

# Sustaining Service, Service- Learning & Experiential Projects: Opportunities & Challenges

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This presentation is based on a review of the programs which are recipients of the 2010 MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship.

Its purpose is to give participants the opportunity to share observations about common strengths and challenges in the programs pertaining to *sustainability*.



All of the projects honored with a MacJannet Prize rely on relationship with institutions or individuals outside of higher education.

The strengths of these relationships seem to be important to the quality and success of each project.



The principal question pertinent to this presentation is:

**How do we build and sustain collaborating relationships that enhance our projects?**



Addressing this question successfully requires an understanding about what we mean by the terms:

- Sustainability
- Collaboration



# Sustainability Defined

The capacity to endure

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability>

This seems to permeate, at least implicitly, the goals of all 8 MacJannet projects. That is, we recognize that our projects are intended to address important issues which, by their nature, tend to defy short-term solutions.



# Collaboration Defined

1. The act of working with another or others on a joint project.
2. Something created by working jointly with another or others.

World English Dictionary



Scholars who study collaboration have developed more nuanced definitions which distinguish them from other forms of relationships. Thus, there have been studies which distinguish among:

- » Cooperation
- » Coordination
- » Collaboration

(Jackson & Maddy, 1999; Kerka, 1997)





These terms may be thought of as part of a relational continuum.

Cooperation      Coordination      Collaboration



(The word continuum is underlined to assure my appreciation that these categories are not discrete nor mutually exclusive, but the distinctions have heuristic value.)



**Cooperation** captures those groups which associate with one another to accomplish a goal that they may each define individually.



**Coordination** involves working together more formally to accomplish a goal, (may include participation in planning efforts and the establishment of mutually defined goals).



**Collaboration** entails a network of sustained relationships in which responsibility, authority, accountability, and resources are shared.



Research suggests that collaboration offers opportunities that may provide advantages including:

- Shared use of resources may be more efficient
- Capacity may be built through shared knowledge and skills
- Generate greater access to broader community constituencies and resources
- Attain “critical mass” of visibility

(BESST, p.3)



But collaboration also poses some risks and challenges, requiring:

- Comprehensive planning
- Communication channels that are well-defined and that operate on many levels
- Commitment of resources to a shared decision-making process
- Vulnerability to other organizational weaknesses

Mattessich and Monsey (1992)



## Assumptions:

- Sustainability is most likely to occur where there is true collaboration, therefore, that is the preferred nature of the relationship among organizations sharing some common endeavor.
- These assumptions may not hold for every project. For various reasons cooperation or coordination may be a better fit.



Even if this is true, there seems to be some benefit in understanding the *differences* among these types of relationships and the potential *value* of collaboration with respect to sustainability within the context of our respective projects.

So with this caveat and rationale in mind, let us delve into some of the issues which seem to face most, if not all, of our programs.





# Comprehensive Planning

- What are the common goals of the collaborating organizations?
- What priority do these goals play in the overall mission of each of the collaborators?
- What assessment tools are used to determine whether or not these goals are being met?
- How are community collaborators identified?



# Communication

- How are relationships established between the representatives from the institutions of higher education and the communities being served?
- How strong are the communication links (communication redundancy)?
- How is assessment feedback conducted and transmitted?



# Resources

- How is the project financed?
- What kind of social infrastructure is needed to integrate the collaborating constituents?
- What kind of physical infrastructure is needed to integrate the collaborating constituents?
- What kinds of training are provided for participants?



# Organizational Vulnerability (Trust)

- How much commitment to the project is there from collaborators?
- How stable and secure are collaborators?
- How well recognized in the community are collaborators?
- Do collaborators have an identity and what is it?



*In addressing each of these items, what is the greatest strength and the greatest challenge your organization faces with respect to sustainability of your project?*

Each project team is asked to address the questions pertinent to the topics most relevant to them:

**Comprehensive Planning, Communication, Resources, Organization Vulnerability.**



# Selected Sources

*BESST: Building Expert State Systems for Training.* (2005). Report prepared by Campaign Consultation, Inc. for the Corporation for National and Community Service, Washington: DC.

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