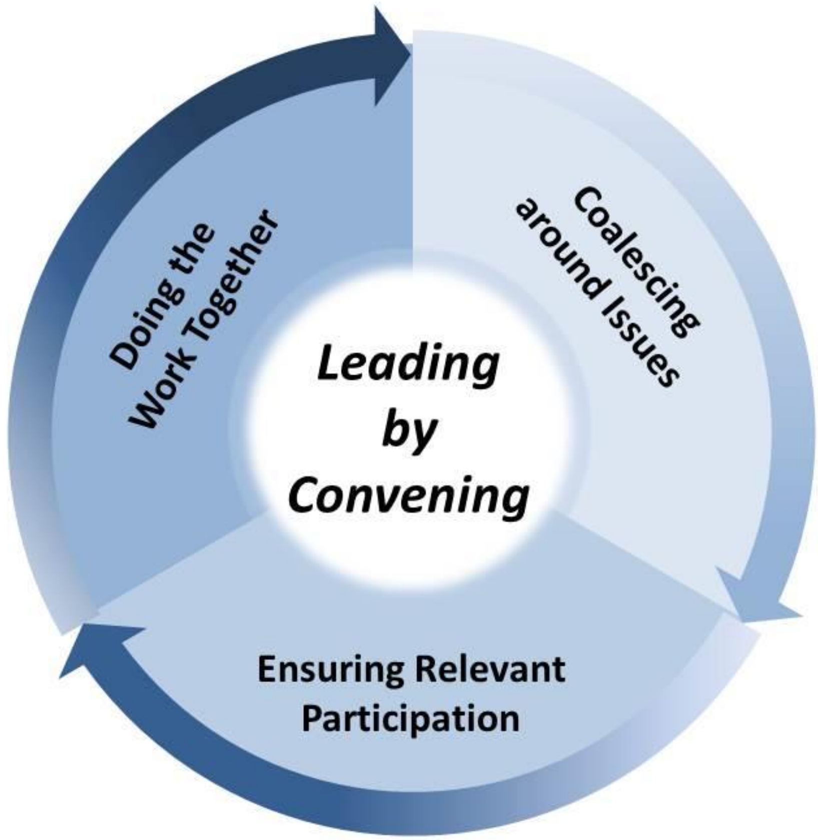

Leading by Convening:

A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement

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The Partnership Way: Leading by Convening Learning Partnerships

In developing this framework, we recognized that Leading by Convening is about our shared experience in creating *'learning partnerships*.*'* Through the Office of Special Education Program's (OSEP) investment in The IDEA Partnership, 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'. This shorthand 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.

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 that 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. Still, 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 particular 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.

<u>Leading by Convening (*A.K.A .The Partnership Way*).</u> 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	Top-down Model	Bottom-up Model	Leading by Convening
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 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, problem-solve and take action
How	• Inviting interested participants to a meeting • Soliciting and considering input from participants • Administrators chart path, make decisions, direct others to take action	• Interested parties join together • Using creative agreement strategies 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/situations • Attending to both the human and technical elements of change; building relationships
Why	• Responsibility resides with the leader…thus, s/he 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 • Broader commitment to implementation • Sustainable after current leaders have moved on	• Decisionmakers, 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 of scale broadens impact and supports sustainability

Leading by Convening: A Guiding Framework for Authentic Engagement

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 and adaptive change. In their 2002 book, *Leadership on the Line*, they pose two critical challenges to implementing change.

> <u>Technical challenges</u> 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.
>
> <u>Adaptive challenges</u> 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 situation above, the technical information is necessary but not sufficient. Adaptive strategies are also needed to address behavior changes in both staff and students.

Based on our efforts to work across groups, the IDEA Partnership added <u>operational elements</u> 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.

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.

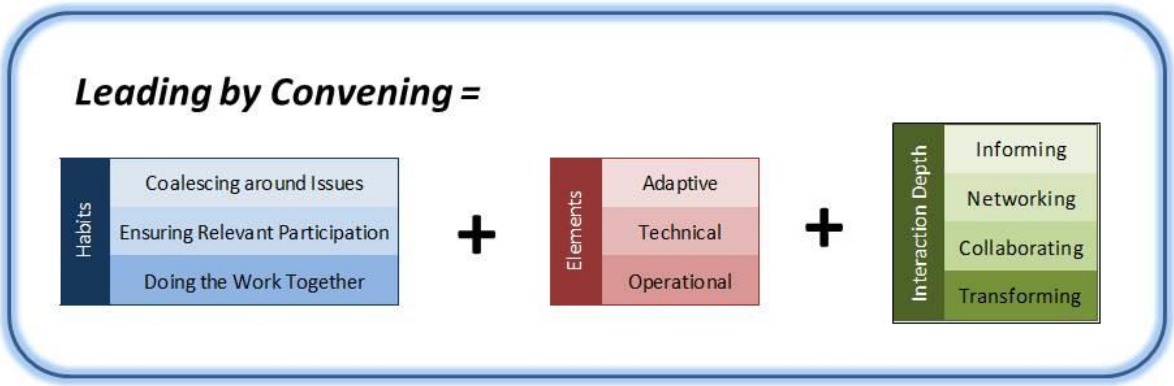
As our work across groups, the partners began to notice the varying levels of interactions. Not all potential partners could or even wanted to engage at deep levels, but all could be included. Over time and with ongoing participation, groups are able to see their own interest in working together. When 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, shared leadership, consensus-building).

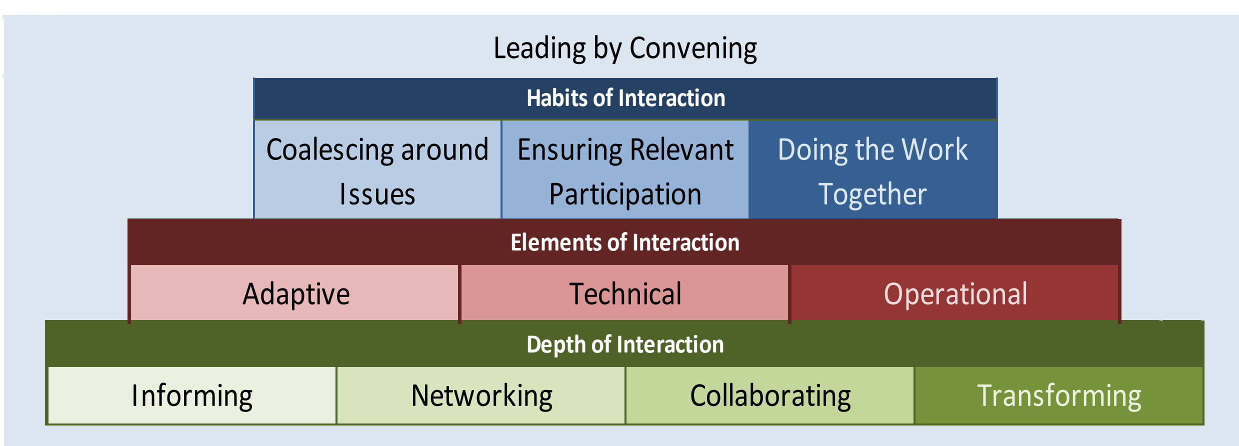
Working in *The Partnership Way* changed who we are as collaborators. It is not easy and it does not happen quickly. We have learned that we must do more than simply say we are attending to the elements of change, we must work at it. We must stretch individually and organizationally. Throughout this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

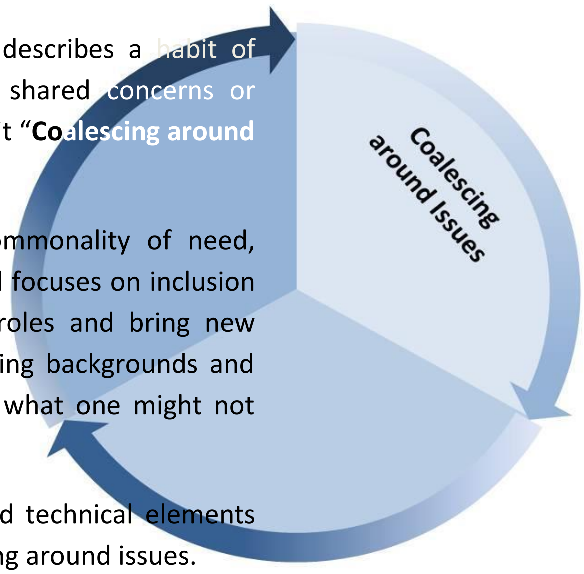


- ***3 habits of interaction***
    - Coalescing around issues
    - Ensuring relevant participation
    - Doing the work together
- ***3 elements of interaction***
    - Adaptive
    - Technical
    - Operational
- ***4 levels of interaction***
    - Informing
    - Networking
    - Collaborating
    - Transforming

The Partnership Way



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/problem. As individuals with differing backgrounds and experiences share and think together, all benefit by 'seeing' what one might not otherwise 'see.'

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

Coalescing around Issues

Adaptive/Human Elements	Technical 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. 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 process for continued engagement. 6. Develop work scope and actionable goals. 7. Commit to process of reflection.

Coalescing around Issues: Adaptive/Human Elements

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.
    a. 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.
    b. 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 list serves.
    c. 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 that are currently 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 we can all agree is essential to reaching agreement within the group and to supporting future work together.

    a. Determine necessary data. Consider the questions of relevancy and focus on the issue(s) being addressed.

b. Collect evidence of both the negative and positive sides of the issue. Go beyond statistical data to qualitative, anecdotal, substantiated stories of the issue.
c. 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?
d. Synthesize results together. Make connections between and among experiences, people and resources.

4. **<u>Commit to reaching consensus through shared understanding in the group</u>.** Once a group of interested individuals identifies an issue of importance, members develops a shared understanding through discussions and exploration of the issue. There may still be variations in perspectives, yet everyone agrees 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. **<u>Acknowledge and agree that collective impact is greater than individual impact.</u>** The advantage of coming together from differing perspectives to address a common interest is that together individuals can make greater impact than they can individually. While most or all in the group acknowledge this, it is important to verbalize across the diversity of stakeholders. Once verbalized, acknowledged and agreed upon, a foundation for moving forward together in deeper collaboration is established.

6. **<u>Agree to move on specific actionable goals</u>.** 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 groups to align work scopes, messages to constituencies, etc., that will contribute to the development of the action plan.

Coalescing around Issues: Technical Elements

1. **<u>Describe the issue.</u>** 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 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 landscape and then identify our coalescing issue(s). The process includes:

a. acknowledging the broad areas that pertain to an issue; define the whole issue;
b. identifying issues that contribute to the current situation from the perspectives of various stakeholders;
c. identifying any pertinent data, evidence-based practices and/or present policies; and
d. agreeing 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 without 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 help 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, its 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 are collaboratively developed, written, shared and revisited often. They include

   a. 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 issue may be addressed by the group.
   b. 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.
   c. 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.

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

5. **Develop process of 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 always 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 list serves) between face-to-face meetings.

6. **Develop work scope and actionable goals**. Once the group has identified its primary shared goal, they set 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 works 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
    a. Crafting and delivery of common messages to the field
        i. delivery via communication vehicles available to the partners;
        ii. presentations together in high value venues (conferences, large meetings, etc.) as a symbolic and substantive demonstration of commitment; and
        iii. creation and presentation of an "elevator speech" (succinct, yet comprehensive statement of core purpose).
    b. Development and dissemination of products
        i. practice and/or professional development documents; and
        ii. Recommendations for policy changes as appropriate to the issue, organization and level of impact.
    c. Setting achievable work goals with others; 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.

d. Measuring progress – Action plans address ways in which progress will be measured
    i. quantitative measures set goals relative to data sets that initially brought people together around this issue; and
    ii. qualitative measures probe changes in the perspectives, stories, etc. across the stakeholders groups in this collaboration.

7. **<u>Use a process of reflection</u>**. 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:
    i. what we thought would happen;
    ii. what did happen;
    iii. how well it was done;
    iv. what was learned; and
    v. what we will do next.

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; and
- 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 can be used for individual or group reflection. Suggestions for use include:

1. 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.
2. 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/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 builds and provides measures of growth over time that can be coordinated with data on practice change.

Coalescing around Issues	**Depth of Interaction**			
	Informing Level **(sharing/sending)**	**Networking Level** **(exchanging)**	**Collaborating Level** **(engaging)**	**Transforming Level** **(commitment to consensus))**
Acknowledging and valuing diversity	Core group of interested stakeholders disseminate information to potentially interested stakeholders, across roles, to inform about issues and invite others into the discussion.	Stakeholders from diverse roles exchange ideas and resources with one another; clarification on 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, 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 take into consideration the whole issue, develop a common understanding and develop areas of agreement.	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 have been 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*)

Four Simple Questions

Use the **Four Simple Questions** learning activity to help create an inclusive path to shared work. We cannot avoid complexity but we can make it less complicated by working through these four simple questions together! 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.

1. *Who cares about this issue and why?*

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

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

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/group	***Initiative/document/ tool***	***Unique vocabulary/difference in perspective***	***Value to our common interest***
Note name of organization/group,	*Note title of initiative/document/tool,*	*Note any unique identifiers relative to this group.*	*Note value this group brings to the table.*

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	***For specific groups***	***For all groups***
Select from below and/or add others.		
Defining a shared problem		
Information exchanges		
Productive inquiries		
Joint events		
Mapping resources		
Developing shared messages		
Other		

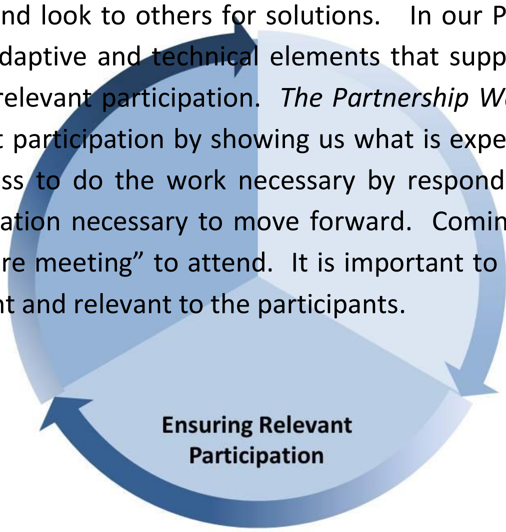
4. How can we deepen our connections?

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	***How can we support and connect to its work on this issue?***	***How can it support and connect to our work on this issue?***
List identified groups.	*Note activity(ies) most likely to be effective.*	*Note activity(ies) most likely to be effective.*

The second triad in the development of *The Partnership Way* involves ensuring 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 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.



Elements of Ensuring Relevant Participation

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

Ensuring Relevant Participation: Adaptive/Human Elements

1. **<u>Demonstrate a commitment to inclusion and participation</u>**. It is not enough to say that we in inclusionary in process; we must demonstrate a commitment to inclusion and participation. Commitment to inclusion can be demonstrated in a variety of ways.
    a. Providing access supports such as translators, interpreters and visual enhancements.
    b. Determining the level of understanding that potential participants have about the technology being used.
    c. Making sure various technology resources are available for use and making sure people feel that they can use what is comfortable for them.
    d. 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.
    a. Ensure a structure for gathering broad participation beyond the designated representative attending the meeting in person.
    b. 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/career does not necessarily allow for daytime participation (parents/families/youth, teachers, etc.). Evenings may be best for conference calls and other follow-up activities.
    c. When and where possible, 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).

2. **<u>Engage stakeholders who are representative, relevant, purposeful, knowledgeable and influential</u>.** Once the core group has coalesced around a particular issue, asking and addressing the question of “Who else needs to be at the table?” is next. 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 they 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 being 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 and/or care about the issue and invites them to join in the discussion and the work. Of course, not all who care can actively participate as representatives are determined. Each group of stakeholders (organization, technical assistance provider, department, etc.) chooses who their 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 partnership group evolves they encourage 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 partnership 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 aides 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 that 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, 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 this 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 c 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 has moves to a collective leadership process, it is important to note that the role of leader/ 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 their 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 will that 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 partnership group.

Ensuring Relevant Participation: Technical Elements

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 partnership, an articulated process of welcoming and orienting is beneficial. Some things we have found valuable in different partnership groups include:
    a. Creating a joint invitation that is customized as needed to include key stakeholders with influence and authority;
    b. Acknowledging various roles at the beginning of each meeting or follow-up activity;
    c. Establishing a mentor/mentee relationship for orienting new people; and
    d. Conducting individual follow-up calls to newcomers from core group member.
    e. Encouraging 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 Way 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…
    a. When do we go to our standing group of stakeholders for input and when do we reach beyond that group?
    a. When do we know we need a subgroup to inform the larger group?
    b. How do we create the structure to support two-way learning that leads to deep understanding?
    c. What constitutes a need for a face-to-face meeting? A conference call? A webinar? A group listserv or email input?

3. **Develop and follow 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.

4. **Contribute to and create a shared vocabulary.** Acknowledging the individuality of language each representative brings to the discussion was 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, to make sure that vocabulary does not become a stumbling block and 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 Partnership Community discussed and developed materials around the framework of responsiveness to intervention, they agreed to use the term Response to Intervention (RTI). However, as some states have adopted other terms such as response to instruction, multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), etc., research- and evidence-based materials developed by the partnership were able to 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, material 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 of reflection.** By definition, engaging in relevant participation means actively participating in an ongoing way in various phases of the process. It is incumbent on each and 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…
   d. Over-invite a particular group that tends to be under-represented;
   e. Put forth extra effort to engage needed groups; or
   f. Lead a discussion on what relevant participation looks and feels like.

Ensuring Relevant Participation: Operational Elements

The technical and adaptive elements of Ensuring Relevant Participation can be characterized by four big ideas:

- Ensuring diversity among relevant stakeholder representatives

- Creating opportunities for engagement on the issue
- Working together to facilitate understanding of the issue and diverse perspectives
- Evolving leadership roles

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 above, 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…

1. 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
2. Create a wall chart; each member of the group uses a colored 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); 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.

Ensuring Relevant Participation	Depth of Interaction			
	Informing Level (sharing/sending)	**Networking Level** (exchanging)	**Collaborating Level** (engaging)	**Transforming Level** (consensus decision-making)
Ensuring diversity among relevant stakeholder representatives	Core group of interested stakeholders disseminate information to potentially interested stakeholders, across roles, to inform about issues and invite 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. Each and all in the group take responsibility for inviting and orienting new members of the group.
Creating opportunities for engagement on the issue	Core group of interested stakeholders invite others to participate in various ways (on- or off-site).	Stakeholders share preferences for on-site and virtual methods of communication.	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	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 identifies and shares 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 sub-issue or activity. Flexible leadership is emerging.	Group members are working together and assuming 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, cross-stakeholder, shared leadership, consensus-building)

ENGAGING "EVERYBODY"

In order to facilitate the four big ideas of relevant participation, we've described some of the actions we would observe the collaborators doing and developing together. The actions range from beginning efforts to deep indicators of partnership. Try this **Engaging Everybody** tool to create manageable ways to involve 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 relations among participants. Use your best judgment to determine how many organizing sessions you need.

Using the Circles to Define Roles

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

The Core Team consists of leaders from diverse groups that are committed to the success of the work.

The Core Team:

- Convenes the group.
- Takes responsibility for structuring each convening and follow up.
- Plans and monitors interaction.
- Creates engagement strategies.
- Organizes activities.
- Communicates with decision makers.
- Oversees review and evaluation.

Key Participants/Advisors are groups that have responsibility for, or keen interest in, the issue.

Key Participants/Advisors:

- 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.
- May join the core team periodically when their expertise is required on a particular issue.

Extended Participants/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.

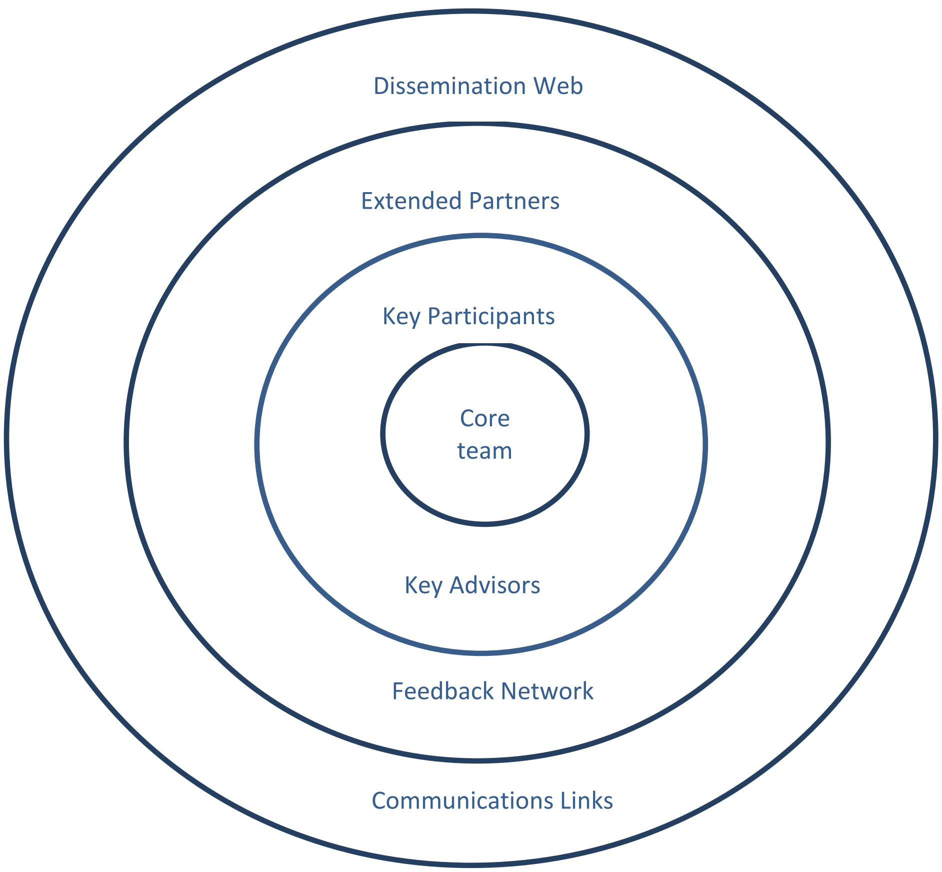
Extended Participants/Feedback Network:

- Volunteer to become involved and represent the perspective of their organization/network.
- Bring the perspective of their role/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.

Dissemination Networks include participants from all the groups within the circles and all the other groups related to this issue.

Dissemination Networks:

- 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/Advisors – Group 1

Group 1 partners must be invited. They represent key constituencies and have the authority and/or influence to help you 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 your core team.

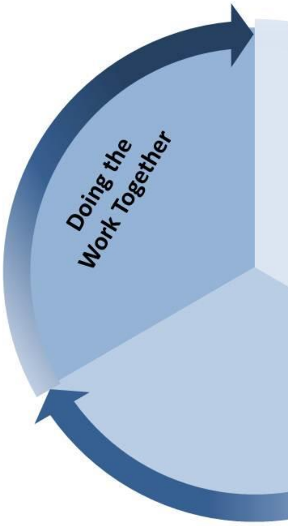
Extended Participants/Feedback Network – Group 2

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. Always begin your communication 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 your Group 1 partners. These people can help you tailor your messages to reach their networks. It is always good, and encouraged, for the Group 1 representative to identify key leaders to join and become active participants in Group 2 who will share their organizational perspectives and bring new ideas to your group.

Dissemination Networks – Group 3

It is important to develop a number of active participants who 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 you are working on and your work on the issue!



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, 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.

Elements of Doing the Work Together

Adaptive/Human Elements	Technical 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. 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/influence. 5. Develop and implement an action plan. 6. Use a process of reflection.

Doing the Work Together: Adaptive/Human Elements

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, experiences and effect to make 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 (language, sense of etiquette, etc.) impacting interactions among the group. Routinely, the members monitor and manage the potential development of an insider/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 non-judgmental. 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/facilitator changes 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 determination of who the leader/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 the participants' personal investment in the value of the work.** Not only through shared leadership opportunities, but 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 pm in the evening so that a practitioner in California can participate. 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 is also 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. **Maintain principles of 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.
    a. Mission statement – Are we staying on purpose? Has our focus changed over time?
    b. Vision statement – Are we striving for the identified overall goal? If not, what has changed?
    c. Guiding principles – Are we living up to our guiding principles? Do we need to exert a bit more effort in an area or two?
    d. 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 /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:
    a. schedules of meeting space and time;
    b. draft and final agenda;
    c. attendance records; and
    d. minutes or notes of the meeting.
    Shared leadership supports typically include:
    a. varying roles and responsibilities for operation of the group;

b. rotating leadership/facilitator responsibilities;
c. establishing protocols for keeping work groups connected to the core group;
d. plan for communicating ongoing work; and
e. shared acknowledgement of all group products.

4. **<u>Develop and implement action plan</u>**. 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:
    a. brainstorming options for action;
    b. choosing from among alternative options for action;
    c. identifying priorities based on the collection and analysis of data;
    d. identifying potential leverage points that might contribute to a solution;
    e. developing plans through collaboration and active engagement of participants in the process -
        i. agree on the structure of the plan,
        ii. identify barriers and how they will be addressed,
        iii. determine resources and tools, and
        iv. establish timing for outcomes at each actionable step:
    f. establishing stakeholder shared responsibility for doing the work, based on role and networking opportunities;
    g. planning for reflection and monitoring of progress; and
    h. planning for adjustment of strategies as need arises.

5. **<u>Identify levels of potential interaction/influence</u>**. As we think about potential interaction and/or influence, we think about it in multiple ways. Typical questions we ask ourselves include: 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.
    a. Horizontal plane: (same level of scale) working together with one level (local, state, national), such as
        i. within a local community, school district and mental health agency working together to address issues of school-based behavioral/mental health;
        ii. at the state level, the state department of education convenes a special education advisory council to address issues of implementation; or
        iii. at the national level, organizations and technical assistance centers come together to address a national education issue.
    b. Vertical plane: (different levels of scale) working together across local, state and national levels.

6. **<u>Use a process of reflection</u>**. 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.

Doing the Work Together: Operational Elements

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 impact, 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 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…

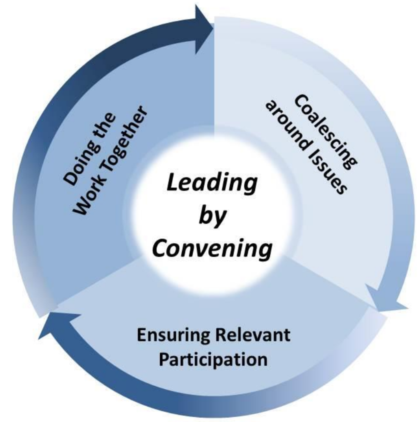
1. Individuals in the Community of Practice (CoP) use the rubric at specified points in time (e.g., every six months). A group discussion may then follow with respect to where "we" are.
2. Create a wall chart. Each member of the CoP uses a colored sticker and places one in the cell that best describes 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 develop 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.

Doing the Work Together	**Depth of Interaction**			
	Informing Level (sharing/sending)	**Networking Level (exchanging)**	**Collaborating Level (engaging)**	**Transforming Level (consensus decision-making)**
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 their 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 their 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 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 their audience and help 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, 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, cross-stakeholder, shared leadership, consensus-building)

Bringing it all together…



Leaders must be willing to do what they are asking of others. Partners have often referred to the analogy that leaders must be on the dance floor and in the balcony at the same time (Heifetz and Linsky. *Leadership on the Line*, 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 must also experience the dance. A good leader knows when to talk and when to listen, when to think and when to do, 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/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, who let go of what does not work and are fine with it, willingly take risks and provide models of leadership for others to emulate. As relationships develop and needs change; as we attend to the adaptive as well as the technical side of change, leadership emerges among others in the community.

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.

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; and
- do the work together.

This is the Partnership Way!

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 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, the work yet to be accomplished.

The following "Bringing it all Together" **group rubric** (page 44) can be used for individual or group reflection. Suggestions for use include…

1. Individuals in the Community of Practice (CoP) 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
2. Create a wall chart; each member of the CoP uses a colored 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); provides a measure of growth over time

The first activity supports discussion that brings the group to a point of understanding and develop consensus about where they are and where they need 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 which can be mapped to programmatic data as a measure of impact on outcomes. *(Visit XXX for a video that provides the overview and the process.)*

Additionally, you will find an individual reflection rubric in the section entitled, "Bringing it all Together" (page 45). In this activity, you address how you see yourself self 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.

Bringing it all Together: GROUP RUBRIC

Leading by Convening	**Informing Level** **(sharing/sending)**	**Networking Level** **(exchanging)**	**Collaborating Level** **(engaging)**	**Transforming Level** **(consensus decision-making)**
Evaluating and showcasing collective influence through accomplishments and positive outcomes	• Disseminating program outcome data to interested stakeholders • Sharing success stories (anecdotal)	• Exchanging ideas about what we think and believe was successful and has been accomplished	• Determining together what constitutes the standards for success • Reviewing together work based upon these standards	• Identifying, sharing and celebrating accomplishments • Looking for opportunities to influence change as a result of these accomplishments • Considering opportunities for replication and generalization • Observing there is vertical and horizontal influence that occurs as a result of this work

Bringing it all Together: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION RUBRIC

Leading by Convening	**Depth of Interaction**			
	Informing Level (sharing/sending)	**Networking Level** (exchanging)	**Collaborating Level** (engaging)	**Transforming Level** (consensus decision-making)
I am a learner and a leader	• stating clearly that I am here to learn from others • stating clearly that I am willing to share leadership	• acknowledging leading comes through skill development • asking others to come to the table as learners and to lead as they feel comfortable	• relying on leadership from those with influence and expertise as needed • knowing that in the role of leader I am still a learner	• moving with ease in and out of the learner and leader roles
When meeting a new challenge/issue, I cross environments by…	• consciously seeking out others with interest in the challenge/issue and sharing my information and questions with them • consciously ensuring that others I seek out are coming from differing roles/ experiences/perspectives	• exchanging questions, ideas and resources with one another • clarifying role-specific vocabulary • consciously asking who or what perspective is still needed to make the best decisions and inviting them into the conversation	• engaging in dialogue about the challenge/issue with as many differing perspectives "in the room" as possible • utilizing communication systems that support working across environ-ments (conference calls, electronic media, etc.)	• no longer needing to bring the process of crossing environments to the conscious level • inviting and engaging with others automatically
I rely on a blended leadership style to address new challenges/issues by…	• analyzing data around the issue • sharing my perspectives with others • asking others to share data and perspectives	• listening carefully to what others have to share • asking clarifying question • offering possible solutions	• calling on others in the group to lead or facilitate discussions • ensuring that each has an opportunity to share • encouraging consensus decision-making • consciously building relations that attend to the human as well as the technical side of working together	• using with automaticity activities/strategies that support relationship-building • acknowledging that each and all stakeholders have a role and their interactions produce value