



E-PARCC

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Syracuse University

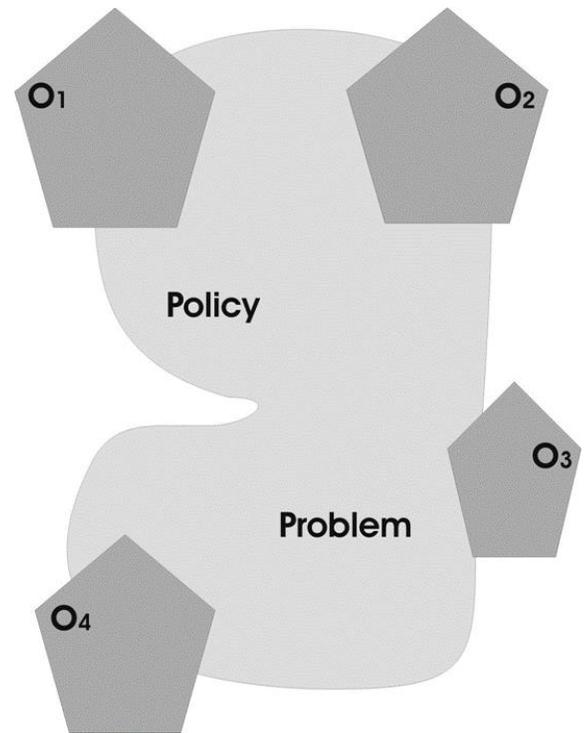
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration

Creating a Community Partnership SIMULATION

Introduction

A major federal government agency has determined that the country has a number of major social problems that need to be addressed. In the past, these problems have mostly been tackled in traditional ways, through the categorical funding of programs that reside in individual government and nonprofit agencies. This federal government funder believes, as do many service professionals, that the only way major public problems can be resolved is to create multi-organizational partnerships, or networks of collaborating organizations, in communities around the country. The agency is convinced that seed money devoted to creating community partnerships in several key areas will pay big dividends. This figure is a graphic depiction of how pieces of organizations and agencies (labeled O) might collaborate to address a complex policy problem that each agency is addressing only partially on its own.



This simulation was an honorable mention winner in our 2007 “Collaborative Public Management, Collaborative Governance, and Collaborative Problem Solving” teaching case and simulation competition. It was double-blind peer reviewed by a committee of academics and practitioners. It was written by Keith Provan and Brint Milward of the University of Arizona, and edited by Laurel Saiz. This simulation is intended for classroom discussion and is not intended to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation depicted. It is brought to you by E-PARCC, part of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University’s Collaborative Governance Initiative, a subset of the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC). This material may be copied as many times as needed as long as the authors are given full credit for their work.

Overview

The notion of community partnerships draws on two of the most important ideas in public and nonprofit management. The first idea is **service integration**. Since the 1960s, public officials have believed that most types of community services are “fragmented” and that if they could only be “integrated” into a collaborative network, they would perform much better. The second idea is **empowerment**. Empowered communities have social capital. Social capital refers to the assets a community develops to allow it to solve its own problems. Trust among community organizations that allows them to overcome funding disputes and turf battles is an example of social capital overcoming self-interested behavior. It is a matter of belief among some in Washington and the foundation world that seed money spent on creating community partnerships and networks will activate communities and allow them to solve problems themselves.

Partnerships allow a community to bring all of its resources to bear on public problems like homelessness, lack of child welfare, or crime. Partnerships are inclusive and assume that if problems are to be solved, organizations and agencies in the nonprofit sector, the private sector and government will have to cooperate.

While often broad in scope, multi-organizational partnerships do have boundaries. Some have attempted to improve the way communities deal with alcohol and drug abuse, others focus on mental health, domestic violence, child welfare, or aging. All involve a set of community organizations that, to some extent, deal with part of the problem that is to be solved or alleviated. But collectively, they are able to address the problem in its entirety.

The Request for Proposal

The government-funding agency has issued a request for proposal (RFP) for communities around the United States to compete for grants that would fund community partnerships for a five-year period. The grants are to be adjusted for community size and only a few will be made available. Assume that you are writing a proposal for a partnership in your county and the proposal, if funded, would be for up to \$1 million per year for five years. At least 75 percent of this money must be directed to the partnership itself and to network-level activities and coordination efforts. Only up to 25 percent of the money can be spent on actual provision of services by existing agencies. This RFP has generated a great deal of interest among community organizations, activists and the business community to come together and write a proposal. The funds are available to build partnerships in the following areas, one of which must be the focus of your proposal:

1. Community revitalization, including, but not limited to, downtown or rural economic development.
2. Emergency preparedness, including, but not limited to, terrorism and pandemics like avian flu.
3. Illegal immigration.
4. Crime reduction, including, but not limited to, drugs and gangs.
5. Mental health services.

The RFP requires that each proposal answer the following questions:

1. What is the goal of the partnership? What are you trying to accomplish?
2. Which community organizations, including government agencies and businesses, and groups will be involved and why? It is O.K. to discuss general types of organizations rather than naming specific organizations.
3. How will the partnership be structured? Develop the framework of a plan for implementing the partnership. Cite who will work with whom, how, when, and so forth.
4. How will commitment be built and maintained among partnership members?

5. How will collaboration be managed and led? What governance issues must be considered to facilitate collaboration and minimize and/or address conflict?
6. What are the anticipated outcomes of the partnership and how will we know if the plan has succeeded at the end of year one? At the end of five years?

Instructions for Preparing This Simulation

The class will be broken into groups of four to seven. The first task will be to choose a topic for the partnership proposal from the list of five, above. After your topic is chosen, the main task is to prepare an outline for the proposal, addressing each of the six questions/elements required by the RFP. Treat it like a first draft that you would present to community stakeholders for their feedback.

Your group will have one hour to prepare your proposal. When you return to class, one member of your group should be designated to present the proposal outline to the class. Presentations for each group should be limited to five minutes with another five minutes for questions and discussion.