



# Implementing Evidence-based Principles in Community Corrections: Collaboration for Systemic Change in the Criminal Justice System



*Project Vision:* To build learning organizations that reduce recidivism through systemic integration of evidence-based principles in collaboration with community and justice partners.

## Why Collaborate?

Criminal justice leaders are being challenged to meet the needs of increasing offender populations with decreasing budgets. Searching for more effective and efficient means of supervising offenders has led many states to focus on the use of evidence-based practices within community corrections. Evidence-based principles provide community corrections agencies with proven methods of reducing offender recidivism. These approaches, combined with the cost savings achieved by supervising offenders in the community instead of in institutions, provide states with an effective policy choice for offender supervision.

Implementing evidence-based principles requires that community corrections agencies change the way they operate and shifting the way they do business is no easy task. Change requires dynamic leadership with a willingness to place equal focus on evidence-based practices in service delivery, organizational

development, and collaboration. These three components form an integrated model for system reform. Each component of this integrated model is essential: evidence-based principles form the basis of effective service provision; organizational development is required to successfully move a criminal justice or correctional system from traditional interventions to evidence-based practices; and collaboration is a critical component to implementing systemic change within the complex web of public safety agencies, service providers, and other stakeholders.

Collaboration can be defined as *coming together to work toward a common vision*. The collaborative process is intended to move participants away from the traditional definition of power as control or domination; towards a definition that allows for shared authority. This results in greater achievements than would be attained by one organization working alone. Since no public safety

agency operates in a vacuum, engaging system stakeholders in change efforts helps eliminate barriers, increases opportunities for success, enriches the change process, educates stakeholders about the agency’s work, and creates a shared vision that supports the systemic change efforts.

Public safety system stakeholders include a wide range of entities, from prisons and police agencies to victim advocates and faith-based community organizations. Working collaboratively with all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of systemic change in community corrections can result in a more coherent continuum of care; one that uses evidence-based principles to reduce recidivism. By collaborating with each other, governmental agencies and community-based providers can jointly provide a comprehensive and integrated array of services that could not be provided by a single agency. Access to a well-organized network of services and pro-social community connections can greatly enhance an offender’s ability to succeed. Collaboration, in this context, is a constructive and useful tool of social action and recidivism reduction.

### An Integrated Model



*Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals.*

*The relationship includes a commitment to: a definition of mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and the sharing of resources and rewards.*

--The Wilder Foundation (Griffith, 2000)

*A group involving all the major actors in the justice system can have tremendous formal and informal authority — and its decisions, not just recommendations, can determine outcomes. Actions can be produced instead of advice.*

(Feely, 2000).

## Who Should Be Included?

A key concept in organizational development and the collaborative process is to ensure that those individuals and organizations most affected have a voice in the process of change. For collaboration to work, all relevant stakeholders must have a voice at the table. Since the actual number of participants must be somewhat limited to ensure efficiency, formal communication methods must be established to ensure that those unable to be at the table still have their views heard.

Leaders must assist stakeholders in understanding and appreciating the value that participation in the change process has for them. Involving external stakeholders not only increases their understanding of the system, but can also help to identify overlapping client populations and shared goals.

For example, as community corrections agencies implement evidence-based principles, they will shift their resource focus onto higher-risk offenders.

### Questions to Ask:

- *What partnerships currently exist in your system?*
- *Where do new partnerships need to be forged?*
- *How does participation in the change process assist partners in accomplishing their mission and vision?*

This shift in focus often results in decreased access to treatment resources for low-risk / high-need offenders. Involving human services agencies in the change planning process can help identify other treatment resources for these offenders.

The development of a policy-level committee that includes leaders from key stakeholder organizations and community groups and helps to guide change, is an essential component of implementing change in the public safety system.

Members of the policy committee should include policy makers from key stakeholder organizations and community groups, including those supportive of the change and those who may pose potential barriers to implementation. Involving those who may not be entirely supportive of all planned changes ensures a richer policy development, educates those policy makers more fully about the system, and may potentially alleviate future barriers.

This policy committee should be charged with guiding relative system-wide policy, implementing corresponding changes in their own organizations that support the system changes, and communicating with their own organizations about the impact of system changes.

**A common vision is an essential element of a successful collaboration.**  
*(See Appendix A.)*

## The Need for Structure

Every collaboration needs some structure, but the degree of structure varies for each collaboration. Collaboration participants should choose a structure that supports their endeavors and fits their desired level of joint activity and risk.

Methods of developing structure, such as charters, memorandums of understanding, and partnering agreements fulfill multiple purposes. For example, they can help clarify the authority and expectations of the group, roles/functions of all participants, focus parties on their responsibilities, and eliminate miscommunication and backtracking when staff changes occur. These tools should clarify decision-making responsibility and emphasize the concept that no single agency or individual is *in charge* in the familiar sense. Instead, professionals from each *center of expertise* are empowered to do what they do best to the enhancement of the collective goal.

**A charter clarifies the authority and expectations of a work group.**  
*(See Appendix B.)*

### Questions to Ask:

- *What are we doing? Why are we doing it?*
- *How are we going to get it done? Who is going to do what?*
- *What are the communication pathways within our collaboration?*
- *Who has authority to make specific decisions?*
- *How do we consciously develop mutual respect within our collaboration?*

## Sustaining Collaboration

Collaboration and system change are very time consuming and resource intensive processes. They require constant attention and nurturing to maintain momentum. *Acknowledging the inevitability of obstacles, admitting them when they reappear, developing collective strategies to overcome them, and having a sense of humor are all important in surviving the process* (Feely, 2000).

Working collaboratively with system partners provides a greater opportunity for successful implementation of true organizational change. With a united and common vision, the combined efforts of stakeholders can achieve more than any one organization could alone. No organization exists in a vacuum; therefore, recognizing the inherent interdependence, and including it in the development of change implementation strategies, greatly enhances the chance of success.

# A Collaborative Model for Implementing Change

Collaborative endeavors must develop a balance between broad participation and the need to make decisions and take action. *The collaborative process has to be perceived as fair, not dominated by one interest group, and accessible to all stakeholders* (Carter, Ley, Steketee, Gavin, Stroker, Woodward, 2002).

It should ensure that the number of participants is small enough to allow for productivity, but broad enough to get widespread support. The collaboration model illustrated in Figure 1 can be used to implement systemic change in criminal justice systems. It identifies multiple levels of systemic involvement, both internal and external to the targeted organization. The collaborative work takes place at all levels, including policy teams, work teams, and implementation teams. Although each of these teams may share an overriding vision of system change as reduced recidivism, each team has different work to do. A collaborative policy team focuses on policy

changes at a systemic level, site work teams direct the internal change work of the organization, and implementation teams are responsible for the practicalities of making change happen.

Mutual respect and understanding is key to sustaining shared authority in collaborative relationships. Borrowing from a concept developed by Michael Hammer in *Beyond Reengineering*, all partners are seen as *Centers of Excellence*, defined as a *collective of professionals, led by a coach, who join together to learn and enhance their skills and abilities to contribute best to whatever processes are being developed. Each agency is an expert at performing its piece of the work of public safety* (Carter, Ley, Steketee, et al, 2002).

In the model below, teams include representation from these *Centers of Expertise*, such as the court, prosecution, defense, corrections, law enforcement, probation, and parole. Each center may be a self-contained organization, but all are linked with

the other centers through the public safety system. The collaboration participants work together towards the shared vision of enhanced service provision and reduced recidivism.

## Questions to Ask:

- Are key stakeholders / centers of expertise involved within each locus of collaborative work?
- Do participants at all levels understand and buy in to the vision?
- Do participants understand how collaboration works?

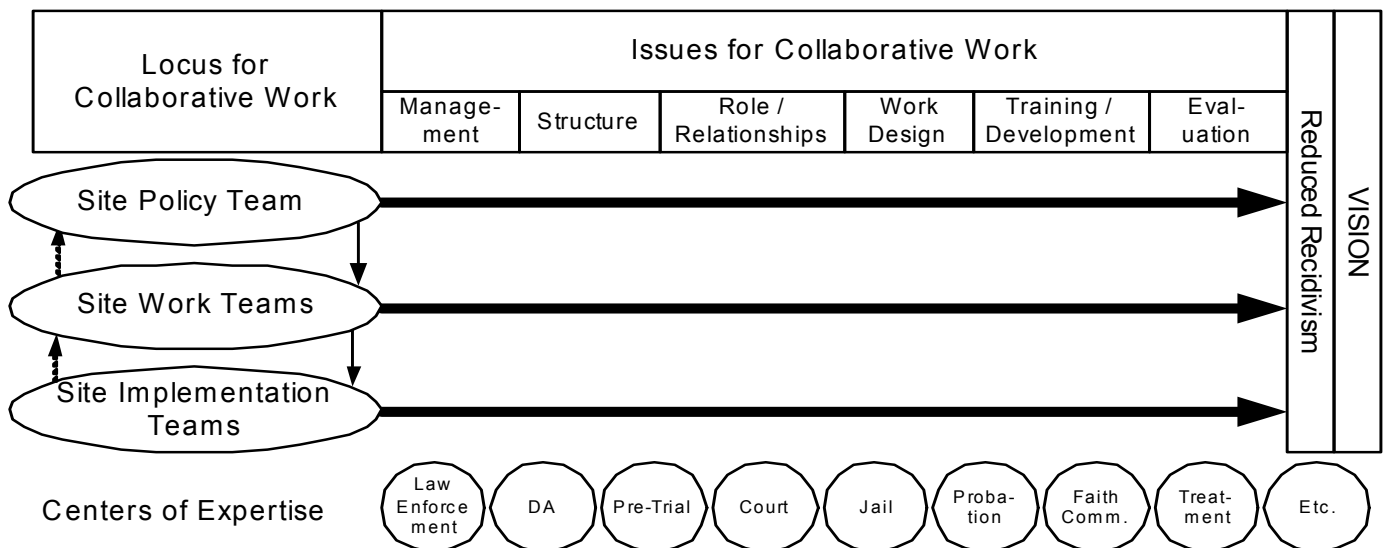
**Collaborations must determine how they will make decisions.**

*(See Appendix C.)*

**Build upon small wins. Celebrate and institutionalize changes quickly.**

*(See Appendix A.)*

**Figure 1: Collaboration Model**





Supporting the effective management and operation of the nation's community corrections agencies

Project Contact Information:

**National Institute of Corrections (NIC), Community Corrections Division**

WWW.NICIC.ORG

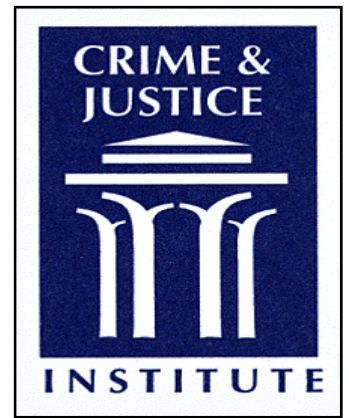
Dot Faust,  
Correctional Program Specialist  
dfaust@bop.gov  
(202) 514-3001

**Crime and Justice Institute (CJI)**

WWW.CJINSTITUTE.ORG

Elyse Clawson, Project Director  
eclawson@crjustice.org  
(617) 482-2520, ext. 120

Lore Joplin, Project Manager  
ljoplin@crjustice.org  
(617) 482-2520, ext. 124



Creative, collaborative approaches to complex social issues

*Special recognition and deepest thanks go to the following project team members who contributed to these documents:*

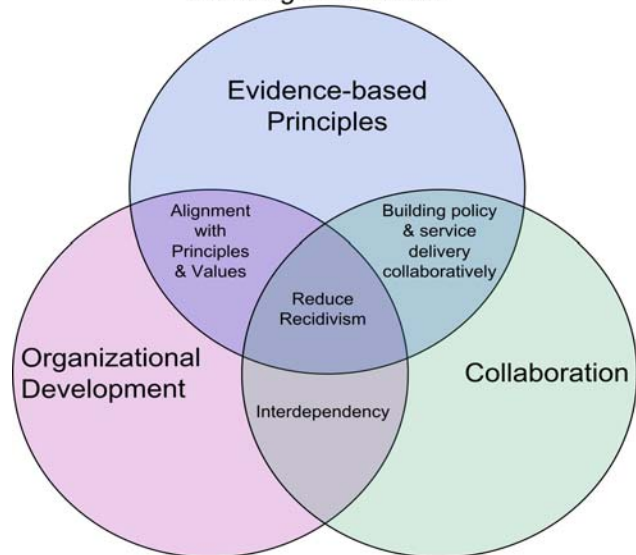
Brad Bogue, Nancy Campbell, Mark Carey, Elyse Clawson, Dot Faust, Kate Florio, Lore Joplin, George Keiser, Billy Wasson, and William Woodward

*The project team is committed to enhancing community corrections systems to better reduce recidivism using research-supported principles.*

**List of Appendices:**

- ♦ **Appendix A** (pages 5-6):  
Essential Elements of Collaboration
- ♦ **Appendix B** (page 7):  
Chartering
- ♦ **Appendix C** (page 8):  
Consensus Decision-Making
- ♦ **References** (page 9)

Implementing Effective Correctional Management of Offenders in the Community:  
*An Integrated Model*



# Appendix A: Essential Elements of Collaboration

The following is a compilation of elements essential to creating and maintaining a successful collaboration.

The list is adapted from The Wilder Foundation and incorporates views from Kathleen Feely's *Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform: Collaboration and Leadership, 2000* as well as Madeline Carter, Ann Ley, Martha Wade Steketee, et al's 2002 *Collaboration: A Training Curriculum to Enhance the Effectiveness of Criminal Justice Teams* and Gwendolyn Griffith's *Report to Planning Committee on the Study of Three Collaborations, 2000*.

## 1. Common Vision

- Define a problem to be solved or task to be accomplished that will result in a mutually beneficial outcome.
- Seek agreement regarding a shared vision to develop system-wide commitment.
- Develop strategies for achieving the vision.
- Ensure a safe environment for vocalizing differences.
- Find a common ground and keep everyone engaged and at the table.

## 2. Purpose

- Develop a unique purpose and clarify the need for change.
- Build concrete, attainable goals and objectives.
- Seek agreement between partners regarding strategies.
- Create incentives for collaboration and change.

## 3. Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities

- Value the unique strengths that each partner brings to the collaboration.
- Clarify *who does what*, and create a sense of accountability.
- Take time to develop principles defining how participants will work together and revisit them often.
- Focus on strengths.
- Listen to, acknowledge, and validate all ideas. Be inclusive.

## 4. Healthy Communication Pathways

- Ensure open and frequent communication.
- Establish formal and informal communication links to strengthen team bonds and direct the process.

## 5. Membership

- Develop an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding, and trust that is shared between participants.
- Help participants to see that collaboration is in their

self-interest.

- Develop multiple layers of decision-making or consensus-based decision-making to create ownership of the project and maintain communication.
- Ensure that members share a stake in both the process and outcomes, have the ability to make compromises, and the authority to make decisions.

## 6. Respect and Integrity

- Ensure that respect and integrity are integral to the collaborative relationship. A collaboration will fail without these two elements.
- View all partners as representatives of organizations and as *Centers of Expertise*.
- Ensure that all partners offer each other *procedural respect* and *role respect*.
- Overcome feelings of skepticism and mistrust. If not, they will undermine achievements of the collaboration.

## 7. Accountability

- In order to clarify mutual expectations, partners must explicitly understand the following: their accountability to each other, to the collaboration as a whole, and to his or her parent organization.
- In order to create mutually agreed-upon expectations of accountability, each collaborative partner must understand the others' *accountability landscape* (i.e.: their organization's history, successes, and challenges).
- Once a common understanding is achieved, the modes of attaining accountability can be developed among the partners.

## 8. Data-Driven Process

- Focus on data. *The centerpiece of reform implementation is a data-driven, outcome oriented, strategic planning process and a cross-agency coordinated plan* (Feely, 2002).

(Continued on page 6)

## Appendix A: Essential Elements of Collaboration (con't.)

(Continued from page 5)

- Maintain a process that is flexible and adaptable to obstacles or barriers.
- Develop clear roles and policy guidelines, and utilize process improvement strategies.
- Identify and collect outcome data. *Identifying clear, measurable outcomes and charting progress toward their attainment is the most concrete and visible basis for accountability in complex change strategies* (Feely, 2002).
- Utilize data to review and refine processes and outcomes.
- Evaluate the process; self-assessment and data are essential tools for effective collaboration. The strength of the collaboration will grow as access and capacity to use data to inform policy and program decisions increases.

### 9. Effective Problem Solving

- Identify problems in a safe way before they become crises.
- Offer collaboration participants an agreed-upon process to resolve problems effectively and efficiently.
- Continually assess team effectiveness and take steps to strengthen their work together (Carter, Ley, Steketee, et al, 2002).

- Build upon *small wins*. Celebrate and institutionalize changes quickly.

### 10. Resources

- Provide sufficient funds and staffing necessary to maintain momentum.
- Use skilled convener(s), as they can help to keep leadership and working groups on task and organized.

### 11. Environment

- Develop a reputation for collaborating with the community.
- Be seen as a leader in collaborative work within the community.
- Develop trust, as it is a critical element in a collaborative climate.
- Develop a favorable political/social climate – a political climate that supports collaboration is one that recognizes what collaboration is, values it as a process for social action, and supports collaborative efforts.

### Questions to Ask: *How Do We Know if We're Successful?* (Griffith, 2000)

Once you've begun a collaboration process, ask yourself and your collaboration participants the following questions to determine how well you're doing.

- ❖ **Reliability** – Does the collaboration consistently produce the desired substantive outcome (the work it intended to accomplish)?
- ❖ **Adaptability** – Is the collaboration adaptive to changes in its environment, in the collaboration itself, and in the problem domain? Change is inevitable, and a successful collaboration will be on the lookout for change and respond to it appropriately.
- ❖ **Legitimacy** – Do the collaboration members view each other as legitimate players in the problem domain? Do they view the collaboration as a legitimate player in the larger problem domain? How is the collaboration viewed by those not involved?
- ❖ **Efficiency** – Is the work of the collaborative performed in an efficient and cost-effective way? Is there sufficient structure to allow the members to communicate and accomplish necessary joint problem solving?
- ❖ **Accountability** – Is the collaboration accountable to the “right” people in the “right” ways?
- ❖ **Sustainability** – Is the collaborative work sustainable in the long term? Has the collaboration identified any of its vulnerabilities and/or adapted for them? Is its robustness tied to particular funding streams, people or organizations?

## Appendix B: Chartering

Chartering is a technique used to guide the efforts of workgroups, providing structure and specifying outcomes, clarifying decision-making authority, and ensuring organizational and leadership support for the work of the group. The technique should be used for defining the work of all teams, especially those faced with long-term projects. Upon convening a workgroup, a charter document is written and approved by leadership. The charter document provides a *road map* for any work group, clearly identifying goals and guiding efforts to achieve those goals.

Steps to developing a charter are as follows:

### Background

- ❖ Outline the problems and issues behind the organizational change effort.
- ❖ Express the commitment of management to the change effort.
- ❖ Clearly outline and communicate the purpose of the group.

### Task

- ❖ Describe the importance of the group's work in relation to the organizational change effort.
- ❖ Describe, in detail, the tasks the work group is directed to complete.

### Guidelines

- ❖ Describe guidelines for how the group will complete its work; and clearly indicate any internal and/or external boundaries that restrict the group's work.
- ❖ Use ground rules to describe how the group will operate in terms of decision-making and group process. The following is a list of ground rule examples:
  - Decisions will be reached by consensus.
  - One person speaks at a time.
  - All group members are equal for the purposes of the chartered work and related group activities.
  - Confidentiality must be respected in the group, i.e., what is stated in the group remains in the group.
  - Share all relevant information.
  - Open disagreement is safe.
- ❖ Guidelines should also outline how the group will interact with the rest of the organization:
  - What information should be shared with leadership and who will bring that information to them?
  - To what degree will the group engage stakeholders external to the organization?
  - How will the group celebrate its progress? Celebrate those small steps!

### Chartered Work Group Membership

Work group membership, while as inclusive as possible, should be limited to a workable number. For most purposes, groups should not exceed eight to twelve members. A specific listing of the group membership should be included in the chartering document. Group member roles should be clearly identified, including how the roles of facilitator and recorder will be managed. These roles may be assigned to one particular member or rotated among members.

### Resources

The charter should identify other individuals or groups that may act as resources to the group, such as an external consultant or clerical support. The group's sponsor (management / leadership) should be clearly identified. This individual will act as a liaison for the group with organizational leadership and should have the authority to allocate organizational resources that may be needed.

### Due Dates

The charter should identify a timeline for the group's work and any interim status reports. The reporting format and audience should be clearly identified.

## Appendix C: Consensus Decision-Making

(Primary contributor: Bob McCarthy and Co.)

Decision-making by consensus allows all group members a voice and opinion. This discussion allows for compromise to reach consensus. Consensus occurs when all group members can honestly say:

*I am willing to support and implement the chosen direction.*

Although the ultimate decision may not be what all group members had personally hoped for, given their knowledge on the subject, the range of opinions in the group, and the time available to work the issues and personalities involved, the decision is one that *they can live with*.

Consensus decision-making involves a cooperative effort to find a sound solution acceptable to everyone

rather than a competitive struggle in which an unacceptable solution is forced on the losers. With consensus as a pattern of decision-making and interaction, group members should not fear being outsmarted or outmaneuvered. They can be frank, candid, and authentic in their interaction at all steps in the decision-making process.

The process of arriving at consensus is a free and open exchange of ideas which continues until agreement is reached. A sound consensus process ensures that the concerns of all group members are heard; and a sincere attempt has been made to take them into consideration in the search for, and the formulation of, a conclusion. The conclusion may not reflect the exact wishes of each member, but it should not violate the deep concerns of any.

Achieving real consensus requires skill in straight communication and working through differences.

The following communication guidelines assist groups to reach consensus:

- ❖ Take responsibility for what you want and do not want. Be specific about who you want it from.
- ❖ Make your position known: what do you think, want, or feel.
- ❖ Make liberal use of sentence structure: *I want/don't want x from y* and *I think/feel x*.
- ❖ Do not hide behind questions. Make proposals instead.
- ❖ Avoid *shoulds*.
- ❖ No plops! Respond to others. Do not leave them hanging.
- ❖ Talk to, not about, a person.
- ❖ Listen for feelings and try feeding them back.
- ❖ Check out assumptions, do not mind read.
- ❖ No *chicken soup*: do not smooth over problems.
- ❖ Take responsibility for your own feelings. No one *makes* you angry.



---

## References for Collaboration

### References

1. Carter, M., Ley A., Steketee, M., Gavin, F., Stroker, R., & Woodward, W. (2002). *Collaboration: A Training Curriculum to Enhance the Effectiveness of Criminal Justice Teams*. Washington, D.C.: State Justice Institute.
2. Clawson, E. (2002). *Collaboration Presentation*. Boston: Community Resources for Justice, Crime and Justice Institute.
3. Feely, K. (2000). *Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform: Collaboration and Leadership*. Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
4. Fuller, J., MSW. (2001). *Organizational Change from a Leadership Perspective*. Oregon: Multnomah County Department of Community Justice.
5. Griffith, G. (2000). *Report to Planning Committee on Study of Three Collaboratives*. Oregon: Department of Corrections.
6. Valentine, K. (2001). *How to Make Partnerships Work: Suggestions from the Field*. National Institute of Corrections: Topics in Community Corrections.
7. Woodward, W. (2001). *Collaboration: What It Takes*. National Institute of Corrections: Topics in Community Corrections.

This article was supported under cooperative award #03C05GIW2 from the National Institute of Corrections, Community Corrections Division, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.