

Keys to Effective Research Collaboration **Ed Osborne, NCAC-24 Report (January 2013)**

A synthesis of research revealed 20 key factors that influence the success of collaboration in research and other team endeavors.¹

- A. Factors Related to the Environment
 - 1. History of collaboration or cooperation in the community
 - 2. Collaboration group seen as a legitimate leader in the community
 - 3. Favorable political and social climate

- B. Factors Related to membership Characteristics
 - 1. Mutual respect, understanding, and trust
 - 2. Appropriate cross section of members
 - 3. Members see collaboration as in their self-interest
 - 4. Ability to compromise

- C. Factors Related to Process and Structure
 - 1. Members share a stake in both process and outcome
 - 2. Multiple layers of participation
 - 3. Flexibility
 - 4. Development of clear roles and policy guidelines
 - 5. Adaptability
 - 6. Appropriate pace of development

- D. Factors Related to Communication
 - 1. Open and frequent communication
 - 2. Established informal relationships and communication links

- E. Factors Related to Purpose
 - 1. Concrete, attainable goals and objectives
 - 2. Shared vision
 - 3. Unique purpose

- F. Factors Related to Resources
 - 1. Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time
 - 2. Skilled leadership

In addition, according to Austin & Baldwin², effective team members on a collaborative research project are good communicators, show respect for the views and expertise of other team members, complement the contributions of other team

¹ Mattessich, P. W., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B. R. (2001). *Collaboration: What Makes it Work*. Saint Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance.

² Austin, A. E. & Baldwin, R. G. (1991). *Faculty Collaboration: Enhancing the Quality of Scholarship and Teaching*. Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, The George Washington University.

members, and exercise a unique role in supporting team success (coordinate efforts, encourage progress, integrate ideas, etc.). Shared values, complementary perspectives and work habits, and a commitment to collaboration are essential. Open, collegial, frequent, and well-structured communication builds a productive and enjoyable team dynamic. When research teams are initially formed, external status often dictates the roles of individual team members. However, as the team works over time, relevant expertise, time available for the project, and access to resources exert a greater influence on the roles of team members. Team cohesiveness tends to be greater in smaller teams of the same gender. Cohesiveness also tends to increase over time and has been found to be a strong predictor of group innovation and productivity. Effective research teams periodically perform an honest self-appraisal of the team's processes and productivity as a mechanism for further strengthening the team.