KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

How can other states duplicate and improve on the success of Minnesota’s Farm to School Leadership Team? Below are critical lessons the team has learned since its formation in April 2011, organized by the five elements of the Crosby and Bryson Integrative Leadership Framework. Success of farm to school initiatives requires a systems approach and thus, cross-sector collaboration. The framework was developed in order to understand collaborative cross-sector leadership in a “shared-power, no-one-wholly-in-charge world” to solve complex public problems.

INITIAL CONDITIONS

Collaborative leadership groups typically come together in turbulent environments where there is a sense of urgency (Crosby & Bryson, 2010).

1. Identify the issue; gain a general agreement on the problem.
2. Use pre-existing professional relationships to build trust among the team. Early champions used their personal and professional relationships and had extensive formal and informal conversations prior to forming the leadership team.
3. Outline a clear vision and values to which every participant can generally agree. Minnesota’s Farm to School Leadership Team developed a team agreement as a basis for shared leadership, responsibility and accountability. (See pages 37-38 for more information.)
4. Obtain political support for farm to school efforts. It was helpful that initial champions had a relationship with the governor, as well as foodservice staff and farmers throughout the state.
5. Find funding sources that can advance early efforts. New grants and funding opportunities sponsored early efforts of Minnesota’s Farm to School Leadership Team, including funding for a facilitator, funding for FTEs within key organizations, and funding for meetings and launching joint efforts.

PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

Cross-sector collaborations are more likely to succeed when leaders pay careful attention to wise design to formulate initial agreements, combine deliberate and emergent planning, build relationships and trust and equalize power and manage conflict effectively (Crosby & Bryson, 2010).

6. Use an external facilitator in the early days to support creation of shared goals and build trust among members. Minnesota’s Farm to School Leadership Team transitioned from a facilitated model of leadership to a shared leadership model after one year.
7. Designate a leadership team coordinator who has a neutral and objective institutional position. The coordinator also needs to be flexible in terms of meeting functions and membership boundaries.
8. Design the meetings to share leadership and responsibilities. For instance, rotate the meeting planners, facilitators and note takers. Hold meetings at different members’ organization sites.
9. Spend adequate time early on for team building efforts to build trust among members. Continue holding trust-building activities as the team ages to maintain trust among organizations, as well as to orient new members.
10. Help establish the legitimacy of collaboration with the outside world, including member organizations, by issuing communications from the team as a whole and documenting the work of the collaborative. [Note: This report is one example of how to bring legitimacy to the collaboration.]
STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

Collaborative structure and leadership effectiveness is influenced by system stability and collaborations’ strategic purpose. Leaders will ensure that the structure of the collaboration is flexible and adaptive to deal with system shifts while simultaneously accomplish strategic purpose (Crosby & Bryson, 2010).

11. Cross-sector involvement is necessary. Establish a relatively flexible membership structure because the collaborative environment changes over time as partner priorities change and new partners and leaders emerge as the work evolves.

12. It is necessary to use both formal and informal decision making processes.

CONTINGENCIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Cross-sector collaborations are more likely to succeed if leaders build in resources and tactics for dealing with power imbalance and competing institutional missions (Crosby & Bryson, 2010).

13. To build trust among members and create legitimacy of the collaboration, it is good to have bottom-up collaboration.

14. It is necessary to build multi-level collaborative relationships for higher level negotiations, administrative activities to keep the team functioning, and support of individual members and their organizations for service delivery.

15. Recognize and build in resources and tactics for dealing with power imbalances. Identify champions in different levels of positions within organizations across different sectors.

16. Recognize possible conflicts among members and the stakeholders they represent. Collaborative leaders should have the ability to reframe disputes in ways that can appeal across sectors.

OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

Cross-sector collaborations are most likely to create public value if leaders design them in such a way that they build on individuals’ and organizations’ self-interests along with each sector’s strengths while overcoming each sector’s weaknesses. The normal expectation ought to be that success will be very difficult to achieve in cross-sector collaborations, regardless of leadership effectiveness (Crosby & Bryson, 2010).

17. It is necessary to match individuals’ and organizations’ self-interests with expected outcomes of collaborative actions.

18. It is desirable to have clear and systematic ways to document and track multi-layered effects and to identify ripple effects.

19. Regular reassessment of processes and the outcomes of the collaborative actions should be conducted to ensure accountability and to demonstrate the performance of the collaboration.

20. Demonstrating and communicating results objectively helps build strong relationships with key political and professional constituencies.