



# Nonprofit/Nonprofit Collaboration in Boston

A Barr Foundation Report

November 2006

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## **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to acknowledge the considerable contributions of Pat Brandes, Marion Kane, and Roberto Cremonini of the Barr Foundation to this project. This project would not have happened without these individuals' commitment and enthusiasm. Also, a special thanks to Rebecca Polan for her assistance with the panel discussion on collaboration at the Barr Foundation. Finally, the author would like to thank all the nonprofit executives and consultants who contributed their intellect, experience, and time to this project.

## Executive Summary

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“...you can understand your work better as you can try to see how someone else sees it. You can challenge each other to set the bar higher....”

--Molly Baldwin, Roca, Inc., on the general benefits of collaborating with other organizations

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Much of the contemporary research on nonprofit management has counseled individual nonprofits on how to work more efficiently, define program niches, and become highly attuned to the changing needs of their stakeholders. By contrast, an emergent stream of research focuses on improving the ability of the entire nonprofit/civil society sector to work together to achieve common social goals, such as poverty elimination. The underlying but untested assumption of these concepts is that deliberate and strategic coordination among a group of nonprofits results in better social outcomes than nonprofits could achieve in isolation from one another. Given the growing number of nonprofits in Boston, decreases in public funding, and pressure on limited private sources of funding, collaborative solutions will be increasingly required.

In this research project, we set out to address the following questions:

- Can Boston’s nonprofits realize greater outcomes (i.e., effectiveness) by working together in new structures or alignments, and, if so, what is preventing that from happening?
- What can foundations and support organizations do to overcome barriers, incent, catalyze, seed, provide tools and resources or otherwise nurture the development of these new ways to work?

In order to address these questions, and to better understand the structure and process of collaboration, we interviewed 42 people (staff of nonprofits involved in local collaborations as well as technical assistance providers); convened a panel of senior consultants; conducted a literature review on collaboration; and identified and examined cases where Boston’s nonprofits have engaged in collaboration.

Overall, what we found supports the notion that nonprofit collaborations are effective and often essential for achieving social outcomes. In the collaborations we studied, we identified policy achievements, cost savings, new solutions to old problems, and innovations in thinking. However, we also found that collaboration is hard, time-consuming and frustrating, and requires new skills that often are not in the toolbox of many nonprofit executives and staff. In particular, nonprofit executives struggle with relational issues that arise during collaboration. In addition, the technical assistance that is available to most nonprofits is at the individual organizational level rather than at the collaboration (i.e., inter-organizational) level. There is an important opportunity to identify the types of technical assistance needed by collaborations, and, more specifically, the sequencing and timing of these interventions.

We identified several actions that foundations and other funding mechanisms can undertake to help incent and reward these activities.

## GENERAL FINDINGS ABOUT NONPROFIT/NONPROFIT COLLABORATION

We identified eight major findings about nonprofit/nonprofit collaboration. The first four findings relate to the structure and process of collaboration; the last four are about the technical assistance needed for collaborations to be successful.

Paying attention to the “soft skills” is key: Nonprofit executives and consultants alike stressed the need to understand the potential landmines related to trust and culture. Collaborations often run into trouble because they jump too quickly to “outcomes” without first setting ground rules and building key relationships at both the executive director and staff levels. Time and resources spent at the outset can avoid significant problems later on.

Collaboration involves various costs and benefits: The costs of collaboration include consulting fees, staff time, and opportunity costs for the organization. On the other hand, the upfront investment can pay off handsomely from a financial or mission-advancement perspective. This requires that time be spent to be sure the collaboration is strategic and clear from a mission and desired-results perspective. Nonprofit executives suggested that funders could better align their expectations for collaboration outcomes with appropriate incentives, such as support for consultants, realistic budget setting, convening and troubleshooting.

Implementation can be very challenging: Even after agreeing upon the goals and mission of collaboration, nonprofits can struggle to implement them. That is, we discovered that finding the time to take on collaboration-related tasks, holding each other accountable for performance, and generally staying on the same page, requires vigilance and work. This is particularly true when nonprofits begin with unequal capacity or resources.

Collaborations that are executive director-centric pay a price: Staff play a critical role in collaboration that should not be overlooked. Work has to be done to drive the collaborative agreements deep into the organizations. Loss of key staff poses a major threat to continuity. In this study, boards differed in their participation in collaboration, although more formal forms of collaboration saw greater board involvement.

TA for collaboration differs from TA for individual organizations: While collaborative processes are used within organizations, there are distinctions unique to collaborations involving multiple organizations. The stabilizing factors that are more or less developed within an organization are missing. There are no clear lines of accountability, communication or performance standards. The organizational context that usually supports activity has to be created anew for a third entity and this requires TA practitioners that are experienced in working with these conditions as well as providing

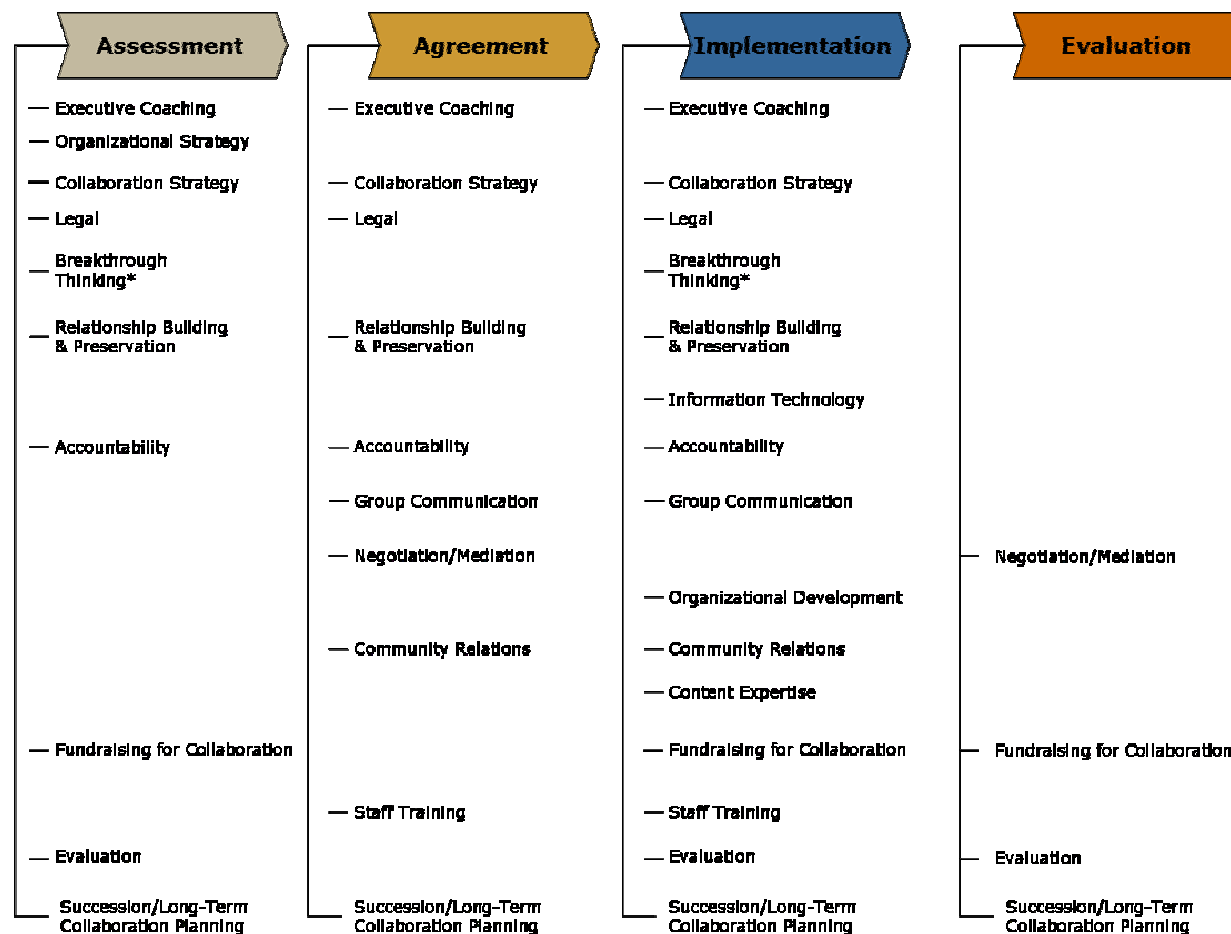
the appropriate skill sets. For instance, negotiation/mediation providers, or collaboration “facilitation” providers specialize in this work. Such TA must be discerned from TA that is centered on helping individual organizations.

Diagnostics are useful in selecting TA, as one size does not fit all: Collaborations differ based on what they are trying to accomplish, and therefore their TA needs may vary accordingly. For example, a collaboration that brings together similar nonprofits in shared office space may need an outside expert versed in group dynamics, whereas a collaboration involving organizations with large memberships may need a community relations/public relations consultant to help explain the collaboration to key stakeholders.

Collaboration often requires multiple consultants: TA is so varied that it is rare for individual TA providers to have all the necessary skills to address the continuum of needs that emerge throughout the phases of collaboration. Multiple consultants are necessary, but the question of how nonprofit organizations can absorb and manage these consultants remains a difficult one.

TA needs to be carefully sequenced: There is a sequence in collaboration—from coming to agreement to collaborate, through implementation and evaluation. TA must be matched to different “stages” of the collaborative process (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: AN EXAMPLE OF MATCHING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO COLLABORATION “STAGES”<sup>†</sup>



<sup>†</sup> See Endnote 13 in the appendix for notes on collaboration “stages.”

\* The term “breakthrough thinking” was coined, for example, in a book called *Harvard Business Review on Breakthrough Thinking*. 1999. Harvard Business School Press. The consulting firm Synectics refers to a similar term, “Building Innovation Capability,” on its website: <http://www.synecticsworld.com>. (Terry Gilliam, Managing Partner of Synectics, participated in the Barr Foundation’s roundtable discussion on collaboration in July of 2006.)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

These findings suggest four sets of recommendations for nonprofits, funders, and TA providers to improve collaboration in the future.

**NONPROFIT EXECUTIVES NEED TO:**

- Discuss realistic timelines and costs of collaboration, including upfront time for relationship-building with collaborators;
- Realistically assess internal competencies and skills needed to be successful, and decide whether to insource or outsource them to other members of the collaboration or outside consultants;
- Reach clear agreement on funding allocation, accountability, credit, and external communications at the outset; and
- Communicate clearly and repeatedly with internal staff and board about how the collaboration meets their mission.

**FUNDERS NEED TO:**

- Be more creative and flexible in how they approach, allocate, and distribute grants and technical assistance for collaboration;
- Think carefully about how they can help nonprofits defray the true costs of collaboration, and be willing to “reward” effective collaboration;
- Help nonprofits carefully decide which types of TA they need, and pay for such assistance; and
- Help identify and match potential nonprofit collaborators, and match technical assistance providers to nonprofit collaborations.

**TA PROVIDERS NEED TO:**

- Find ways to collaborate with other TA providers to provide a seamless continuum of services to the nonprofits; and
- Clarify their core competencies in the collaborative arena, and contribute them not only to collaboration projects, but also to an emerging practice of collaboration among TA providers.

**NONPROFIT EXECUTIVES, FUNDERS AND TA PROVIDERS**

- all need to intentionally work together to share best practices and key lessons about collaborations and contribute to making the process more efficient and successful for the field going forward.

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"When you assemble our patient populations, which... [together include] about 45,000 patients, that allows you to do a lot more with research, have population-based interventions, and also allows you to apply for bigger grants from larger and national foundations."

--Bill Walczak, Codman Square Health Center, on the fundraising benefits of the DotWell collaboration involving Dorchester House Multi-service Center and Codman Square Health Center

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## Introduction

The concept of organizations working together is hardly new. Corporations have created sophisticated networks in order to remain at the cutting edge of industry;<sup>2</sup> governments have partnered with private pharmaceutical companies to address global health crises;<sup>3</sup> and nonprofits have worked with one another to tackle some of society's most recalcitrant problems.<sup>4</sup> The literature on collaboration, enriched by decades of organizational research, provides a heady mix of description, prescription, and precaution.<sup>5</sup>

In the nonprofit sector, the call for collaboration among nonprofits has intensified, prompted to some degree by concerns about the rapid growth trajectory in the number of nonprofits, and the lack of corresponding funding to support such growth. Massachusetts is no exception: the number of nonprofits continues to rise, but not the funding streams to support them.<sup>6</sup> The attention given to collaboration, in fact, is reminiscent of another focus of the nonprofit community: organizational "capacity-building." Much has been written about "capacity-building" and nonprofits, and the role of technical assistance (TA) in strengthening individual nonprofits.<sup>7</sup>

This report does not aim to retrace that well-traveled terrain. Instead, it examines the process of nonprofit/nonprofit collaboration, in depth, and probes the role of TA in strengthening the sector through inter-organizational collaborations.

By "collaboration," we refer to a seminal definition by noted collaboration expert Paul Mattesich:

*Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals.*

*The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards<sup>8</sup>.*

Between January and August of 2006, we interviewed 42 individuals with first-hand knowledge of nonprofit/nonprofit collaboration (27 nonprofit executives and 15 technical assistance providers/consultants). We interviewed nonprofit executives whose organizations were located in Metropolitan Boston.<sup>9</sup> We asked them to describe in detail their participation in specific collaborations. They explained what made collaborations effective, and were reflective about what made some collaborations less effective or ineffective. These interviews, along with documents shared with us by the nonprofits, provided us with a robust set of case studies of nonprofit collaborations in the Boston

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**“We’ve been able to expand services for the guests. For example, we’re actually about to add dental care in conjunction with health care for the homeless, which is hugely value-added for our guests, because none of them have dental insurance, and they can’t get it any other way.”**

--Lyndia Downie, Pine Street Inn, on collaborating with the Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program to provide health services to homeless people

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area. Table 2 summarizes the different types of collaboration in which these nonprofit executives were involved.<sup>10</sup>

We also asked technical assistance providers/consultants to provide their first-hand views of nonprofit collaboration. We convened a group of senior consultants in July of 2006 for a roundtable discussion on collaboration. Finally, we reviewed the literature on collaboration to improve our understanding of how academics and people in the nonprofit field view the concept.

Through these various sources, we hoped to illuminate the inner workings of nonprofit/nonprofit collaboration, and, in doing so, answer the following questions:

- Can Boston’s nonprofits realize greater outcomes (i.e., effectiveness) by working together in new structures or alignments, and, if so, what is preventing that from happening?
- What can foundations and support organizations do to overcome barriers, incent, catalyze, seed, provide tools and resources or otherwise nurture the development of these new ways to work?

Before discussing the major findings, this report first describes people’s views about collaboration. Overall, nonprofit executives in this study were very enthusiastic about the benefits of collaboration to their respective organizations. Several nonprofit executives suggested that collaboration conferred financial benefits (among many benefits) to their organizations. For example, by working together, two health centers involved in a collaboration called DotWell were able to move forward with a single chief financial officer rather than two—leading to significant cost savings.

Nonprofit executives also observed that collaboration allowed their organizations to better accomplish their missions. Melissa Harper, whose Good Sports organization participates in a collaboration that houses nonprofit sports organizations in a single building, noted:

*Being co-located with sports organizations and seeing how they operate and what their issues are, and hearing the conversations that they’re having about how to better serve their kids is incredibly helpful to us, because it helps us figure out how to better serve those organizations.*

TABLE 2: CASE EXAMPLES OF NONPROFIT/NONPROFIT COLLABORATION IN BOSTON

<b>Collaborating organizations</b>	<b>Organization types</b>	<b>Collaboration Goals</b>
Pine Street Inn, Morgan Memorial Goodwill	Social service	Clothing collection and distribution system for homeless people
Hyde Square Task Force, City Life/La Vida, Sociedad Latina	Organizing, community-building	Sharing of information technology services
The Trustees of Reservations, Boston Natural Areas Network	Conservation/environment	Formal “affiliation” of environmental organizations- many outcomes
Project Hope, Wellspring House	Social service	OneFamily Scholars academic scholarship program for women
Conservation Law Foundation, Charles River Watershed Association	Policy, legal	Joint policy & legal action to advance water issues in Massachusetts
MetroLacrosse, Good Sports, A Better Chance, CityKicks, New England SCORES, World T.E.A.M. Sports	Youth-serving	Co-location of youth sports organizations in office building
Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association, Conservation Law Foundation, Boston Society of Architects, Environmental League of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Various (e.g., environment, affordable housing)	Formation of Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance
Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation, Urban Edge, Hyde Square Task Force, and private developers	Real estate development (affordable housing), organizing	Mixed use development of Jackson Square area of Boston
Episcopal Divinity School, Massachusetts Council of Churches, Clean Water Action	Education, faith, environmental advocacy	Training program for community organizers on environmental issues
Roca, Inc., and Massachusetts General Hospital	Youth-serving, health care	Hospital operates community health clinic at site of youth services organization
Pine Street Inn, Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program	Social service (homeless), health care	Medical program takes over clinic for homeless persons
Dorchester House Multiservice Center, Codman Square Health Center	Health care	Two clinics form separate 501c(3) to share back-office functions, and other services
Project Hope, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, Greater Boston Legal Services, Center for Social Policy (UMass-Boston), and 7 homeless shelters	Various (e.g., social service, legal)	Nonprofits collaborate on Transition to Work Collaborative

Collaborations centered on advancing policy issues have generated various positive outcomes. According to the Charles River Watershed Association’s executive director Robert Zimmerman, the collaboration between his organization and the Conservation Law Foundation resulted in the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation modifying its practices regarding stormwater discharge. Also, the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance (MSGA) illustrates how a policy-focused collaboration can promote greater cohesion among the diverse stakeholders involved in “smart growth.”

Said David Harris, former executive director of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, which is part of the MSGA:

*Absent the Alliance, some of us might be confronting, might be disagreeing with each other publicly without having a mechanism for coming to some kind of understanding of each other’s positions, and then allowing us to operate as allies, publicly.*

## Key Findings

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**“I think the biggest thing you need in order to collaborate is confidence in yourself as an organization and trust in your colleagues, both within the organization and with people you’re partnering with. What you cannot be doing, and no amount of TA will overcome it, [is] I can’t partner with you and have to look over your shoulder because I don’t trust you.”**

--A nonprofit executive director

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### 1. Trust and Culture

Many people suggested that the hard task of attending to the “soft skills” is vital to the success of any collaboration. They stressed the importance of relational issues, such as trust and culture, to collaboration. In other words, trust must be formed and maintained among the various, key people involved in a given collaboration, and efforts must be made to assure that differences in culture are properly addressed and revisited. Interviewees noted that trust and culture issues appear throughout the entire collaboration process (i.e., these issues are not restricted to implementation, etc.), but their emphasis on trust and culture suggests that time and resources spent at the outset of collaboration could avoid significant problems later on.

#### TRUST

Trust was described in terms of whether nonprofit executives:

- get along on a personal level;
- are committed to shared mission, and willing to act in the best interests of the collaboration;
- can be trusted to keep group conversations confidential;
- are “competent”<sup>11</sup> at their jobs; and
- are reliable.

Furthermore, people viewed trust in terms of whether key staff of collaborating organizations could work together.

The following examples illustrate some aspects of trust in collaboration. Sister Margaret Leonard, executive director of Project Hope, a nonprofit that serves the homeless, suggested that a collaboration of organizations serving the homeless requires collaborators who are willing to subjugate their own organizational needs in order to support the shared cause:

*“...the focus isn’t on growing your organization and agency, the focus is on helping the [homeless] families to really move through all this.”*

Charles River Watershed Association’s Zimmerman, who is a veteran of several environmental coalitions, observed that trusting in a counterpart’s abilities is important for collaboration.

Many nonprofit executive directors observed that their recent collaborations had emerged from long-standing professional relationships with other nonprofit executive directors. In such cases, lack of trust between and among executives was not viewed as a collaboration barrier per se, because the trust had been formed and fortified over many years.

In fact, these close relationships turned out to be essential for collaboration. Nancy Schwoyer, executive director of Wellspring House, a community-based nonprofit in Gloucester, Massachusetts, explained that trust among *many* collaborators might be cultivated by first solidifying the trust between two people:

*"I think it's important to find a partner with whom you can work closely and then work towards a broader collaboration."*

In the case of the DotWell collaboration, the participating health center CEOs had built a friendship over many years, and had even jointly participated in a fellowship program that allowed them to travel together around the country to view the management practices of other nonprofit CEOs.

However, interviewees noted that pulling together groups of people who lack such long-standing relationships can pose significant challenges to collaboration. Deb Linnell, Mission Effectiveness Program Director, Third Sector New England, suggested that nonprofit collaborations often run into trouble, because collaborators jump too quickly to “outcomes” without first tending to the trust-building aspect of the process. One nonprofit executive cited the need for an initial “growing the collaboration period”; other

executives echoed the call for upfront time to better familiarize themselves with their fellow collaborators.

Furthermore, when one considers that nonprofits do not solely collaborate with natural allies, the importance of trust to the outcome of collaboration becomes magnified. David Harris, former executive director of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, said,

*“Our organization is based on the notion very much of collaboration, and that means collaborating both with the people with whom you agree and the people with whom you disagree.”*

**CULTURE**

Many nonprofit executives and consultants spoke about the importance of culture to collaboration, and the need for people of different organizations to manage differences in culture.

These differences included the following:

- discrepancies in organizational size and resources of the collaborating organizations;
- management styles of the nonprofit executives;
- different professional disciplines’ approaches to crafting solutions to social problems; and
- gender differences of the nonprofit executives involved in the collaboration.

Table 3 (below) provides a sample of words nonprofit executives used to describe her/his organizational culture, compared to that of her/his collaboration counterpart.

Table 3: Verbatim words/phrases used by respondents to describe organizational cultures

Respondent’s organization	Respondent’s view of collaborators’ organization
“Bureaucratic”	“Entrepreneurial”
“Less compromising”	“More compromising”
“Conservative”	“Activist”

**Box 1. Profile: Trust, and working through cultural differences in a health clinic for homeless people.**

Facing a large operating deficit, the Pine Street Inn (PSI), a Boston homeless shelter, decided to turn over its health clinics for homeless people to the Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program (BHCHP). Despite the strong working relationship that had been built over many years between the two organizations, the announcement that BHCHP, a physician-led organization, would run the health clinic was met with resistance. Lyndia Downie, president of PSI, recalled that "the [PSI] nurses were understandably upset. Many of them were here because we had a nurse run clinic. Although the bulk of Health Care for the Homeless staff are nurses, it was a substantial change. There is no way around the fact that it was very painful. It was not about the fact that the nursing model was not working. It was about how to deal with sizeable cuts at the state level and keep services intact for the guests."

Dr. James O'Connell, director of BHCHP, also noted a "creative tension" between the organizations, and the strong but distinctive professional cultures therein. He noted, about the PSI clinic: "The nurses had a rich tradition as leaders and pioneers in the field of caring for homeless persons in shelters. These nurses were justifiably proud to be a part of this clinic. And when [I] started in 1985, we worked in collaboration with the nurses, but it was still very clearly Pine Street's Nurses Clinic."

Downie recalled that some of PSI's nursing staff left despite being offered new positions with BHCHP. Over time, however, BHCHP and Pine Street worked through the transition. As O'Connell acknowledged: "I don't think we could possibly have succeeded without the trust and vision shared by Lyndia, myself, and everyone who had worked so closely together for fifteen years."

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Some nonprofit executives described "culture" in terms of the demography of the population their respective organizations served. In the DotWell collaboration, both CEOs noted that a difference in the culture of the served neighborhoods factored into the decision to collaborate--but not formally merge.

Observed Codman Square Health Center's Bill Walczak:

*We realized that if we tried to really put the two cultures together, as much as the two organizations are similar and only a mile apart in Dorchester, they're totally different cultures, and, as we've learned from some failed mergers [of large hospitals in Boston], a merger could possibly destroy the two health centers. So we tried to try this kind of middle ground solution.*

However, some organizational culture differences were viewed as beneficial. Good Sports's Harper said that collaborating with a larger organization with a more pronounced culture was beneficial to her organization:

*"One of the challenges being a small organization is that you almost have a lack of culture, because you're so small."*

## **2. Weighing costs and benefits of collaboration**

The nonprofit executives and TA providers in this study articulated a key concern about collaboration: Does collaboration provide a sufficient return on nonprofits' investments of resources to warrant their participation? The question is deceptively complex, because nonprofits may consider the risks and rewards of collaboration on financial *and* non-financial (e.g., fulfillment of social mission) bases. No consensus emerged on this question; interviewees provided arguments on both sides.

As described earlier in this report, nonprofit executives described myriad benefits of collaboration, ranging from financial efficiencies (e.g., see Pine Street Inn, Box 1, above) to mission advancement (e.g., Good Sports and the TeamWorks collaboration). The mission-advancement aspect of collaboration can be a critical aspect of how nonprofits view the outcomes of collaboration. Marianne Hughes, executive director of the Interaction Institute for Social Change, says the potential for social "impact" is a major reason why nonprofits choose to collaborate.

On the other hand, the "costs" of collaboration to a nonprofit are multifaceted. Several nonprofit executives, as well as consultants, expressed concern about the full cost of collaboration, which includes staff time dedicated to working on collaboration-related activities; time for the executive directors to meet about the collaboration; and TA/consulting fees. For example, a common refrain heard from nonprofit executives and consultants alike was that relationship/trust-building is very time-consuming for collaborating organizations.

Another nonprofit executive explained that the time spent on collaboration meant time away from competing responsibilities, which suggests an opportunity cost aspect of

engaging in collaboration. Yet another executive estimated that his participation in one particular collaboration “could take 40 percent of my [her/his] time” if the executive put in the amount of effort she/he would like to invest.

Susan Nelson, a principal of the nonprofit consultancy TDC, suggested that the business incentives for individual nonprofit organizations to collaborate are lacking:

*You rarely see for-profit businesses collaborate unless there is significant profit to be made. But it is not always immediately apparent how NPO collaborations improve individual bottom lines. It is often hard to see how a collaboration that might move the sector forward moves forward an individual organization. Consequently there is little internal reward for EDs,<sup>‡</sup> if they engage in these efforts, from their boards, major donors, or other senior managers unless the improvement to the individual bottom line can be confidently predicted as both a short and long term outcome of the effort. Even then, when money is assured, the efficacy of collaboration is constantly being judged against ever changing internal goals and business strategies.*

Several nonprofit executives were openly critical of some foundations’ funding practices related to collaboration. One nonprofit executive director noted that

*“...funders want to fund the outside costs and not necessarily some of the real costs to an organization of doing this.”*

Another nonprofit executive, Urban Edge’s Mossik Hacobian, reported two types of experience. Speaking about foundations, Hacobian stated, “Usually what happens is, they say,

*‘Well you’re collaborating. Therefore, we’re going to give you two-thirds or three-quarters of what you would have gotten if you competed. Instead of getting \$100,000 each, we’ll give you \$150,000 together—two of you.’*

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<sup>‡</sup> “NPO” means nonprofit organization; “EDs” refers to executive directors.

However, Hacobian also cited a recent, opposite example involving funders:

*“Jackson Square Partners received substantial grants from foundations and corporations that would not have been forthcoming at that level or possibly at all but for the partnership or collaboration.”*

Furthermore, Sister Margaret Leonard of Project Hope applauded one foundation that provided “flexible funding” for a collaboration in which her organization took part:

*“So, it could be in getting the technical assistance you need, it could be the information technology, it could be a whole range of things. But it’s available to you, and you don’t have to go through this long proposal writing [process].”*

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**Box 2. Profile: The time and money costs involved in a large real estate development project**

Urban Edge, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC), and the Hyde Square Task Force comprise the nonprofit partners in a public/private real estate development project in the Jackson Square area of Boston. The \$200 million-plus mixed-use development promises, in addition to more than 100 market-rate apartments, a youth and family center, an active recreational facility containing an ice rink as well as 200-plus affordable housing units. This was a complicated project to begin with, but in addition, Urban Edge and JPNDC (two community development corporations working in adjacent service areas) had what JPNDC’s executive director Richard Thal called a “mixed history” of relations.

Mossik Hacobian, Urban Edge’s executive director, said the years of planning that preceded the release of the city’s RFP, and forming this collaboration, has cost Urban Edge approximately \$2 million in staff time, legal, design and planning consultant services and property acquisition-related costs. Nonetheless, Hacobian viewed the effort in collaboration as an appropriate investment. He noted, “The scale of this project warranted such an effort.”

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### 3. Implementation challenges

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**"I think something that tends to happen is that partnerships often get stuck after they develop a vision. Dividing up the work and determining a complementary role differentiation...is a point that can be difficult."**

--Gerri Spilka, OMG Center for Collaborative Learning

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Many people viewed implementation as a point at which difficulties arise in collaboration. Major implementation challenges include parsing out roles and responsibilities to staff to complete the collaborative work; assuring that trust-building among organizations takes place at the staff level; and allocating rewards once the work is finished.

Joanne Hilferty, president and CEO of Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries, explained that a significant collaboration challenge lay in

*"...having the idea worked out between the CEOs communicated within both organizations so that the direct line staff responsible for implementation understand it, are supportive of it, make it work."*

Along these lines, some nonprofit executives noted that it might have been helpful to have some outside help with internal communications (i.e., speaking with staff members about the effects of the collaboration on staff). Some executive directors also expressed concern that they could not hold other people's staff members accountable for performance. As one nonprofit executive put it,

*"You don't have authority over staff from another organization."*

The issue of fairness among collaborators came up time and again. That is, equitably divvying up the rewards was seen as problematic during implementation. Nonprofit executives expressed frustration with collaborations in which some organizations exhibited credit-seeking behavior (e.g., to funders, the media), or when funding was split evenly among collaborators despite perceptions that some organizations were doing more work than others. One nonprofit executive framed the fairness issue thusly:

*"If there's unequal deliverance of results or activity for the same amount of money, it's pretty hard."*

Also, as noted earlier, organizations may differ in how they prioritize the collaboration in question—smaller collaborators might place greater importance on the collaboration than larger ones—thereby making implementation even more challenging.

In DotWell, Joel Abrams, Dorchester House CEO, attempts to avoid implementation problems in the following way:

*“So there’s no formal way that Bill and I keep tabs on each other, but we meet frequently and we discuss all of the tensions and all of the benefits that are accruing, all the potential problems, financial or otherwise. You do want to know over time whether or not DotWell is serving both health centers relatively equally, that one is not benefiting disproportionately when both are paying in equally, and we just talk about it. We’ve been very open about when we think that’s been happening, and we’re also aware that in doing that, it puts additional stress on the DotWell staff, because they’re always trying to make sure they’re being balanced.”*

Nonprofit executives employed various strategies to strengthen accountability in collaborations. The Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance, which involves groups ranging from affordable housing to environmental law, hired a strategy consulting firm to help craft a formal work plan that included specific tasks and responsibilities of each participating organization. Some collaborations convened meetings between the nonprofit executives and/or other key staff to talk through implementation issues. However, one nonprofit executive noted that it can be difficult to monitor the behavior of peers; something as basic as calling a fellow executive director on being unresponsive to emails on issues relating to the collaborative can be politically tricky.

#### **4. Understanding the roles of board and staff**

Several insights were offered about the role of nonprofit staff in collaboration. Key staff turnover, whether at the executive director, or non-executive staff level, was viewed as a major threat to the health of any collaboration. (See Box 3 for an illustration of the issues around executive director succession.)

Third Sector New England’s Linnell stressed the importance of actively involving staff in the collaboration, and allowing key staff to make collaboration-related decisions without executive approval. Richard Thal, executive director of the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation, recalled being told by a consultant during an impasse in negotiations between him and another executive director:

*“Both of you guys are not relenting on these points, and you ought to delegate it to some of your staff people to work it out.”*

Insights were also offered about the wide range of ways in which boards are involved in collaboration. Several nonprofit executives and consultants spoke generally of the need to have the backing of their boards of directors in collaborative endeavors. The most

intense board involvement occurred in the most formal forms of collaboration. For example, Andrew Kendall, president of the Trustees of the Reservations, noted that a “working group” of board and staff worked through many of the salient issues in the “affiliation” between the Trustees of Reservations and Boston Natural Areas Network. Similarly, the DotWell board of directors comprises board members from both collaborating health centers. The DotWell board, nearing a decade into the collaboration, hired an outside evaluation/consulting firm to assess the collaboration to date. Also, part of the Codman Square Health Center and Dorchester House Multi-service Center boards’ respective reviews of their CEOs include goals that relate to DotWell objectives.

Board members also provided expertise to their nonprofits during collaboration that might have otherwise required outside technical assistance. Pine Street Inn president Lyndia Downie explained that one of her organization’s board members had public relations expertise that proved useful during collaboration, while other nonprofit executives described having board members with legal backgrounds that provided legal expertise on collaboration matters.

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**Box 3. Profile: Executive director turnover can potentially make the collaboration vulnerable.**

The DotWell partnership, a separate 501c(3) jointly formed by two Boston health centers (Codman Square Health Center and Dorchester House Multi-service Center), was the brainchild of the two CEOs, Bill Walczak and Joel Abrams, respectively. The two executives forged trust over a period of multiple decades as colleagues.

Walczak acknowledged that one of the largest potential problems facing DotWell in the future is this: what will happen to the collaboration once Abrams retires? Will the new CEO champion DotWell? For his part, Abrams shared Walczak’s concern about continuity of the collaboration: “As I said before, success often is the best foundation for further success, but it’s certainly no guarantee. There have to be very careful selection of successors with that in mind, with that kind of compatibility in mind. And it may not be a perfect match, but at a minimum, you want to bring somebody in who believes strongly in the value of the partnership, if it’s the desire of the organizations to continue the partnership. You don’t want it to be sabotaged by someone who really doesn’t want it in the first place.”

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## The Role of Technical Assistance (TA) in Collaboration

### 5. TA for collaboration versus TA for organizations

One of the key distinctions that emerged is that technical assistance for collaboration may require specific types of TA that are not typically provided to individual organizations. A specific charge of consultants working with collaborations would be “getting them unstuck,” Root Cause CEO Andrew Wolk explained.

Gerri Spilka of OMG Center for Collaborative Learning cited the need for nonprofit executives to develop

*“Consensus-building skills, consensus-building around real work, not just about vision....”*

These particular skills--also referred to as negotiation or mediation--assume two or more parties around which these skills can be applied. Another example of collaboration-specific TA is “facilitation,”<sup>12</sup> which can support groups through the various decision points in a particular project.

The Trustees of Reservations’ president Andrew Kendall stated that a consultant’s general role is to “tee up the questions that neither partner is going to tee up” during the collaboration discussions. The Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston’s David Harris explained that a skilled facilitator can help build trust among collaborators:

*“If you don't have trust, process can help you get it. And if you have it, process can help you keep it.”*

Another example of collaboration-focused TA would be what Patrick Field, a consultant with the Consensus Building Institute, referred to as “assessing the potential for collaboration,” which is tantamount to a baseline examination of whether collaboration should proceed or not.

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**“Having someone facilitate the process who is not on either side but understands each organization well enough to really be able to keep the process moving forward”**

--Andrew Kendall, The Trustees of Reservations, describing the attributes of an effective nonprofit collaboration consultant

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... [TA] would be useful, because it's that trust thing. You know, it's starting to break down some of those barriers that are between organizations, and I think naturally as you become roommates and neighbors you start to do that anyway, but it takes time, and I think that having some formal team-building processes up front would maybe shorten that time. It certainly would help."

--Melissa Harper, Good Sports, explaining how TA could have been useful as a way of getting to know fellow youth sports organizations in the TeamWorks collaboration

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## 6. Different TA for different types of collaboration

Nearly all of the nonprofit executives we interviewed saw a need for some form of TA during collaboration. Many of these executives reported having used at least one consultant during collaboration. The types of TA that these executives thought would be helpful varied considerably--by the particular nature of the collaboration (e.g., policy coalition, human services) as well as by the areas of in-house expertise held by the organizations. In other words, the TA needs for any given collaboration are not uniform, and some customization of TA providers is necessary to satisfy the collaboration.

For example, one nonprofit executive said that a collaboration in which she was involved needed a community relations/public relations consultant who could

*"identify all our constituencies, and...figure out how the message [announcing the collaboration] is presented to them."*

Furthermore, information technology and financial/accounting expertise are examples of areas where several of the nonprofits had in-house capacity, and therefore did not require any technical assistance. In the case of Joel Abrams of Dorchester House, he recalled,

*"I would say except for legal, we had it all in-house."*

Juan Leyton, former executive director of City Life/La Vida, which participated in an information technology consultant-sharing collaboration with Sociedad Latina and Hyde Square Task Force, emphasized the importance of non-information technology-related outside help:

*"The collaboration is around technology, but we realized that anyone can tell you about the specifics about technology.... but the most challenging thing [is] how to make...the organizations come together."*

Some nonprofit executives suggested hiring seasoned consultants with content-specific expertise--Codman Square's Walczak calls it "older executive director types"—to consult with the collaborators during the process. Walczak, for instance, noted how a former Massachusetts hospital commissioner could be useful in health center collaborations because of this individual's credibility and deep knowledge of the field. In the Jackson Square real estate development collaboration, the nonprofits hired a consultant who was expert in negotiating complex real estate development deals. Finally, former MetroLacrosse executive director Zack Lehman, whose organization operates youth lacrosse programs in Boston, says that having had someone with specific expertise in coordinating "multi-tenant nonprofit centers" would have been useful to have during the TeamWorks collaboration.

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**“It’s really hard for nonprofits who have such slim resources to really devote a lot of time to consultants who are not necessarily coordinated, but even if they’re coordinated, there’s just so much time they can put into it.”**

--Gerri Spilka, OMG Center for Collaborative Learning

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## 7. Managing various consultants

Overall, “one consultant can’t do it all” was a sentiment to which most nonprofit executives and consultants in this study prescribed. Most people could not identify a “one-stop shop” for collaboration technical assistance that can provide the full repertoire of assistance required for collaboration.

The idea that multiple consultants might be needed to meet the demands of a given collaboration raised concern from interviewees about how an organization might juggle multiple consultants. Furthermore, some nonprofit executives described collaborations in which consultants that served organizations, and consultants that served the collaboration, were in the fold at the same time. For instance, when needed, organizations tended to find their own legal counsel to help craft formal agreements between collaborating organizations, yet a consultant could also be brought in to facilitate the collaborative process.

Some consultants cited a construction metaphor, “general contractor,” to describe one possible solution to the problem. Marianne Hughes, executive director of the Interaction Institute for Social Change, a nonprofit training and consulting organization, provided the analogy of a house, and how a homeowner would hire an “architect and general contractor” rather than a “plumber” in order to get the house built.

The perceived lack of a “one-stop shop” for TA by nonprofit executives underscores a related issue: how nonprofit executives find TA in the first place. For example, Reverend Ed Rodman, professor of the Episcopal Divinity School, which collaborated with the Massachusetts Council of Churches and Clean Water Action to start a training program for organizers, noted a lack of a “yellow pages” of technical assistance providers for collaboration. The nonprofit executives in this study located TA providers in a hodgepodge of ways. When asked how they identified TA providers, or how they would advise peers to go about finding TA providers, nonprofit executives offered myriad answers—e.g., via consultant recommendations from board members, consultant directories, other nonprofit executives, or funders.

## 8. Matching TA to Time

The earlier point that different types of TA are useful for different collaborations begs the question, “When can TA be useful in collaboration?” The answer appears to hinge on where organizations are in the collaboration process. One idea that emerged from the Barr Foundation roundtable discussion of senior consultants was that different types of TA correspond to different “stages” of collaboration;<sup>13</sup> there is a sequence to it. These senior consultants noted that TA is requested at various points throughout the process, including sometimes at crisis moments.

The idea of matching TA to time was noted throughout the study. Maureen Pompeo, executive director of Management Consulting Services, referred to collaboration as “an iterative process,” during which various types of TA could be used at different points in time. In other words, she noted that

*“a collaborative effort may need TA to draft a basic operating agreement that spells out how the collaboration will work, and yet another type of TA to implement, particularly when the implementation involves technology or finances.”*

In the Executive Summary (Table 1), we showed how different types of TA could be matched to appropriate points in the collaboration process. The table showed that facilitation could be useful at multiple stages of collaboration—at the outset, and during the implementation of the collaboration. By comparison, executive coaching (e.g., on leadership), and a baseline examination might very well be useful for a collaboration prior to agreement.

However, the table is hypothetical, and is strictly intended to be illustrative. In other words, one might expect a completely different roster of TA for a different collaboration. The idea behind the table is that collaborations require customized TA solutions that are judiciously selected to meet the particular requirements of the specific collaboration.

## Conclusions

In this study, we set out to better understand how nonprofits in Boston collaborated with one another, by listening to those who have formed or assisted collaborations. In doing so, we have found that collaboration holds promise in the nonprofit sector. Many nonprofit executives in this study reported many types of positive collaboration outcomes, ranging from financial benefits to policy reform. However, we acknowledge that collaboration needs improvement.

This concluding section provides a set of recommendations for the field—for nonprofits, TA providers, and foundations—and, in doing so, recapitulates many of the study’s main findings.

Overall, this study provides four sets of recommendations to improve collaboration in the future.

### **NONPROFIT EXECUTIVES NEED TO:**

- Discuss realistic timelines and costs of collaboration, including upfront time for relationship-building with collaborators;
- Realistically assess internal competencies and skills needed to be successful, and decide whether to insource or outsource them to other members of the collaboration or outside consultants;
- Reach clear agreement on funding allocation, accountability, credit, and external communications at the outset; and
- Communicate clearly and repeatedly with internal staff and board about how the collaboration meets their mission.

These recommendations underscore the importance of planning, patience, and the willingness of nonprofit executives to ask for help. Nonprofit executives must recognize that while not all problems can be forecast, they can avoid many landmines by investing considerable time at the outset of collaboration. Furthermore, they can assure smoother implementation by relinquishing, or at least sharing, control of the collaboration process to staff, or third-party consultants, as appropriate.

### **FUNDERS NEED TO:**

- Be more creative and flexible in how they approach, allocate, and distribute grants and technical assistance for collaboration;

- Think carefully about how they can help nonprofits defray the true costs of collaboration, and be willing to “reward”<sup>§</sup> effective collaboration;
- Help nonprofits carefully decide which types of TA they need, and pay for such assistance; and
- Help identify and match potential nonprofit collaborators, and match technical assistance providers to nonprofit collaborations.

Funders have significant financial and convening resources that can be marshaled to catalyze nonprofit collaboration: They can help subsidize the costs of technical assistance, or, in the words of one interviewee,

*“aid in the introduction of competent players [nonprofits] with interests in particular areas that might be where a partnership might be mutually beneficial.”*

They can also provide more realistic financial incentives for collaborators to collaborate, because joint work is a resource-intensive proposition. However, it is imperative that funders match their assistance to the needs of a particular collaboration, because every collaboration is unique.

#### **TA PROVIDERS NEED TO:**

- Find ways to collaborate with other TA providers to provide a seamless continuum of services to the nonprofits; and
- Clarify their core competencies in the collaborative arena, and contribute them not only to collaboration projects, but also to an emerging practice of collaboration among TA providers.

Technical assistance providers can play an important role in filling the gaps that nonprofits have during the collaboration process, but two points must be made: (1) It is unlikely that a single consultant can fill this large niche on her/his own; and (2) Many nonprofits may struggle to manage multiple consultants at once. Therefore, TA providers should work with funders, nonprofits and other TA providers to assure that collaborations receive the full range of help they need. For example, several consultants suggested the “general contractor” idea for coordinating TA.

#### **NONPROFIT EXECUTIVES, FUNDERS AND TA PROVIDERS**

- all need to intentionally work together to share best practices and key lessons about collaborations and contribute to making the process more efficient and successful for the field going forward.

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<sup>§</sup> Quoting a nonprofit executive from the study whose name is withheld for confidentiality.

Despite the plethora of how-to primers and general literature on nonprofit collaboration, concrete examples of successful nonprofit collaboration remain in short supply. This means archiving more examples in specific fields and/or types (e.g., policy advocacy, human service collaboration, affordable housing). One nonprofit executive noted a sector need to “capture the case studies of successful collaborative efforts.” Nonprofits and TA providers could help build local knowledge about collaborations, and funders could help subsidize knowledge building efforts around collaboration.

## Appendix

### Persons Interviewed

Joel Abrams  
Chief Executive Officer  
Dorchester House Multi-Service Center

Molly Baldwin  
Executive Director  
Roca, Inc.

Valerie J. Burns  
President  
Boston Natural Areas Network

Kathleen Carney  
Director of Resource Development  
Urban Edge

Lyndia Downie  
President  
Pine Street Inn

Kristina Egan  
Director  
Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance

Aaron Gornstein  
Executive Director  
Citizens' Housing and Planning  
Association

Mossik Hacobian  
Executive Director  
Urban Edge

Melissa Harper  
Executive Director  
Good Sports

David J. Harris  
Executive Director (at time of  
interview)  
The Fair Housing Center of Greater  
Boston

Joanne K. Hilferty  
President and CEO  
Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries

Andrew Kendall  
Executive Director  
The Trustees of Reservations

Lee Ketelsen  
New England Director  
Clean Water Action

Christopher Kilian  
Vice President  
Director, Vermont Advocacy Center  
Conservation Law Foundation

Zachary Lehman  
Executive Director (at time of  
interview)  
MetroLacrosse

Sister Margaret A. Leonard  
Executive Director  
Project Hope

Juan E. Leyton  
Executive Director (at time of  
interview)  
City Life/Vida Urbana

**Nonprofit/Nonprofit Collaboration in Boston**

Claudio Martinez  
Executive Director  
Hyde Square Task Force

Robert Zimmerman, Jr.  
Executive Director  
Charles River Watershed Association

James O'Connell  
President  
Boston Healthcare for the Homeless  
Program

Technical Assistance Providers/  
Consultants

Joan Quinlan  
Director  
Community Benefit Department  
Massachusetts General Hospital

Robert Harrington  
Senior Manager  
La Piana Associates

Reverend Canon Edward W. Rodman  
Professor of Pastoral Theology and  
Urban Ministry  
Episcopal Divinity School

Marianne Hughes  
Executive Director  
Interaction Institute for Social Change

Nancy Schwoyer  
Executive Director  
Wellspring House

Deb Linnell  
Mission Effectiveness Program Director  
Third Sector New England

Richard Thal  
Executive Director  
Jamaica Plain Neighborhood  
Development Corporation

Stephanie M. Lowell  
Independent Consultant

Bill Walczak  
CEO  
Codman Square Health Center

Paul Mattesich  
Executive Director of Wilder Research  
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

Philip Warburg  
President  
Conservation Law Foundation

Thomas McLaughlin  
Senior Manager  
Grant Thornton LLC

Karen Wiener  
Director of Special Projects  
Citizens' Housing and Planning  
Association

Susan Nelson  
Principal  
TDC

Maureen Pompeo  
Executive Director  
Management Consulting Services

William Snyder  
Co-Founder  
Social Capital Group

Gerri J. Spilka  
Director  
OMG Center for Collaborative  
Learning

Carl Sussman  
Principal  
Sussman Associates

Ann Fowler Wallace  
Program Consultant  
Fundors' Network for Smart Growth  
and Livable Communities

Mary Wissemann  
Director of Boston Office  
Wellspring Consulting

Thomas Wolf  
Chair and CEO  
Wolf, Keens & Company

Andrew Wolk  
CEO  
Root Cause

**Barr Foundation Roundtable Discussion on Collaboration: Senior Consultants**

Patrick Field  
Managing Director  
Director, North America Program  
Consensus Building Institute

Terry K. Gilliam  
Managing Partner  
Synectics, Inc.

Tammany Hobbs Miracky  
Consultant  
Head of Boston Office  
Monitor Institute

Marianne Hughes  
Executive Director  
Interaction Institute for Social Change

Mary Wissemann  
Director of Boston Office  
Wellspring Consulting

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## Methods

### LITERATURE REVIEW

We began this study by conducting a literature review on collaboration and related terms. We searched the World Wide Web for articles on collaboration that described what collaboration was, by academics, foundations, and other nonprofit sources. In addition, we reviewed the Barr Foundation's in-house library of resources on collaboration. Endnotes and a bibliography are included in the appendix of this report.

We used the literature review to familiarize ourselves with the concept of collaboration, and to frame the types of questions for nonprofit executives and TA providers for the study. We did not, however, intend this search to be exhaustive or representative of the literature as a whole.

### INTERVIEWS OF NONPROFIT EXECUTIVES

We interviewed nonprofit executive directors and other key nonprofit staff who met two criteria: (a) their nonprofit was based in Metropolitan Boston; and (b) they were collaborating with, or had collaborated with, other nonprofits. In order to generate a pool of potential interviewees, we employed a non-probabilistic sampling method known as the "snowball method."<sup>\*\*</sup> That is, we brainstormed a list of nonprofit executives in Boston who had engaged or were engaged in nonprofit/nonprofit collaboration, and then asked these executives to refer us to others whom they knew who met our study criteria (e.g., their collaboration counterparts at other organizations).

In the major collaborations we studied that involved only two nonprofits, we interviewed nonprofit executives of both nonprofits. However, in some cases, our interviewees were involved in collaborations that involved more than two organizations. In these instances, we interviewed nonprofit executives of two of the collaborating organizations.

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Hanneman R, and Riddle M. "Introduction to social network methods." Accessed 11/3/2006:  
[http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~hanneman/nettext/C1\\_Social\\_Network\\_Data.html](http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~hanneman/nettext/C1_Social_Network_Data.html).

By “collaboration,” we referred to a seminal definition by noted nonprofit collaboration expert Paul Mattesich:

*Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals.*

*The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards<sup>8</sup>.*

It is important to note that we did not include merger as part of our discussion of collaboration. Mergers are important (and timely) topics for nonprofit organizations to consider, but we argued that their incentives and intensity differ from what we deemed collaboration. We are not the first to make this point: “If participants relinquish autonomy, a different organizational form is created – a merger, perhaps, but not a collaboration.”<sup>14</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, we did not consider loose ties between nonprofits, as a form of collaboration in this study.<sup>15</sup>

Between January and August of 2006, we interviewed 27 nonprofit executives from 23 nonprofit organizations. Table 2 (in the body of the report) summarizes the different types of collaboration in which these nonprofit executives were involved.<sup>16</sup> We asked them to describe in detail their participation in specific collaborations, including whether they had any TA to help them through the process. They explained what made collaborations effective, and were reflective about what made some collaborations less effective or ineffective.

#### **INTERVIEWS OF TA PROVIDERS/CONSULTANTS**

We also asked technical assistance providers/consultants about their first-hand views of nonprofit collaboration. Like the interviews of nonprofit executives, we brainstormed an initial list of names of TA providers to nonprofit organizations, and added to this list through word of mouth (e.g., referrals from nonprofit executives we interviewed). In total, we interviewed 15 TA providers/consultants. (The list of TA providers/consultants can be found in this appendix.)

#### **PANEL OF SENIOR CONSULTANTS**

In July of 2006, the Barr Foundation convened a panel of senior consultants at the Barr Foundation for a two-hour lunch roundtable discussion on collaboration. (The list of senior consultants can be found in this appendix.) The purposes of the meeting were to go in-depth into the experiences these consultants had helping nonprofits collaborate, and to ask these senior consultants how TA could strengthen collaboration.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Ahn, S.D. is an independent consultant. He is also a research fellow of the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard University.

<sup>2</sup> Castilla E, Hwang H, Granovetter E, and Granovetter M. “Social networks in Silicon Valley.” 2000. pp. 218-247, Chapter 11, in Lee C et al., Eds., *The Silicon Valley Edge*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.

<sup>3</sup> Reich MR, editor. *Public-private partnerships for public health*. 2002. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

<sup>4</sup> Foundations, for example, often collaborate in this way. See the Grantmakers for Effective Organization Web page, “Mapping the field of funder networks,” at: <http://www.geofunders.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageID=103>. Accessed 11/16/06.

<sup>5</sup> See Gray, B. “Conditions facilitating interorganizational collaboration.” *Human Relations* 1985; 38(10):911-936.

<sup>6</sup> Talcott, S. “Nonprofit mergers catch on in region.” *Boston Globe*. April 6, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> See Greene SG. “Getting the basics right.” *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, 2001. For background on organizational capacity, see Letts CW, Ryan WP, and Grossman A. *High performance nonprofit organizations*. 1999. John Wiley & Sons, New York. See also McKinsey & Company. *Effective capacity building in nonprofit organizations*. 2001. Venture Philanthropy Partners.

<sup>8</sup> Mattesich PW, Murray-Close M, and Monsey BR. *Collaboration: what makes it work, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. St. Paul, Minnesota. May 2004. Page 4

<sup>9</sup> One nonprofit is headquartered in Sharon, Massachusetts, another is located in Gloucester, Massachusetts, but most other nonprofits in this study are located directly in the city of Boston.

<sup>10</sup> Not all collaborations are listed here, because many nonprofit executives spoke about various collaborations in which they had taken part.

<sup>11</sup> Paraphrasing an executive director and a consultant in this study who both noted the importance of “competence” as an aspect of trust. Names withheld to assure confidentiality.

<sup>12</sup> See page 82, in Strauss D. *How to make collaboration work: powerful ways to build consensus, solve problems, and make decisions*. 2002. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco. Strauss provides his own distinctions between “facilitation” and “mediation” in detail, beginning on page 64.

<sup>13</sup> Several authors have referred to a “phases” or “stages” concept of collaboration. Our “stages” of collaboration headings in Table 1 are derived from the work of authors who have previously written about the subject. See, for example, David LaPiana’s *Real Collaboration* (2001: 9; full citation in Bibliography section), who describes “Inspiration,” “Formalization,” “Operation,” and “Institutionalization or Termination” “stages” of collaboration. Also, Molebash refers to 3 “phases” of collaboration: “Phase 1: Developing a Collaborative Relationship”; “Phase 2: Addressing Content-Specific Needs”; and “Phase 3: Assessing the Long-Term Effects of Collaboration.” See Molebash B. “Commentary: Phases of collaborative success: a response to Shoffner, Dias, and Thomas.” *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* 2002; 2(1): 63-72.

<sup>14</sup> Page 148. Wood DJ, and Gray B. “Toward a comprehensive theory of collaboration.” *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 1991; 27(2):139-162.

<sup>15</sup> See discussion of “informal” vs. “formal” collaboration in Nissan LG and Burlingame DF. “Collaboration among institutions.” Page 2. The Center for Philanthropy at Indiana University. No date.

<sup>16</sup> Again, not all collaborations are listed here, because many nonprofit executives spoke about various collaborations in which they had taken part.