of the product was the most frequently mentioned as a positive result of collaboration (133 times out of 681). This included higher quality work products and decisions. The second commonly cited positive result was economic benefits; indicating pooling of resources, lower costs, and economies of scales (66 times out of 681). Synergy effect and learning were mentioned 56 times, respectively. Synergy focused on the collaborative results that a single organization cannot do individually. Other less commonly cited results included better public service (31 times), mission accomplishment (27 times), sustainable outcomes (19 times), and timely results (15

times).

The second theme was *process outcomes*. Respondents indicated that collaboration produces comprehensive (more and better) ideas reflecting different perspectives (57 times). This helps to identify and solve the problems better (18 times). Other answers cited were that collaboration generated more agreement/consensus (6 times). Respondents commented that these are vehicles to increase performance.

Another distinctive theme was *relationship-focused outcomes*. Greater buy-in was one of the key positive results that respondents perceived (65 times). This included ownership of solutions and less resistance. Another frequently mentioned positive result was relationship building (57 times). It included greater willingness to collaborate in the future, more interaction among senior executives, and alliance building. Human resource benefit was mentioned 35 times. Regarding this subtheme, respondents referenced improved job satisfaction, leveraging capability, stronger alignment of individual skills, as well as less stress. Respondents also touched upon empowerment as another positive result of collaboration (18 times).

[Insert Table 6 about here]

The negative results of collaboration

Under the *performance outcomes* category, we identified four major subthemes from SES executives' responses. Respondents indicated that collaboration yielded suboptimal outcomes

(39 times) and loss of resources (28 times). Resources here included time, staff, funding, and political support. Another less reported result (25 times) was that nothing happened even through collaboration. The case in point was collaborative decisions not acted on. Another response reported as a negative result was unfulfilled interest (14 times),

The second theme discussed by SES executives who responded to our survey was *process outcomes*, which included seven subthemes. Time-consuming appeared to be a predominant negative result of collaboration (91 times mentioned). Respondents considered burden as another key negative result (46 times mentioned). Burden appeared with diverse references: for example, reporting requirements, unfunded mandated tasks, and increasing demand for communication and additional skills. Collective action problems were commonly mentioned as a negative result (31 times). SES respondents also mentioned increased bureaucracy as administrative barriers (8 times). Other less cited negative results were resource mobilization challenges (6 times) and SES respondents believed that sometimes collaboration transformed problems into crisis (3 times). All these factors produced the result that collaboration slows processes down (43 times).

The last theme, *relationship outcomes*, included seven subthemes of negative results of collaboration. Individual- and agency-level loss were mentioned 41 and 27 times, respectively. To be specific, it included when an individual or agency lost their power, control, autonomy, responsibility, credit, or reputation. Another commonly mentioned negative result of collaboration was conflict (28 times). In addition, there were several statements on increasing turf battles (16 times), unwillingness to collaborate in the future (10 times), and alienation of those who refused to collaborate (8 times). Respondents also brought up hostility or distrust between collaborating parties 5 times in their responses.

[Insert Table 7 about here]

Recent Collaboration Experience: Purpose and Type

In this question, SES executives were asked to tell about their recent collaboration experience. 280 respondents (out of 304) indicated that they have recently been involved in any collaboration. This question consists of three sub-questions: “What was the purpose of the collaboration?”, “How it was started?” and “Which organizations were involved?” With respect to the first and second sub-question, we categorized qualitative responses into two major themes: *structural issue* and *procedural issue*. As noted in Figure 3, the majority of responses were coded as procedural issue theme (128 times).

[Insert Figure 5 about here]

The first theme, *structural issue*, included eight subthemes. Among them, oversight/evaluation is the most commonly mentioned by respondents (30 times). Respondents also cited reorganization, 20 times. Other responses reported were pilot project (12 times), new methodology (10 times), and case tracking systems (5 times). Reporting requirements (3 times) and budget concerns (2 times) were also reported as motives for collaboration.

The second theme, *procedural issue*, included seven subthemes. New agenda/policy/program development occupied a dominant proportion of procedural issue (61 times). Workforce development/deployment was the second most cited subtheme (22 times). Program redesign and data sharing/improvement were mentioned 15 and 14 times, respectively. Polling opinion (4 times) was also cited.

Regarding the third sub-question, we identified seven types of collaboration and classified qualitative responses from SES members into those types. The most frequently cited type of collaboration was collaboration among federal agencies (93 times out of 286). The

second commonly mentioned type of collaboration was internal collaboration within an organization (77 times). Intersectoral and intergovernmental collaboration were mentioned 38 and 35 times, respectively. Other less commonly cited collaborations included international collaboration (16 times) and collaboration with citizens (2 times).

[Insert Table 8 about here]

Percentage of organizations in the five (or less) most important collaboration experience

We asked SES executives: “Think about the five (or less) most important collaborations you have been involved with recently. What percentage of the participants have come from Federal, State, Local, Nonprofit, and Private organizations?” This section reports the responses to this question. All five collaborations showed similar patterns. If the sum of answers for each organization did not equal 100 percent, it was excluded in the analysis (see Table 9 for the total number of respondents in each collaboration).

[Insert Table 9 about here]

In collaboration 1, respondents answered that 83 percent of participants came from federal organizations, on average. Furthermore, 152 respondents (out of 268) reported that they collaborated only with federal government. On average, collaboration with state governments, nonprofits, and private organizations occupied 5 percent of the collaboration, respectively. The proportion federal organizations that SES members belonged to, and that collaborate with local governments, averaged only 2 percent.

In collaboration 2, 73 percent of respondents (out of 206) reported that they collaborated with people from federal organizations, on average. SES executives also collaborated with state governments (11 percent), private organizations (7 percent), local governments (5 percent), and nonprofits (4 percent). Figure 6 denotes the proportion of organizations in Collaboration 1

through 5.

[Insert Figure 6 about here]

The role of technology in collaboration

This section documents how SES executives described the role of technology in their collaborations (295 of 305 responded to this question.) Three distinctive themes emerged from the responses which became the organizing structure for the codes: 1) significance of the role, 2) the role itself, and 3) the particular technology tools.

Significance

SES collaborators saw the significance of technology (cited 152 times) as ranging from vital to nonexistent. The largest number of responses (62 times) painted the role as “vital”, “central” or “essential”; however, the second largest number of responses (46 times) described the role as “minimal”, “limited”, or “minor.” Executives defined “limited” as the use of simple technology tools (“We communicate by e-mail. We talk on the phone. Do you consider that technology?”) or referred to the limitations of technology versus person to person interface (“Importance (of technology) can be overstated. Face to face is often more effective.”)

Less frequent were qualified responses- that the role of technology was “helpful” (cited 15 times) or dependent on other factors (14 times), particularly the nature of the collaboration itself. As one executive stated, “It really depends on the type of collaboration; in some cases, technology is highly involved and in others it is very minor.” Another added, “It depends on the individual collaboration effort. Matching the right enabling technology to the needs of the specific collaboration is important.” A smaller number of executives viewed technology as having no role (11 times) or warned that technology could have a negative effect or pose a barrier to collaboration (4 times). One executive said, “An overreliance on technology, such as

an overuse of videoconferencing in lieu of interpersonal meetings, can be an impediment.” On a different point, two responses cited incompatible systems and data structures among organizations as hampering collaboration.

Roles of Technology

Respondents described the role of collaboration in three distinctive ways. The most frequent was as a key enabler of communication between individuals and groups (cited 52 times). Technology assisted to facilitate discussion, generate input, and allow geographically dispersed members to efficiently communicate. Second, executives pointed to data sharing and management as an important role of technology (38 times). Technology is used to gather, organize, and share the information needed for analysis and decision making by actors in collaborative groups. Third, respondents indicated that technology is used for the analysis phase of collaboration (12 times).

Technology Tools

SES collaborators rely on a variety of technology tools to support their collaborations; however, most use the same tools for collaboration as they use for their ongoing leadership and professional responsibilities. Most frequently mentioned were personal computer and phone-based communication tools: email (cited 54 times) and individual and conference calls (cited 43 times). Videoconferences (cited 28 times) and, more specifically, webinars (18 times) were seen as saving time and money. Other responses identified collaboration tools, including SharePoint and project management software (21 times), word processing and documents sharing (13 times), website and internet content (8 times), and shared IT systems (5 times). Wikis and blogs were mentioned only 5 times, almost equal to the responses calling for live or face to face meetings (4 times) as more appropriate for collaboration work.

Overall, the responses about the role of technology confirm the essential nature of

communication in collaborative work. They indicate that executives are successfully using technology-assisted communication tools without noting significant disadvantages. Also noteworthy is the relatively small use of specific collaborative tools (such as SharePoint) and web 2.0 options for communication and knowledge-building (wikis, blogs, twitter). One executive put it this way, “I think technology has not been used to its potential in the collaborations I have been involved in.”

[Insert Table 10 about here]

The skill set for the successful collaborator

In this question, SES executives were asked to identify the skill set for the successful collaborator (the number of respondents was 298 of 305). While many responses describe concrete skills (cited 643 times), SES executives frequently refer to personal qualities as equally important for successful collaboration (314 times). The following provides the detailed responses organized by four themes: communication and conflict management skills; soft skills; technical or “hard” skills; and personal attributes. Each theme is further divided by subthemes representing the codes for the qualitative analysis.

Skills of the Collaborator

Communication skills and conflict management skills were most frequently mentioned as important for successful collaboration (429 times). Respondents indicated that a collaborator must be a good communicator (116 times), an excellent listener (92 times), and adept at interpersonal communication or “people skills” (51 times). In addition, collaboration requires a

comprehensive set of conflict management skills (170 times) including facilitation (cited 43 times), negotiation (43 times), interest-based or collaborative problem solving (36 times), compromise (23 times) , conflict resolution (12 times), consensus building (9 times), and mediation (4 times). Also, those leading collaboration need to be skilled at team-building and keenly aware of group dynamics (cited 32 times).

Respondents describe the collaborator as a skilled visionary who has the ability to see the big picture (47 times) and who thinks strategically (30 times), developing goals, structures, inputs and actions to achieve them. The collaborative manager exercises leadership (28 times) and uses creative approaches to problem solving (25 times). Less frequently mentioned but equally interesting was the ability to share. Respondents mention sharing of leadership, power, goals, and credit as central to collaboration (19 times).

In addition to the skill set above (which could be called “soft” skills), respondents identified expert technical knowledge of the subject area (39 times), project management and organizational skills (32 times), and time management (4 times) as important skills for achieving the goals of the collaboration.

Personal Attributes

The SES respondents saw collaborators as having distinctive personal attributes. Openness or open minded was most frequently mentioned as an outstanding characteristic (82 times). Respondents identified the need for collaborators to be open to new ideas, to the ideas of others, to change, and to helping others succeed. Patience was frequently mentioned as an important attribute (46 times). One executive called it, “the patience of a saint.” The collaborator was seen as self-confident and risk-oriented (26 times). Other characteristics identified were flexible (26 times), unselfish (26 times), persistent and diligent (21 times), diplomatic or tactful (15 times), empathetic (13 times), trustworthy and trusting (13 times),

respectful (13 times) and goal-oriented (13 times). Respondents pointed to the collaborator as needing to demonstrate honesty and integrity (15 times), self-awareness or emotional intelligence (10 times), decisiveness (9 times), friendliness (7 times), and a sense of humor (6 times).

[Insert Table 11 about here]

Managing Conflict within Collaborations

193 respondents (out of 304) answered that collaboration yields conflict. When asked how they manage conflict within collaborations, the government executives and managers surveyed responded with a range of methods. The first overarching theme, *conflict management approaches*, referenced a series of strategies. The conflict management strategy mentioned *most* frequently was “allowing conflict to happen” which was mentioned 37 times. The use of conflict management processes such as interest-based problem solving, mediation, and negotiation were mentioned 63 times within the 277 responses to this question. Other less commonly cited methods included compromise (18 times), breaking down the conflict into smaller issues (11 times), neutralizing opinions through diffusing and depersonalizing the conflict (11 times), and avoidance (7 times).

The second overarching theme was *facilitation* strategies. The most common facilitation strategies to managing conflict included identifying common ground which was mentioned 42 times, giving all parties at the table a voice which was mentioned 30 times and, in turn, listening which was mentioned 27 times. Another common strategy among respondents was in the realm of *clarification* of the rules, frameworks, goals, and problems the a collaborative group faces; this included establishing ground rules (11 times), framework agreement (7 times), goal clarification (15 times), identifying the core of the problem (12 times), reframing the issues (7 times), and focusing on outcomes which was mentioned 16 times. Other less commonly cited

methods included consensus-building (14 times), relationship-building (6 times), objectivity (9 times), and transparency (8 times).

[Insert Table 12 about here]

Lessons Learned

Of the 305 SES executive survey respondents, 225 respondents, or 73.8%, elected to provide lessons they have learned during their experiences using collaboration as a management practice. From our analysis, six response trends emerged: 1) respondents gave an introspective response that highlighted the behavioral approaches that have led to their own collaborative successes; 2) respondents highlighted the importance of group dynamics and the need to have the right people, perspectives, and attitudes at the table; 3) respondents highlighted the need for leadership; 4) respondents elected to use this questions to further outline the challenges to successful collaborative experiences; 5) respondents chose to give a recipe or formula for successful collaboration; and 6) respondents chose to highlight that collaboration yields better outcomes.

[Insert Table 13 about here]

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about collaboration?

Roughly 32% of our respondents elected to answer the final survey question which asked if they had anything else that they would like to add, which either had yet to be covered in their individual survey responses or that they believed was most salient to them. While our research team chose not to code the responses of this particular question, when analyzing the survey results we found the most salient trends among the respondents highlighted that collaboration

(listed in no particular order): is worth the effort; requires perseverance; yields positive outcomes; poses specific challenges; and requires process improvements.

Several comments illustrated the sentiment that the positive attributes and consequences of collaborations outweigh the challenges. The term “worth” the effort was referenced several times in our survey responses. Despite the challenges and negative outcomes highlighted by the SES members in the previous section, many of our respondents expressed that collaboration yields better results. The SES executives who responded to our survey also expressed that collaborative experiences are not singular experiences; instead they expressed the importance of persisting with collaboration as a management strategy. Furthermore, survey respondents highlighted not only the process improvements required to improve the actual efficacy of collaborative processes (such as goal establishment and clarification, and information sharing) but also the need for new structures and government leadership to help facilitate positive collaborative processes. Respondents referenced the notion that the way collaboration was viewed at the individual, agency, and federal level required “change”.

[Insert Table 14 about here]

Conclusion

In this paper, we analyzed how 305 federal executives in the United States government perceive collaboration. We delved into what they see as the catalysts to collaboration, the barriers to collaboration, and the skill set needed to be a collaborative manager. Insights concerning when to collaborate and when not to collaborate were offered. Both the positive and negative results of collaboration as a management strategy were addressed, and tips from the “pros” for catalyzing successful collaborations were highlighted. While our analysis of the data is at an early stage, we offer the following “surprising finds” concerning collaboration as a management strategy from this research.

Surprising Find #1: Emphasis on performance outcomes.

While collaboration is often mandated, the dominate reason to collaborate reported by the SES executives we surveyed is very concrete: to increase performance. Our executives reported looking for a way to implement a program in a superior way, to enhance a project in ways it could not be enhanced if there were no collaborative efforts, to increase economic benefits to the government, and to better serve the public. They collaborate primarily when their personal cost-benefit analyses indicate that it will be a savvy management decision to do so.

Surprising Find #2: The negative results of collaboration.

While respondents acknowledged that collaboration increased performance-related outcomes (61% of frequency counts) and that is the primary reason why they choose to collaborate, they also reported experiencing process hardships while doing so (49% of frequency counts). (Please see Figures 1 and 2.) Collaboration, generally, was reported to take more time than individual action, with the risk of suboptimal outcomes. Sometimes there was a loss of resources after a significant expenditure of time and effort in a collaborative activity. Sometimes nothing happened. Our respondents nonetheless reported choosing collaboration if they thought it would increase performance-related outcomes.

Surprising Find #3: The untapped role of technology.

We were surprised at the underutilization of technology reported by our SES respondents. The most common technologies reported were the personal computer, phone calls, email, conference calls, and video conferences. There was little to no mention of more high-tech aids to collaboration such as knowledge management systems, virtual rooms, online file cabinets, handheld computers to assess consensus, Wikis, data conferencing, application sharing,

enterprise bookmarking and prediction markets, to name just a few possibilities.

Surprising Find #4: The importance of the individual.

While organizations and established jurisdictions formally collaborate, it is, of course, always in the form of managers and officials. The success of any collaboration is deeply dependent on the skills of officials and managers. Our SES respondents emphasized over and over again the importance of who is representing their organization at the table. Are their leadership skills a good match for a collaborative endeavor? Do they have the necessary personality to be an effective collaborator? Do they have training in negotiation and collaborative problem solving? Our respondents reported that effective collaboration requires leaders who catalyze – not impede – collaboration. This is, in part, translated into a lack of ego, the ability to give up power, and a broad view of success that includes the public interest.

Surprising Find #5: The skills of the collaborative leader.

Finally, we were surprised at the extent to which our SES respondents emphasized the importance of good people skills for effective collaboration. These include communication, conflict management, facilitation, negotiation, and collaborative problem solving skills. These optimally are coupled with personal attributes like patience, openness, and humility.

This conference paper presents some of the preliminary conclusions from our collaborative leadership project. Like the recently released survey of Google employees, our SES respondents reported that while technical skills and substantive knowledge are important when utilizing collaboration as a management strategy, the most highly desirable skills for effective collaboration are people skills and process skills. The question then becomes how best to teach these skills in our public management programs. Clearly there is a need to revamp our

curricula to insure that the public managers of tomorrow will be able to work effectively in landscapes that requires them increasingly to be collaborative.

Table 1. Demographics of Survey Respondents.

Category	Count	%	Total
<i>Age</i>			305
22-35	5	2%	
36-45	32	10%	
46-55	116	38%	
56-65	130	43%	
65+	22	7%	100%
<i>Gender</i>			
<i>Female</i>	111	36%	
<i>Male</i>	194	64%	100%
<i>Education</i>			
<i>Not College Graduate</i>	7	2%	
<i>College Graduate</i>	60	20%	
<i>Advanced Degree</i>	238	78%	100%
<i>Location</i>			
<i>D.C.</i>	211	69%	
<i>Not D.C.</i>	94	31%	100%
<i>Org. tenure (years)</i>			
0-1	41	13%	
2-3	37	12%	
4-5	18	6%	
6-7	12	4%	
8-9	17	6%	
10+	180	59%	100%
<i>Position tenure (years)</i>			
0-1	87	29%	
2-3	109	36%	
4-5	44	14%	
6-7	23	8%	
8-9	14	5%	
10+	28	9%	100%
<i>Type</i>			
<i>CareerSES</i>	274	90%	
<i>NoncareerSES</i>	26	9%	
<i>Non-response</i>	6	2%	100%

Table 2. Major Reasons Why SES Executives Choose Collaboration as a Management Strategy

Category	Reason Adopted	Times Cited	Total
Collaboration was mandated	Mandated by boss (including the President)	10	130
	Directives from agency	25	
	Legislative mandate	7	
Collaboration adopted to improve outcomes	Improves problem solving	36	50
	Learning	10	
	Impedes process	4	
Collaboration was "the right thing to do"	"The right thing to do"	58	58
Collaboration adopted to improve process	Leverage resources	47	115
	Innovation	6	
	Better outcome	62	
Collaboration adopted to improve relationships	Better relationships	27	32
	Credibility	5	
Other	Fun	3	18
	No/none/no reason	0	
	Other	15	

Table 3. Themes and quotes from the reasons behind the use of collaboration as a management strategy

Theme	Example Quotes
Mandated by Agency Culture	<p>[Collaboration] . . . is a core value of our Agency and we have found that approach to be the most effective way of achieving our objectives and mission, both internally and externally</p> <p>Collaboration is key to . . . [the] effective use of resources. We have to collaborate internally so that we can leverage the organization’s multiple assets. . . . We collaborate externally . . .so that we can focus our resources on the most pressing issues</p>
Improving Outcomes	<p>It is a key aspect of enhancing performance and effectiveness of an organization</p>
Leveraging Resources	<p>With limited resources and overlap of priorities/initiatives, collaboration makes good business sense to leverage existing resources for better outcomes</p>
Personal Belief	<p>I do not feel that the federal government collaborates best practices among federal agencies, so I take it upon myself to do so as there are no formal programs that I am aware of.</p> <p>Can’t achieve success by yourself. Everything is interconnected to something else, and one needs to collaborate to succeed</p>
Improve Process	<p>To tap a broader base of knowledge, find better solutions, engage stakeholders, leverage scarce resources, and deliver more extensive, impactful and persistent results</p>
Building Better Relationships	<p>Communication and interpersonal activity is a prime driver for me to reach an understanding with Senior Leaders and buy-in for achieving strategic vision</p>

Table 4. Themes and quotes concerning challenges to collaboration

Theme	Example quote
Relational challenges	
Turf wars/power struggles	“Rice bowls: fear of losing dollars if collaborative ways to become more efficient are successful.”
Group characteristics	“A major challenge is having the right people at the table.”
Reaching consensus	“Reaching agreement despite different standards, cultures, legal requirements, political goals, and perspectives on what a successful result may entail. This especially true in international collaborations”
Communication	“Effectively communicating and especially having the time to discuss, consider, and integrate across the different organizations.”
Lack of mutual trust	“Lack of trust built on the perception and fear that the participants do not share each other’s interests and do have hidden agendas”
Sharing of resources	“The way budgets and financial systems are constructed in the federal government make it difficult to share resources.”
Fear of loss of reputation	“Overcoming fears that recognition will not be shared on good or great ideas”
Logistical challenges	
Time	“Hard to make time for activities for which I’m not directly responsible.”
Logistics	Coordinating across distances given different schedules and lack of staff for collaboration.
Effort/Money	“The effort seems exponential in relation to the number of internal and external organizations involved.”
Follow-up	“Organizing a multi-agency meeting is easy. What is difficult is identifying participants who are committed to the next step and have the staff and time to complete the work or implement the agreed upon action.”
Regulations	“The government has too many stovepipes, rules, regulations and mindsets that make collaboration difficult, and sometimes impossible.”
Political challenges	
Political context	“The fundamental principles of our government...checks and balances, separation of power, and federalism, make for a system that is predisposed against collaboration. Put simply, collaboration finds a hostile environment in our system of government.”
Agenda setting	“Differing agendas and priorities that do not reward collaboration are a challenge. Rather, some work in an agenda of winners versus losers and fear a loss of „nimbleness“.”

Balance	“Balancing time and effort with results. Convincing others that their investment in collaboration will pay off.”
Organizational challenges	
Agency cultures	“Differing perspectives, paradigms, languages, and priorities across different organizations.”
Organizational goals/missions	“Conflicting missions, goals, priorities and strategies yield challenges in finding common motivational factors to promote collaboration.”
Inadequate incentives	“Performance standards do not incentivize collaboration.”
Technological challenges	“We really do not know or understand the full array of technological options available to us to enhance collaborations.”
Personal challenges	
Actor characteristics	“Inflexible people, egos, and dysfunctional personalities.”
Lack/mismatch of leadership	“Poor leadership: people who, while intelligent enough, view working with others as a threat and do not understand the idea of leading when you are not in charge.”
Lack/mismatch of skills	“Most of us learned only traditional management techniques.”

Table 5. Themes and quotes concerning catalysts for collaboration

Theme	Example quote
Relational catalysts	
Leadership	“Agency leadership that sets the expectation of collaboration and makes non-collaboration unacceptable.”
Shared view of mission	“Common view of the mission, common metrics of performance, and a shared vision of success.”
Attitude	“Folks have to check their egos at the door and be willing to work for the common good.”
Willingness to collaborate	“To collaborate you must be willing to listen and learn, to suspend disbelief while you allow yourself to follow where another leads.”
Success	“Success that one organization could never achieve alone.”
Champion/Advocate	“Confident people with engaging personalities who are more interested in solving the problem.”
Personal relationships	“Relationships drive collaboration and collaboration strengthens relationships.”
Communication	“It helps to communicate intent and desired results so that all can work to the common cause.”
Previous collaborations	“A history of working well together.”
Trust	“More can be accomplished if the groups trust and respect each other.”
Coincidental	“Serendipity: those Starbucks conversations.”
Process betterment catalysts	
Insufficient resources	“Inadequate budget, expertise or capability to do the entire project on one’s own.”
Nature of issues	“Common issues or identification of duplicate efforts are often catalysts for collaboration.”
Mutual advantages	“The „win“ for stakeholders; the need to find ways to sustain a given result; the recognition that we are all connected and hence we are all vulnerable.”
Identification of duplicated works	“Avoiding duplication of effort.”
Sense of urgency catalysts	
Crisis or emergency	“Knowledge that disasters or emergencies might occur if you do not collaborate.”
Threats	“An external factor that threatens the entire organization.”
Failure	“Some agencies more than others learn the value of collaboration only during the cleanup after a crash and burn.”
Time pressure to complete tasks	“Urgent and new projects. The Recovery Act generated a LOT of collaboration.”
Increasing workloads	“Increasing workloads where you cannot do it all yourself.”
Mandate catalysts	

Agency culture	“Organization-wide recognition that other organizations may possess information and/or resources that could support creative resolutions to difficult problems.”
Directives from agency	“Being pushed by the top of the agency in order to move the whole agency forward in the same direction for the collective good.”
Legislative	“There is nothing like a statutory mandate to catalyze collaboration.”
Presidential	“Clearly articulated Presidential goals can be a critical catalyst for collaboration.”
Personal belief	“The biggest catalyst for collaboration is the belief that it is the right thing to do.”
By boss	“A direct order to collaborate from more senior leadership.”
Organizational catalysts	
Governance structure	“The governance structure of a collaborative network should contain a means for regular assessment by the parties of the progress of the entire project, comparing status to expectations and recommending and implementing actions that are the result of the differences between the status and the expectations.”
Incentives	“Needed: reward and recognition for collaborative behavior.”
Work/physical environment	“Co-location of staff helps matrix teams collaborate better.”
Study/research	“GAO and IG studies that point out the need for collaboration.”

Table 6. Themes and quotes from the positive results of collaboration

Theme	Example quote
Performance outcomes	
Quality product	"Collaboration enriches the product or service we can deliver to our clients."
Economic benefit	"Resources can be combined or leveraged so the government is not inventing the same wheel in multiple agencies. This would save a great deal of money."
Synergy effect	"Collaboration is a force multiplier, aimed at getting more resources focused on an issue than going it alone"
Learning	"Learning to respect the ideas and the needs of other people and organizations"
Public service	"Results that are more likely to meet the needs of stakeholders and customers"
Mission accomplishment	"We have multiple, diverse client agencies with sometimes completing missions that require harmonization and compromise for either client agency to accomplish basic program goals."
Sustainable outcomes	"Field technology has a better chance of being sustained during its lifecycle if more parts of the government are using it."
Timely results	"Given limited resources, collaboration is often the quickest way to achieve a goal."
Process outcomes	
Ideas	"Collaboration enables me to draw upon a diverse set of views and experiences, which enables me to pick and choose the best options."
Helping to problem-solving	"By including staff that represent different perspectives, we better identify the problems and the solutions, and there is greater acceptance of the end guidance."
Consensus	"Work goes more smoothly when everyone who needs to be involved is when collaboration and cooperation was the center of the efforts."
Relationship outcomes	
Buy-in	"More buy-in and ownership of the participants in the solution you developed together."
Relationship building	"Collaboration can produce overall stronger working relationships among parties."
Human resource benefit	"Good collaboration experiences provide professional and psychological satisfaction and opportunity for professional development."
Empowerment	"Everyone gets heard and is engaged."

Table 7. Themes and quotes from the negative results of collaboration

Theme	Example quote
Performance outcomes	
Suboptimal outcomes	"A negative for collaboration could be less than desired results based on watering down."
Loss of resources	"When resources are awarded competitively and the organization can lose out if their collaborative efforts have helped another organization be more successful financially."
No actions	"A group may believe that by just collaborating their work is over. So we get stuck at the self-congratulatory phase but real work does not get implemented."
Unfulfilled interest	"Not always possible to obtain a win-win situation"
Process outcomes	
Time consuming	"Collaborative approaches can take more time to establish and to operate on an ongoing basis than independent efforts."
Burden	"Continuing new directives ... often result in excessive reporting burdens and new work, most of which is unfunded."
Slowing down process	"Collaboration can slow things down because of higher communication demands, sorting out different visions, and ensuring a common understanding."
Collective action problem	"Sometimes we need to know who did what, to discern among varying levels of performance. If everyone is collaborating and the credit is shared, then there is potential or high performers to be quietly sharing more than their fair share of the load, and lower performers may be coasting on the efforts of others."
Increased bureaucracy	"The effort at collaboration can also product a bureaucratic maze of competing interests rather than an efficiency of cross-fertilizing efforts."
Resource mobilization challenges	"There are times a little more work is required to enable collaboration and you may not have the staff to adequately implement the collaboration. At times it requires purchasing equipment you may not have with resources you don't have."
Crisis	"If it takes too much time to do, the problem can become a crisis."
Relationship outcomes	
Individual level of loss	"Individuals have to give up control because they are dependent on others."
Agency level of loss	"Sometimes there is a loss of control over the desired outcome or agenda of your home agency or department."

Conflict	"Collaboration can lead to a breakdown in relationships unless conditions for the collaboration are clearly described."
Increased turf battles	"Diverse agendas which may overlap in one area and create tension in others."
Unwillingness for future collaboration	"It could lead to further compartmentalization and lack of active participation in future collaboration."
Alienation of those who refuse to collaborate	"Stakeholders feel that they have been slighted by the collaborative efforts."
Distrust	"Finding that collaboration partners are disingenuous and/or dishonest, which destroys collaboration and eliminates trust which is difficult to build and easy to destroy."

Table 8. Themes and quotes from recent collaboration experience

Theme	Example quote
Structural issues	
Oversight/Evaluation	To conduct evaluations that involved three major programs.
Reorganization	Restructuring the agency.
Pilot project	It started as a pilot project to test whether the use of volunteers could carry out survey work.
New methodology	Had to establish methodology and protocol to ensure all records timely processed and reviewed.
Case tracking systems	The Office of General Council used a collaborative process to design a case-tracking system to be used by the several divisions within the headquarters office and the 14 field offices.
Reporting requirement	Address government-wide reporting requirements related to facility management.
Budget concern	Started because budget cuts were going to drastically reduce IT spending.
Procedural issues	
New agenda/policy/program development	The purpose was to provide input to national-level policy in development
Workforce development/deployment	Hiring reform. By inviting agencies, other organizations within OPM, etc., to join together to collaboration on the best way to reform hiring.
Program redesign	We have been doing system redesign collaborative in the various parts of our hospital.
Data sharing/improvement	To share information across government and governments to make the US more secure.
Polling opinions	To obtain information about other agencies' procurement and invoice approval policies for purposes of revising our own at NRC.

Table 9. The total number of respondents in each collaboration

Collaboration 1	Collaboration 2	Collaboration 3	Collaboration 4	Collaboration 5
268	206	161	109	91

Table 10. Themes and quotes from the role of technology

Theme	Example quote
Significance	<p>Technology is an invaluable tool for successfully accomplishing the collaboration.</p> <p>Technology is generally an enabler; either for communication or to achieve the goal.</p> <p>Collaboration would have occurred even if we used candles and quill pens.</p>
Roles	
Communication	Technology facilitates collaboration through making communication more efficient.
Data sharing and management	<p>Technology facilitated the movement towards the goal via data sharing.</p> <p>Data storage, analysis, dissemination</p>
Analysis	To engage, explain and allow survey results to be reported back to our agency.
Tool	<p>Technology facilitates communication for collaboration in cases where we are not collocated. But we don't use anything fancy; just phones, conference calls, and e-mails.</p> <p>Collaborations within my agency have been GREATLY helped by project management software! It shows who is on the team, who is doing what, and what is happening next- very helpful, especially for linear thinkers who get confused by collaboration.</p> <p>Webinars have been the most valuable use of technology.</p> <p>On-line meetings greatly facilitate efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>Unquestionably email has changed the nature of collaboration in the last 20 years.</p>

Table 11. Themes and quotes from skill set for the successful collaborator

Theme	Example quote
Communication skills	<p>Communicate, communicate, communicate</p> <p>A successful collaborator needs to be able to articulate the issues</p> <p>Good communication- verbal and written</p>
Listening	<p>Listen, listen, listen, and if you didn't hear that, listen</p> <p>Active listening, restating, and clarifying expectations</p> <p>Primary skill is the willingness and ability to listen to others, identifying their objectives for the collaboration, and integrate across multiple objectives to understand what type of approaches will work</p> <p>an ability to work with a number of people and communicate with them effectively</p>
Interpersonal	<p>the ability to separate oneself from the task and be able to accept criticism without making it personal or internalized (a thick skin!)</p>
Conflict management skill	
Facilitation	<p>A good collaborator has some of the same skills as a good facilitator- identifying issues and coming to consensus on those issues</p>
Collaborative problem-solving	<p>negotiation skills- to identify others' interests as well as one's own and reach mutual acceptable solutions and decide on shared approaches</p> <p>Recognizing and cultivating win-wins</p> <p>ability to understand perspectives of others and find common ground</p>
Compromise	<p>willingness to suboptimize for the greater good</p>
Conflict Resolution	<p>good conflict resolution skills (of course, the best collaborator knows how to proceed so that insurmountable conflicts don't arise</p>
Team-building	<p>ability to reach across organizational boundaries</p> <p>knowledge of group dynamics and political culture</p> <p>ability to deal with a variety of personalities</p>
Soft skill	

	Big Picture Thinking	the ability to see the bigger picture (mission) as well as how the individual functions/parts fit and contribute
	Strategic Thinking	Strategic orientation(defined in this sense as an ability to identify a goal and the types of inputs and actions to achieve it ability to think long term and develop the relationships to support the collaboration
	Leadership	leadership ability to bring the parties together to work toward successful collaboration someone usually needs to orchestrate the collaboration a leader who is willing to take risks and motivate others to take the same risks
	Creative Thinking	facilitative leadership- the ability to lead a group through a sticky process, honor everyone's contribution, and drive towards a solution or next steps willingness to get out of the box and try non-traditional approaches
	Sharing	As President Reagan used to say, when you do not care who gets the credit, it is amazing what you can accomplish
Hard skill	Technical Expertise	absolute expert knowledge of the subject matter enough technical skills to gain the confidence and respect of other collaborators
	Project Management	Can produce products and decisions by group deadlines ability to be organized and able to share how the process is going to work in working together across organizational lines. Ability to see how the collaboration is working as it accomplishes activities, so people are clear on progress, decisions that have been made, who is responsible for delivering work products, how we are going to gather input or feedback
	Personal attributes	
	Open Minded	the willingness to accommodate other opinions Openness to change

Patient	respect for opposing views to the point you seek them out patience with stupid people some efforts take a long time to become a reality
Risk taking/change-oriented	look beyond the obvious and explore new opportunities
Unselfish	“ self-confident” “low ego” “service motivated and selfless” “not needing to receive all the credit (unselfish)” “team player”
Persistence	“an almost manic persistence” “tenacity- follow-up, pick yourself up, learn as you proceed, and do not give up on the mission”
Emotional Intelligence	“someone who constantly questions themselves- how can I be better” “Self-awareness/emotional intelligence”
Respect	“In addition, respect is a foundational quality. When you respect someone enough to involve them and seek out their opinion, you help create mutual respect between the parties”

Table 12. Themes and quotes from question on conflict management strategies

Theme	Example quote
Interest-based problem solving Mediation	Focus on the issues, not the positions. Carefully, a wrong approach to resolving conflicts will ensure that it will be the last effort for parties who believe they were short changed. Someone should be assigned the role of mediation if collaboration projects are successful.
Negotiation Allowing Conflict to Happen	A negotiated compromise must be brokered to allow the entire project to go ahead. Conflict is not necessarily a negative thing; we can have "healthy" conflict that generates more rigorous thought and conversation.
Identifying Common Ground Everyone a Voice	The best way to manage conflict is to seek common grounds and look for win-win solution. Giving The leader needs to emphasize the importance of each person's participation in the work group.
Listening	By listening to what is desired by the parties and working on how each can meet those desires to some degree.
Compromise	A real willingness to allow and encourage serious compromise.

Table 13. Themes and quotes from lessons learned

Theme	Example Quotes
Personal Observations and Advice	You need to be unselfish and not worry about what organization gets credit. Learn it early, practice it often.
Group Dynamics	Select the collaborative teams carefully. Identify lead persons for each component. You must have a good understanding of the goals and objectives and have passion in your belief in them and the need to attain the goal.
The Need for Leadership	Leadership is the key. It makes the process work. The leader has to provide a clear vision of what the group is trying to do and every member has to see how they own part of that vision. Then they can work together.
Challenges	True collaboration is not easy. Too often, working groups come together to share their ideas, but not to engage in true collaboration. Very rarely do interagency groups truly collaborate on an idea.
Recipes for Success	It's an unnatural act between consenting adults and organizations, but the greater good is almost always achieved. Be patient, allow all collaborators to reach the same levels of understanding before forging ahead assuming they're there. At the same time, set clear and measurable mileposts or benchmarks, so the effort is seen by all as having some sort of lifecycle, not a wormhole that will suck away all the energy, commitment, and resources with no apparent purpose. Focus time where need be on the "stragglers", build the relationships, transparency, and trust needed to move forward. In my experience collaboration has been worthwhile 1. when very broad, aimed at sharing information about common interests, and 2. when focused on specific projects. In the first instance, a low or moderate level of time & effort may be sufficient, while in the second, more focused investment is needed.
Collaboration Yields Better Outcomes	Collaboration is hard work to initiate but well worth it in the long run. I have built many important connections through collaborations, and it has enabled me to accomplish things I could certainly not have done on my own.

Table 14. Themes and quotes from final survey thoughts

Theme	Example quote
Positive Outcomes	It's really hard, but some of the most rewarding work I've done in my 23+ year career has been through collaborative groups. And I've met a ton of people in different disciplines who have become invaluable assets to my work as well as my career. I wouldn't be here without them!
Barriers	It requires a lot of work! People are very territorial and often do not want to solve problems unless they (their agency) gets full credit for finding the solution. If money/budget is involved with the solution to the problem there will be push-back. People do not share budgets or staff easily.
Opportunities for Improvement	I think the new generation will teach us more about how collaboration can really work -- using new technologies and new expectations of sharing information and working together. It should be the way of the future but it needs to be recognized and resourced and the role of boundary organizations need to be better understood and appreciated by federal employees

Figure 1. Challenges to collaboration (frequency :%)

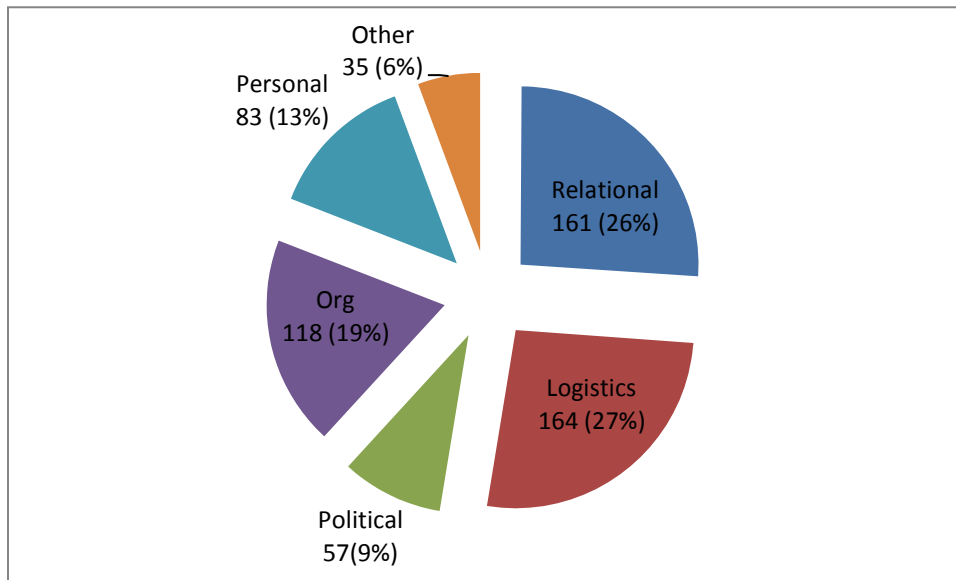


Figure 2. Catalysts for collaboration (frequency :%)

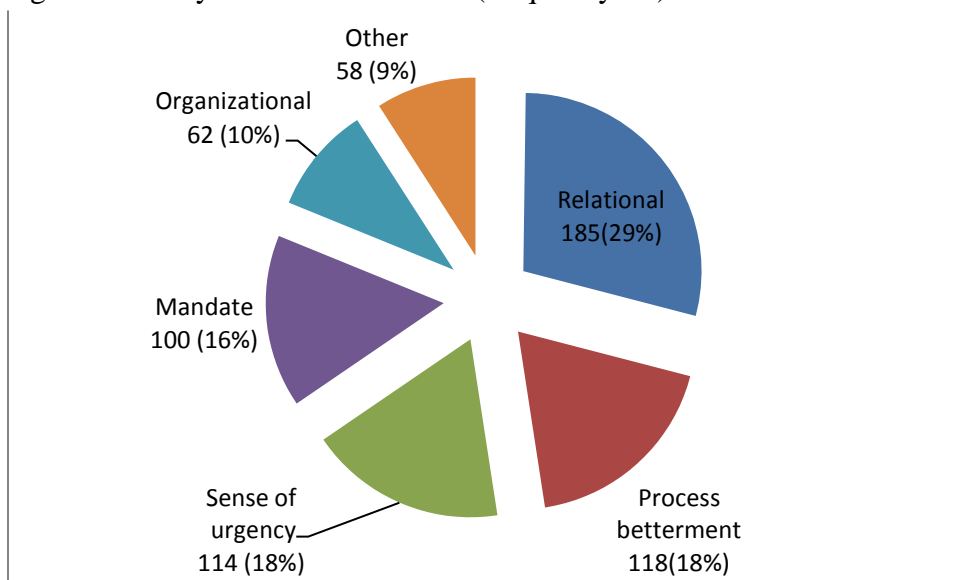


Figure 3. Positive results of collaboration (frequency :%)

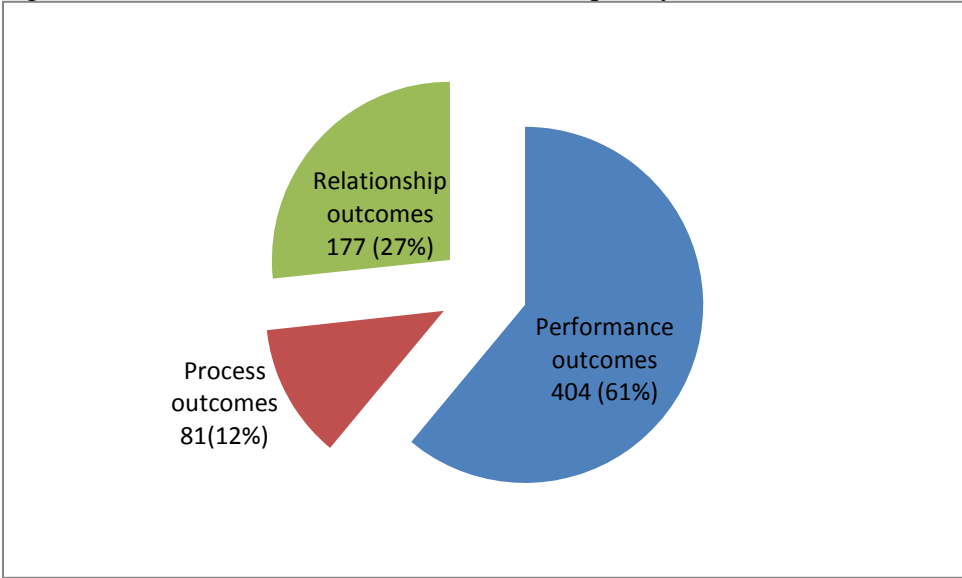


Figure 4. Negative results of collaboration (frequency: %)

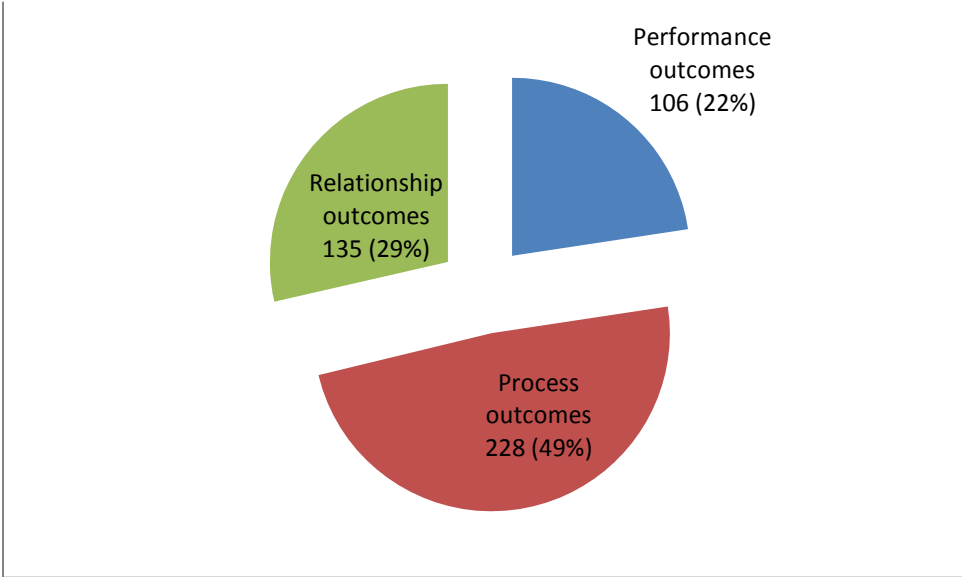


Figure 5. Purpose of collaboration (frequency (%)) including other category)

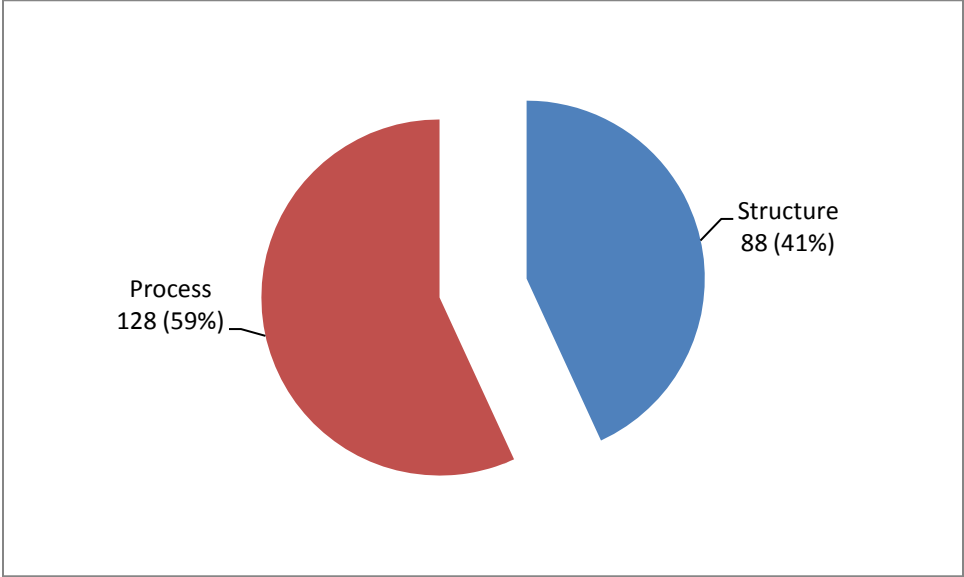
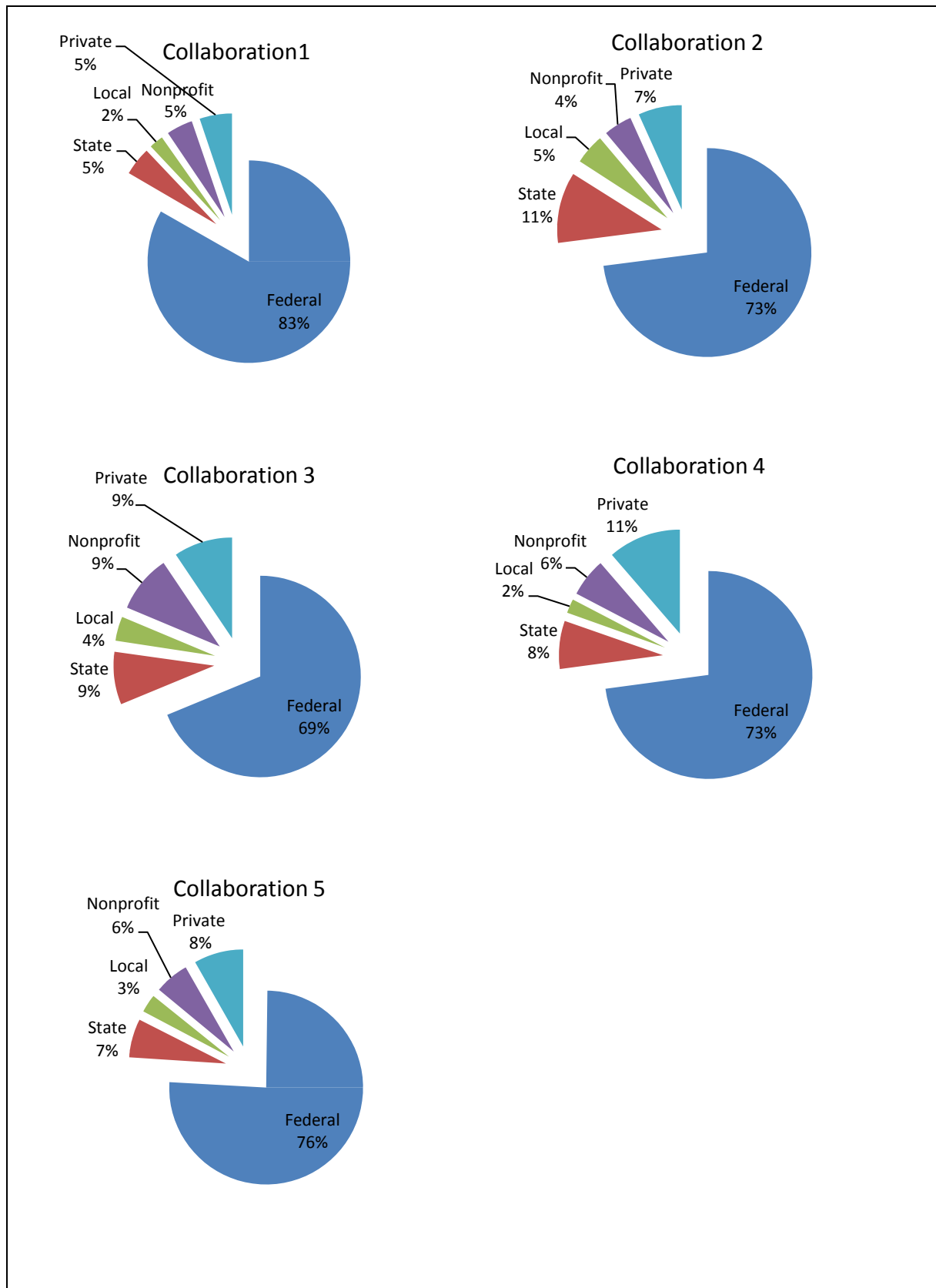


Figure 6. The five (or less) most important collaboration experience



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