



ENGAGING FAITH GROUPS IN COLLABORATION

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A collaborative can be described as a loose grouping of organizations from one or various sectors (i.e. governmental, non-profit, corporations, faith) that is created to achieve certain ends. This resource can help both faith-based and secular organizations to better identify the specific benefits that the faith community can bring to such collaborative efforts.

TOP TIPS

What is, or could be, the faith community's role in collaboratives? Collaboratives often want faith representation, but frequently struggle to recruit religious leaders and, if successful, are then sometimes unclear about how they want the faith community to contribute. What value does the faith community bring to collaboratives?

Faith leaders and organizations can provide valuable contributions to a collaborative and the community, including:

- **Education and information dissemination:**
Faith organizations have established communication processes in their congregations and in the community that can be used to provide information on collaborative activities and services (e.g., newsletters, announcements before or after service).
- **Facilities:** Congregations can provide safe, accessible, neighborhood-based locations for community activities, meetings and services.
- **Long-term commitment to the community:**
Faith organizations are not dependent on short-term grants or government assistance to continue to serve the communities in which they are located. Especially in rural areas, ministers are often the only full-time community worker in a neighborhood. Their commitment and presence in the community is long-term.

- **Engaging in community outreach and convening meetings:** Faith leaders are often among the most trusted in a community. Clergy can convene meetings and discussions as neutral leaders, as the faith community is not typically viewed as a political entity or as a competitor for funding dollars. This gives clergy a particular advantage in working across sectors—they can work with larger non-profits and government agencies, as well as with grassroots organizations. Faith organizations can also facilitate community focus groups and meetings.
- **Resident input:** Religious organizations are usually located in and serve specific communities. Congregation members are not only members of the church, but they are also community residents. You can gather their input through focus groups, surveys, etc.
- **Service delivery:** Faith organizations often provide an array of services to residents in need, such as food, shelter, clothing, childcare and senior services in the community.
- **Spiritual support:** Faith organizations can provide spiritual support, guidance and assistance to community participants, service providers and other collaborative organizations.
- **Volunteers:** The faith community typically has an established volunteer base to assist in collaborative programs and other community activities.

Although this tip sheet focuses on the benefits of collaboration *with* faith groups, collaboratives also bring benefits *for* faith groups, such as new resources, increased visibility, and a stronger community presence. When devising plans and strategies in a collaborative, it is important to discuss the goals of all participants.

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