

## Using Collaboration Theory for Formative Assessment

My name is Terri Anderson and I serve as a Director for Evaluation with the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Center for Health Policy and Research. Recently, Michael Hutton-Woodland and I worked with a 15 member coalition of regulatory agencies and long term care providers convened to address safe medication administration in Massachusetts nursing homes. We used collaboration theory to assess how members of this strategic alliance coordinated their respective organizations to develop and sustain a new regulatory model. We wanted to understand the level of inter-organizational collaboration needed as well as the quality of their communication since tense relationships sometimes exist between regulators and providers. Further we wanted to monitor the changes in teamwork over the project's two year time period. Therefore, we used Rebecca Woodland's Collaboration Evaluation and Improvement Framework (CEIF) (Gajda, 2004; Gajda and Koliba, 2007) to systematically foster and monitor the group's level of collaborative integration.

First, we used two CEIF tools in facilitated group discussions to build collaboration literacy among team members. The Collaboration quiz introduces various collaboration theory terms and principles to the project stakeholders. These terms appear in the second CEIF tool, the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR). The SAFAR categorizes levels of collaborative integration based on an alliance's purpose, strategies and tasks, leadership and decision-making. Scores, ranging from 'networking' (1) to 'unifying' (5), formatively assess participants' current and desired levels of collaboration.

Each team member assigns a numeric SAFAR rating to the baseline level of integration between their organization and that of each other strategic alliance member. A second numeric rating which assesses the desired level of integration is also assigned. Both baseline and desired scores are then averaged by organizational pair and across the alliance. Average alliance scores are then reported back to the stakeholders at each subsequent meeting to assess the team's growth in collaboration.

### Hot Tip:

- Use the CEIF Collaboration Quiz as an icebreaker while you build collaboration literacy in preparation for SAFAR use.
- Use Microsoft Excel to record SAFAR scores, calculate group scores and make bar graphs to display results for team members.

### Rad Resource:

- AEA Online Journals contain these references:

Gajda, R. (2004). Utilizing collaboration theory to evaluate strategic alliances. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 25(1), 65-77.

Gajda, R., & Koliba, C. (2007). Evaluating the imperative of intraorganizational collaboration: A school improvement perspective. *American Journal of Evaluation* 28(1), 26-44.

- AEA Conference Library contains the Collaboration Quiz