

Building Relationships for Health Systems Change: Collaboration

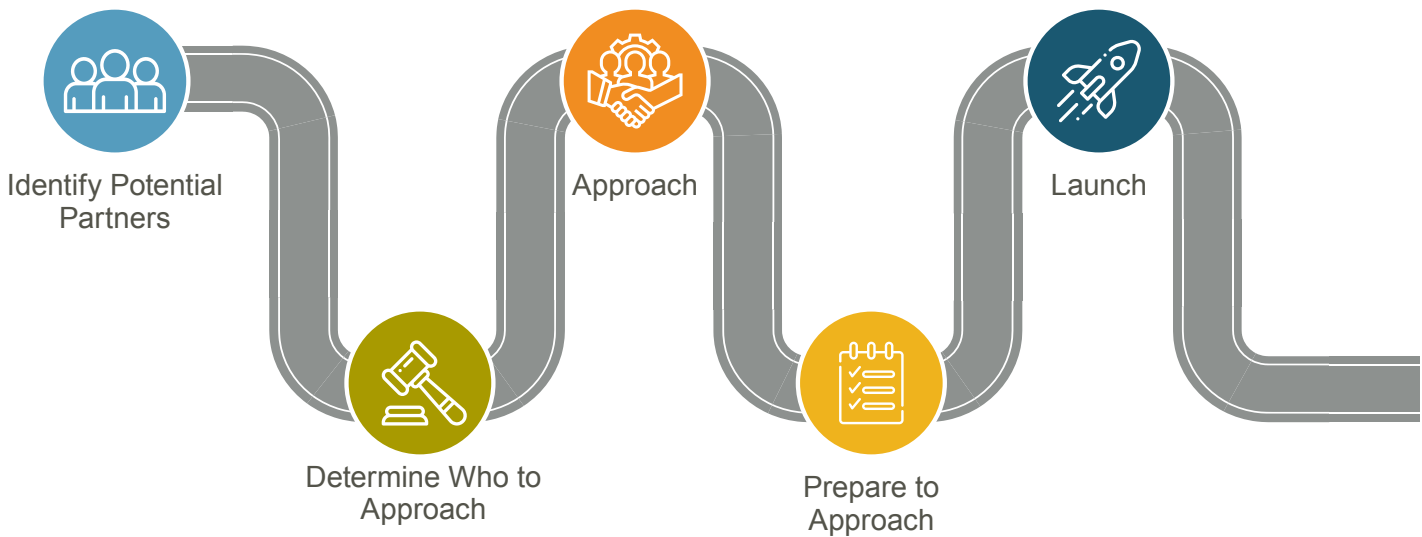
What and why collaboration?

We hear the term “collaboration” thrown around a lot these days, yet what does it actually mean? For our purposes, we define collaboration as a partnership between government, non-profit, private and public organizations, community groups and individual community members coming together to solve problems that affect a community. Partners recognize that by working together, they have more power and influence to tackle systems issues.

Effective collaboration focuses on tackling complex challenges that impact multiple stakeholders with potentially different perspectives about the causes and solutions. Organizational partners and individual members of a collaboration work together to develop a shared purpose and to align and leverage their resources to achieve shared goals. Leadership within a collaboration is distributed among all members and not hierarchical. Often, a collaborative effort has a “convener” to coordinate and facilitate effective collaboration; however, no one person or organization is the sole decision-maker.

A key to collaboration that effective leaders in all sectors have come to realize is that problems won't be solved unless the people who are most impacted are central to solving them. They are the ones who know how to make solutions work. Therefore, meaningfully engaging those with lived experience of an issue - in this case tobacco-use - is essential to a successful collaborative effort.

When organizations, community groups, and people most impacted by an issue align their efforts and leverage their assets, they are better able to achieve goals to improve quality and health outcomes, reduce costs, and promote equity. Tobacco prevention is ripe for such collaboration!



PATHWAY TO COLLABORATION: Addressing Tobacco with Healthcare and Other Organizational or Community Partners

At **every** step did you...

Engage organizations and community groups impacted

Meaningfully include community members, specifically those most impacted

Ensure adequate time for building strong relationships and trust

Clarify the purpose and importance of working together

Discuss values, priorities and perspectives

Co-design a process that is transparent, equitable and community centered

Determine goals, roles and responsibilities – together

Adapt processes and tools to be sure they are relevant, accessible and equitable for all partners, e.g., plain language, no industry jargon, translation and interpretation

Assess and improve the collaborative process – continuously

Identify and address barriers for meaningful engagement

Surface, discuss and address power imbalances

Address conflict, harm, failures and/or unintended consequences



Identify potential healthcare and other organizational or community partners

Gather quantitative and qualitative tobacco data about who isn't thriving and disparities / inequities

What is the impact on people in Oregon?

What is the impact on people living in the region and community?

What populations are most impacted?

Identify organizations, institutions and populations disproportionately impacted by tobacco use

Who is most impacted?

What is their connection to tobacco prevention and use?

What are their interests and assets?

Identify organizations and institutions, e.g., health plans, medical and dental clinics and behavioral health providers, as well as populations, e.g., Tribes, CCO members, currently involved with tobacco prevention

What is their current role?

What are their interests and assets?

What are you aligned on?

Consider how potential partners are connected to each other

Do they currently work together?

Have they worked together in the past?

Do they work well together?

Identify any opposition to tobacco prevention

Who may be opposed?

What are their perspectives?



Determine who to approach within potential healthcare and other organizational or community partners

Identify people within organizations who are engaged in tobacco prevention work

What is their current and/or potential role?

What is their interest?

How are they impacted?

Are they in a position to make decisions and or allocate resources?

Are they involved in implementing programs?

Are they involved in improving programs?

Are they an advocate?

Can they influence others within their organization or community to prioritize the work?

Identify people within populations who are most impacted by tobacco

What is their connection to the issue?

How are they impacted?

Are they an advocate?

Can they influence others within their community or population to prioritize the work?

Consider how organizations and people are connected to each other

Do they currently work or interact together?

Have they worked or interacted together in the past?

Do they work or interact well together?



Prepare to approach potential healthcare and other organizational or community partners

Reflect on your own organizational culture

What are your values?

What is your leadership style?

What is your strategic emphasis?

How do you define success?

Research potential partners' organizational culture

What are their values?

What is their leadership style?

What is their strategic emphasis?

How do they define success?

Create value proposition statement(s)

What is the problem or issue that needs to be resolved?

What role can your organization play to address the issue?

What role could the potential partner play to address the issue?

How might you work together?

What is the likely impact you can achieve by working together?

Determine compensation to organizational or community partners

Are there potential partners who will need financial and/or other support in order to participate?

Can you offer payment, child-care, transportation and other support services to compensate them for their participation and expertise?

Make a plan to share power

Do you have a process in place to ensure all partners, including people most impacted, share power?

Do you have a process in place to support all partners to be leaders, including people most impacted, based on their interests and strengths?

Do you have a process in place to assess and improve how well you share power and distribute leadership with all partners, including people most impacted?



Approach potential healthcare and other organizational or community partners

Share what issue needs to be addressed, using both qualitative and quantitative data

What is the impact on people in Oregon?

What is the impact on people living in the region or community?

What populations are most impacted?

Share your desire to work with them to improve systems, outcomes and equity

Ask about their interest in the issue

How do they currently help people who are impacted?

Discuss your value proposition

What is their perception of the problem or issue that needs to be resolved?

What role does their organization currently play?

What role can their organization potentially play?

How might we work together?

What is the likely impact we can achieve by working together?

Explore readiness for change

What is their awareness of what needs to be changed?

What is their desire to participate and support the change?

What is their knowledge on how to change?

What is their ability to implement desired skills and behaviors?

What is their commitment to reinforce and sustain the change?

Ask about their approach

What are their values?

What is their leadership style?

What is their strategic emphasis?

How would they define success?

Ask about their willingness to work with you on this issue

Who, within their organization, should be involved?

Ask if there are other potential partners to engage

Clarify what you learned and next steps

Follow up promptly with a thank you, what you learned and any next steps



Launch work with healthcare and other organizational or community partners

Focus on cooperating, coordinating and collaborating, not competing

To what degree is each partner willing and able to collaborate?

Clarify purpose

Why are organizations collaborating?

Is there a shared understanding of the issue to be addressed?

Align on who else needs to be engaged

Have all organizations and community partners that are impacted been invited?

Clarify goals

What are the organizations trying to accomplish together?

Is the goal time-bound, measurable and specific?

Clarify plans

What is the strategy to achieve the shared goal?

What is the budget for the strategy, including in-kind contributions?

Clarify responsibilities

Who will do what, by when?

Determine communication expectations

What methods and frequency work best for the team?

Improve your process, tools and collaborative culture continuously to ensure relevance, equity and accessibility

What data needs to be collected and used to guide improvements?

Identify sustainability strategies

What needs to be done to scale up and sustain the work?

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Collaboration tools and resources

- [Systems Change Model Final](#)
- [Equity-Centered Policy Change Model](#)
- [ADKAR](#)
- [Community Tool Box Toolkits](#)
- [CDC's Public-Private Partnership Guidelines: A Tool to Support Engagement with the Private Sector to Achieve Public Health](#)
- [Tamarack Institute Tool: The Collaboration Spectrum](#)