Leading by Convening

A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement

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Since the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and through its subsequent reauthorization in 2004, policymakers, administrators, practitioners and families have come together to find common ground, reach out to others interested in the same issues and create positive joint solutions to identified problems. The diversity among the 50 national organizations, technical assistance providers and organizations and agencies – at both the state and local level – has enriched us all as we have grown to recognize that building human relationships is the key to working together for practice change.

Special appreciation goes to hundreds of decision makers, implementers and family members who participated both on- and off-site during the Development Meeting (December 2012), the Annual IDEA Partnership Meeting (January 2013) and the National Community of Practice on Transition Meeting (May 2013). This document is the result of the collective input, editing suggestions, interviews and stories from these individuals and evidences the power of engagement through convening.

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Authentic Engagement

Section One

Why We Need a Blueprint on Authentic Stakeholder Engagement

In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) launched a new strategy to bring general and special education into learning partnerships across families, practitioners, administrators and policymakers. The four linked partnerships were designed to build the relationships necessary to accomplish the practice changes in the 1997 landmark amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

These changes were called *landmark changes* because they broke new ground in the education of students with disabilities. These changes are widely accepted and almost commonplace today; however, they were quite controversial at the time. Several of the most prominent changes were:

- Students with disabilities should have access to the general curriculum.
- Students with disabilities should participate in statewide assessments.
- Funding formulas for special education should be placement neutral.
- The connection between behavior and academics was established and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) was introduced.

The potential impact of the issues was significant. The range of stakeholders was huge. Could these groups, that did not hold the same perspective regarding the changes in the law, become allies? This was the challenge of the IDEA Partnership.

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In 15 years of working together, we have learned valuable lessons about practice change though partnership. One of the most important was our ability to discover shared values and interests. For years, our commonality was masked by different vocabulary and unique identities; we lacked the relationships needed to actively engage with enough frequency to gain trust.

We became united in promoting a new kind of collaboration. Most people think that they are good collaborators, but our shared experience told us that most collaboration happens at a fairly low level. Early in our partnership, we began to define how we wanted to engage each other. Gradually, shallow collaboration was replaced by authentic engagement that allowed us to act together when we were in agreement and made it safer to talk about issues on which we did not agree.

This blueprint is the product of our journey. In examining our blueprint, we hope that you will find validation for your efforts at shared work and learn some new strategies that have worked for us.

Authentic Engagement: The Partnership Way

This document began as an effort to *manualize* the strategy developed through OSEP's investment in the IDEA Partnership. It has become much more. In developing this blueprint, we recognized that this work is about our shared experience in creating learning partnerships across stakeholders who work in the same landscape of practice. Further, we realized that this strategy has real importance in today's complex and interconnected systems.

The Blueprint Development Process

In September, 2012, key leaders from organizations in the IDEA Partnership decided that we needed to make our learning explicit. They were clear that we needed a tool that would leave no doubt as to the kind of collaboration that we believe is needed to achieve a change in practice. Two national organizations, the Council of Special Education Administrators and the National Association of School Psychologists, were designated to coordinate the development of a blueprint for authentic engagement that built on our work in states and in organizations.

In December, 2012, 16 participants met onsite and 20 contributors participated online. Over two days, the text of this blueprint was written by those collaborators. They represented decision makers, administrators, practitioners and families. They worked in special and general education. They were from national organizations, state agencies and local schools. In short, they represented the roles that must work together to implement IDEA. After talking together, they wrote based on their past experiences and their shared ideas of what authentic collaboration should look like in practice.

In January 2013, 100 persons from an array of roles who attended the annual meeting of the IDEA Partnership reviewed the concepts and used critical pieces of the document during the meeting. Their ideas were incorporated into the next draft.

In May 2013, 68 individuals from national organizations and state teams worked together onsite for two days using the blueprint to improve interagency collaboration around transition. Their suggestions informed the next draft. For a list of contributors, see Appendix One.

It should be abundantly clear that we tried to model active engagement in the development of the blueprint. The final version shares our lessons learned and recognizes the heavy influence of Etienne Wenger's work on Communities of Practice and Ronald Heifetz's work on technical and adaptive change.

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We have found that relationships are undervalued as a strategic investment. Over time, we began to talk about the value of relationships as The Partnership Way. The Partnership Way no longer refers to the IDEA Partnership, but rather the strategy of partnership that builds connections and fosters authentic engagement through leading by convening. The lessons in this document are grounded in our shared experience, but draw on experiences far beyond our work. They build on what each of us knows from our own experience as participants, collaborators and leaders.

One of our partners recently referred to the potential value of this work as the *new discipline of engagement* that will have prominence in a world now connected by social learning approaches. Other partners have described this as the *leadership strategy of the future* in systems that demand greater transparency. As you explore and apply the concepts in this blueprint, you will form your own ideas about the relevance and usefulness of relationships and engagement as strategy.

The Partnership Way no longer refers to the IDEA Partnership, but rather the strategy of partnership that builds connections and fosters authentic engagement through leading by convening.

The Story of Our Experience

In 1997, there were landmark amendments to IDEA. Students with disabilities were expected to have access to the general curriculum, learn what their peers were learning and have their progress measured through large-scale assessment programs. It was clear that progress in practice would require engaging stakeholders beyond special education. Across the nation, these relationships were not uniformly in place. To address this need, OSEP decided to fund a partnership of professional and family organizations that would work at the national and state levels to customize information and support the use of research-based practices. This investment, the IDEA Partnership, was first funded as four linked partnerships. In the beginning, each partnership addressed a different audience, but soon the strategy was reformulated to create a unified partnership that embraced the array of roles connecting research, policy, practice and people. The IDEA Partnership was crafted as an investment that works on the technical and the human side of change.

Today, 50+ IDEA partner organizations, together with OSEP, form a community with the potential and intention to transform the way we work and improve outcomes for all students, especially students with disabilities. We did not always enjoy the close working relationships that we have today. We had significant differences in perspective and power, yet the participation of every partner was important to reach the goals established under IDEA. We had to find a way through our differences to our commonalities. Our lessons learned are in this blueprint.

For 15 years, the IDEA Partnership has been continuously learning how stakeholders can join with decision makers to achieve what has not been accomplished through other strategies. This blueprint makes our learning explicit. In it, we focus on *authentic engagement* as the core commitment and *convening* as the leadership strategy that makes learning partnerships possible.

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Leadership Design: Top Down, Bottom Up or Both

When we think about leadership, one of two primary approaches often comes to mind. The formal leadership we most often experience is a top-down design grounded in authority and formal channels of influence. Yet, contemporary issues often demand another more informal kind of leadership—one that rises up from the bottom, from the stakeholders who are impacted by the decisions being made. Here, we compare characteristics of top-down and bottom-up models of leadership. We acknowledge that there are times when one is more appropriate than the other or when one is more beneficial based on context. However, there are times and issues that call for a leadership model that bridges policy and practice, a shared leadership model that honors what decision makers, practitioners and consumers know and are willing to do on an issue. We propose a hybrid model based on convening that respects both authority and influence.

Top-Down Leadership

In a top-down model of leadership, one person or a small group of people make decisions and share those with others for implementation. As decisions are being made, leaders sometimes consult and invite input from others. Their ideas may, or may not, be incorporated into the final policy decision or action plan. In this model, responsibility for the policy or plan resides with the leadership. In this model, speed is a priority. High-stakes finance, final budget allocations and situations where statutory or regulatory language set parameters may require a top-down style of leadership.

Bottom-Up Leadership

In a bottom-up model of leadership, those affected by the issue bring their drive for practice change into a learning partnership based on research, data and diverse perspectives. They look for solutions and create an action plan. Action is driven by shared recognition of persistent problems and consensus on strategies. Leadership roles are not fixed in a bottom-up process. Leaders emerge based on knowledge, level of experience and skills needed at a particular point in time.

Engagement, evident in a bottom-up model, takes more time than a top-down model. However, the benefits are many. There are more opportunities for perspective sharing during the search for workable strategies. A broader array of perspectives leads to a broader spectrum of possible solutions. And, most importantly, bottom-up decision making and implementation leads to natural supports for sustainability as strategies have been proposed, validated and implemented by those at the practice level. Moreover, sustainability is shared by a larger network of key implementers.

The Partnership Way of Leadership

We describe our operational style as a hybrid of these two leadership designs. It requires that leaders, regardless of title, accept the value of bringing groups with authority and groups with influence together in a shared leadership strategy. This style supports authentic engagement.

Leading in Place: Stories of Leadership Choices that Work

While individuals have a tendency toward one leadership style or another, they can learn to be open to different styles. At the same time, no one style always works. Context has a lot to do with how individual leaders work. In the following stories you will see leaders at the school, district and state level grapple with the challenges of implementing practice change. The text boxes provide some insights into the style that they chose to use in their situation. As you read, ask yourself, "What style would I use?"

Playing Offense in Georgia

Building a Team for Sustainable Change in a Rural High School

Georgia Principal Chip Medders drove an academic turnabout at Manchester High School when he took a detour from his comfort zone five years ago and invited a

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Partnership: A Hybrid of Top Down and Bottom Up

	Leading: Top-Down Model	Leading: Bottom-Up Model	Leading by Convening: The Partnership Way
Who	• Senior administrator(s) drive policy decisions. • Designated specialists contribute and carry out work.	• Representatives of a cross-stakeholder group have influence in guiding actions and decision making. • Dynamic leader(s) convene(s) group.	• Groups with authority over the issue join with groups that have influence in the field. • Persons with expertise and/or experience share knowledge and skills. • Representatives of diverse stakeholder groups engage through consensus to identify issues, solve problems and take action.
How	• Invite interested participants to a meeting. • Solicit and consider input from participants. • Administrators chart path, make decisions and empower others to take action.	• Interested parties join together. • Creative agreement strategies are used to bring the group to consensus. • Group charts the path and direct action. • Leaders emerge.	• Leading by convening. • Sharing perspectives among the members of the group. • Sharing leadership opportunities and responsibilities, based on role, expertise and needs of the group in specific contexts or situations. • Attending to both the human and technical elements of change; building relationships.
Why	• Responsibility resides with the leader. He or she has the most say. • Leader driven; autocratic or small core group of people.	• Buy-in across groups is desired. • Responsibility resides with all. • Grassroots investment engages participants and empowers action. • Broad commitment to implementation. • Sustainable after current leaders have moved on.	• Decision makers, practitioners and consumers understand that collective influence has the potential to change outcomes. • Stakeholders with authority and influence have a role and their interactions produce value. • Building relationships across roles and levels broadens the area of impact and supports sustainability.

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diversified group of school, family and community stakeholders to coalesce around some very alarming school data. The new C.A.F.E. (Circles of Adults Focusing on Education) Dialogue Stakeholder Team appreciated the transparency of Principal Medders, and reacted with concern – not with accusations – about the piling up of problems including declining test scores, high absenteeism, little parent involvement, low graduation rates and a revolving door for frustrated staff. Principal Medders then took an even bigger leap of faith by asking the team to roll up their sleeves and help him turn it around.

Four years later, Manchester High School, located in a rural farmland community of about 3,800 residents, had increased its graduation rate for general education students from 60 percent to 94.7 percent. In the same time period, the graduation rate for students with disabilities had increased from 28 percent to approximately 63 percent. And, one year later, Manchester was one of 10 high schools in Georgia that won the Governor's Office of Student Achievement Gold Award for greatest gain in percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards. The C.A.F.E. dialogue process was part of the Georgia Department of Education's (GaDOE) five-year focus on family and community engagement. This initiative was funded by an OSEP State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). The C.A.F.E. supports the adoption and use of evidence-based practices promoted in the Georgia SPDG's GraduateFIRST initiative implemented in collaboration with OSEP's National Drop Out Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities.

Many factors played into the significant improvement of this high school, where 100 percent of the students qualify for the federal free lunch program, but Principal Medders is quick to identify the C.A.F.E. process as the conduit to change. He invited the community to see all the problems and work as a team to make changes. "Together, we switched from a defensive position to an offensive one," said Medders, who before becoming principal was a special education teacher and is now a high school principal in a nearby county.

The C.A.F.E.'s impact was felt immediately using the tools of school improvement: evidence-based practices, a thorough drill on the data, coherent examination of all initiatives and administrative buy-in to proposed changes. By doing something differently – recognizing the need for the right mix of community support and hands-on assistance and purposefully becoming inclusive and transparent in every aspect of its work – the C.A.F.E. process resulted in significant change.

C.A.F.E. uses two strategies learned and supported through the IDEA Partnership: the Dialogue Guide process and Communities of Practice. By inviting the full range of partners to learn from and with each other, Meriwether County leaders committed to making the necessary practice changes. Parents and community members, many of whom had been disengaged with the school, joined the C.A.F.E. and are still active today. Store owners, the sheriff, mechanics, realtors, parents of students who dropped out or were likely to drop out and many others came on board to provide multiple perspectives at the urging of the district's Parent Mentor, Ginger Henderson. A facilitator also kept the team focused and action oriented.

The team's initial task was to create communitywide awareness of the pressing school issues as well as to create a sense of urgency. The team then collaborated to launch activities to support ongoing academic efforts, including adult mentors to homeroom advisories and the FBI Program (Fathers Being Involved) to encourage more adult male role models. The C.A.F.E.'s work was intentional and often found solutions to a myriad of social issues impacting certain students that went far beyond what a school is typically capable of addressing.

Georgia: The Partnership Way

- Groups with authority over the issue join with groups that have influence in the field.
- Persons with expertise and/or experience share knowledge and skills.
- Decision makers, practitioners and consumers understand that collective influence has the potential to change outcomes.

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The C.A.F.E. at Manchester High School, which is in the Meriwether County School District, is a local adaptation of the IDEA Partnership's national effort to build shared meaning and personal resolve among a group that can exert influence on a critical education issue. It is the connection that brings all the federal and state investments together for local change. C.A.F.E. also builds on GaDOE's 12-year investment in the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership, which is collaboratively supported by funding from OSEP, GaDOE and the local school districts.

District Efforts in Indiana

Mixing Leadership Approaches to Increase Student Literacy

The Madison-Grant United School Corporation began a four-year professional growth process in K–12 literacy using the framework for authentic engagement developed by the IDEA Partnership. School district data, reflecting state and national student assessments, indicated poor student growth in English language arts. Data analysis by district administrators revealed at both the intermediate and middle school levels low student proficiency in reading comprehension and writing applications and, at the high school level, low student proficiency in writing and the use of sophisticated vocabulary. Leadership believed that to support student learning the district needed to invest in learning for faculty and staff. So, they engaged a literacy consultant to bring research knowledge and best practices information into the district.

After the initial sharing of information, building administrators in collaboration with teachers and specialized instructional support personnel, determined the areas of literacy they would address. The staff in each building looked at their own data and worked together to determine what additional information and what types of professional supports were needed. Crossing levels of scale, they accessed documents and information from the Indiana Department of Education, technical assistance centers and independent researchers. Support strategies were discussed and matched to teacher and staff level of learning (consultation, collaboration, coaching). Interested stakeholders were engaged at multiple points in the process. In addition to the teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, building administrators and others impacting or impacted

Indiana: Top Down

District leaders:

- Analyzed state and national student performance data.
- Identified gaps in literacy.
- Determined professional development.
- Engaged a professional development provider to share research knowledge and best practice.

Indiana: Bottom Up

Primary teachers from across buildings:

- Identified a specific concern related to literacy instruction.
- Decided across buildings the what, why and how of needed supports to accomplish their goal.
- Accomplished buy-in for the resulting product and process across buildings, grade levels and teachers.

Indiana: The Partnership Way

Collaborative Learning and Implementation

- Cross-stakeholder engagement: teachers, specialized support personnel, administrators, students, parents and community.
- Attendance to the technical and human side of change: matching support process to teacher/staff request/need.
- Supporting sustainability: teacher expertise develops into teacher leadership and/or mentoring situations.

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by the initiative were involved in the work. Not least of all, students engaged in discussions about what did and did not work for them as learners. As the process has evolved over the succeeding three years, teachers have developed expertise in differing areas and have taken on mentoring and leadership roles in their respective buildings and across buildings. Additionally, dialogue occurred throughout this time with parents and community members. As a result, parents demonstrated increased awareness and support for the literacy initiative and a local foundation grant supported funding for professional development opportunities.

Throughout the evolution of this initiative, one issue stands out as an example of bottom-up decision making. In this midwestern small town, rural district with three elementary buildings, primary teachers raised similar questions across the buildings with regard to research, best practice and appropriate materials to support student acquisition of skills in phonemic awareness and phonics. Up to this point in time, each school had been addressing the standards in differing sequences and with inconsistent use of different materials. Several teachers began their own research on best practices; others began searching for quality materials available both in and out of the district. They then decided they needed additional help to research best practice and delineation of appropriate sequence of skill instruction, as the standards had gaps. With facilitation, they developed a scope and sequence of student mastery that was accepted by all and implemented in all three elementary buildings.

Lessons from the State and Stakeholders in Colorado

Authentic Engagement is Becoming the Norm for Creating School Reform

In the early part of the 21st century, the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) processes in local schools was beginning to emerge in the state of Colorado. Recognizing the potential for improving intervention services to students, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) began systematically working to scale up RTI practices in the state. The early leaders of this initiative recognized the importance of having a forum where multiple stakeholders could collaborate in support of this work. As a result, the CDE created what it called the Colorado RTI Community of Practice. This Community of Practice brought together CDE personnel and local practitioners to engage in monthly discussions of problems of practice related to the successful implementation of RTI. This group included personnel representing multiple departments in the CDE (prevention; language, culture and equity; Title I; Gifted and Talented Education; Special Education; and Standards) as well as school-based practitioners (school psychologists, special education teachers and school administrators). The original purpose of this Community of Practice was primarily for open discussion about what people were seeing in the field and as a forum that could identify the professional practice issues that needed to be addressed.

In October 2009, CDE was awarded a SPDG by the U.S. Department of Education that allowed the state to dive deeper into this scaling up work, including expanding the use of Communities of Practice. The grant helped fund the formation of several new Communities of Practice that were designed to look at some of the issues that were emerging about professional roles and practices of various personnel, as well as some of the systems and supports that were needed to fully engage families as partners in education. This grant also gave birth to new partnerships between the CDE and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), the IDEA Partnership and the RTI Action Network. Each of these national partners brought new insights and opportunities for CDE. From the partnership with NASP came consultative support for building a variety of Communities of Practice. One such effort sought to expand understanding about the training, roles and services of school psychologists and how these professionals might contribute more effectively to RTI in the schools. In turn, a Community of Practice focusing on the roles of bilingual school psychologists and social workers was formed and continues to meet regularly, pursuing an active agenda addressing professional practices, school collaboration and professional development.

Also in 2009, the Colorado General Assembly established the State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) that was given the charge to "review best practices and recommend to policy makers and educators strategies to increase parent involvement in

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public education" (C.R.S. §22-7-301(2), 2012). Concurrently, CDE opted to form the Family-School-Community Partnership Community of Practice that links CDE leaders, school practitioners, family regional resource center staff and family representatives together. The work of this group has led to the development of more effective collaboration and resources to support schools and families. Additionally, the leadership of this Community of Practice was appointed to chair the SACPIE, creating the opportunity for these two groups to combine their efforts and truly transform practice at the state and local levels.

From the partnership with the RTI Action Network, a new Community of Practice on state-level implementation of RTI was formed that focused on examining practices specific to state-level implementation of RTI. This Community of Practice brought together state-level implementation leaders interested in exploring issues related to policies and procedures, compliance, funding, how to best support local education agencies and how to better integrate existing practices such as PBIS with RTI.

The collaboration with the national IDEA Partnership helped nurture a deeper understanding of the theoretical foundations of Communities of Practice, the critical functions of this work as described by Community of Practice theorist Etienne Wenger and the potential for more sustainable collaborations. In fact, in the last three years, a transformation of the original Colorado RTI Community of Practice has occurred. Through experience in working across stakeholder groups, this Community of Practice has moved well beyond its original purpose as a monthly discussion forum to a Community of Practice that is actively producing work to guide the field in meaningful practice for students. For example, this group used the community to create, pilot and evaluate fidelity of implementation rubrics now being used by school districts across the state. Additionally, this Community of Practice is currently evaluating its work against the essential functions of Communities of Practice described by Wenger (2002) as being to educate, support, cultivate, encourage and integrate. The Colorado RTI Community of Practice is currently conducting a self-evaluation of each of these functions by examining existing data and evidence that characterizes its work in all five areas. This evaluation process is helping the Community of Practice plan for future work and is creating an opportunity for the group to really celebrate its accomplishments. Overall, utilizing Communities of Practice is emerging as the new norm for doing effective and sustainable school reform work in Colorado.

Colorado: The Partnership Way

- Groups with authority over the issue join with groups that have influence in the field.
- Persons with expertise and/or experience share knowledge and skills.
- Building relationships across roles and levels broadens the area of impact and supports sustainability.
- Decision makers, practitioners and consumers understand that collective influence has the potential to change outcomes.
- The Community of Practice strategy brings coherence across investments.

Leading by Convening

A Guiding Framework

Leading by convening, as we describe it, is an overarching idea, a guiding framework and a new discipline for leaders at every level. We envision this framework to include habits of interaction, elements of interaction and depth of interaction. Three habits of interaction are drawn from our work with Etienne Wenger in Communities of Practice. The habits we work to instill in individuals, organizations and agencies include coalescing around issues, ensuring relevant participation and doing work together. Each section of the blueprint is organized around these three habits.

Each habit is further examined to describe three elements of collaboration. The elements of interaction are informed by the work of Heifetz and Linsky on technical

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and adaptive change. Throughout the blueprint we have described the technical and adaptive aspects that demand consideration. As a partnership, we further describe operational elements. Operational elements are the decisions that a group makes after considering both the technical and adaptive sides of an issue. Operational elements are articulated at the end of each section.

Based on our work together, we recognized that depth of interaction also was an important aspect to describe. Over time, the partners have used four levels to talk about our work together. These levels progress from typical interactions (described as Informing) through deepening interactions (described as Networking and Collaborating) and conclude with individual and system changes (described as Transforming). The rubrics at the conclusion of each section map the depth of interaction to the operational decisions and provide a standard by which to measure progress on interaction.

A way to envision the entire framework is provided in the graphic representation, The Partnership Way: Leading by Convening. The habits, elements and depths of interaction are nested within the more encompassing leadership behavior, leading by convening. The habits of interaction, elements of interaction and depths of interaction will be discussed further in the following pages.

Establishing Habits of Interaction

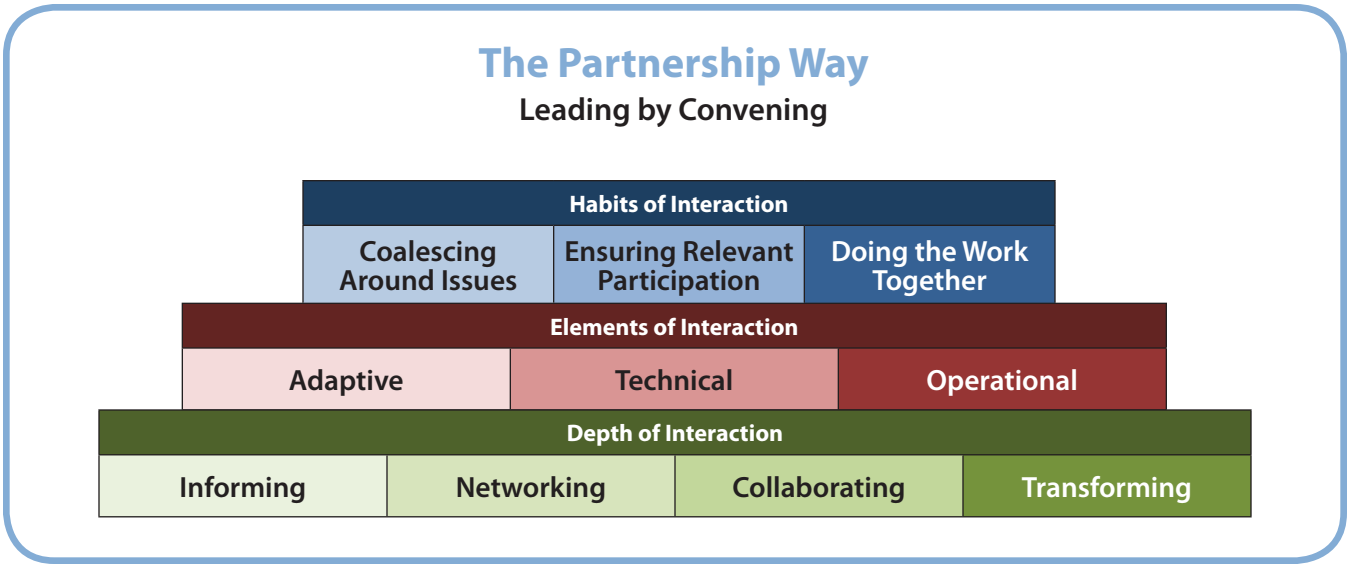
In 2007, we undertook our first attempt to describe how working across groups could address persistent problems of practice. The product, *Communities of Practice: A New Approach to Solving Educational Problems,* is still instructive. While working on that resource, Etienne Wenger helped us to understand the social discipline of learning by asking these questions in the foreword.

- What shared concerns are going to bring people together in meaningful ways?
- Who should be at the table to ensure real progress in practice?
- What should participants be doing together to increase their individual and collective learning and ability to act?
- Who has the skill, legitimacy and leadership to convene these groups?

He posed these questions around several actionable behaviors that defined our habits of interaction:

- Doing the Work Together.

He also helped us understand the need for a new leadership style, leading by convening. Conveners translate complex work into ways that individuals can contribute. They bring stakeholders together through "insight, networking,



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inspiration and humility" (Wenger, as cited in Cashman, Linehan, and Rosser, 2007). They create the conditions for people to come together.

These principles have permeated our thoughts and led us to articulate how leading by convening enables authentic engagement, and how engagement opens opportunities for shared work and sustainable practice change.

Elements of Interaction

Addressing Challenges as a Critical Element of Sustainable Change

Creating change when change is needed is a worthy effort. Implementation science (Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005) is teaching us much about what it will take to introduce new practices and how to go about installing them and maintaining them with fidelity.

While we are learning how to increase the likelihood that new practices will endure, sustaining change continues to be a challenge. Change often depends on learning the new practice while sustainability depends on individual acceptance of the change and integrating it into our personal behavior.

We have found that sustaining practice change depends on the four Cs: content, context, contact and communication. Several researchers have influenced our thinking about this. Dean Fixsen's work on implementation helped us with content and context. Etienne Wenger's work on Communities of Practice helped us establish the habits of interaction that address contact and communication. These variables were brought into a new focus when we became acquainted with the work of organizational theorists Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky. They have shaped our thinking on sustainable change. In their 2002 book, *Leadership on the Line*, they pose two critical challenges to implementing change.

- **Technical challenges** are those that can be solved by the knowledge of experts. These elements come into play when the problem definition, solution and plan implementation are clear. For example, research identifies early warning signs for academic failure. The technical challenge can be met by sharing the information with educators and implementing the strategies.
- **Adaptive challenges** are those that require new learning, those for which there is no clear-cut problem definition and solution. Adaptive challenges require experimentation, discovery and/or adjustment to past practice. Adaptive change is about the human elements of change: values and beliefs, relationships and buy-in or lack thereof. When asking people to think differently, act differently and believe differently, the success rate is often less than if the solution relies on technical elements alone. For example, in the preceding situation, the technical information is necessary but not sufficient. Adaptive strategies also are needed to address behavior changes in both staff and students.

Based on our efforts to work across groups, the IDEA Partnership added operational elements that help leaders to act in full consideration of both the technical and adaptive challenges. Operational elements bridge from ideas to goals and actions. They define what each of the players will be doing to address the technical and adaptive issues. Operational decisions supporting the technical side of change focus on the content and infrastructure necessary for implementation. Operational decisions in support of the adaptive side focus on the human aspects of change – the attitudes or behaviors that support or constrain change.

The ongoing challenge of leadership is to approach change in a way that fully addresses both the technical and adaptive elements. Operationalizing this belief demands a leadership style that is inclusive, collaborative, authentic and engaging. This is the spirit of partnership and leadership pioneered through the IDEA partners.

Moving to Deeper Levels of Interaction

As our work across groups deepened, the partners began to notice the varying levels of interactions. Not all potential partners could or even wanted to engage at deep levels, but all could be included. With time and with ongoing participation, groups are able to see their own interest

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in working together. When this happens engagement deepens. We describe four levels of interaction: informing, networking, collaborating and transforming.

- **Informing** – Sharing or disseminating information with others who care about the issue.
- **Networking** – Asking others what they think about this issue and listening to what they say.
- **Collaborating** – Engaging people in trying to do something of value and working together around the issue.
- **Transforming** – Doing things The Partnership Way (leading by convening, cross-stakeholder engagement, shared leadership, consensus building).

Working in The Partnership Way changed who we are as collaborators. It is not easy and it does not happen quickly. We have learned that we must do more than simply say we are attending to the elements of change; we must work at it. We must stretch individually and organizationally.

Throughout this document, we describe what it means to work and lead in The Partnership Way. Again, although this term began as a reference to the IDEA Partnership, we now use it to describe the authentic engagement achieved through convening and shared leadership.

The Partnership Way is a hybrid leadership style of leading by convening, incorporating elements and strategies from both top-down and bottom-up models.

Tools and Learning Activities

As we have worked in states and districts, we found the need to develop tools to communicate concepts and generate ideas. In different states, we had to customize the tools, but they were almost always needed. We have compiled and edited those tools for your use. You will find them referenced at the end of the corresponding sections and in the appendices.

Each tool or learning activity has a history. Each was developed based on a recognized need. We believe that you will face some of the same challenges in communicating the behavior change expressed in this blueprint. These tools are provided to reinforce the concepts. You may need to customize them for your needs and may even want to develop some of your own. We will continue to develop tools and learning activities and they will be made available on the blueprint link (**www.ideapartnership.org**).

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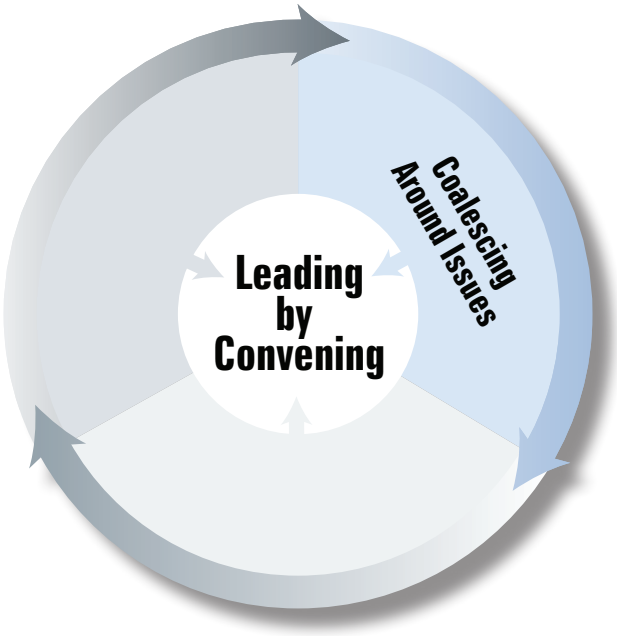
Coalescing Around Issues



Section Two

The first triad in the development of The Partnership Way describes a habit of practice in which groups of people come together around shared concerns or problems of practice that they want to resolve. We call this habit **Coalescing Around Issues**.

Inherent in coalescing around an issue is commonality: commonality of need, commonality of purpose and commonality of action. This triad focuses on inclusion of multiple partners who come from differing and unique roles and bring new perspectives to the issue or problem. As individuals with differing backgrounds and experiences share and think together, all benefit by seeing what one might not otherwise see.

In our IDEA Partnership work we have identified both adaptive and technical elements that, when practiced consistently, develop the habit of coalescing around issues.

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Coalescing Around Issues: Adaptive and Human Elements

1. Value each and all perspectives.
2. Acknowledge individuality of language in discussing the issue.
3. Agree upon data sources that contribute to understanding the issue.
4. Commit to reaching consensus through shared understanding in the group.
5. Acknowledge and agree that collective impact is greater than the individual impact.
6. Agree to move on specific actionable goals.

1 Value Each and All Perspectives

Openly demonstrating the value of each and all participants is central to a safe environment where participants can share, think and problem solve together. It is essential to avoid conveying that some participants are more important than others. Implementing strategies to support active, ongoing participation of diverse stakeholders demonstrates that each and all perspectives have value.

- Ensure group interaction that is frequent enough to help participants feel they are in this together. Provide ample time to express current understanding of the issue and to gain one another's perspective.
- Encourage active involvement of participants by creating multiple opportunities to engage and redefine the issue. Take advantage of available electronic connections between face-to-face meetings (e.g., webinars, electronic meeting space, conference calls, email and Listservs).
- Continue outreach to others who are interested in or linked to the issue in some way, using existing networks to reach out and invite others, paying particular attention to ensuring minority voices are present. Keep nonparticipating groups informed and continue to invite those who don't join in from the beginning. Those who are not participating are welcome to join the group at any time and at any point in the process.

2 Acknowledge Individuality of Language in Discussing the Issue

When first coming together, issues need to be described through vocabulary that is used by the array of partners. There is the element of learning each other's language before the partners can agree on common terms that will be used in their shared work. As persons from differing roles gather together and begin discussion of a common issue, they often find that role-specific or career-specific language may hinder understanding of each other. Participants are encouraged to ask for clarification when someone uses a term or acronym with which others are unfamiliar. Discussions of vocabulary and terminology need to be public so that connections can be explored and made. Creating lists of new terminology or terms that have the same meaning is often helpful to the group. Ultimately, common language for the partnership work can be agreed upon and shared externally as well as used internally.

3 Agree Upon Data Sources that Contribute to Understanding the Issue

A diverse group of stakeholders brings diverse perspectives and identifies with diverse data sets. Stakeholders point to statistical and anecdotal data that resonate with their constituencies and should be included in discussions of the issues. Using a process to determine the data upon which all can agree is essential to reaching agreement within the group and to supporting future work together.

- Determine necessary data. Consider the questions of relevancy and focus on the issue(s) being addressed.
- Collect evidence of the negative and positive sides of the issue. Go beyond statistical data to qualitative, anecdotal and substantiated stories of the issue.

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- Analyze for meaning and accuracy. Are the data current? Are they from reliable sources? How much weight should be given to quantitative data versus qualitative data?
- Synthesize results together. Make connections between and among experiences, people and resources.

4 Commit to Reaching Consensus Through Shared Understanding in the Group

Once a group of interested individuals identifies an issue of importance, members develop a shared understanding through discussions and exploration of the issue. There may still be variations in perspectives, yet all agree they can accept a joint statement about their work on the issue and begin moving forward. Expressing the common ground, while noting the things with which group members do not agree, is a key principle for developing this common understanding through consensus. Often consensus is evidenced by nodding heads, parallel body language, verbal commitment and a willingness to endorse the group's decisions. True consensus is reached when individuals continue talking about the agreed upon common messages after the meeting and the commitment is sustained over time. An important first step is to agree to work on the points of agreement until, over time and with continuing interactions, it becomes easier to talk about issues on which there is not current consensus. It is important to understand where the perspectives on the issues begin to diverge. This point must be respected as trust develops.

5 Acknowledge and Agree that Collective Impact is Greater than the Individual Impact

The advantage of coming together from differing perspectives to address a common interest is that, together, individuals can make a greater impact than they can individually. While most or all of the group acknowledge this, it is important to verbalize it across the diversity of stakeholders. Once verbalized, acknowledged and agreed upon, a foundation for moving forward together in deeper collaboration is established.

6 Agree to Move on Specific Actionable Goals

As the group begins to act together, it will need to develop an action plan. Action plans address specific technical elements that will be important to address the issue. Before the development of such a plan, it is wise to reiterate the specific actionable goals that will be translated into an action plan. At this stage, it this important to reaffirm the willingness of the group to align work scopes, messages to constituencies, etc., that will contribute to the development of the action plan.

Coalescing Around Issues: Technical Elements

1. Describe the issue.
2. Outline the existing knowledge base.
3. Seek out and acknowledge related initiatives at differing levels of scale.
4. Develop mission, aspirational statement, guiding principles and ground rules of interaction.
5. Develop a process for continued engagement.
6. Develop work scope and actionable goals.
7. Use a process for reflection.

1 Describe the Issue

When the goal is to address a particular issue or problem, it is important to separate out the issue from the broader picture. In the IDEA Partnership, we have found it helpful to deal with the full landscape of the issue first, to outline the broader picture and the specific pictures within that broad

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landscape and then identify our coalescing issue(s). The process includes some specific actions:

- Acknowledge the broad areas that pertain to an issue; define the whole issue.
- Identify issues that contribute to the current situation from the perspectives of various stakeholders.
- Identify any pertinent data, evidence-based practices and present policies.
- Agree on which specific aspect(s) the group will tackle.

As the group moves forward in agreement, we let others know we see the full landscape of the issue; however, this is the piece we can do right now.

2 Outline the Existing Knowledge Base

For every issue there is a compendium of related theory, research and practice knowledge. It is important to establish the knowledge base and the evidence base that will inform the dialogue that will take place across stakeholders. As sources of knowledge may vary across groups, it is important to identify the knowledge base that influences the current thinking of each group.

3 Seek Out and Acknowledge Related Initiatives

One of the unique characteristics of The Partnership Way is to ensure that an identified issue is not treated as though all the work begins with this effort. Honoring what others have done is part of the process of coalescing around the issue. Within and beyond the assembled group, related and aligned work is sought out and explored. The group seeks out information from different levels of scale (national, state, local and individual). Seeking out and learning about related initiatives that partners have undertaken helps group members to understand and build on the positives that have come before, develop a strong base on the issue and gain assistance in agreed upon efforts. As the group continues to work together, members keep looking for aligned issues and opportunities to engage with a broader group of diverse stakeholders.

4 Develop Mission, Aspirational Statement, Guiding Principles and Ground Rules of Interaction

Inclusive work relies on commitment of the group members to the common statements that unite them. That commitment is more likely to sustain itself over time if certain key understandings – including the following – are collaboratively developed, written, shared and revisited often.

- Mission statement: A mission statement sets forth the purpose for which the group has come together. Typically, a well-articulated mission statement includes the what, how and why of what the group is doing/planning on doing. It is best developed after open discussion of the issue and ways in which the group may address the issue.
- Aspirational statement: An aspirational statement describes what the change will look like in practice and how the group interactions will achieve it. It serves as a reminder of why the group is together and provides impetus for continuing with the plan.
- Guiding principles: Guiding principles are the unifying beliefs that are the foundation for collaborative efforts. They articulate what we believe about the importance of the issue, current conditions and what is possible as the group moves forward together. Guiding principles reflect respect for all.
- Ground rules of interaction: Inclusive practice is not always a natural way to behave and therefore requires some specific agreements that make the expectations explicit. Most often this involves describing the ways of communication and working together that convey a mutual respect, shared leadership and a willingness to consider change. Effective collaborations recognize that there will be disagreements. Ground rules set expectations for how differences will be handled and how the groups will return to common ground. Groups differ on the formality surrounding ground rules. Most often ground rules specify actions around convening, planning and communicating. For example, some leaders believe it is important to specify that all meetings – both face-to-face and virtual – will have a prepared agenda that is shaped by the group and driven by the work accomplished between meetings. Others are comfortable with a less structured

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approach. Ground rules express the agreed upon process for the group.

5 Develop a Process for Continued Engagement

Every group must determine its rhythm of interaction; the frequency that allows individuals to feel like part of the group, but not so often that the work becomes burdensome or mundane. Engagement implies that work is ongoing. Meetings stimulate engagement. Preparation, on-site interactions and follow-up activities contribute to the vitality of the group and the accomplishment of goals that have been agreed upon. The group determines the avenues for connecting and takes advantage of available electronic media (e.g., webinars, electronic meeting space, conference calls, email and Listservs) between face-to-face meetings.

6 Develop Work Scope and Actionable Goals

Once the group has identified its primary shared goal, it sets up an expectation for action by developing a work scope and actionable goals related to the overall primary goal. Often, the overall goal is broad and there are smaller goals that are important and actionable in achieving the larger goal. The group members work together to identify the actionable goals. This becomes the scope of the work. For example, if the overall goal is to improve practice relative to a particular topic, actionable goal steps may include the following.

- Crafting and delivering common messages to the field includes:
  - Delivery via communication vehicles available to the partners.
  - Presentations together in high-value venues (conferences, large meetings, etc.) as a symbolic and substantive demonstration of commitment.
  - Creation and presentation of an elevator speech (succinct, yet comprehensive statement of core purpose).
- Developing and disseminating products includes:
  - Practice and/or professional development documents.
  - Recommendations for policy changes as appropriate to the issue, organization and level of impact.
- Setting achievable work goals with others, including goals that are attainable in a specified time period and within the context of the change environment. Work goals are grounded in a theory of change. They specify how the shared work of the group will create the practice change that is envisioned in the aspirational narrative.
- Measuring progress. Action plans address ways in which progress will be measured.
  - Quantitative measures set goals relative to data sets that initially brought people together around this issue.
  - Qualitative measures probe changes in the perspectives, stories and other sources of information across the stakeholder groups in this collaboration.

7 Use a Process for Reflection

Reflection is one important strategy in an ongoing process of communication and interaction. A structured process of reflection focuses the group on both the task and the relationships. Periodically, groups must examine the extent to which they are actually coalescing around the issue. A good reflection tool helps collaborators focus on their theory of change and how their interaction will produce the desired outcome. Reflection is essential to both measuring progress and focusing on next steps. It is important to identify:

- What we thought would happen.
- What did happen.
- How well it was done.
- What was learned.
- What we will do next.

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Coalescing Around Issues: Operational Elements

After considering both adaptive and technical elements, the group must make operational decisions. In coalescing around issues, the technical and adaptive elements can be characterized by four big ideas:

- Acknowledging and valuing diversity.
- Researching and agreeing on relevant data.
- Decision making through consensus.
- Coalescing to complete future work together.

In order to facilitate such reflection, the following rubrics are correlated to the four big ideas of coalescing around an issue and describe what we would observe the collaborators doing in terms of behaviors observable in beginning efforts and behaviors evident in deepening levels of partnership.

These rubrics, which include the following suggestions, can be used for individual or group reflection.

- Individuals in the group use the rubric at specified points in time (e.g., every six months).
  - A comparison of ratings across stakeholders informs a group discussion that helps the group to form a fuller picture of its interactions and how this relationship contributes to the group's outcomes.
- To explore the ratings in a group meeting, create a wall chart. Each member of the group uses a colored sticker and places one in the cell that best describes his or her perspective on the current status of each operational element (described on the rows of the rubric). The responses are recorded. As the group returns to the rubric (e.g., quarterly, semi-annually), the data on collaboration build and provide measures of growth over time that can be coordinated with data on practice change.

Tools and Learning Activities

In Appendix Two you will find the following tools and/or learning activities to use that will be useful in helping to bring people together to coalesce around issues. You can use these products as a self or team coaching tool and during your convenings to clarify meaning and generate ideas. A description of the tools follows.

- ***How People Are.*** Change is hard for most people. This tool will help you prepare for some of the most predictable challenges.
- ***Four Simple Questions.*** We cannot avoid complexity but we can make it less complicated. This tools will help you create an inclusive path to shared work.
- ***Seeds of Trust.*** Your stakeholders will take in messages about your sincerity in both direct and indirect ways. Little things mean a lot. Use this tool to identify small changes that build trust.
- ***Meet the Stakeholders.*** For every issue, there are a number of groups that have deep and durable connections at the practice level. Use this tool to reach out and identify potential partners.

Note: Digital versions of the tools—PowerPoint presentations and PDF fillable forms—are found on both the CD and the USB drive.

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Coalescing Around Issues Rubric

	Depth of Interaction			
Coalescing Around Issues	**Informing* Level (Sharing/Sending)**	**Networking† Level (Exchanging)**	**Collaborating‡ Level (Engaging)**	**Transforming¶ Level (Committing to Consensus)**
Acknowledging and valuing diversity.	A core group of interested stakeholders disseminates information to potentially interested stakeholders, across roles, to inform them about issues and invite them into the discussion.	Stakeholders from diverse roles exchange ideas and resources with one another. Clarification of role-specific vocabulary is at beginning stages. Outreach to others with a specific focus on roles not yet involved continues.	Diverse stakeholders engage in dialogue about issues. Differences are acknowledged and explored. A common vocabulary begins to emerge.	Diverse stakeholders with diverse perspectives are engaged through multiple ways in active collaborative dialogue about issues in order to reach consensus about priorities and future research, policy and practice opportunities.
Researching and agreeing on relevant data.	Personal and professional experiences (anecdotal) are the primary source of evidence for consideration.	Stakeholders consider what other data beyond personal stories could be a source of evidence and begin collecting relevant data and resources.	Stakeholders identify relevant data from across disciplines and examine for common themes for understanding (collective analysis).	Through consensus, stakeholders agree on the anecdotal and research data from various perspectives and sources relevant to the issue.
Decision making through consensus.	Core group identifies an issue of importance.	Stakeholders contribute to the discussion, bringing in other perspectives.	Stakeholders contribute to and create a shared vocabulary. They reach across systems to review, critique and revise and/or confirm the issue to be addressed.	Through consensus, stakeholders determine the specific aspects of the issue that the group will move forward to influence.
Coalescing to move to future work together.	Core group intentionally shares with others, who are not already stakeholders, the reason for caring about this issue, meeting one-on-one with targeted persons, organizations, etc.	Stakeholders are intentional about inviting new members into the group work and being purposeful in getting the people in the same room to work together.	Stakeholders develop grounding documents (mission, vision, guiding principles and ground rules). Stakeholders develop and agree on a process of continued communication that fits their needs.	Through consensus, stakeholders develop a set of actionable goals that define the work scope of the effort. Relationships are built for strategic advantage.

*__Informing__ — Sharing or disseminating information with others who care about the issue.

†__Networking__ — Asking others what they think about this issue and listening to what they say.

‡__Collaborating__ — Engaging people in trying to do something of value and working together around the issue.

¶__Transforming__ — Doing things the partnership way (leading by convening, working cross-stakeholder, sharing leadership, building consensus).

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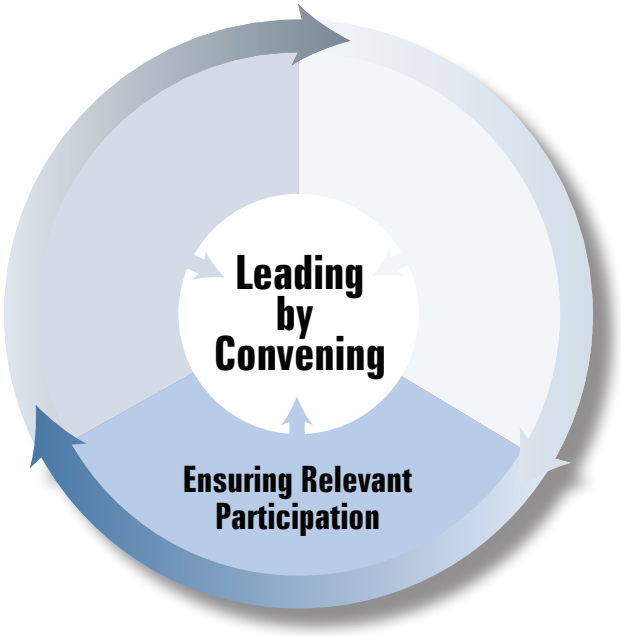
Ensuring Relevant Participation



Section Three

The second triad in the development of The Partnership Way involves ensuring that the right mix of stakeholders is identified and participating. This habit of interaction we call **Ensuring Relevant Participation**.

In some ways, ensuring relevant participation is breaking away from traditional expected behavior for interacting at meetings. At most meetings, you are expected to follow along and look to others for solutions. In our IDEA Partnership work we have identified both adaptive and technical elements that support us as we continue to strive to ensure relevant participation. The Partnership Way models the process of ensuring relevant participation by showing us what is expected, and the participants show a willingness to do the work necessary by responding to the invitation and doing the preparation necessary to move forward. Coming together must not feel like just one more meeting to attend. It is important to accomplish things; things that are important and relevant to the participants.

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Ensuring Relevant Participation: Adaptive and Human Elements

1. Demonstrate a commitment to inclusion and participation.
2. Engage stakeholders who are representative, relevant, purposeful, knowledgeable and influential.
3. Acknowledge disagreement as part of the process to move forward.
4. Engage through leadership; begin with a skilled facilitator; continue through shared leadership.

1 Demonstrate a Commitment to Inclusion and Participation

It is not enough to say that we are inclusionary in process; we must demonstrate a commitment to inclusion and participation. Commitment to inclusion can be demonstrated in a variety of ways.

- Providing access supports such as translators, interpreters and visual enhancements.
- Determining the level of understanding that potential participants have about the technology being used.
- Making sure various technology resources are available for use and making sure people feel that they can use what is comfortable for them.
- Equalizing the knowledge base by offering overview sessions for new participants and/or important stakeholders that may have different kinds of experience with the topic. This is particularly important in empowering families and youth to participate meaningfully in content discussions.

Commitment to participation can be demonstrated in a variety of ways.

- Ensure a structure for gathering broad participation beyond the designated representative attending the meeting in person.
- Consider flexibility of scheduling as to day of the week and time of the day (e.g., conference calls across time zones for those whose job or career does not necessarily allow for daytime participation (e.g., parents and/or families, youth, teachers, etc.). Evenings may be best for conference calls and other follow-up activities.
- Consider providing stipends for participation if group members do not have a salary attached (e.g., stipend for families, child care, time and day of meetings) when and where possible.

2 Engage Stakeholders Who Are Representative, Relevant, Purposeful, Knowledgeable and Influential

Once the core group has coalesced around a particular issue, group members ask and address the question "Who else needs to be at the table?" As a group first begins, those at the table may find that the right stakeholder, or not all the relevant stakeholders, have been invited to participate. At times, when this happens, the group may find it may not act on the purpose of the meeting or follow up after the meeting. When that is recognized, it is important to keep inviting, keep working through the difficulty and acknowledge that the work will be improved by adhering to the intent of the process of relevant participation.

All decisions made at different levels of scale should ensure cross-stakeholder engagement. Anything less and it doesn't become a habit of collaboration. Through its data review, the core group has identified those who are affected by or care about the issue and invites them to join in the discussion and the work. Of course, conveners may not always have the time, space or relationships to invite everybody who cares about the issue. This is why it is important for the group to be open to other partners as the work evolves. In our work, each group of stakeholders (e.g., organization, technical assistance provider, department, etc.)

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chooses who its representative to the partnership group will be. The person chosen to attend might vary depending on the purpose of the meeting or activity. When determining who that representative is going to be, stakeholder groups are encouraged to consider people with expertise, materials and resources; those who have credibility with the larger group of stakeholders being represented; and those with the responsibility of doing the work on the ground. As the group evolves, it encourages all stakeholders to make recommendations about who else should be involved as those outside the core group bring a deeper understanding of who needs to be included from the community to create change. Also, as the group evolves, its members develop skills in leveraging participation and opportunities (sometimes people and sometimes issues).

3 Acknowledge Disagreement as Part of the Process to Move Forward

As the group is made up of diverse stakeholders it is essential to have an agreement and a clear understanding that we may not reach consensus on every point. Acknowledgement that disagreement is part of the process begins with opening up the process to involve people who might not agree and are willing to be the ones who speak up. Intentionally inviting people who might not just go along with the group's prevailing thought aids the full group in many ways. Through discussion on points of disagreement, it has been our experience that points of agreement are clarified; resources that have to date been overlooked or not known become known; and a deeper commitment to the work is established.

4 Engage Through Leadership; Begin with a Facilitator; Continue Through Shared Leadership

Through our experience, we have found that it has been beneficial at the beginning stages of group interaction to enlist the help of a skilled facilitator who is recognized or can quickly build a sense of objectivity with the group. The facilitator possesses skills to include all participants through a defined process and use of strategic tools. Quickly building comfort through internally facilitated discussion, this person models the value of perspective early on as decision makers, practitioners and consumers are all encouraged to respond and contribute.

It is important to note that the facilitator may be a person from the group or from outside the group. The internal facilitator is someone who is able to suspend his or her opinions for the time being in order to elicit information, opinions and expertise from the other members of the group. When there is no one in the group who has the skills or the willingness to take on the role, it is advantageous to bring in someone from outside the group who has no vested interest in the issue in order to begin the discussion. Once the group has the issues on the table and trust is building, the external facilitator leaves the group. Likewise, at a similar point, the internal facilitator gives up the role of leadership and the collective group leads the process. The decision to use an internal or external facilitator is a key decision. In either case, the facilitator must remain cognizant of where perspectives come together and where they begin to diverge. This space is important to trust building and ownership.

One important sign that it is time to move to a collective leadership is collective ownership; the conversational pronouns move from "they" and "I" to "we". As the group moves to a collective leadership process, it is important to note that the role of leader or facilitator is shared; the person in the role changes as the situation changes. One meeting or discussion may require a person with research knowledge to lead, another may call for someone doing the work in the field to lead and so on.

Whoever is in the leadership/facilitation role at the time has to have a strong self-awareness, acknowledge his or her weakness and be open to redirection and correction from others. As a leader/facilitator, consider at what point you need to give up the role and share it with others. Changing roles on a regular basis is critical to preventing the demise of a group based on a leadership change. As a member of the group, consider whether or not you need to be at the table or whether that will inhibit the process. This can be particularly true when a person of authority and a person under the other's supervision are both representatives to the group.

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Ensuring Relevant Participation: Technical Elements

1. Implement a process of welcoming and orienting.
2. Develop guidance on when to convene.
3. Develop and follow a communication protocol.
4. Contribute to and create a shared vocabulary.
5. Conduct an environmental scan.
6. Use a process for reflection.

1 Implement a Process of Welcoming and Orienting

Throughout the life of a partnership the group evaluates the current attendee list and routinely considers if there is anyone who should be at the table who is currently not there. To support diverse stakeholder engagement and to address addition of members throughout the time the group is in the partnership, an articulated process of welcoming and orienting is beneficial. Some things we have found valuable in different partnership groups include:

- Creation of a joint invitation that is customized as needed to include key stakeholders with influence and authority.
- Acknowledgment of various roles at the beginning of each meeting or follow-up activity.
- Establishment of a mentor/mentee relationship for orienting new people.
- Individual follow-up calls to newcomers from core group members.
- Encouragement for new members to talk about an individual experience and then discuss how it contributes to the bigger picture.

2 Develop Guidance on When to Convene

Coming together in the partnership is not about just attending another meeting. As a whole, it is beneficial to develop guidance on when stakeholder groups should be convened. For example, when a federal policy requirement requires state change, we don't need a stakeholder group to guide the policy development. We do, however, need to work with the stakeholders to implement it. Critical questions to address as the group develops such guidance include the following.

- When do we go to our standing group of stakeholders for input and when do we reach beyond that group?
- When do we know we need a subgroup to inform the larger group?
- How do we create the structure to support two-way learning that leads to deep understanding?
- What constitutes a need for a face-to-face meeting, conference call, webinar, group Listserv or email input?

3 Develop and Follow a Communication Protocol

Following the development of guidance on when to convene stakeholders is the development of protocols for communication. There are multiple ways to support relevant participation among the group members. Any process developed should provide opportunities for virtual participation in addition to face-to-face participation. A communications protocol includes structure issues such as who has responsibility for invitations and setting up the meeting (on site and/or virtual), how one contributes to agenda development and how feedback between sessions will happen. It would also include protocols for meeting processes and progress as well as clarity on expected behaviors and group interactions.

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4 Contribute to and Create a Shared Vocabulary

Acknowledging the individuality of language each representative brings to the discussion is a critical element of coalescing around an issue. To ensure relevant participation it is important to move forward with a common language for partnership work and to make sure that vocabulary does not become a stumbling block that limits participation. With a shared vocabulary we are better able to define the problem clearly and to move forward together.

In addition to using this shared vocabulary within the group, it becomes central to shared messages that go out to others. Still, it must be recognized that shared messages often need to be customized for the audience and that some terms may need to be interpreted for a particular audience. For example, as the IDEA Partnership community discussed and developed materials around the framework of responsiveness to intervention, they agreed to use the term *Response to Intervention*. However, as some states have adopted other terms such as Response to Instruction, Multi-tiered System of Support, etc., research-based and evidence-based materials developed by the IDEA Partnership could be customized by interchanging the terms that spoke to the different states.

5 Conduct an Environmental Scan

Moving beyond seeking out and honoring what others have done on the issue (coalescing triad), this is a time when members of the expanded group conduct an environmental scan to find out who else cares about this issue and why. The group seeks out others with expertise, materials and resources that can contribute to the work. Environmental scanning activities include talking to people in your own network, talking to other groups with whom you work, conducting Internet searches and reaching out to those in other geographic locations and levels of scale.

6 Use a Process for Reflection

By definition, engaging in relevant participation means actively participating in an ongoing way in various phases of the process. It is incumbent on all members of the group to be cognizant of others' participation as well as their own. Strategies or actions that indicate may increase participation when needed include:

- Over invite a particular group that tends to be underrepresented.
- Put forth extra effort to engage needed groups.
- Lead a discussion on what relevant participation looks and feels like.

Ensuring Relevant Participation: Moving Forward Together

The technical and adaptive elements of ensuring relevant participation can be characterized by four big ideas about the way we interact:

- Ensure diversity among relevant stakeholder representatives.
- Create opportunities for engagement on the issue.
- Work together to facilitate understanding of the issue and diverse perspectives.
- Acknowledge evolving leadership roles. Rotate or share leadership.

These technical and adaptive elements are paired with operational elements that appropriately support the technical and adaptive aspects of relevant participation and result in group outcomes, both behaviors and impact, relative to the issue identified. As stated previously, reflecting on the progress toward desired outcomes is a key element of The Partnership Way. In order to facilitate such reflection the following rubrics are correlated to the four big ideas of relevant participation and describe what we would observe the collaborators doing and developing together. The actions range from beginning efforts to deep indicators of partnership. Regardless of depth, several behaviors are important in this element.

These rubrics can be used for individual or group reflection. Suggestions for use include the following.

- Individuals in the group use the rubric at specified points in time (e.g., every six months). A group

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discussion may then follow with respect to where "we" are.

- Create a wall chart. Each member of the group uses a colored dot sticker and places one in the cell that best describes the current status for each of the operational elements (each row). The group then revisits and reflects with a set of different colored dots at a later time (e.g., annually, semi-annually). This provides a measure of growth over time.

The first activity supports discussion that brings the group to a point of understanding and develops consensus about where we are and where we need to go. The second activity provides that same support for discussion plus the additional benefit of translating the percentage of responses in each cell to statistical data that engage data-oriented thinkers and provide programmatic data to share with others.

Tools and Learning Activities

In Appendix Three you will find the following tools and/or learning activities to use that will be useful in helping to ensure relevant particiaption. You can use these products as a self or team coaching tool and during your convenings to clarify meaning and generate ideas. A description of the tools follows.

- ***What's in It for Me?*** Participation is not the same as engagement. Use this tool to identify the difference and begin to really engage your partners.
- ***Engaging Everyone.*** Talk to a group about engaging the full range of stakeholders and predictably you hear, "We will have 200 people at every meeting." This is a real fear; but is it a real problem? Use this tool to create manageable ways to involve everybody.
- ***Learn the Language: Make the Connection.*** Unique vocabulary, program names and funding streams contribute to the lack of clarity around shared interests. Use this tool to help your stakeholders find the commonality.
- ***Web of Connections [PowerPoint].*** Why do you identify certain groups as potential partners? Why would they want to become a partner? Use this tool to articulate the various perspectives around a shared issue.

Note: Digital versions of the tools—PowerPoint presentations and PDF fillable forms—are found on both the CD and the USB drive.

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Ensuring Relevant Participation Rubric

Ensuring Relevant Participation	Depth of Interaction			
	Informing* Level (Sharing/Sending)	**Networking† Level** (Exchanging)	**Collaborating‡ Level** (Engaging)	**Transforming¶ Level** (Committing to Consensus)
Ensuring diversity among relevant stakeholder representatives.	A core group of interested stakeholders disseminates information to potentially interested stakeholders, across roles, to inform them about issues and invite them into the discussion.	Stakeholders from diverse roles exchange ideas about who else might be important to this issue (relevant stakeholders). Outreach to others with a specific focus on roles not yet involved continues. Ideas about method preferences, accessibility and responsibilities are exchanged.	A process of welcoming and orienting is in place for new members. Inclusion and participation supports are in place.	Supports for participation are a natural way of working together. All in the group take responsibility for inviting and orienting new members of the group.
Creating opportunities for engagement on the issue.	A core group of interested stakeholders invites others to participate in various ways (on- or off-site).	Stakeholders share preferences for on-site and virtual methods of communication.	The group develops guidance on when to convene. Stakeholders consider suggested communication methods that meet the needs of the members and match methods with purposes and/or types of engagement activities.	The group considers and utilizes, as appropriate, multiple methods for engagement (online, face-to-face, conference calls, etc.). Methods are utilized and modified as needed. Flexibility in method use is demonstrated.
Working together to facilitate understanding of the issue and diverse perspectives.	A core group initiates an environmental scan to determine who else has resources to contribute to the work.	Stakeholders from diverse roles exchange information and share work that has been done previously. An environmental scan is conducted and others with expertise, materials and resources are invited into the group.	Stakeholders contribute to and create a shared vocabulary. They reach across systems to review, critique and revise/confirm the issue to be addressed.	Stakeholders demonstrate disagreement is a way to reach agreement. A common vocabulary is used. The question of who else needs to be involved continues to be addressed.
Evolving leadership roles.	Core group members identify and share a variety of different roles and functions that can occur within the group as it evolves.	Stakeholders discuss roles and responsibilities and determine who is interested in assuming specific roles for distinct periods of time or in relation to a particular subissue or activity. Flexible leadership is emerging.	Group members work together and assume roles and responsibilities appropriate to their knowledge, skills and interests. Shared leadership is emerging.	Shared responsibility and accountability for all roles and activities is evident. Roles are flexible and different people assume them at different times as needed.

*__Informing__ — Sharing or disseminating information with others who care about the issue.

†__Networking__ — Asking others what they think about this issue and listening to what they say.

‡__Collaborating__ — Engaging people in trying to do something of value and working together around the issue.

¶__Transforming__ — Doing things the partnership way (leading by convening, working cross-stakeholder, sharing leadership, building consensus).

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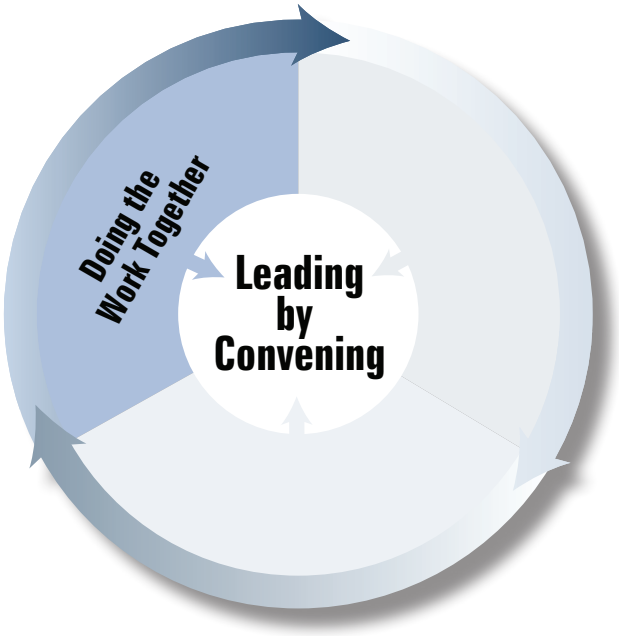
Doing the Work Together



Section Four

The third triad in the development of The Partnership Way focuses on the work being accomplished and the interactions between and among the participants. This habit of interaction we call **Doing the Work Together**.

Working together effectively is critical if we are to have a significant impact across organizations and agencies and local, state and national levels. From our years of refining how we approach and follow through with one another as organizations, as agencies and as individuals we have identified adaptive and technical elements that have supported us along the way.

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Doing the Work Together: Adaptive and Human Elements

1. Value and appreciate diversity in participants and interactions.
2. Model and demonstrate respect for and among all participants.
3. Practice shared leadership.
4. Encourage and support participants' personal investment in the value of the work.
5. Acknowledge the human need (individual and group) for recognition.

1 Value and Appreciate Diversity in Participants and Interactions

Throughout working together as a true Community of Practice, there is ongoing participation of diverse stakeholders in all aspects of the work. Diversity of perspectives on the issue is encouraged by bringing together those in different roles (e.g., education professionals, families, business professionals, etc.) who are interested in the topic. Once together, the climate is one of appreciation and thanks for sharing of differing perspectives, knowledge, expertise and experiences and making a contribution to the work of the whole. Members of the group openly explore turf issues that could influence or inhibit interactions. They consider cultural variables (e.g., language, sense of etiquette, etc.) that impact interactions among the group. Routinely, the members monitor and manage the potential development of an insider or outsider culture. They examine impact and influence of potential alliances and invite others with differing opinions or information into the community. As new persons are invited into the group, it is essential to implement strategies that were identified in the first triad of coalescing around Issues.

2 Model and Demonstrate Respect to and among All Participants

As members of the community work together they acknowledge and honor all perspectives by being accepting and nonjudgmental. All opinions are listened to, considered, discussed and equally valued. Often within the discussion one will hear a phrase similar to, "Oh, I had not thought of it from that angle." Within discussions there is agreement to challenge ideas, not people; and from that evolves statements of agreement, disagreement and clarification. Being cognizant of agenda times and focusing on the discussion at hand is an outward example of demonstrating respect for those who are giving of their time and energy.

3 Practice Shared Leadership

Now that the group has coalesced around an issue and all the relevant persons are at the table, meeting facilitation becomes the responsibility of and is shared among the members of the group. The person in a temporary role of leader or facilitator can change based on the situation. This is a nonhierarchical process; position and title do not determine who is in a leadership role. Knowledge, experience and available time and energy contribute to the determination of who the leader(s) or facilitator(s) are at any one time in the process. The person or persons leading the work take responsibility for organizing, documenting and completing the agenda; facilitating the meeting and ensuring the participation of all present; sharing leadership inside the current meeting; and ceding leadership when the situation changes. Shared leadership is ever evolving.

4 Encourage and Support Participants' Personal Investment in the Value of the Work

Through shared leadership opportunities, and at all times in the process, members of the group demonstrate their willingness to work together to accomplish a common goal. This is witnessed in a commitment to the work and the process. We have experienced willingness of East Coast participants to be on a conference call at 8 p.m. in the evening so that a practitioner in California can participate.

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Often words of appreciation are directed to individuals or groups of individuals relative to their efforts and energy.

5 Acknowledge the Human Need (Individual and Group) for Recognition

In addition to spontaneous words of appreciation, there also is a need for shared recognition and celebration of accomplishments. It is important to stop occasionally and reflect on where the group has been and where it is now. The reflection tools (technical element) provide the support to remember to stop and take stock, to discuss accomplishments and to share recognition for those accomplishments.

Doing the Work Together: Technical Elements

1. Develop and maintain principles for interaction and engagement.
2. Develop a structure for convening and working together.
3. Create and maintain systems to support group interactions.
4. Identify levels of potential interaction and/or influence.
5. Develop and implement an action plan.
6. Use a process for reflection.

1 Develop and Maintain Principles for Interaction and Engagement

As a full group, it is advantageous to revisit the documents developed as the group transitioned from coalescing to ensuring relevant participation. Periodically asking ourselves the following questions ensures that we are staying on task with our work.

- Mission statement: Are we staying on purpose? Has our focus changed over time?
- Vision statement: Are we striving for the identified overall goal? If not, what has changed?
- Guiding principles: Are we living up to our guiding principles? Do we need to exert a bit more effort in an area or two?
- Ground rules of interaction: How are we doing? Are we adhering to our agreed upon parameters of interaction? Do we need to exert a bit more effort in an area or two?

2 Develop a Structure for Convening and Working Together

Referencing the previous decisions (ensuring relevant participation) regarding guidance on when to convene and the protocol for communication, the group choses or amends the structure based on the finalized action plan (goals to be accomplished and timeframe for completion). A wide variety of formats for convening and working together are available from face-to-face physical meetings, to audio/video virtual meetings, to conference calls and/or email.

3 Create and Maintain Systems to Support Group Interactions

There are times when some members engaging in the work will not be available for a meeting or a conference call. To function well, every member needs to be informed both on and off site and on or off a call. Doing the work together means sharing the responsibilities for that work. The group typically agrees that documentation of work is needed and will be shared with all, possibly via email or a group site that all can access. Documents that typically are produced include:

- Schedules of meeting space and time.

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- Draft and final agenda.
- Attendance records.
- Minutes or notes of the meeting.

Shared leadership supports typically include:

- Varying roles and responsibilities for operation of the group.
- Rotating leadership or facilitator responsibilities.
- Establishing protocols for keeping work groups connected to the core group.
- Plan for communicating ongoing work.
- Shared acknowledgement of all group products.

4 Identify Levels of Potential Interaction and/or Influence

As we think about potential interaction and/or influence, we think about it in multiple ways. We ask ourselves typical questions.

- How can we, the group working together, benefit from interaction with others who are not part of the group?
- Who else needs to be invited into the work?
- Who else might benefit from our work?
- With whom do we need to share?

Potential for interaction exists across horizontal and vertical planes or differing levels of scale.

- Horizontal plane: (same level of scale) working together with one level (local, state, national).
  - Within a local community, a school district and mental health agency work together to address issues of school-based behavioral/mental health.
  - At the state level, the state department of education convenes a special education advisory council to address issues of implementation.
  - At the national level, organizations and technical assistance centers come together to address a national education issue.
- Vertical plane: (different levels of scale) working together across local, state and national levels.

5 Develop and Implement an Action Plan

During the initial time of coalescing around an issue, the core group of partners developed a work scope and actionable goals. Now the larger, more diverse group revisits the initial decisions and creates an action plan with specific small goals (the same as or flowing from the earlier identified actionable goals), timelines and responsibilities that are clearly defined. Steps in the process include:

- Brainstorm options for action.
- Choose from among alternative options for action
- Identify priorities based on the collection and analysis of data.
- Identify potential leverage points that might contribute to a solution.
- Develop plans through collaboration and active engagement of participants in the process.
  - Agree on the structure of the plan.
  - Identify barriers and how they will be addressed.
  - Determine resources and tools.
  - Establish timing for outcomes at each actionable step.
- Establish shared responsibility for doing the work among stakeholders, based on role and networking opportunities.
- Plan for reflection and monitoring of progress.
- Plan for adjustment of strategies as need arises.

6 Use a Process for Reflection

Along the way, it is important to take time to reflect on working together. This is important for several reasons. Reflection helps to recognize the change that occurs, as it is sometimes difficult to see when you are deeply involved in the work. Reflection creates opportunities for accomplishments to be highlighted and celebrated. Reflection requires us to look both at the tangible and intangible outcomes – the products and tools produced and the relationships that have been built.

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Doing the Work Together: Moving Forward Together

The technical and adaptive elements of doing the work together can be characterized by four big ideas:

- Engaging diverse participants in completing the relevant work.
- Evolving leadership roles.
- Working together to understand and articulate the issue.
- Working together to plan and implement action.

These technical and adaptive elements are paired with operational elements that appropriately support the technical and adaptive aspects of working together and result in group outcomes, both behaviors and impacts, relative to the issue identified. Reflecting on the progress toward desired outcomes is a key element of The Partnership Way. In order to facilitate such reflection the following rubrics are correlated to the four big ideas of doing the work together and describe what we would observe the collaborators doing and developing together. The actions range from beginning efforts to deep indicators of partnership. Regardless of depth, several behaviors are important in this element.

These rubrics can be used for individual or group reflection. Suggestions for use include:

- Individuals in the group use the rubric at specified points in time (e.g., every six months). A group discussion may then follow with respect to where we are.
- Create a wall chart. Each member of the group uses a colored dot sticker and places one in the cell that best describes the current status for each of the operational elements (each row). The group then revisits and reflects, using a set of different colored dots at a later time (e.g., annually, semi-annually). This approach provides a measure of growth over time.

The first activity supports discussion that brings the group to a point of understanding and develops consensus about where we are and where we need to go. The second activity provides that same support for discussion plus the additional benefit of translating the percentage of responses in each cell to statistical data that engages data-oriented thinkers and provides programmatic data to share with others.

Tools and Learning Activities

In Appendix Four you will find the following tools and/or learning activities to use that will be useful in helping participants to do the work together. You can use these products as a self or team coaching tool and during your convenings to clarify meaning and generate ideas. Description of the tools follow.

- ***Problems Come Bundled.*** Few problems have just a technical side or just a human side. Use this tool to more fully identify the issues you face.
- ***Building Engagement.*** Anybody can deliver information. We want engagement. Use this tool to generate learning activities around an issue.
- ***Defining Our Core [PowerPoint].*** We often need to describe our work in straightforward ways that are understandable to potential partners and the public. Use this tool to express your driving purpose and share it simply with others.
- ***One-Way, Two-Way Learning [PowerPoint].*** While formal systems often communicate through a one-way process, interaction demands a two-way process. Use this tool to transform one-way processes into two-way learning activities.

Note: Digital versions of the tools—PowerPoint presentations and PDF fillable forms—are found on both the CD and the USB drive.

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Doing the Work Together Rubric

	Depth of Interaction			
Doing the Work Together	**Informing* Level (Sharing/Sending)**	**Networking† Level (Exchanging)**	**Collaborating‡ Level (Engaging)**	**Transforming¶ Level (Committing to Consensus)**
Engaging diverse participants in completing the relevant work.	The expanded group (after coalescing) informs others about the proposed work and the anticipated outcomes, along with the opportunity to participate.	Each group agrees to become the conduit for its members to learn and be involved.	Stakeholders work together to share unique perspectives and begin the work. Efforts to find others who might be important to this work are ongoing and intentional.	Partners who have experienced working together with a diversity of individuals cannot think of any other way to work. This type of engagement is internalized and expected.
Evolving leadership roles.	The expanded group informs its constituents that the effort is underway and opportunities for engagement continue.	Stakeholders share levels of expertise in organization, facilitation, etc. Members begin to identify and ask individuals to facilitate certain activities.	Meeting facilitation is shared among members of the group. Flexibility in leadership is evident based on comfort and skill levels of the individuals.	Members of the group demonstrate willingness to work together to accomplish a common goal. Flexibility in leadership is evident. When a designated facilitator becomes unavailable another steps up from the group.
Working together to understand and articulate the issue.	The expanded group communicates evolving ideas, issues and resources.	The expanded group seeks opportunities for their constituents to respond to the current ideas, issues and resources.	Stakeholders consistently revisit their structures for interaction and revise as needed.	Group members agree and clearly articulate the work through the products created and/or their discussions with others.
Working together to plan and implement action.	The expanded group identifies strategic ways in which to customize messages for its audience and helps them to act.	Participants exchange ideas about the work and how it could be accomplished, possible action steps and timelines.	Through shared decision making, stakeholders create a well-developed action plan. They share responsibility and are actively engaged in implementation of the plan. Transparency and open communication occurs between and among different levels.	Vertical and horizontal influence occurs as a result of implementation of the action plan. Practitioners influence policy and policy influences practice.

*__Informing__ — Sharing or disseminating information with others who care about the issue.

†__Networking__ — Asking others what they think about this issue and listening to what they say.

‡__Collaborating__ — Engaging people in trying to do something of value and working together around the issue.

¶__Transforming__ — Doing things The Partnership Way (leading by convening, working cross-stakeholder, sharing leadership, building consensus).

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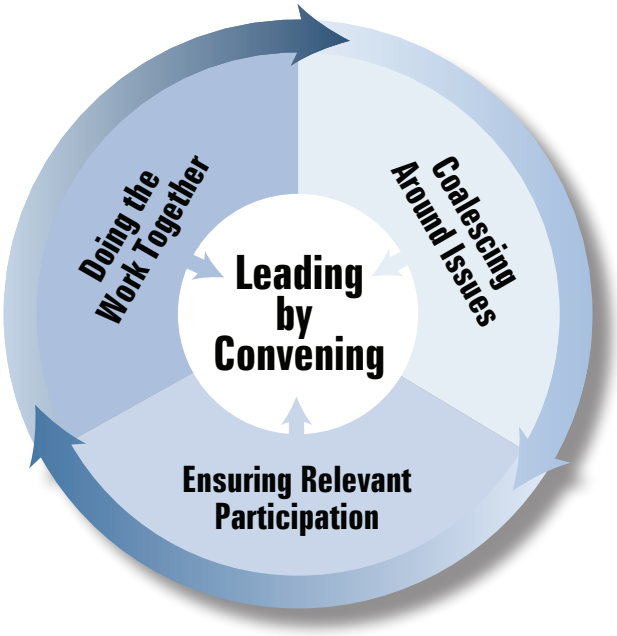
Bringing It All Together



Section Five

To lead by convening requires a set of skills that is both teachable and learnable. These skills can be developed by consciously thinking and acting in ways that attend to the relationship (adaptive and human) elements of change across the continuum of activities embedded in the habits of coalescing around, ensuring relevant participation in and working together to address an issue of common interest. We have found that taking time to reflect together on how we are doing provides reminders when needed and promotes celebration of accomplishments; thus, we continue to learn together and teach one another along the journey.

We believe that most deep learning takes place across complex landscapes of communities, networks, teams, conversations and connections. It is important to recognize that all individuals come to the process as learners. Each enters into the process having experiences that have contributed to a level of expertise derived from those experiences. It is through the eyes of personal experience that each views the issue or problem.

One caution or lesson learned is that of being careful to not become trapped in our own history; that is, not to allow internal nor external parameters to bind creativity. It also is important to not totally disregard history, as there are lessons to be learned from the past that can propel us forward. The opposite of being trapped in history is being an active learner, being open to hearing and listening and truly considering other perspectives. Checking one's ego

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at the door, leaving assumptions behind and being open to unlearning as well as learning are essential qualities of a learner. This concept has been a driving force in our work to create linkages, define multiple perspectives and work across agencies and organizations that share both interest and influence on an issue. Through convening via The Partnership Way deeply rooted personal experiences create knowledge, lead to additional questions and ignite both passion for the issue and commitment to finding and implementing solutions.

Convening, cultivating and promoting learning across these complex landscapes of differing perspectives calls for a special type of leadership deeply rooted in personal experience. Within each habit of interaction leadership is contextual or situational and changes based on the need of the group or subgroup at the time. It is imperative for the leader or convener to have a sense of the *why* – the purpose the group is together – to know the vision, before knowing the *how* of reaching that vision. Indeed, it is through interaction within the group that the how is defined. It also is very possible that the vision may change from the time of coalescing to discuss the issue to the point of creating an action plan to address the issue.

Leaders must be willing to do what they are asking of others. Partners often have referred to the analogy that leaders must be on the dance floor and in the balcony at the same time (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002). It is from the balcony that we see the big picture and where we observe if things are working smoothly. It is on the floor that the work is being done and where the enthusiasm resides. What is a complex set of steps on the floor may appear easy from the balcony; therefore, to be a good leader one also must experience the dance. A good leader knows when to talk and when to listen, when to think and when to act and when to cede leadership to another. Those who see themselves as leaders are guided by the deep belief that engaging themselves and others in The Partnership Way is a better way to work.

We have found that those (persons and agencies) possessing influence within a network as well as a level of expertise in either content knowledge or relationship development hold the legitimacy to act as a convener, especially at the coalescing stage. Leaders increase the capacity of others to become leaders. They actively seek out full participation by reaching out to those who previously have not had a voice, letting go of what does not work and are fine with it and willingly taking risks and provide models of leadership for others to emulate. Leadership emerges among others in the community as relationships develop and needs change. As we attend to the adaptive

Leading by Convening

Leading by Convening means we:

- Meet people where they are on the issue.
- Bring people together to build support for addressing the issue.
- Convene the stakeholders to discover why this is important and how it will improve practice.
- Translate complex challenges into ways that individuals can contribute.
- Help people lead in place regardless of role, position or title.
- Create new knowledge together.
- Solve complex issues that need the various perspectives/aspects that contribute to problems/solutions.
- Build a personal commitment to working in this way because we believe inclusive work is better and more sustainable work.
- Cultivate the habit of collaboration.
- Integrate collaboration into the identity of the group and the individual.

Leading by Convening becomes a reality when we routinely:

- Coalesce Around Issues.
- Ensure Relevant Participation.
- Do the Work Together.

This is The Partnership Way!

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as well as the technical side of change, leaders can take on varied roles to suit the needs of the group. . For many of us participating in this way over several years, across levels of scale and on a myriad of issues, we cannot think of working in any other way. We increasingly find ourselves bringing people together across sectors, professions and disciplines to contribute their different perspectives. We have learned about how to reach out, when to leverage opportunities and why it is important to share leadership. Being a collaborator, constantly learning and stepping up to lead when the situation calls has become the way we work. It has become who we are collectively and individually.

Bringing It All Together: Impact of Leading by Convening

Over the years as we have continued to revise and refine the ways in which we work together within the IDEA Partnership, we have found that attending to the adaptive as well as the technical elements of each of the triads that contribute to leading by convening increases our potential in reaching desired outcomes. Acknowledging and celebrating those accomplishments and positive outcomes is important to validate and/or sustain the energy that is going into the work on an issue. Ultimately, the knowledge, experience and beliefs of the people at the table as well as their combined work will result in positive impact and change in other leaders, policies and practices.

Taking time to reflect upon and to evaluate the collective influence of the work being done is encouraged and can be useful to sustain energy for the process, the issue and the work yet to be accomplished.

The Bringing it All Together Group Rubric can be used for individual or group reflection. Suggestions for use include:

- Individuals in the group use the rubric at specified points in time (e.g., every six months); a group discussion may then follow with respect to where we are.

Bringing It All Together Group Rubric

	Depth of Interaction			
Leading by Convening	**Informing* Level (Sharing/Sending)**	**Networking† Level (Exchanging)**	**Collaborating‡ Level (Engaging)**	**Transforming¶ Level (Committing to Consensus)**
Evaluate and showcase collective influence through accomplishments and positive outcomes.	• Disseminate program outcome data to interested stakeholders. • Share success stories (anecdotal).	• Exchange ideas about successes and accomplishments.	• Determine together what constitutes the standards for success. • Review together work based upon these standards.	• Identify, share and celebrate accomplishments. • Look for opportunities to influence change as a result of these accomplishments. • Consider opportunities for replication and generalization. Observe the vertical and horizontal influence that occurs as a result of this work.

*__Informing__ — Sharing or disseminating information with others who care about the issue.
†__Networking__ — Asking others what they think about this issue and listening to what they say.
‡__Collaborating__ — Engaging people in trying to do something of value and working together around the issue.
¶__Transforming__ — Doing things The Partnership Way (leading by convening, working cross-stakeholder, sharing leadership, building consensus).

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- Create a wall chart. Each member of the group uses a colored dot sticker and places one in the cell that best describes the current status for each of the operational elements (each row). The group then revisits and reflects with a set of different colored dots at a later time (e.g., annually, semi-annually, etc.). This provides a measure of growth over time

The first activity supports discussion that brings the group to a point of understanding and develops consensus about where it is and where it needs to go. The second activity provides that same support for discussion plus the additional benefit of translating the responses in each cell to statistical data captures deepening engagement that can be mapped to programmatic data as a measure of impact on outcomes. [See the tool, Measuring Progress, in Appendix Five, for an activity that does this.]

The Bringing It All Together Individual Reflection Rubric can be used for reflection. In this activity, you address how you see yourself in the role of collaborator. We encourage you to stop and reflect occasionally regarding your own internalization of the strategies in The Partnership Way. We have found that focusing on deep levels of engagement gradually changes our identity as leaders and collaborators. We often hear those that have been working in this way for a period of time say that it was a difficult change process for them personally; however, now they cannot imagine working in any other way.

Tools and Learning Activities

In Appendix Five you will find the following tools and/or learning activities to use that will be useful in helping you bring leading by convening all together. You can use these products as a self or team coaching tool and during your convenings to clarify meaning and generate ideas. A description of the tools follows.

- ***A Quick Chronology of Engagement.*** It is helpful for groups to look back on their work together and to tell the story of their engagement. Use this tool to develop and reflect on the chronology of your group's engagement and describe the value of your work together.
- ***Give Value First.*** Do you have expectations as you enter a learning partnership? Use this tool to rethink how expectations shape a potential partnership.
- ***Your Brand.*** Your brand is not your content, your logo or your website. It's what your stakeholders perceive about you, and how you make them feel. Use this tool to build your brand.
- ***Measuring Progress [PowerPoint].*** The value of relationships is hard to describe and even more difficult to measure. Use this tool to identify and quantify the value of relationships as strategy.

Note: Digital versions of the tools—PowerPoint presentations and PDF fillable forms—are found on both the CD and the USB drive.

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Bringing It All Together Individual Reflection Rubric

	Depth of Interaction			
Leading by Convening	**Informing Level*** **(Sharing/Sending)**	**Networking† Level** **(Exchanging)**	**Collaborating‡ Level** **(Engaging)**	**Transforming¶ Level** **(Committing to Consensus)**
I am a learner and a leader.	• I state clearly that I am here to learn from others. • I state clearly that I am willing to share leadership.	• I acknowledge that leading comes through skill development. • I ask others to come to the table as learners and to lead as they feel comfortable.	• I rely on leadership from those with influence and expertise as needed. • I know now that in the role of leader I am still a learner.	• I move with ease in and out of the learner and leader roles.
When meeting a new challenge or issue, I cross environments.	• I consciously seek out others with interest in the challenge/issue and share my information and questions with them. • I consciously ensure that others I seek out are coming from differing roles, experiences and perspectives.	• I exchange questions, ideas and resources with others. • I clarify role-specific vocabulary. • I consciously ask who or what perspective is still needed to make the best decisions and invite them into the conversation.	• I engage in dialogue about the challenge/issue with as many differing perspectives in the room as possible. • I use communication systems that support working across environments (conference calls, electronic media, etc.).	• I no longer need to bring the process of crossing environments to the conscious level. • I invite and engage with others automatically.
I rely on a blended leadership style to address new challenges and issues.	• I analyze data around the issue. • I share my perspectives with others. • I ask others to share data and perspectives.	• I listen carefully to what others have to share. • I ask clarifying questions. • I offer possible solutions.	• I call on others in the group to lead or facilitate discussions. • I ensure that each person has an opportunity to share. • I encourage consensus decision making. • I consciously build relations that attend to the human as well as the technical side of working together.	• I use with automaticity activities and strategies that support relationship building. • I acknowledge that all stakeholders have a role and their interactions produce value.

*__Informing__ — Sharing or disseminating information with others who care about the issue.

†__Networking__ — Asking others what they think about this issue and listening to what they say.

‡__Collaborating__ — Engaging people in trying to do something of value and working together around the issue.

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Meeting to Co-Create Tools and Learning Activities

Learning partnerships generate new knowledge grounded in doing the work together. Use the tools in Appendix Six to structure a new kind of meeting. Meetings to co-create tools help reinforce shared purpose and generate materials that the partners can use or customize to mobilize action within their networks. A description of the tools follows.

- ***Co-Creating Tools.*** One of the major challenges in learning to lead by convening is shaping traditional meetings in a new way. Many of our meetings bring people together by co-creating materials to be used and promoted by all the partners. This tool presents an overview of this strategy.
- ***Grounding Assumptions.*** This tool helps groups understand the importance of grounding assumptions and helps group members identify them. Grounding assumptions are statements with which all stakeholders agree. Where perspectives begin to diverge, grounding assumptions end.
- ***Needs of the Field.*** This tool summarizes how groups articulate a shared vision as well as the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to reach the vision.
- ***Developing a PowerPoint and Notes [PowerPoint].*** This tool helps teams develop content for a PowerPoint presentation that will be finalized by a volunteer work group following the convening. The work group may decide to create a presenter's guide or put helpful content and presentation suggestions in the notes field.
- ***Dialogue Guides [PowerPoint].*** This tool describes the use of Dialogue Guides, which can be used to help group members discuss topics identified by the stakeholders.

Note: Digital versions of the tools—PowerPoint presentations and PDF fillable forms—are found on both the CD and the USB drive.

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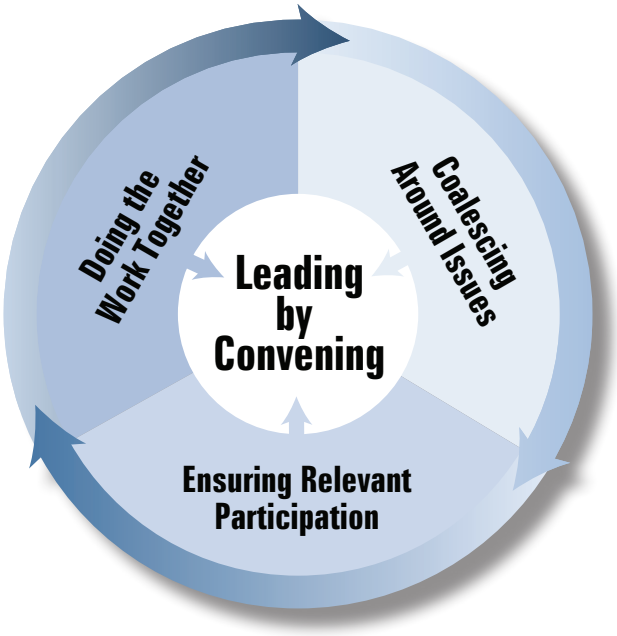

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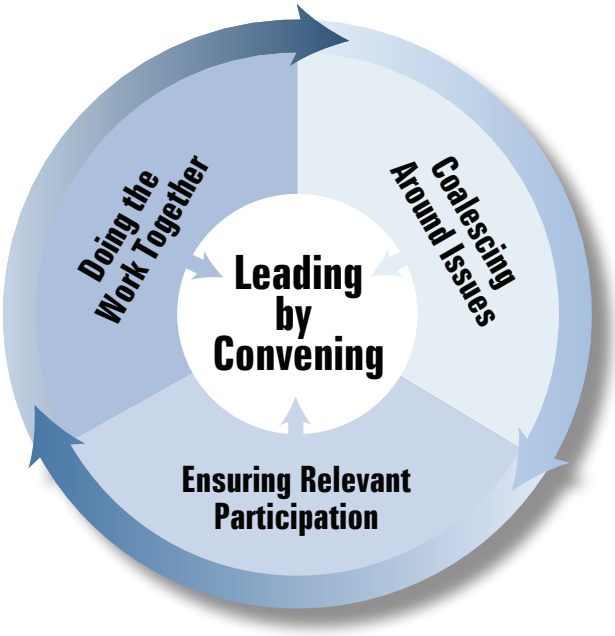

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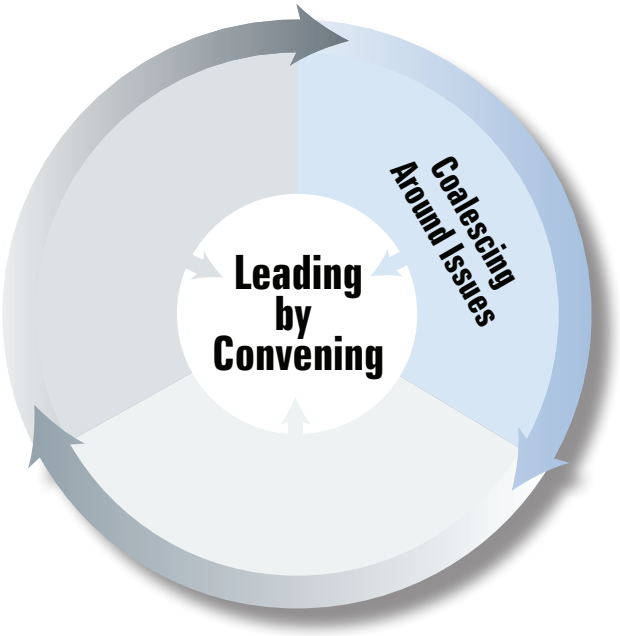
Coalescing Around Issues
Tools and Learning Activities



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Leading by Convening

Coalescing Around Issues

How People Are

Two organizational researchers, Keller and Aiken, describe some common myths about change in the business environment in their 2008 article, *The Inconvenient Truth about Change Management*. We have excerpted some key quotes and ask, "Do they apply beyond business? Is this how people are?"

For each of the following quotes conduct a Think/Pair/Share activity:

- With a partner, choose a quote that you will explore together.
- Take two minutes to read and think about the quotation individually.
- Take one minute to compose your individual thoughts.
- For one minute each, share the extent to which you agree or disagree with the quote.
- Finally, together decide, "Does the quote apply beyond business? Is this how people are?" and identify similarities or differences in your work or interactions.

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How People Are (continued)

Quote 1

"Leaders are no more likely to start a social 'contagion' than the rank and file…. Success depends less on how persuasive the 'early adopter' is, and more on how receptive the society is."

I Am Thinking	Areas of Agreement or Disagreement	Similarities and/or Differences with Our Work

This quote suggests that exemplars are important; however, building broad support for ideas is just as important. We need models but cannot assume that is all we need.

Continued

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How People Are (continued)

Quote 2

"Research indicates that when employees choose for themselves (versus 'being told'), they are more committed to the outcome by a factor of almost five to one. Time communicating the message should be dramatically rebalanced toward listening versus telling."

I Am Thinking	Areas of Agreement or Disagreement	Similarities and/or Differences with Our Work

This quote suggests that practitioners need to have some involvement in implementing change. They need to decide that the change is good through meaningful interaction. Information is necessary but not sufficient.

Continued

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How People Are (continued)

Quote 3

"What the leader cares about (and typically bases at least 80 percent of his or her message to others on) does not tap into roughly 80 percent of the workforce's primary motivators for putting extra energy into the change program."

I Am Thinking	Areas of Agreement or Disagreement	Similarities and/or Differences with Our Work

This quote seems to zero in on the differing pictures held by leaders and implementers relative to change. It suggests that success could be improved if leaders create processes to uncover what might drive and constrain implementers.

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Leading by Convening

Coalescing Around Issues

Four Simple Questions

Persistent problems of implementation remain challenging because they require crossing many boundaries to ensure progress in practice. Issues are complex, interconnected and can look different from the perspective of various implementers.

In these situations, we encourage leaders to use four simple questions.

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Four Simple Questions (continued)

1. Who cares about this issue and why?

Answering this question permits leaders to think beyond their personal and/or professional role to develop a big picture of the issue in practice.

Who cares? [List by role, organization, position, name, etc.]	**Why do they care?** [Note their connection to the issue.]

Continued

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Four Simple Questions (continued)

2. What work is already underway separately?

Recognizing the work of others is critical to developing allies. Respecting the history that others have on an issue is critical to engagement.

Organization or Group [Note name of organization or group.]	**Initiative, Location, Document or Tool** [Note title of initiative, location, document or tool.]	**Unique Vocabulary or Difference in Perspective** [Note any unique identifiers relative to this group.]	**Value to Our Common Interest** [Note value this group brings to the table.]

Continued

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Four Simple Questions (continued)

3. What shared work could unite us?

Relationship building takes time! Shared activities make a start and lead to bigger opportunities.

Activities that Might Have Value [Select from below and/or add others.]	For All Groups?	If Not for All Groups, List Specific Groups
Defining a Shared Problem		
Information Exchanges		
Productive Inquiries		
Joint Events		
Mapping Resources		
Developing Shared Messages		
Other (Specify)		

Continued

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Four Simple Questions (continued)

4. How can we deepen our connections?

A single outreach won't yield much when we want to change practice; interactions must be ongoing. *Remember*: If a group is important to our outcomes it isn't any less important because it doesn't accept our invitations. Keep inviting!

Group [List identified groups.]	**How can we support and connect to this group's work on this issue?** [Note activity(ies) most likely to be effective.]	**How can this group support and connect to our work on this issue?** [Note activity(ies) most likely to be effective.]

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Leading by Convening

Coalescing Around Issues

Seeds of Trust

You have decided to work on an issue by bringing people together. Congratulations! You are on your way to better outcomes through relationships. However, making the decision is not enough. Many of the people who you want and need to work with may be reluctant to engage. You will need to plant the seeds of trust. These seeds may grow quickly with some and slowly with others, but you need to plant and tend them just the same.

Building a relationship takes effort, and your stakeholders will take in messages about your sincerity in both direct and indirect ways. Changing your habits of interaction means knowing what drives and constrains your choices.

We have included some lessons we have learned throughout the years. Read and react to each. Identify what might encourage you and what might keep you from taking this particular action.

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Seeds of Trust (continued)

Lesson Learned #1

Create an invitation that goes beyond the basics of time, place and topic. Tell people why you want to do things differently. Ask them to join you.

To what extent do you see yourself doing this? [Highlight your response.]

Very Likely *Likely* *Possibly* *Unlikely* *No Way*

What positives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible positives that come to mind.]

What negatives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible negatives that come to mind.]

Is it worth it to try? [Highlight "No" or "Yes" and determine why you responded in that way.]

No *Yes*

Why? Deciding factors.

Continued

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Seeds of Trust (continued)

Lesson Learned #2

Not all the stakeholders will accept your invitation. What you do next matters a lot; you must keep reaching out. If you have identified someone or some group as a key stakeholder, they are no less important because they do not take your invitation. The work cannot stop, but neither can the outreach to this group and to others.

To what extent do you see yourself doing this? [Highlight your response.]

Very likely *Likely* *Possibly* *Unlikely* *No Way*

What positives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible positives that come to mind.]

What negatives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible negatives that come to mind.]

Is it worth it to try? [Highlight "No" or "Yes" and determine why you responded in that way.]

No *Yes*

Why? Deciding factors.

Continued

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Seeds of Trust (continued)

Lesson Learned #3

Some stakeholders may bring their old perceptions into the new collaboration. Be honest with yourself: You probably do this too! Think about how people have enabled you to trust when trust is at risk. Your tone and your ability to show authentic appreciation for the participation of others build trust. This does not mean any one person or group can always have their way; it does mean that each person and/or group is consistently treated with respect for their role and their views. Be alert and by your behavior set a different tone!

To what extent do you see yourself doing this? [Highlight your response.]

Very Likely *Likely* *Possibly* *Unlikely* *No Way*

What positives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible positives that come to mind.]

What negatives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible negatives that come to mind.]

Is it worth it to try? [Highlight "No" or "Yes" and determine why you responded in that way.]

No *Yes*

Why? Deciding factors.

Continued

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Seeds of Trust (continued)

Lesson Learned #4

We sometimes think about people who do not agree as resistors. We often fail to look at the role resistance does or does not play in achieving our goals. Organizational development author Rick Maurer says that, "resistance causes a fog that permeates the message about what you are trying accomplish." When people say, "I don't get it," they honestly don't! Making participation safer for important stakeholders is essential to the initial effort and to sustainability of the change you envision. Think about what is at risk for your stakeholders and actively work on addressing it as part of your overall strategy.

To what extent do you see yourself doing this? [Highlight your response.]

Very Likely *Likely* *Possibly* *Unlikely* *No Way*

What positives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible positives that come to mind.]

What negatives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible negatives that come to mind.]

Is it worth it to try? [Highlight "No" or "Yes" and determine why you responded in that way.]

No *Yes*

Why? Deciding factors.

Continued

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Seeds of Trust (continued)

You Try It

From your experience, leading or participating, write a lesson you have learned about building trust.

To what extent do you see yourself doing this? [Highlight your response.]

Very Likely *Likely* *Possibly* *Unlikely* *No Way*

What positives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible positives that come to mind.]

What negatives could result from use of this strategy? [List below all possible negatives that come to mind.]

Is it worth it to try? [Highlight "No" or "Yes" and determine why you responded in that way.]

No *Yes*

Why? Deciding factors.

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Leading by Convening

Coalescing Around Issues

Meet the Stakeholders

For every issue, there are a number of groups that have deep and durable connections at the practice level. Some are very closely aligned with the issues that you are trying to influence. Others have more distant, yet still important, connections. In either case, stakeholder groups have influence in what practitioners know, believe and do. Stakeholder groups can be important allies in moving new and/or proven practices to implementation!

To meet and address persistent challenges, we encourage leaders to identify and reach out to their potential partners.

Type of Partner	Partner Name	Contact Information
Organizations and groups that represent those responsible for directly implementing this practice.		

Continued

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Meet the Stakeholders (continued)

Type of Partner	Partner Name	Contact Information
Organizations and groups that represent those individuals with authority in the environments where this practice must be implemented.		
Organizations and groups with influence on the practitioners and consumers that care about this issue.		
Other		
Other		

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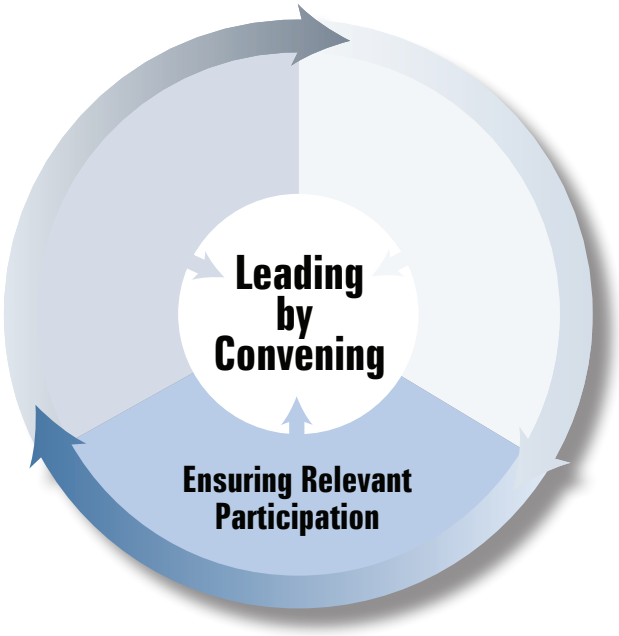
Ensuring Relevant Participation
Tools and Learning Activities



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Leading by Convening

Ensuring Relevant Participation

What's in It for Me?

Creating Professional and Personal Value

One error that we made as we began to work across groups was mistaking participation for involvement. When you are convinced of an opportunity or a course of action, it's easy to become very focused on convincing people of your viewpoint. In our early work we found ourselves reviewing the participant lists and feeling good that so many had come to hear our message. Soon we learned that a participant list is just that; nothing more. To engage people, we had to support and encourage interactions, exchange views and form opinions about the personal and professional value of continuing to engage.

Following are some things we did to help participants engage. For each strategy, identify why you think it helped turn participants into partners.

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What's in It for Me? (continued)

To Support Engagement	Value to Moving Participants to Partners
At each meeting, we conduct a public count of the roles (personal connection to the issue) represented by the attendees.	
At each meeting, we do a public count of the organizations represented among the attendees.	
After taking counts, we publicly note and set goals for engaging underrepresented groups (roles and/or organizations).	
We publicly ask if the mix of roles and organizational reach is significant enough to be a catalyst for practice.	
At meetings, we have shorter content presentations followed by longer interaction sessions.	
Pairs or teams of partners from different organizations facilitate the interaction sessions.	

Continued

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What's in It for Me? (continued)

To Support Engagement	Value to Moving Participants to Partners
At each meeting we create a voluntary list of organizations that want to take a leadership role on an issue of interest.	
We create customizable messages about the content that partners are encouraged to share with their networks.	
We send pairs or teams of partners to high-value meetings to present on the issues we are pursuing.	
We are attentive to sending a mix of partners from a variety of roles whenever we present to others or facilitate engagement.	
We are attentive to using the work of each partner organization as it relates to our shared work.	
We provide teams of partners to attend key meetings and obtain buy-in from organization leaders.	

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Leading by Convening

Ensuring Relevant Participation

Engaging Everybody

Talk to a group about engaging the full range of stakeholders and predictably you hear, "We will have 200 people at every meeting." This is a real fear, but is it a real problem?

We have found that for most issues, people want to be involved but not necessarily physically present. After a meeting or two, people sort themselves out by the way they want to be engaged. We have built on that understanding in creating this tool. By intentionally asking at which level individuals want to be engaged early in your collaboration, you can be inclusive within a structure.

This tool can be used after the first few convenings or at the conclusion of the first convening, depending on the current relationship among participants. Use your best judgment to determine how many organizing sessions you need.

Using the Circles to Define Roles

The circles (see next page) define the responsibilities so that potential partners can choose from among roles they would like to play.

The Core Team

The core team consists of leaders from diverse groups who are committed to the success of the work. Their responsibilities follow.

- Convene the group.
- Take responsibility for structuring each convening and follow up.
- Plan and monitor interaction.
- Create engagement strategies.
- Organize activities.
- Communicate with decision makers.
- Oversee review and evaluation.

Key Participants and Advisors

Key participants and advisors are groups that have responsibility for, or keen interest in, the issue. Their responsibilities follow.

- Act as regular contacts for information on the issue.
- Give advice and help the core team sense issues and adapt activities in a variety of contexts.
- Make opportunities for the work within their networks.
- Bring their networks into the work of the group.
- Promote the cross-stakeholder approach to problem identification and problem solving.
- Join the core team periodically when their expertise is required on a particular issue.

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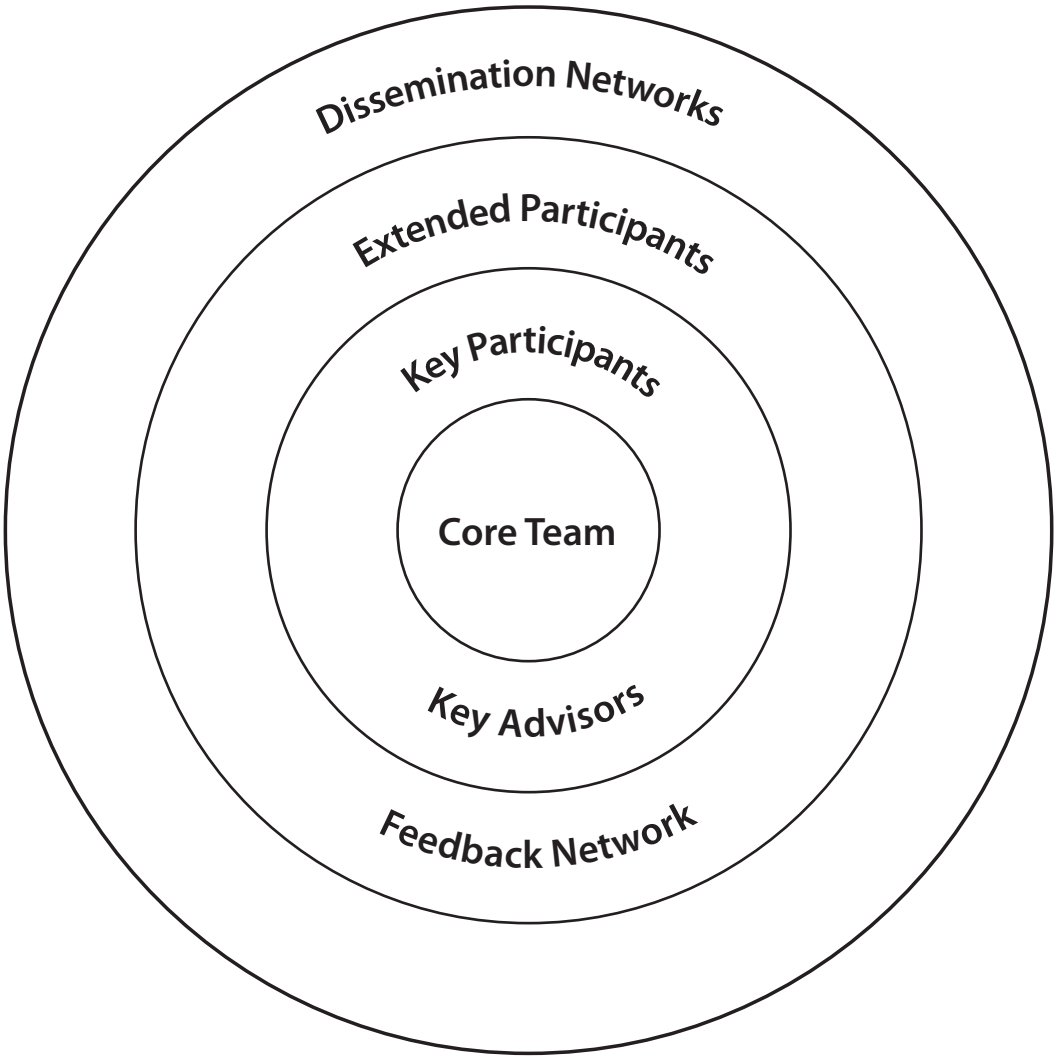
Extended Participants and Feedback Network

Extended participants and feedback networks are individuals who are reached through the organizations and networks that are key participants/advisors. They represent individuals who work at the practice, family or individual level. These participants have connections to the issues and to the organizations that are active on the issue. They can be a bridge between ideas as formulated and ideas as practiced. Their responsibilities follow.

- Volunteer to become involved and represent the perspective of their organization and/or network.
- Bring the perspective of their role and/or organization into the work.
- Bring important learnings back to their networks.
- Identify opportunities within their networks to showcase the learning.
- Hold both their organizational identity and the group identity while interacting with the group.
- Identify other practitioners and family members who may become active.



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Dissemination Networks

Dissemination networks include participants from all the groups within the circles and all the other groups related to this issue. Their responsibilities follow.

- Receive information.
- Redistribute information through newsletters, news blasts, meetings, etc.
- Submit information from newsletters, news blasts, meetings, etc.
- Customize messages for their particular audience.

Using the Circles to Send Important Messages or Invite Designated Participation

Sometimes activities or events require decisions about strategic participation. For every message, invitation or event the core team should decide together who to notify and who to invite. These are different processes with different goals.

Core Team

The core team constructs the process for inviting and defining participation from among the active members of each group based on the issue, **c**ontent, **c**ontext and special considerations regarding **c**ommunication and the need for **c**ontact (the Four Cs). The core team maintains a master list and customizes the list for each event based on the Four Cs.

Key Participants and Advisors—Group 1

Group 1 partners must be invited. They represent key constituencies and have the authority and/or influence to help individuals make change. All of these leaders may not be able to become consistently active on the issue, but they must be knowledgeable about the work of the group and committed to group outcomes. They may ask to designate a Group 2 participant to represent them. Group 1 must contain a critical number of active, key leaders who constitute the core team.

Extended Participants and Feedback Network—Group 2

Although Group 1 leaders must always be included, it is important for them to redistribute invitations and information to their networks as needed. The key participants and advisors from Group 1 are often uniquely situated to identify the right person to champion an issue or strategy on behalf of the organization. Interested and committed individuals from these organizational networks form Group 2.

Communication should begin with an understanding of the value of their individual participation and their connection to their larger network. These people are connectors and have influence with Group 1 partners. These people can help tailor messages to reach their networks. It is always good and encouraged for the Group 1 representatives to identify key leaders to join and become active participants in Group 2 who will share their organizational perspectives and bring new ideas to the group.

Dissemination Networks—Group 3

It is important to develop a number of active participants who will form Group 3. This group receives information and is asked to provide information. Group 3 participants should have enough interaction to consider themselves connected. Develop ways to actively engage Group 3. Some ideas include: webinar invitations, surveys, blogs, polls and broad inquiries.

Group 3 is important in creating both a buzz about the issue and the work completed on the issue.

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Leading by Convening

Ensuring Relevant Participation

Learn the Language: Make the Connection

When we started bringing different groups together, it quickly became apparent that groups had different ways of talking about the issues we share. Vocabulary, programs and funding streams contributed to the lack of clarity around shared interests. At first we thought we had to create a common vocabulary, but then we thought, "Why would we add more terminology?" We decided to be intentional about learning how our partners described our shared work. We called this strategy *learning the language*.

You can use this chart to help your stakeholders define key ideas and cross-walk vocabulary, programs and/or funding streams that are important in their work. Good collaborators value the work of all the partners, and finding connections depends on negotiating the boundaries created by unique vocabularies. Spend time thinking about language; it is the key to making deep connections!

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Make the Connection (continued)

Major Initiative Being Discussed			
Initiative:			
Major Goal	**Funded by**	**Promoted by**	**Key Terms**
Initiatives Our Stakeholders Believe Are Connected to the Major Initiative Being Discussed			
Initiative:			
Major Goal	**Funded by**	**Promoted by**	**Key Terms**
Key Points That Must Be Communicated About How These Initiatives Are Connected			
Alignment of Goals	**Shared Concepts about Strategy**	**Vocabulary that is a Bridge or Barrier**	
Initiative:			
Major Goal	**Funded by**	**Promoted by**	**Key Terms**
Key Points That Must Be Communicated About How These Initiatives Are Connected			
Alignment of Goals	**Shared Concepts about Strategy**	**Vocabulary that is a Bridge or Barrier**	

Continued

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Make the Connection (continued)

Initiatives Our Stakeholders Believe Are Connected to the Major Initiative Being Discussed			
Initiative:			
Major Goal	**Funded by**	**Promoted by**	**Key Terms**
Key Points That Must Be Communicated About How These Initiatives Are Connected			
Alignment of Goals	**Shared Concepts about Strategy**	**Vocabulary that is a Bridge or Barrier**	
Initiative:			
Major Goal	**Funded by**	**Promoted by**	**Key Terms**
Key Points That Must Be Communicated About How These Initiatives Are Connected			
Alignment of Goals	**Shared Concepts about Strategy**	**Vocabulary that is a Bridge or Barrier**	

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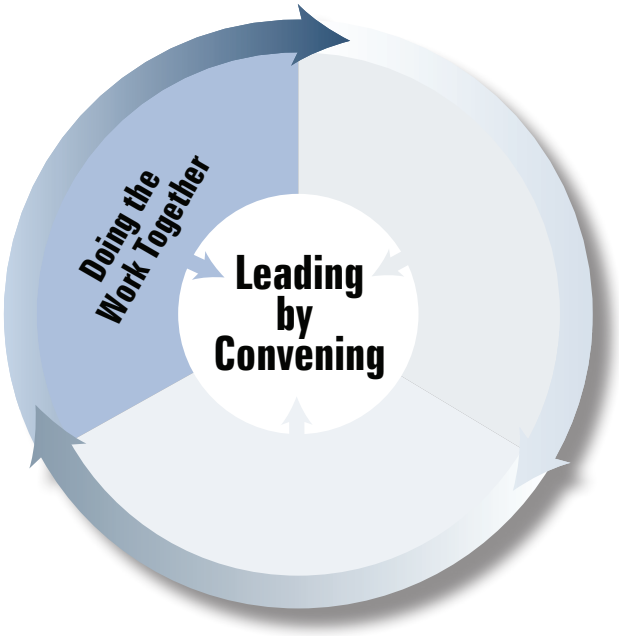
Doing the Work Together
Tools and Learning Activities



Appendix Four

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Leading by Convening

Doing the Work Together

Problems Come Bundled

Technical Problems—Can be solved by the right information or expert advice.
Adaptive Problems—Need different accommodations for different situations.

Few problems have just a technical side or just an adaptive human side. As organizational theorist Ronald Heifetz says, "Problems come bundled." Find out more at the following video links.

Video: Adaptive vs. Technical - Dr. Ronald Heifetz
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwWyIlUlvmo&list=PL687TFPUs_2DpZgF_z5TAx9x5ecPl_9Rl

Video: The nature of adaptive leadership – Dr. Ronald Heifetz
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfLLDvn0pI8&list=PLYGfiXGGVWyDS4iaSzdNH1D6GiKW44VtK

As you begin your collaboration, let's look at how the problems you want to address are bundled.

SAMPLE

Problem

Progress monitoring of individual performance is not specific enough, or frequent enough, to improve student outcomes.

Technical **Can be solved by the right information or expert advice.**	**Adaptive** **Need different accommodations for different situations.**
1. Professional development focuses on the process of progress monitoring. 2. Fidelity checks indicate problems with implementation.	1. Willingness to consider new evidence-based strategies. 2. Time needed to master new strategy. 3. Willingness to seamlessly integrate new practice. 4. Extent to which new practice fits with school culture. 5. Extent of support provided during acquisition of new skill.

Your Turn

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Problems Come Bundled (continued)

Problem	
Technical **Can be solved by the right information or expert advice.**	**Adaptive** **Need different accommodations for different situations.**

Problem	
Technical **Can be solved by the right information or expert advice.**	**Adaptive** **Need different accommodations for different situations.**

Continued

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Problems Come Bundled (continued)

Problem	
Technical **Can be solved by the right information or expert advice.**	**Adaptive** **Need different accommodations for different situations.**
Problem	
Technical **Can be solved by the right information or expert advice.**	**Adaptive** **Need different accommodations for different situations.**

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Leading by Convening

Doing the Work Together

Building Engagement

The following are some ideas for generating learning activities for stakeholder engagement around a particular topic. The main purpose is to bring people together to work on issues they care about. In our experience, we needed to develop a list of potential things and let people choose what had value for them. This list can get you started; you will have others.

Think about maximizing engagement by linking two or more of the activities. Keep in mind that engagement depends on the participants seeing value in the activity and feeling that they are contributing in meaningful ways.

Anybody can deliver information; you want engagement.

1. Together, build a stakeholder-recommended document repository. Include formal regulations and guidance as well as practice documents, websites, videos and articles from the popular press. Aim to make this a one stop location on topics connected to your content area or focus.

2. Produce and host a webinar or webinar series organized by your stakeholders, with invited speakers identified by your members.

3. Share leadership across a variety of stakeholders, create a dialogue guide on a document of importance to your content area or a specific focus of implementation. [See how to create a dialogue guide in Appendix Six, Meeting to Co-Create Tools and Learning Activities.]

4. Create a site where your stakeholders can interact on this issue. [Many free and inexpensive sites are publicly available. See Related Work in the Blueprint Section at www.ideapartnership.org for examples.]

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5. Host a virtual dialogue on a question that your members develop with a summary posted to a virtual site that your stakeholders share or another website that is agreed upon by your stakeholders.

6. Develop a regularly scheduled poll (weekly, monthly, etc.) based on issues raised by your stakeholders.

7. Invite guest bloggers on a topic from a range of perspectives. Then, as a follow up, host a virtual dialogue based on the blogs.

8. Develop a collaborative blog.
   - Identify a webinar of interest to all stakeholders.
   - Invite five designated viewers from different roles to view a webinar.
   - Hold a call to develop the collaborative blog entry.
   - Co-create the blog.
   - Post the collaborative blog to your virtual site.
   - Invite comments and follow up on potential connections expressed.

9. Other, developed by your members.

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Building Engagement (continued)

Planning and Delivery	
Activity	
Engagement Activity *Participating Members* *Start Date* *End Date*	*Decisions/Action/Progress/Schedule*
Activity	
Engagement Activity *Participating Members* *Start Date* *End Date*	*Decisions/Action/Progress/Schedule*

Continued

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Building Engagement (continued)

Activity	
Engagement Activity *Participating Members* *Start Date* *End Date*	*Decisions/Action/Progress/Schedule*
Activity	
Engagement Activity *Participating Members* *Start Date* *End Date*	*Decisions/Action/Progress/Schedule*

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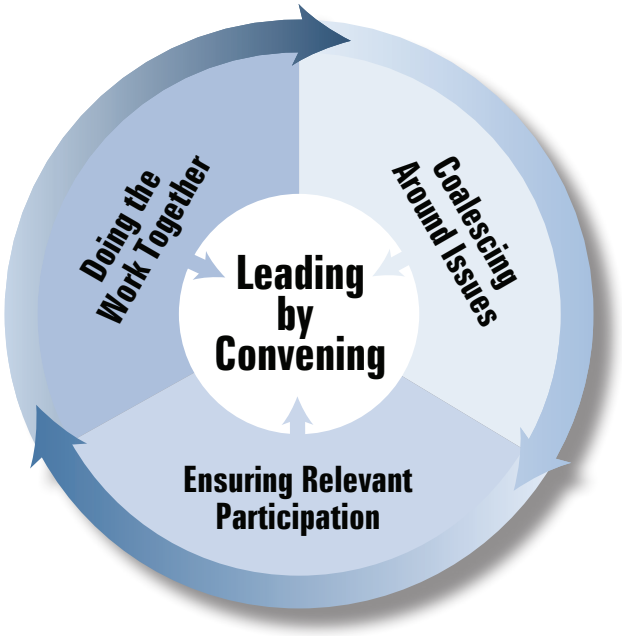
Bringing It All Together
Tools and Learning Activities



Appendix Five

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Leading by Convening

Bringing It All Together

A Quick Chronology of Engagement

This quick chronology tells the story of our engagement around an issue important to us.

Procedure

This activity can be pursued in a large group by using shelf paper and stickers in the shapes shown in the text box, or in small groups/at individual tables by printing the document on 11x17 paper and using stickers in the shapes shown. Stickers are available in most office supply stores. Alternatively, you can use the fillable PDF form included with the materials. [*Note*: You can fill in the form, print it out, and attach stickers.]

1. Work as a team.
2. Think back over your work together.
3. Tell the story with short notes and/or icons.
4. Recall important people/groups in every time period and include them in your chronology.
5. Note the key activities that you pursued; mark them with a circle.
6. Identify important relationships that were built; mark them with a heart.
7. Note your accomplishments; mark them with a star.
8. Think about what you wanted to happen and what actually happened. Think about what forces drove and/or restrained your efforts.
   - Mark driving forces with right arrows.
   - Mark restraining forces with left arrows.
9. Stand back and as a team make notes on what you see and what it tells you about your work together.
10. Note the deeper stories that show the value of working across groups, or stories of missed opportunities that will not be missed again.

Key Features of Engagement

- ♥ Relationship
- ● Activity
- ★ Accomplishment
- ➡ Driving Force
- ⬅ Restraining Force

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An Engagement Chronology (continued)

Think back over your work together. Tell the story in short notes.	
Story Item	
Date	*Tell the story about the noted item, recalling key people and groups.*
Date	*Tell the story about the noted item, recalling key people and groups.*
Date	*Tell the story about the noted item, recalling key people and groups.*

Continued

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An Engagement Chronology (continued)

Big lessons from the quick chronology.

Stories that should be told.

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Leading by Convening

Bringing It All Together

Give Value First

Give Value First **means to "enter a new relationship without contingencies…enter as though you are already partners."**

—Jeffrey Gitomer

Think About It

What does it look like to approach collaboration as if you are already partners?
Some experts recommend that as collaborations develop, a formal arrangement should outline expectations and commitments. In your view, is Give Value First consistent with formal agreements about responsibilities within collaboration? For you and your partners, what level of formality feels right?

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Leading by Convening

Bringing It All Together

Your Brand

Branding is often associated with the business world, but really we all have a brand. For today's educators, our brand is not our content, our logo or our website. It's what our stakeholders perceive about us and how we make them feel.

We must go beyond our content and services; it's about selling the problem you are solving. Throughout The Partnership Way, we have been describing a shared approach to solving persisting problems through careful attention to the technical and the human sides of the issue and making operational choices that reflect both.

It's time to brand your approach.

- What is your mission?
- Why would anyone care about this work?
- What are people saying about you as you fulfill your mission?
- What do you want people to be saying about you as you fulfill your mission?
- What simple tag line can help you convey your desired brand?
- Where are the opportunities to develop your brand?
- In what ways will you seek feedback on the brand that you are cultivating (which may or may not be the brand you want to cultivate)?

Use the following form to brand your approach.

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Your Brand (continued)

Brand Your Approach
What is your mission?
Why would anyone care about this work?
What are people saying about you as you fulfill your mission?
What do you want people to be saying about you as you fulfill your mission?
What simple tag line can help you convey your desired brand?
Where are the opportunities to develop your brand?
In what ways will you seek feedback on the brand that you are cultivating (which may or may not be the brand you want to cultivate)?

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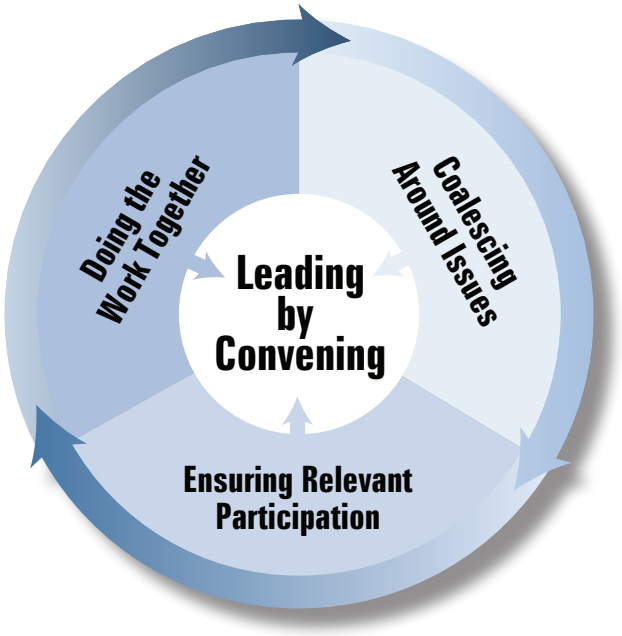
Meeting to Co-Create Tools
Tools and Learning Activities



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Leading by Convening

Meeting to Co-Create Tools

Co-Creating Tools

One of the major challenges in learning to lead by convening is shaping traditional meetings in a new way. In the IDEA Partnership, we have evolved our meeting design to focus on shared interest and build on expertise and perspectives across groups.

Many of our meetings bring people together by co-creating materials to be used and promoted by all the partners. This strategy is transferable to the state and local levels.

This document describes how you may bring your partners together in a new kind of meeting that allows everyone to focus on content and build relationships.

The Agenda

Convenings always begin by asking, "Who's here?" Once you know the range of stakeholders in the room, ask the group to suggest who else needs to be here. This understanding becomes important as your group plans to move this issue forward. The following activities will begin on site and be finalized over time. This allows you to invite those who are not in attendance to become part of the process.

Content

Scan the list of partners and the list of expert resources on the topic of interest. Often, these knowledgeable sources are found in technical assistance investments, research investments and organizational investments. Invite these key informants to join your effort and present their work. Consider the full range of key informants and be sure that your final selection covers the various aspects of the issue. Also be sure to include experts from the fields who reflect the people you are trying to reach.

Process

Opening

After determining the make up of the group, make an opening statement about the topic that brings the group together. Surface the perspectives by inviting reactions to the opening statement. Facilitate and briefly summarize the perspectives that are articulated. Segue to the informational session.

Informational Session

Form a panel of key informants identified in your initial research. Hold an informational call with all participants to describe the purpose of the panel. Be clear that each panelist is invited because of expertise in a particular aspect of the issue. No one panelist can provide all the information needed to reach the range of stakeholder groups but, collectively, they provide a knowledge base upon which the participants will begin to interact. Invite the panelists to stay for the interaction with participants. This enables the informants to learn from the stakeholders as well as the stakeholders to learn from the informants.

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Identify the information that each panelist will provide and organize the information into a coherent picture of the issue. Craft several key messages that will shape the flow of the panel. Identify a panel facilitator who can deliver the organizing messages as they move from panelist to panelist, creating bridges across content and presenters. At the conclusion of the panel, the facilitator reinforces the idea that the stakeholders present will now interact around the messages they just heard. Together, they co-create as follows. [*Note:* Each of these activities are further described in Appendix Six, Meeting to Co-Create Tools and Learning Activities.]

- Identify grounding assumptions about the importance of this topic. Grounding assumptions are statements with which all stakeholders agree. Where perspectives begin to diverge, grounding assumptions end.
- Articulate needs of the field. This document summarizes a shared vision as well as the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to reach the vision.
- Develop content framework for a PowerPoint that will be finalized by a volunteer work group following the convening. The work group may decide to create a presenter's guide (see sample presenter's guide) or put helpful content and presentation suggestions in the notes field.
- Create dialogue guides around important documents on this topic identified by the stakeholders.

Prior to the meeting, solicit volunteers to lead each of these portions of the convening. Be sure that your volunteers represent the range of stakeholders. Convene the volunteers ahead of time as advisors to the event. Be sure that the volunteers understand the nature of their role. They are facilitators; they are not presenters.

Co-Creating Tools Sample Agenda

8:30-9:00am: *Opening: Welcome and "Who's here?"*

9:00-10:15am: *Content panel*

10:15-10:30am: *Break and move to breakouts*

10:30am-Noon: *Breakouts*
- Grounding assumptions
- Needs of the field

Noon-1:00pm: *Networking lunch: Table discussion [Note: Turn in a sheet from each lunch table.]*
- Three things my colleagues would most agree with on this issue.
- One thing my colleagues would most likely question about this issue.

1:00-1:15pm: *Move to afternoon breakouts*

1:15-2:30pm: *Breakouts*
- PowerPoint outline
- Dialogue guides

2:30-2:45pm: *Break*

2:45-3:15pm: *Breakouts continue*

3:15-4:00pm: *Reconvene full group; next steps*
- Create work groups to complete the tools.
- Establish a timeline and determine the review process.
- Evaluate the convening:
  - Content
  - Process

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Leading by Convening

Meeting to Co-Create Tools

Grounding Assumptions

Grounding assumptions are a group of statements that set forth the unifying beliefs as agreed upon by the involved stakeholders. These grounding assumptions serve as the foundation for collaborative efforts. Grounding assumptions address what people know and what they do. These statements are developed through discussion and consensus. Use this tool to develop your grounding assumptions.

We have provided some examples from our work that might help with your work.

Generate Statements of Agreement around	Example	Our Grounding Assumptions
Knowledge	"Theoretical and knowledge bases for response-to-intervention frameworks are still developing and ideas will continue to evolve as implementation becomes more widespread and the growing knowledge and research base are made available for peer review." *—RTI Collection, IDEA Partnership*	

Continued

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Grounding Assumptions (continued)

Generate Statements of Agreement around:	Example	Our Grounding Assumptions
Perceptions	"Success in college and career begins at birth." *—Cradle to College and Career Collection, IDEA Partnership*	
Affective Behaviors	"Feeling connected and supported in the school environment is a critical feature for students, parents and staff." *—ASD Collection, IDEA Partnership* "Reaching out to a broad range of stakeholders and making meetings and activities convenient for all who must attend." *—Leading by Convening, IDEA Partnership*	

Continued

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Grounding Assumptions (continued)

Generate Statements of Agreement around:	Example	Our Grounding Assumptions
Areas of Need or Need for Action	"All transitions across all levels and systems are critical and demand attention." - *Cradle to College and Career Collection, IDEA Partnership* "Implementation of a response-to-intervention framework may require some fundamental transformation of current elements that support school improvement." - *RTI Collection, IDEA Partnership*	

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Leading by Convening

Meeting to Co-Create Tools

Needs of the Field

We convene divergent groups in order to improve practice. Identifying the needs of the field is an important part of this process. The first step in getting people to take action together is to create a unified vision of the future. A shared vision helps everyone see the big picture of what is needed compared to current practice. Once the group begins talking about its vision, the needs of the field become clear. Thus, in order to effectively and efficiently impact the future in positive ways, it is important to consider current practice as well as a vision for the future.

The following outlines a process and set of questions to facilitate discussion and development of statements that help guide the future discussions and work of the group.

Guiding Questions	Facilitating the Process
• What is the vision for the future? *(Facilitator may wish to encourage participants to think a specific number of years into the future (3 years, 5 years, etc.)*	• Having time frames for each question and activity encourages focus and facilitates the work.
• What is current practice? *(What is the current status of the issue from each stakeholder perspective?)*	• With fewer than 10 participants, it is suggested to work as a whole and adjust the times accordingly.
• Where are the gaps?	• With more than 10 participants, it is suggested to work in table groups and share out as a whole group (time segments follow).
• What information is needed to move forward? *(May identify that differing information gaps exist across stakeholders; identify what all need to know.)*	• Suggested time segments: ◆ 5 minutes to introduce the activity/process. ◆ 50 minutes for table activity (10 minutes for each guiding question). ◆ 5 minutes for transition to whole group. ◆ 50 minutes for group share out and consensus (5 minutes for each guiding question).
• What skills are needed to move forward? *(May identify that differing skill gaps exist across stakeholders; identify what all need to know.)*	• During group, share chart responses on chart paper or media projection.
• What processes need to be in place to support acquisition of knowledge and skills for those interested and/or involved in the issue or those who we invite into the work?	

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