

Designing Intentional Collaborations | Worksheet

We set out to better understand the mechanisms that help individuals, teams, and organizations do more purposeful work together. We spoke with over 30 experts across the social impact space, including family foundations, impact investors, and philanthropic advisors in order to uncover the drivers of and barriers to collaboration. We found that five critical ingredients enable organizations to harness the power of collaboration to achieve greater impact in the world.

The 5 Essentials of Collaboration:



Common Ethos

Collaborations with a shared clear purpose lead to less unnecessary friction and more focused problem solving.



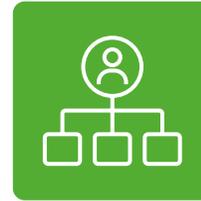
Committed Relationships

Collaborations exist to overcome challenges and those built on strong relationships are more able to face adversity head on.



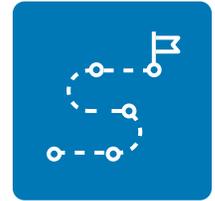
Continuous Curiosity

Collaborations designed around learning together help build cohesion, challenge bias and spark innovation.



Clear Stewardship

Collaborations with well-defined roles and expectations generate the ownership and agency necessary for action.



Intentional Processes

Collaboration that is enabled by thoughtful ways of working will maximize productivity with minimal bureaucracy.

To dive deeper into the 5 essentials of collaboration, check out: [Designing Intentional Collaborations: How a more purposeful approach to collaboration can yield greater impact.](#)

Applying it to Your Collaboration

Below are a series of questions to help you explore ways to understand and improve your collaboration. We recommend letting each key collaborator answer these questions on their own, compare your answers, and use it as a jumping off point to work through disagreements and align on a north star. This will be a useful tool as you kick off a collaboration, at a transitional midpoint or moment of change, or as a reflective debrief as a collaboration comes to a close.



Common Ethos: Define and measure iteratively.

- Why do we believe this work is important?
- What is the main aim and vision of this collaboration?
- What does success look like to us, and how are we measuring it?



Committed Relationships: Design your team with overcoming challenges in mind.

- What are the kinds of challenges you're likely to face and how can you embrace them?
- How will you build a team that can tackle these problems with diverse perspectives?
- Are we providing moments for collaborators to connect as people, and not just teammates?
- How can you recognize power dynamics and neutralize them before they stifle collaboration?



Continuous Curiosity: Seek learning opportunities that will build bridges to innovation.

- Where does our thinking need to be broadened?
- Where do we not have alignment where learning could provide common ground?
- Whose perspective have we not heard, or don't hear from often?



Clear Stewardship: Secure the right resources, human or otherwise.

- Who will keep us on track, with time, budgets, and tasks?
- Who will keep us accountable to our common ethos and metrics?
- Who will steward our needs and aims for the long-term?



Intentional Process: Design your processes to adapt with the times.

- Does everyone know why you use the processes you do, and are they getting value from them? Do the current processes meet the diverse needs of everyone involved?
- Which processes are meeting time-boxed needs, and which are addressing recurring functions?
- What major shifts in our problem-area, our resources, or our people can we foresee in the next five, ten, and even twenty years? What shifts can we plan for now?

Curious? Learn more about us at [Intentional Futures](#).

We are a strategy and design firm working with visionary leaders to solve hard problems that matter.

Questions? Feel free to reach out, we love to chat!

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