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MANAGER INFLUENCE ON COLLABORATIVE CHANGE INITIATIVES

**A Research Project
Presented to the Faculty of
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management
Pepperdine University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Organization Development**

**by
Ron Milam
August 2014**

This research project, completed by

RON MILAM

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: August 2014

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Abstract

Ensuring all residents in Southern California have access to healthy food is one of many examples of an issue too complex and challenging for any one organization to change on its own. More and more, organizations work in collaboration and designate individuals to manage these collaborative change initiatives. This research uncovers the specific influence managers of collaborative change initiatives have in shaping positive outcomes for the collaborations they serve. Based on interviewing 11 managers and funders from six leading collaborative change initiatives, there are two contextual ways in which managers influence collaboration: their position itself carries influence and their ability to navigate the collaborative context they operate in. The main findings of this research share five key ways in which managers influence the collaborations they serve: their own personal characteristics and skills, the relationships they cultivate, the membership they support and empower, the processes they manage, and the culture they shape.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to the many people who helped make this thesis possible. I am especially appreciative for the support I received from my thesis advisor, Dr. Ann Feyerherm. I appreciate the conversations and input from my second reader, Dr. Dale Ainsworth, who also shared real-world stories of managing collaboration from his role as a practitioner. I appreciate all the leaders who took the time to meet with me and share their thoughts. I am grateful to other students in my Pepperdine Master of Science in Organization Development Omicron Prime cohort whom I engaged in both dialog and action around issues related to collaboration. I also want to acknowledge my wife, Jennie Pasquarella, who has supported me 100% through this process, even after she gave birth to our twin boys, August and Sebastian.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Transitioning Southern California into a sustainable region where residents live in healthy communities with access to community gardens and nutritious food is no easy task. Add to this the dream of removing concrete from the Los Angeles River and reversing the pace of global warming, and it is no surprise that this level of change is beyond the capacity of one organization to accomplish on its own. These challenges are too complex, messy, and wicked (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Trist, 1983). Instead, “large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations” (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 38). This cross-sector coordination is called many things: collaboration, inter-organizational relations, collective impact, and transorganization development, to name a few.

This thesis will use the terms “collaboration” and “collaborative change initiatives” interchangeably, focusing on Southern California, a place riddled with complex social, environmental, and economic challenges. As the recent *Vision 2021 LA* report noted,

Los Angeles has taken great strides over the past several decades to become a greener and more livable community. . . . But there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done to transform Los Angeles into an environmentally sustainable and healthful place to live for all of its residents. (Gold et al., 2012, p. 1)

How this work gets done through collaboration is the central focus of this thesis.

More than 30 collaboratives have launched in Southern California to address issues related to urban sustainability: improving access to healthy food, revitalizing the Los Angeles River, building healthy communities, and many more (Milam, 2013). Each has its own creation story, funders, membership dynamics, processes, design, and impact on the community. These initiatives also include their own sets of challenges,

pitfalls, and risks. Numerous questions remain on what exactly is needed to ensure these collaboratives maximize their impact and create lasting, positive change.

This thesis investigates the role of leadership in managing collaborative initiatives focused on transforming Southern California into a sustainable region. Called “partnership managers” by Huxham and Vangen (2005, p. 207), “mediators” by Gray (1989, p. 161), “hub managers” by the California Endowment (2014, p. 4), and other names by other collaboratives, these leaders play critical roles in the overall effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder initiatives they manage. Yet, little research exists on what exact influence these managers have to create positive outcomes for the collaborations they support and how their relationships with the collaborations’ funders shape results.

Background

In her book *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems*, Gray (1989) noted that “collaboration is a process in which those parties with a stake in the problem actively seek a mutually determined solution” (p. xviii). Her book lays a theoretical groundwork of ingredients needed for successful collaboration. Gray noted the potential value of a “third party” (p. 161) to help during the various stages of collaboration. This role potentially includes assessing overall readiness to collaborate, getting parties to the table, minimizing resistance, ensuring effective representation, establishing a climate of trust, modeling openness, designing and managing the negotiation process, managing data, and getting consensus.

“What is generally agreed upon by researchers, practitioners, and members that participate in inter-organization networks is that these structures are difficult to form and manage” (Ainsworth, 2011, p. 5). Huxham and Vangen took it a step further in

Managing to Collaborate: “Unless you see THE POTENTIAL for real collaborative advantage (i.e., that you can achieve something really worthwhile that you couldn’t otherwise achieve), it’s most efficient to do it on your own” (2005, p. 37). Huxham and Vangen went on to propose a theory of collaborative advantage and argued that effective management includes managing goals, negotiating processes, understanding membership, coping with trust, using power, and clarifying identity. All of these are potential guideposts for anyone seeking to manage a collaborative.

“Unlike most collaborations, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants” (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 36). Collective impact, a relatively recent term coined by Kania and Kramer from FSG, a nonprofit consulting firm serving collaboratives, seems to be growing in popularity in the nonprofit sector given the attention generated from their articles in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. In “Collective Impact,” they proposed:

The backbone organization requires a dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations that can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly. (2011, p. 40)

Collective impact provides some general guidelines for managing collaboration. The collective impact framework does not address all of the complexities involved with collaboration compared to other researchers on collaboration and inter-organization relationships. In many ways, the backbone organization relates to referent organizations, proposed more than 30 years ago (Trist, 1983). In both situations, an individual is usually tasked in a leadership role to manage a collaboration. Both the

backbone and referent organizations represent separate entities to manage collaboration.

Williams (2002) went another step further and identified specific “skills, abilities, experience and personal characteristics” (p. 103) of what he called “boundary spanners” (p. 109), which include building sustainable relationships; managing through influencing and negotiation; managing complexity and interdependencies; and managing roles, accountabilities, and motivations. These skills provide a guide for anyone wanting to enter the challenging space of managing collaboration. “Boundary spanner” provides a powerful image that highlights how those serving in the role of managing a collaboration span so many boundaries and relationships in order to accomplish their work.

Huxham and Vangen (2005) noted, “In many collaborations the individual playing the most significant role in leading the collaborative agenda is the partnership manager, director or chief executive, who, strictly speaking, is usually not a member of the collaboration” (p. 207). More so than any other quote from the literature reviewed for this thesis, this statement served as a launching point for this research. How is it that someone who is not officially a member of the collaboration can play such a significant role? What aspects of this role have the greatest influence? How is that influence carried out? What resources exist that could serve as a guide for an individual in this role?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

While the existing research gives some general direction for managing collaboration, this thesis aims to uncover the specific influence managers of collaborative change initiatives have in shaping positive outcomes. Specifically, this thesis aims to answer the following question: What influence does a designated and

paid manager of collaborative change initiatives have? This research investigates the role of the individual managers influencing the collaborations they serve instead of how a “backbone organization” or “referent organization” influences collaboration, which could be its own topic of research.

This research further develops a critical aspect of a growing movement towards collective change-making. With the growing popularity of collective impact, more funders and local leaders are calling for collaborative initiatives to address challenging social issues, sometimes without a full understanding of the complexities, challenges, and frustrations associated with effectively getting organizations to work with each other. An increased understanding of how managers effectively influence collaboration will help increase the overall value of this developing change strategy. By understanding how one can influence collaboration in a specific role, the intention of this research is to serve as a guide both for managers and funders of collaborative change initiatives.

Methodology

This research follows an exploratory collaborative action research design, which reflects the nature of collaboration: “when participation and collaboration are involved, action research develops new research relationships, and often works towards building a community of learners” (Punch, 2005, p. 162). In addition to generating valuable research that helps answer the research question, the experience also serves to provide a space for reflection and learning for collaboration managers and funders. This research followed a feminist perspective on interviewing, where “researcher and researched become co-creators of data through the interview” (p. 173).

Specifically, this research used a methodology of semi-structured individual interviews, which included interviewing 11 managers and funders from six collaborative

change initiatives in Southern California. Each interview took place separately and lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to one hour.

Thesis Outline

In Chapter 2, the literature review focuses on relevant research in collaboration and specifically on the role of the manager from leading academic books and articles. The literature review is structured by seven different approaches regarding the management of collaboration. Each approach serves as a potential guidepost to managers of collaboration to choose to influence the collaborations they serve.

Chapter 3 describes the research methods in greater detail. This research used an exploratory action research design, conducting separate interviews with managers and funders from six collaborative change initiatives in Southern California.

Chapter 4 reports the findings from this research, which first reviews two contextual factors that provide a foundation for managers' influence and further identifies five themes that emerged from this research that describe what influence managers have on the collaborations they serve.

In Chapter 5, this research presents a discussion of the findings, implications for research, implications for practitioners, limitations of this study, and potential areas for additional research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Since the 1970s, a growing number of academics and practitioners have explored collaborative change initiatives involving multiple organizations working together to accomplish something each organization on its own would not be able to accomplish. This literature review focuses on the role a manager plays in serving collaboration. While numerous books and articles exist on the subject of managing collaboration, there is not yet consensus on how individuals in a manager role can most effectively influence the collaborations they serve. In addition, less research exists looking into what a manager's influence looks like, how managers go about influencing, and what decisions they make that influence the collaborations they serve.

This literature review explores different ways in which leadership is conceptualized in the context of collaboration through the role of the manager. In "Managing Collaborative Inter-Organizational Relations," Hibbert, Huxham, and Smith Ring (2008) defined management as "a series of processes undertaken by a team of individuals, with various skills and capabilities, that are focused on defining both the direction to be taken by an inter-organizational entity and the allocation and implementation of resources towards those ends" (p. 391). They noted a manager may come in different forms and management takes places at the micro-scale (management practices), the macro-scale (structures), and an intermediate scale (processes). They noted seven different ways in which to conceptualize managing collaboration, which in turn provide approaches for how one might lead and manage. These include the following views:

1. "*Life Cycles, Phases, and Stages*" (p. 396): Successful managers understand what phase their collaboration is in and respond appropriately.

2. *“Analytic Conceptualizations—Typologies, Models, and Diagnostics”* (p. 398): Successful managers understand what type of collaboration they serve and shape it.
3. *“Success and Failure Factors”* (p. 398): Successful managers understand best practices for managers.
4. *“Competencies, Behaviours, and Tasks”* (p. 401): Successful managers demonstrate a range of identified qualities that help them succeed.
5. *“Guidelines and Process Steps”* (p. 403): Successful managers understand and guide participants through the process.
6. *“Tools and Facilitation”* (p. 404): Successful managers facilitate processes using a variety of tools.
7. *“The Themes Approach and Reflective Practice”* (p. 404): Successful managers reflect on their actions and understand tensions inherent in collaboration.

The literature review is based on these themes. Each theme contains a short definition followed by specific examples from related academic research that build upon the definition.

Life Cycles, Phases, and Stages

This research views collaboration “as passing through a set of phases or stages, sometimes referred to as a life-cycle” (Hibbert et al., 2008, p. 396). Regarding these different phases, “the intention is usually to provide some insight about issues that need management attention at that stage” (p. 397).

Numerous authors break down collaboration into various stages (Gray, 1989; Mankin & Cohen, 2004; Speckman, Forbes, Isabella, & MacAvoy, 1998; Winer & Ray, 1994). Several similarities exist, with many suggesting four distinct phases for

collaboration: the first is a start-up phase, the second is a growing stage, the third is a managing stage, and the fourth is an implementation stage. Differences exist on what each stage is called. For example, the first stage is called “problem setting” (Gray, 1989, p. 57); “early stages” (Speckman et al., 1998, p. 764); “setting the stage” (Mankin & Cohen, 2004, p. 135); “envision results by working individual-to-individual” (Winer & Ray, 1994, p. 69); and “identification” (Cummings, 1984, p. 400).

Leadership helps play an important role in shaping each phase of collaboration. Different phases of collaboration require leadership to pay attention to different details. While Gray (1989) noted “third parties can assist the parties in a number of critical ways during all three stages of a collaboration” (p. 163), Speckman et al. (1998) shared, “What is important here is that the management focus shifts in concert with the evolution of the alliance and conveys a recognition of changing roles and role requirements” (p. 764). Mankin and Cohen (2004) noted, “the most desirable approach is a facilitative one that provides as much autonomy as possible to team members as long as everyone also understands and accepts the need for a more directive approach as circumstances may require” (p. 194). Feyerherm and Parker (2011) noted, “theorists and practitioners should not just look at any one particular collaboration, but rather the constellation of collaborations and its evolution over time” (p. 150). They noted a more emergent approach leaders can take that is willing to share power and build trust in order to build effective collaboration for sustainability.

Analytic Conceptualizations—Typologies, Models, and Diagnostics

“A diversity of other models and frameworks has been proposed with a view to providing a base for managerial action” (Hibbert et al., 2008, p. 398). These include

what the overall purpose is, how hierarchical the structure is, the time frame, and the level of formality and degree of trust that exist within the collaboration.

Himmelman (1996) distinguished collaboration from coordination, networking, and cooperation. Goerzen (2005) noted collaborations differ based on hierarchy, time horizon, and structure. Aslinger and Jenk (2004) got more creative in their typologies and used invasive, multi-function, multi-project, coopetition, and networks. Bachmann and Zaheer (2008) reviewed levels of trust and discussed how it shapes collaboration. While each one of these provides a potential guide to a manager, multiple models may be true simultaneously. By understanding there are multiple potential models, managers are in a better position to work within the collaborative space they find themselves in.

Related to how collaborations are run, Huxham and Beech (2008) noted, “Designated lead organization status is clearly a source of power as it places the organization in a position to dominate decisions—or even to decide unilaterally—about who to involve and how the joint objectives are formed and carried out” (p. 565). There are several options for where to house the role of a manager. One option is designating a lead organization from the collaborative’s membership and having the manager work from that lead organization to serve the larger collaboration. A manager can also sit in a neutral third-party organization, such as a “backbone organization” (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 40). Or, as Gray (1989) noted, “Collaboration can occur with or without the assistance of a third party who serves as mediator or facilitator” (p. 25). How a collaboration chooses to house the role of managing the collaboration and where the manager actually operates out of are subject to variation. Where a manager is positioned can have an impact on the manager’s level of influence.

Wherever the manager is housed, the managers themselves are often in a position to shape these multiple frameworks, shaping the collaborations they serve. This could include the overall collaboration design, structure, and purpose. Even if managers do not have an in-depth understanding of the framework they are operating in, their own actions will shape the overall framework for the collaboration they serve.

Success and Failure Factors

Success and failure factors focus “on the identification of inherent generic factors that affect the success of collaboration and relate predominantly to practice (micro) theory” (Hibbert et al., 2008, p. 398). A wide variety of factors exist, including trust, power, risk management, and influence. “The factors tend to be a mix of uncontrollable environmental attributes that need to be accounted for in the management of collaboration and controllable attributes that are the essence of what needs to be managed” (p. 400).

Numerous authors shared multiple success factors for leading effective collaboration: Gray (1989) shared nine factors; Alexander, Comfort, Weiner, and Bogue (2001) presented five leadership themes; Ariño, de la Torre, and Ring (2001) shared three guidelines for building trust; Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey (2001) noted 20 success factors influencing the success of collaboration; and Huxham and Vangen (2005) suggested six ways in which leadership plays a role in collaboration.

The common theme in these guidelines is best practices for making collaboration work. Sometimes the themes are very broad, focusing on the collaboration as whole. For example, Mattessich et al. (2001) addressed best practices related to the environment, membership, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources. In membership, for example, is there trust, is there the right cross-section, do

members see collaboration in their self-interest, and are they willing to compromise? Reviewing these 20 success factors gives manager an overall picture of best practices to be aware of as they carry out their work.

Each collaborative-wide best practice is often nuanced and can require an in-depth study. Other authors focused more on specific themes such as building trust. Ariño et al. (2001) proposed a specific model for building trust that a manager could follow. Whether the best practices are big picture or more specific around a theme, there does not seem to be a uniform and agreed-upon set of guidelines to make collaboration work.

Beyond specific guidelines, Gray (1989) noted the selection of a mediator is a political activity. Alexander et al. (2001) noted that various leadership dilemmas exist when applying these themes, including balancing continuity and change in leadership, leadership development, and power with participation. Mattessich et al. (2001) noted “skilled leadership” is one of two factors that make up resources. Specifically, “the individual who provides leadership for the collaborative group has organizing and interpersonal skills, and carries out the role with fairness” (p. 28).

Competencies, Behaviors, and Tasks

“Many prescriptions for successful collaboration are couched in terms of competencies, skills, capabilities or attributes” (Hibbert et al., 2008, p. 401). Williams (2002) focused on skills, abilities, experience, and personal characteristics needed to facilitate collaboration. Feyerherm (1994a; 1994b; Feyerherm & Parker, 2011) noted thematic leadership behaviors and approaches, while both Himmelman Consulting (2002) and Kania, Kramer, Turner, Merchant, and Martin (2012) reviewed common

leadership characteristics. Milward and Provan (2006) noted tasks that lead to effective collaborative network management.

Together, these authors suggested a broad spectrum of competencies: visionary, results-oriented, adaptive, communicator, politic and humble, persuasion skills, ability to educate, ability to draw out ideas, willingness to encourage partners, ability to balance discussion with keeping focused, an understanding of community organizing, a commitment to leadership development, and a sense of humor. They listed a number of behaviors: building sustainable relationships, managing through influencing and negotiation, surfacing underlying assumptions and beliefs, helping create new alternatives, and initiating collective actions. Finally, they reviewed specific tasks: managing complexity and interdependencies; managing roles; and managing accountability, legitimacy, conflict design, and commitment. Like success and failure factors, there is no agreed-upon set of competencies, behaviors, and tasks.

Guidelines and Process Steps

“Guidelines, which may derive from process (intermediate), structure (macro), or practice (micro) positions, are generally expressed in lists of ‘soundbites’ of best practice, always leading with a clear imperative” (Hibbert et al., 2008, p. 403).

Guidelines and process steps help guide managers in their role in serving a collaboration and help members engage with the work of collaboration. Thompson and Perry (2006) suggested five guidelines and later, along with Miller (2008), shared five variables to measure the outcome of processes. Das and Teng (1997) laid out a seven-stage process, and Huxham and Vangen (2005) noted six leadership activities.

Thompson and Perry (2006) noted,

Public managers need to budget the time necessary to negotiate with collaboration partners across five dimensions—governing, administering, paying attention to the tension between self-interests and collective interests, forging mutually beneficial relationships, and building reciprocal and trusting relationships—to allow for trial-and-error learning and the building of credible commitments. (p. 29)

Das and Teng's (1997) approach is more micro-based: "considering strategic alliances, selecting alliance partners, negotiating the alliance agreement, setting up of the alliance, operating the alliance, evaluating alliance performance, and modifying the alliance" (p. 50).

Huxham and Vangen (2005) looked at all three approaches. Using a more macro approach, they looked at the role of leadership through structures (organizations and individuals associated with the collaboration); processes (the various instruments in which communication takes place within the collaboration); and participants (every participant in the collaborative may take a lead).

Regarding guidelines for the manager, Huxham and Vangen (2005) noted, "In many collaborations the individual playing the most significant role in leading the collaborative agenda is the partnership manager, director or chief executive, who, strictly speaking, is usually not a member of the collaboration" (p. 207). "They are often highly influential because they alone are employed by the partnership and care about it as their sole employment activity. For this reason, they also have a much greater level of understanding of the partnership than any of the members" (p. 207). They also noted more micro-oriented leadership activities, which include controlling the agenda, mobilizing member organizations, and empowering those who can deliver collaboration aims. They noted different facilitative leadership roles (process): embracing, empowering, involving, and mobilizing. In addition, they noted partnership managers

may also need to take on more directive leadership roles: manipulating the collaborative agenda and playing politics.

Tools and Facilitation

Facilitation is a key tool for helping members of a collaboration move through the guidelines and process steps mentioned above, which “can be used to support the collaborative process” (Hibbert et al., 2008, p. 404). Several authors provided specific suggestions for the role of facilitation in supporting collaboration: Gray (2008) elaborated on “deliberate actions taken by an alliance partner or a third party to influence the formation, design or process of interaction among alliance partners” (p. 665). Schuman (1996) took a broader approach and noted that a facilitator needs to be aware of social processes, cognitive processes, and political processes in order to effectively serve collaboration. In addition to Schuman’s focus on process and content, Huxham (1996) added substantive expertise of collaboration as a contributor to effective intervention and noted that collaboration expertise can either be “discussed explicitly with those involved in the collaboration” or it can be “largely hidden from the participants, but used explicitly by the facilitator in the design of the overall process” (p. 145). While each of the above noted the role individuals can play in facilitation, Ackermann, Franco, Galuppe, and Parent (2005) noted the potential for technology aided by computers to support the group decision-making process.

Both Gray (2008) and Schuman (1996) discussed the need for a neutral third party to lead the facilitation process. Gray (2008) provided the most detailed and specific list for facilitation processes to use during four different stages she laid out for collaboration. For each stage, Gray suggested specific process strategies for visioning,

convening, problem structuring, reflective intervening, process design, conflict handling, internal brokering, and institutional entrepreneurship.

The Themes Approach and Reflective Practice

The previous categories “each have their own merits but it may not always be a straightforward translation for those managers seeking to convert them into meaningful action” (Hibbert et al., 2008, p. 405). An alternative approach uses a themes-based theoretical framework. Using this framework,

the manager is thus able to concentrate at any one time on particular issues of current concern—let us say, dealing with the difficulties in the agreement of collaborative purpose—while maintaining an awareness that dilemmas and difficulties highlighted by other themes—say, lack of mutual trust and power imbalances—will affect the fruitfulness of any line of action they choose to take. (p. 406)

Related to this seventh approach viewing collaboration through different sets of typologies and models, Huxham and Vangen (2005) proposed a theory of collaborative advantage and argued effective management includes using power, managing aims, negotiating purpose, responding to membership dynamics, and building trust and clarifying identity. Each of these reflect key themes of which a manager needs to be aware. Regarding power, Huxham and Vangen noted three perspectives on power: power over (self gains), power to (mutual gains), and power for (transfer of power to another party). They noted how power can be used at the macro level—formally acknowledged authority, power dynamics that shift over time—and that different types of power may be relevant over time. On the micro level, they observed how power is used in the daily life of a collaboration: who decides the name, membership, identity, invitation, bringing people together, meeting management, meeting agendas and format, and meeting follow-up. They noted that “Those who manage, deliberately or

otherwise, to access these points are in powerful positions at those moments to shape the future of the collaboration” (p. 181). In order to manage power at the macro and micro levels, managers need to be aware of what style is appropriate and have awareness of their own power in relation to others.

Summary

Based on the existing literature, multiple perspectives exist to support managers in influencing positive outcomes for the collaborations they lead. This thesis explores manager influence in greater detail: what influence they have, how they influence, and the decisions they make that carry influence. While numerous authors looked at the role of managers in collaboration (Gray, 1989; Huxham & Vangen, 2005), few went into any great detail about the specific influence managers have and how their specific influence translates into positive outcomes for the collaboration.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Procedures

This chapter begins with a review of the research design followed by a description of the research sample. After that, it covers the protection of human subjects and then gives details on the instrumentation used. This chapter discusses the data analysis and closes with a chapter summary.

Research Design

In an effort to understand the manager influence on collaborative change initiatives, the research included a total of 11 interviews—with six managers, one manager/funder, and four funders—from six different collaborative change initiatives in Southern California. In one collaboration, two people shared the role of manager, and in another collaboration the same individual both managed the collaboration and represented the funder. These staffing differences represent one way in which these collaborations differed from each other, even though they all involved multiple organizations coming together to accomplish something that a single organization could not accomplish on its own.

These collaboratives were chosen because they address a broad set of issues related to urban sustainability in Southern California. Half of the collaborations were clients of the researcher (Building Healthy Communities: Long Beach, Little Green Fingers, Northeast Los Angeles Riverfront Collaborative); and the other half were collaborative change initiatives the researcher was familiar with in the Los Angeles area. The researcher requested interviews with all of these participants with an initial email (see Appendix A).

The research included semi-structured, face-to-face individual interviews that followed an exploratory collaborative action research design, which reflects the nature

of the content being researched. Appendix B contains the interview protocol. All interviews took place separately and lasted from 30 minutes to one hour. Each interview was audio recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. Each transcription was analyzed to determine common themes using a system of coding.

Research Sample

The researcher interviewed managers and funders from six collaborative change initiatives in Southern California. Everyone who participated in this research gave permission to share their name, collaboration they are affiliated with, and their role with the collaboration. These include the following:

- Building Healthy Communities: Long Beach: Rene Castro (manager) and Jenny Chheang (funder, California Endowment)
- Little Green Fingers: Deborah Fryman (manager) and Jessica Kaczmarek (funder, First 5 LA)
- LA2050: Shauna Nep (manager and funder, Goldhirsh Foundation)
- Los Angeles Food Policy Council: Alexa Delwiche and Clare Fox (managers) and Andrea Azuma (funder, Kaiser Permanente, Community Benefit—Kaiser Permanente is one of many funders of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, and Azuma sits on the leadership board in an individual capacity)
- Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability: Krista Klein (manager) and Beth Jines (funder, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power)
- Northeast Los Angeles Riverfront Collaborative: George Villanueva (manager)

These collaborations consist of organizations working together to accomplish some goal that any one organization would be unlikely to accomplish on its own.

Beyond that similarity, the collaborations researched for this thesis varied in size, membership, focus, funding, and environment they operate in. Like organizations, collaborations come in many different shapes, and this research aimed to understand manager influence in a variety of collaborative contexts. Table 1 contains additional information about the collaborations interviewed for this thesis (based on the researcher's evaluation).

Table 1. Collaboration Characteristics

	Building Healthy Communities: Long Beach	Little Green Fingers	LA2050	Los Angeles Food Policy Council	Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability	Northeast Los Angeles Riverfront Collaborative
Manager (Full or part time)	Full time	Full time	Full time	Full time	Full time	Part time
Funder (Number of funders/their level of involvement)	One/High Involvement	One/Medium Involvement	One/High Involvement	Many/Medium Involvement	Many/Low Involvement	One/Low Involvement
Members (Number of members/can a new member join (open) or is membership established (closed)/are members funded)	50-100/Open/Some funded	8/Closed/All funded	8/Closed/10 grantees funded, engagement from the broader community	100/Semi-Open (orientation process required)/Some funded	25/Closed/Not funded	7/Closed/All Funded
Focus (Policy change or project implementation)	Policy	Project	Policy and Project	Policy and Project	Policy and Project	Project
Year launched	2010	2011	2011	2009	2007	2012
External landscape (stakeholders outside of the collaboration that also have influence)	Politicians, community members	Politicians, community members, users of service	Politicians, community, social media	Politicians, agencies, nonprofit community	Government agencies, academia, local cities	Politicians, community members, media
Geographic focus	Central Long Beach	Eight neighborhoods in Los Angeles County	Los Angeles	Southern California	Los Angeles County	A section of the Los Angeles River and surrounding communities in Northeast Los Angeles

Protection of Human Subjects

The questions asked are part of a normal set of reflective questions one could ask about leadership and management. There were no psychological or emotional risks by answering these questions. This research was of minimal risk to the participants and was voluntary. Data generated from participants was kept confidential. Quotes from people interviewed for this thesis were verified with each of them individually before being included in this thesis. To maintain confidentiality, no individual is identified with any quote. Participants in this research signed consent forms (see Appendix C). Only the researcher had access to the audio recordings and notes from the interviews.

Instrumentation

The following summarizes the questions asked of participants. Managers were asked to reflect on the questions for themselves, and funders were asked to give their perspective on the managers:

1. Opening

- When did this collaboration start? How many members are there? How many sectors do they represent? How often do members meet? How is the collaborative funded?

2. Personal Background Info

- How long you have been involved with this collaboration? What influenced you to take on this work? Now that you're here, who has had a positive influence on you as you have carried out this work?

3. General Influence

- What influence would you say you have in shaping positive outcomes for the collaboration you manage?

4. Influencing Tactics

- How do you go about influencing the collaboration? Do you have an example of a situation in which you were influential and it led to a positive outcome for the collaboration? Would you explain further? How do you know if your influence led to a positive outcome for the collaboration?

5. Decision-making

- What decisions can you, as a manager, make unilaterally? What decisions do you need to ask the funder for input? What decisions have you made that had the greatest influence on the collaboration?

6. Ending Questions

- Is there anything else that we should have talked about that we haven't yet?
- Is there a participant in the collaboration that you recommend I speak with to reflect on your influence on the collaboration?

Data Analysis

This research is based on a system of coding developed and refined through a three-step process of visualizing the data, followed by a second researcher checking for inter-rater reliability. The first step entailed developing a detailed set of related codes using a system of colored highlights applied to the interview transcripts. The codes categorized responses to each question asked and then later combined those codes into an overall coding system.

After coding 150 pages of narrative from the transcripts, the second step involved creating a spreadsheet summarizing details from each time a specific code was used to get a better sense of the frequency of related responses. This helped combine the data

into related themes. The codes that emerged from the step above included the following:

- Personal Characteristics: Skills and behaviors of manager that influence successful collaboration.
- Collaboration Characteristics: Characteristics such as number of members and funder characteristics (more mentioned in Table 1) set the overall collaborative context in which a manager operates. Managers who understand dynamics related to these characteristics are more likely to successfully influence the collaboration. Managers also can influence these characteristics, which then influence the collaboration.
- Agenda Setting: The ability to navigate agendas at the personal and organizational level and create a common shared agenda.
- Empowering Membership: Influencing the development of engaged, empowered, and effective members.
- Relationship Building—Internal Environment: The ability to build strong relationships within the collaboration, transform conflict when it appears, and hold members accountable.
- Relationship Building—External Environment: An understanding of the broader context which the collaboration is a part of and how to engage with it. Political awareness was included in this theme.
- Manager Web of Relationships: Managers sit in the center of a relationship hub and can influence positive outcomes when they have positive relationships with a specific set of stakeholders

- Process Steps: Convening, facilitating, creating, and holding a space for constructive conversations.
- Management: Staffing and hiring of outside consultants.

To illustrate these themes, the researcher created three visuals to explore the relationship between the various themes identified. One visual highlighted how a manager sits in the hub of relationships, like the hub of a wheel (Figure 1).

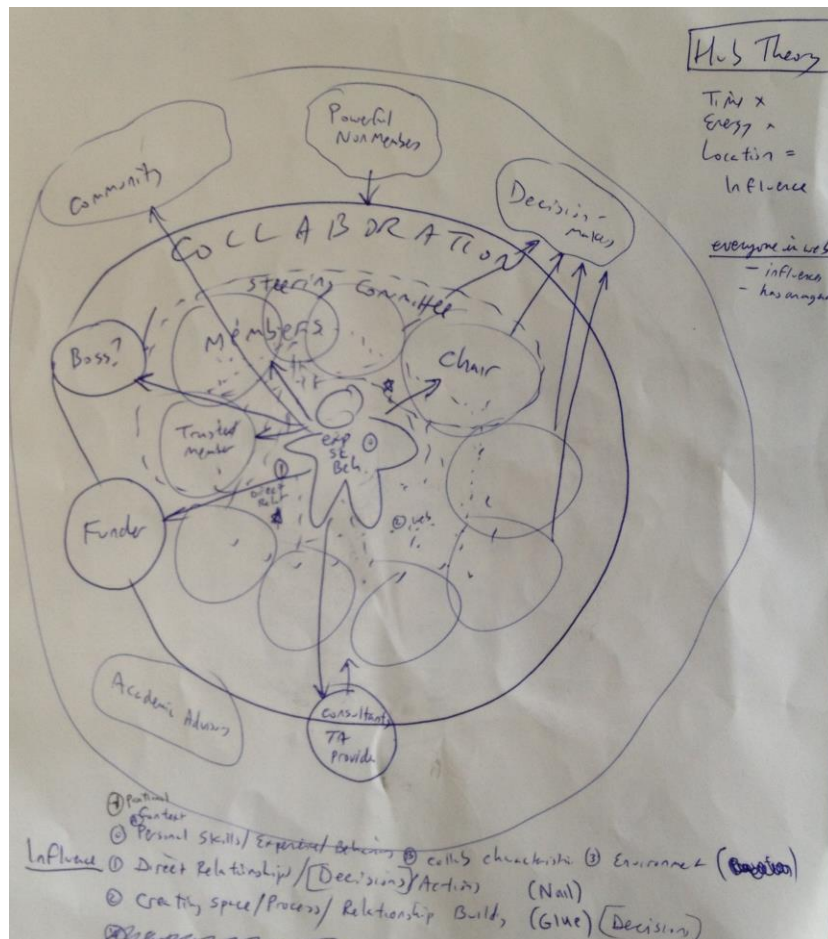


Figure 1. Manager Serving as a Relational Hub

A second visual captured the researcher’s initial ideas describing the various ways in which managers influence the collaborations they serve (Figure 2).

After developing and refining the coding, a second researcher reviewed the set of codes and checked for inter-rater reliability. The second researcher's review affirmed the developed coding, with an initial agreement of 76%. Upon further discussion, the agreement increased to 89%.

Summary

The intent of this study was to understand the influence of managers in collaborative change initiatives. Specifically, the research sought to answer the question: What influence does a designated and paid manager of collaborative change initiatives have? Using semi-structured individual interviews, this research individually interviewed 11 managers and funders from six collaborative change initiatives in Southern California. This research was of minimal risk to the participants and was voluntary, and the data will be kept confidential. Questions were related to general background of the collaboration, personal background of the manager, general Influence, influencing tactics, and decision-making of the manager. Using a coding system, this research categorized the themes heard. Based on these themes, the results in the next chapter emerged.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter summarizes key themes heard from individuals interviewed for this thesis. The first sections provide two factors related to the context in which managers serve that give them influence, providing the background for the following five areas in which managers successfully influence positive outcomes for the collaborations they serve.

In order to understand the influence of managers, it helps to understand the broader context in which they serve that gives them potential influence. Notably, this research generated two contextual factors that provide a foundation for their influence. The first examines how the position of manager itself carries influence. Managers are uniquely positioned in the center of a hub of relationships. These relationships are strengthened by the amount of time and energy managers contribute to the collaborations they serve compared to other members. The second factor looks at the broader environment the manager operates in. Manager influence in part is shaped by the design of the collaboration itself and the larger environment the collaboration operates in. These factors are interrelated and build upon each other:

1. **Positional Influence: Manager's Location, Time, and Energy:** In many ways, managers serve as a hub for a network of relationships because a key part of their job involves interacting with and building relationships with members of the collaborations they serve. In addition, managers usually spend more time on the collaboration compared to members because it is their job. This translates into a deeper understanding and awareness of collaboration dynamics.
2. **Contextual Influence: Manager Understanding of Collaboration Dynamics and Environment:** A manager is just one of many points of influence within a

collaboration, but the managers' deep understanding of collaboration dynamics helps them both navigate the complexity and influence its direction.

While the position of the manager carries influence and the broader context helps determine a manager's influence, ultimately it is the actions managers take that generate influence in the collaborations they serve. This research identified five themes highlighting specific ways in which managers themselves generate influence on the collaborations they serve:

1. **Personal Characteristics and Skills:** The personal qualities of the managers shape their ability to influence. The ability of managers to effectively engage with a broad set of stakeholders helps increase their overall influence.
2. **Relationships They Cultivate:** Managers play a critical role in cultivating relationships, both within the collaboration and with external stakeholders. The quality of these relationships can influence positive outcomes for the collaboration.
3. **Membership They Support and Empower:** Managers play an important role in providing capacity-building support for members and a space for members to take ownership in the collaboration. The quality of members' capacity and commitment they bring to the collaboration can influence positive outcomes for the collaboration.
4. **Processes They Manage:** Managers serve as process stewards for the collaborations they serve. This includes the spaces they create, gatherings they facilitate, agendas they negotiate, conflict they manage, accountability they bring, and their own role that they clarify. Healthy processes that engage members play

another key role in influencing positive outcomes for the collaborations that managers serve.

5. Culture They Shape: What a manager pays attention to helps shape an overall culture of collaboration. Managers use a spectrum of criteria to judge whether or not the collaborations they serve are effective.

These findings are based on the number of instances interviewees mentioned various themes based on the coding of the transcripts. Table 2 summarizes which topics garnered the most attention.

Table 2. Findings

Findings	Mentions/Percentage of Coding Related to This Theme From Interviews
Positional influence: Manager's location, time, and energy	34 (6.5%)
Contextual influence: Manager understanding of collaboration dynamics and environment	92 (18.0%)
Personal characteristics and skills	104 (20.0%)
Relationships they cultivate	34 (6.5%)
Membership they support and empower	40 (8.0%)
Processes they manage	180 (35.0%)
Culture they shape	32 (6.0%)

Positional Influence: Manager's Location, Time, and Energy

Managers sit in a unique relational hub of a collaboration that gives them a tremendous source of potential influence. One manager noted, "It's a huge gift to be able to sit at the center of a collaborative and benefit from all of these different assets and appreciate the incredible assets people bring. It's a very rare spot to sit there, to be

able to see it.” Another manager stated “. . . we as the keepers of the relationships, it’s like we are the hub of conversations, not all the time, but we are a hub I would say of conversations and information sharing.” The words “center” and “hub” visually describe how the manager role is unique in the number of relationships that come with that position. The other words “assets” and “information sharing” demonstrate managers have a deep understanding of what partners bring to collaboration and use their position to share that information in order to benefit the overall collaboration.

Table 3 illustrates instances where managers referenced different relationships they cultivate in their role during interviews for this thesis (this table, along with all of the following tables in this thesis, in arranged in order of the number of times a manager mentioned this element).

Table 3. Manager Relationships

Manager Relationships
With funder
With chair (of steering/executive committee)
With coordinating/steering/executive committee
With broader community/neighborhood collaboration operates in
With members
With “boss” if manager is working from a member organization
Understanding of powerful people/organizations outside of the collaboration who have influence
With outside consultants and contractors
With an academic advisory group

Combined, managers may have relationships with anywhere from 10 to 100+ individuals and organizations, both within the collaboration they serve and outside of it. Because managers serve as a major hub in the collaborative networks they serve, information, relationships, and understanding gets funneled through them. With the manager sitting at the hub of relationships, they gain another advantage: knowledge

and information. The managers' positional influence helps them both navigate and ultimately shape the dynamics of the collaborations they serve, and their knowledge of the broader environment in which the collaboration operates helps them successfully navigate the collaboration.

While it is a normal part of a manager's job to interact with all of these different stakeholders, the chances are less that these stakeholders engage with each other as much. As one manager noted, "They've been members for years. You know, I work with these folks, some on a daily basis, some on a weekly, some monthly, so I know everybody by name and face at this point. They all don't know that, which is interesting." Other managers interviewed for this research shared a similar dynamic. Even if member organizations received financial compensation for their work, which was the case in four of the six collaborations interviewed for this thesis, an organization's work in the collaboration it participated in represented only a small portion of the organization's overall workload.

In addition to being a major node within the collaborative network they serve, managers usually spend much more time working in the collaborative space compared to members in the collaboration. As one funder put it, ". . . because the collaborative has paid staff who are devoting time to this every day, they're able to reshape it and help it evolve and figure out new directions for it moving forward." Of the six collaborative change initiatives in this study, five employed full-time managers. This gives managers more knowledge, opportunity to build relationships, and potential influence for shaping the collaboration. Serving at the center of relationships on a daily basis also brings an opportunity to build trust, which in turn leads to a willingness on the part of members to share information with the managers. One manager put it, "So I was receiving this grant

notice from multiple sources which was the first time I was actually like, okay, they trust me and they value that I'm going to send this out to folks."

A manager's influence is made even greater by the members they serve having other commitments. As one manager put it, "I think being a managing director with a collaborative, you're very lucky, because all of your members are, or everybody that you're collaborating with has their own organization that they're focused on so they leave to you a huge void to fill." This creates an interesting dynamic where the person most involved with the collaboration, the manager, is not technically a member of the collaboration. Those who are supposed to be most involved with the collaboration, its members, often have competing responsibilities and commitments outside of these collaborations. Given this dynamic, managers often fill in the void, as one noted,

I found I have learned, I tried at first to create things by committee, which is what I'm supposed to do as managing director, is managing, right? It wasn't working, people are too busy. They didn't have the bandwidth to start from scratch to do something, so I did. It's worked out much better. . . .

In summary, managers have tremendous influence simply based on their position in the collaborations they serve. Their role facilitates strong relationships with a broad array of stakeholders that comprise the collaborations. This, combined with the amount of time they spend on the collaboration compared to other members, deepens their own awareness of what is going on and ability to shape its direction. That said, a manager is still one of many points of influence within a collaborative space, and the overall context a manager operates in also influences his or her capacity to influence the system he or she serves.

Contextual Influence: Manager Understanding of Collaboration Dynamics and Environment

Managers work within a collaborative context, and each collaboration interacts with a larger environment. Both the internal collaborative context and the larger environment are complex and constantly changing. This larger environment influences what all actors within the collaborative system are able to influence, including the manager. As one funder noted,

It will be interesting to see with a new chair of the leadership council how the relationship between the chair and the staff changes. I think it will be very different because the chair won't be someone who is working on this full time. Aside from the fact that it's a whole different person, personality, and work style, but also just the difference in time, ability to focus on this.

Membership within collaborations is often in flux, with different people assuming various roles and different organizations entering and leaving the collaborative space. In addition, membership size, dynamics, composition, changes, and the members' relationship to collaborating also shape the context in which a manager operates. Managers constantly adapt to these changing dynamics, which influence the overall system the manager operates in.

Beyond membership, the institutions that fund these collaborations themselves shape the internal dynamics of the collaborations they support. Some collaboratives are funded by one funder, while others receive support from multiple funders. Some foundations allocate staff time for program officers to work alongside the collaboration, which adds a strong influence outside of the manager. As one funder noted,

the [Name of Funder] . . . is so involved . . . [in the initiative. In] some initiatives, the funder [just] writes the check and lets the . . . [grantee] write the work plan and then steps back. I'm there [at the site] 70% of my time in meetings with people, so . . . the role of the funder in this collaborative is really critical . . . I

have influence in relationships that I can use strategically to move our work forward as well, but knowing when to do that and how to do that [is key].

Other funders are more hands-off, as another funder noted, “it’s not an initiative where we’re deeply involved in setting the direction.”

Because funders bring needed resources to the collaboration, they have influence, and often they have influence directly over the manager. As one manager noted, “Right, because ultimately I’m accountable to the funder. And I’m supposed to deliver fantastic product, and I can’t do that if not everyone is meeting their deliverables.” Like the manager, the funders usually are not technically members of the collaborations they fund, but they influence these collaborations in various ways throughout the life of the collaborations. The funder for the same collaboration noted,

It’s in their scope of work. You know, things were going so well, we never really had to enforce it. But when we had the snafu, we as the funder had to remind everybody this was a request, this is exactly why we were making this request.

Considering that the funder’s resources fund each one of the partners, there is a greater chance partners will listen to the funder. The following language from one manager also shows the influence a funder has in a collaborative space: “And I think it’s because our funder dropped a major bomb by saying, ‘yeah, we don’t really see any future funding.’”

Collaborations also get influenced by outside forces. One funder noted changes in the external environment having an influence on the collaboration it supported: “I think it’s going to evolve a little bit too with a new mayor in office and a founding chair that’s stepping back from their role. I think it’s very dynamic.” Referring to a different elected official not officially part of another collaboration, one manager noted, “They had made promises, unbeknownst to us, that had nothing to do with us and our program”

which ultimately influenced the direction of the collaborative. Members of the collaborative add to the messiness, as noted by the same manager: “what else I didn’t know and continued to not know is that a lot of our partners in our collaboration have long, have other stuff going on, that may or may not intersect with some of the same players.”

Table 4 is a summary of the contextual factors that were named by at least four funders or managers. (A threshold of four mentions generated a robust list of factors. To include factors that received fewer mentions would make this list much longer).

Table 4. Contextual Influences

Contextual Influences
<i>Funder Characteristics</i>
Funder composition
Funder involvement
Funder dynamics: influencing potential of their future funding
<i>Membership Characteristics</i>
Membership composition
Membership dynamics
Membership evolution (changing internal leadership)
Membership’s willingness to collaborate
Membership size
<i>History</i>
Member relationships pre-collaboration (who convened it, meetings, process, etc.)
Need collaborative responded to
<i>Age of Collaboration</i>
Structure
Meeting frequency
Where manager is housed
Governance/leadership

Managers who understand how these factors influence the environment they work in are themselves more likely to influence the collaboration. Some managers take their own influence to the next level by actively designing the overall collaborative context, often in partnership with the funder and facilitating members in the process.

Because each collaboration is unique, what may work in one collaborative space for a manager to influence the collaboration he or she serves may not work in a different space. Ultimately, it is up to all managers individually to decide how they want to use their positional influence and adapt to the context in which they find themselves. It is important that managers be able to work in highly complex environments, read the politics of various situations, be able to adjust to fluid circumstances, and exert influence without power.

Personal Characteristics and Skills

Each manager brings his or her own personality and skills to the collaboration that can influence positive outcomes for the collaboration. As one funder noted when talking about a manager's influence,

some of the other things are more through style, personality, interpersonal skills that managers have. They are able to convince them to come to the table, bring people together, have them see that there's a shared agenda and find a way for people from multiple organizations to work together. The managers connect it to other things that the organizations are doing so that multiple organizations and people can be involved in the work. It's really challenging.

Who managers are ultimately plays a major role in their ability to shape the collaborations they serve. Another funder shared a similar perspective: "So I think a lot of it is personality; because of their background, because of who they are, they have good skills in managing relationships."

Research participants mentioned several other attributes in relation to the managers. In addition to style, a manager's passion or mindset also contributes to successful collaboration, as demonstrated by the following comment:

I really do believe in the power of collective impact and I think you do, we can't really solve the challenges that are before us in siloed approaches and siloed thinking and we need each other. I mean, I feel that way on many different, deep levels, even spiritually I feel like we are all interconnected. We need each other.

Given the messiness of collaboration, another funder put it more bluntly given the dynamics and complexity around collaboration: “They have to have thick skin and be very flexible.” Being a reflective practitioner also featured prominently in many of the interviews. As one noted, “I’ve had the benefit of dozens of people that I’ve been inspired by who have really contributed to my learning and my growth.”

Personal attributes most associated with successful influence from this research include experience with collaboration, having existing relationships, knowledge of landscape, flexibility, openness, thick skin, facilitation skills, project management, political awareness, and interpersonal skills.

Table 5 is a summary of the personal characteristics and skills of managers that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 5. Personal Characteristics and Skills

Personal Characteristics and Skills
Personal Characteristics
Belief in collaboration
Honesty/trusting/trustworthy
Experience/understanding with issue
Existing relationships
Life experience
Knowing landscape
Willingness to deal with resistance, “thick skin”
Reflective practitioner (learn as you go, learning from mistakes)
Skills
Facilitation/listening
Interpersonal skills/communication
Political (lack of political understanding can get one in trouble)
Project management
Negotiation
Community organizing

If managers are aware of their own personal traits, behaviors, skills, and personalities, then they can proactively apply them to positively influence the

collaborations they serve. As they move forward with their work, they will make choices that have an impact on the collaboration, some helpful and some not so helpful. An important mindset is giving the space to reflect on one's actions, harvest the learning, and incorporate the lessons into future actions.

Relationships They Cultivate

Given the positional influence managers have, managers play a critical role in cultivating positive relationships. This applies both internally within the collaboration and externally within the larger environment. As one funder noted referring to the manager, "I do think they are really good at developing collegiality amongst partners, developing a strong collaborative that is based on relationships." The stronger these relationships, the more effective members are in working with each other.

Managers understand the influence of trust in creating positive working relationships among members and work to build it through a series of small steps. A manager noted a specific way in which relationship building was built into a meeting agenda: "we had an agenda, we let each group present on what their project was, and then we let everyone go around the room to say 'this is my project, here is how I think you could help me.'"

Managers also leverage their relationships to help them serve the collaboration. As one funder noted, the managers "know enough about the people in the organizations to see how they can make connections between the work. They are able to identify what the motivators are for different people around the table and connect the agendas to a larger vision."

Managers also benefit from their own relationships with different members of the collaborations they serve. As noted earlier, being at the hub of relationships oftentimes

generates valuable information for managers. As one noted, “And they will be like, ‘I happen to know all of these other things too, you might want to factor that into your deliberation.’” The trust managers build also gives them space to manage. As one funder put it,

I think a lot of us have known [the manager] . . . long enough . . . [The manager] was at the [elected official’s] office, and then at . . . [a government agency], and . . . [the manager has] been a friend for a while. [The manager] can suggest anything at all. If it makes sense and we have the resources.

An important relationship that came up in several interviews is the one a manager cultivates with the funder. As one funder noted,

Like we’re really strategic for when I send an email and I convene a meeting and when I’m the one leading it versus when they do, and we’ll definitely talk about it, like “Does it make more sense for you to be the facilitator?” Because sometimes people are going to be more open and talk more if they are the one doing it, but sometimes there are times where you need to bring down the hammer and realize this is how it’s going to be, in which case, I’ll be the one to kind of do that.

Working together, a manager and a funder can be strategic in building relationships and getting things done.

Table 6 is a summary of the internal relational factors that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 6. Relationship Building—Internal Environment

Relationship Building
<i>Internal</i>
Making connections/cross-pollinating members
Building trust
Recruiting, building, vetting potential membership

In addition, managers influence collaboration by building relationships with stakeholders outside of the collaborative, as pointed out by this manager:

Not only do I live in the community [where the collaboration works], but I’ve also worked for . . . [an elected official] that has served those neighborhoods, so it’s

given me, at least I know the terrain of the community organizations and some of the key leaders and folks that you need to kind of understand and be sensitive about. You need that history at times, especially because this is a very, kind of, complicated planning project.

Managers usually have the freedom to decide what relationships and events they want to pursue outside of the collaboration. As one funder noted,

You know, that networking piece, they make a lot of decisions, just who they meet with and who they connect with on a day-to-day basis. You know, it's not like a big formal decision, but they are always meeting people, and sometimes later they will be like "Oh you know, I had lunch with this person." So they are always doing a lot of that, that networking piece.

Another funder noted the importance of the manager building their membership from external stakeholders:

I think they are good at figuring out who to reach out to, folks that are interested and willing, and ready to kind of join on. I haven't been with them when they have had these meetings. They are very articulate and that helps a lot. They can articulate the mission.

In regards to making statements and representing the collaboration externally, this evolves with time, as one manager noted, "But now, we don't need to check in with our board about going to city council and making statements." The "now" refers to how this is a process of decisions made by both the manager and the leadership committee that helps set a norm for what the manager can and cannot do.

All managers noted the importance of having an awareness of the external environment they operate in. One manager shared a lesson learned:

but there were a lot of things in play that I did not know about. I was just doing my job kind of thing. Facilitating, moving forward on a site. And it's not like I didn't follow direction or anything like that, I was doing what I always did. But . . . a county political player said, "Sorry, we don't want you to build there," and for the first time I was told by someone who I didn't know had any power over our program that you can't do that and I'm like "Do we report to them? Because nobody told me that."

This story was the best example from all the interviews highlighting that powerful non-members of the collaboration can shape what happens in the collaboration. Managers either spend time themselves outside of their collaboration building relationships or they tap into the existing relationships their members have with the broader community.

Because managers sit in a hub of relationships, they are uniquely positioned to cultivate them, both internally within the collaboration and with external stakeholders. Managers have a wide variety of options for how they both build relationships directly and also create a space for relationships to flourish. These actions make connections within the network; and the stronger these relationships, the greater chance there is for trust, understanding, and positive working relationships.

Table 7 is a summary of the external relationship factors that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 7. Relationship Building—External Environment

Relationship Building
<i>External Environment</i>
Strategically meeting with external stakeholders
Understanding political leadership/context they operate in
Recognizing power of non-members who can influence collaboration

Membership They Support and Empower

Managers play a role in influencing the development of engaged, empowered, and effective members that ultimately own the direction of the collaboration. As one manager noted, “The only way we can achieve anything that’s sustainable is by broadening the engagement and broadening the ownership.” The same manager built on this concept: “And that, I think, is the secret of an effective manager, is that, to every extent, you’re lifting up the work of your partners.” Another manager noted, “I think my

role is to make their work more effective. Build their capacity, to leverage their opportunities, so that's a role this organization should be taking."

Creating the space for engagement and lifting up the work of partners is amplified by building members' capacity. As one funder noted, "So I would say their role has been to really help build the skill level of the collaborative and really build the community building within the groups; that's really critical." Managers influence the direction of capacity building and delivery for members. This includes trainings on a variety of topics such as conflict resolution, community organizing, and community relations. As one funder noted, "I mean the technical assistance providers, we will check in on it, but they pretty much schedule those on their own. Yeah, maybe we'll check in, but I'm fine with them, if there's a training that is needed, they do all of that." What a manager thinks will build membership capacity, who the manager brings into that, and how the capacity building is done all influence the collaboration itself.

A related way of influencing is creating a space where members can learn and grow from each other in addition to learning from outside capacity builders. A manager noted how managing the process itself can help with informal capacity building:

But many of the working groups that are very active are meeting on their own. Because they are actual functional working groups, so people are meeting as the work needs to be discussed and then what we're going to do moving forward, the network space, which is kind of becoming more of a fluid, cross-pollination type of space where we can build capacity collectively, but it's not necessarily the same as having an agenda, formal work items, and we're moving projects together.

Beyond building capacity, managers work to engage members. As one manager put it, "That I need to work like hell to create that space so that they make the decisions, they stick to the decisions, so that they feel engaged by the decision. But you're trusting them with the decisions." This quote clarifies that the manager is not making the

decisions for the members of the collaboration, but rather the manager creates a space for members to become engaged in the collaboration by making decisions related to the collaborative.

Each manager makes decisions on a daily basis that may or may not provide a space to engage members. Managers constantly have to decide if they want to intervene and how they will intervene to serve the group. One reflective manager summarized this by saying,

Another management tactic is learning when to actually step in with the partners that are involved in your collaborative. Since the collaborative was made up of high-quality professionals with strong personalities, I had to trust them and give them their space for their own vision of the work they were responsible for. But when the work and collaboration with others was not going smoothly, I would step in and manage a compromised solution. This is unlike organizing a community that may need constant empowerment or education from a traditional community organizing approach.

In this instance, the manager both made choices to intervene while also stepping back to give members the space they need to lead.

Table 8 is a summary of the membership capacity and empowerment factors that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 8. Empowering Membership and Building Capacity

<i>Empowering Membership/Building Capacity</i>
Empowering members
Building membership capacity
Identifying leaders
Stepping out of influencing to create structures for broad ownership and engagement

Managers understand that they play an important role in building membership capacity and creating a space for engagement. The more members are engaged with the collaborative, the more likely they are to work towards a collaborative agenda in addition to their own organization's agenda. Managers have choices in how they will

build capacity and ownership, whether directly or indirectly, through creating a space for it. Much of the managers' work to build capacity and engagement also occurs in the various processes they steward.

Processes They Manage

This theme received the most attention during the interviews (mentioned 180 times by participants in this research, 35% of coding attributed to this factor), almost double the amount of the next item and more than four times as many mentions as some other themes. Managers have a major influence on the collaborations they serve through the processes they manage. While managers often take the lead in managing these processes, they also support members to manage these processes as well. While the manager stewards a process, members of the collaborations primarily do the work of deciding the direction they want to go. This is where the work of the collaboration takes place, and this section is divided into six sub-areas: spaces they create, gatherings they facilitate, agendas they negotiate, conflict they manage, accountability they bring, and role they clarify.

Spaces they create. Managers have an influence in deciding who to convene for what purpose. One manager captured how this process related to the previous process of engaging membership and the following process of facilitation:

I think a large part of our influence is creating, facilitating, co-creating spaces for leadership to be actualized, and that happens through the talking and listening which in and of itself would really build one's impact to show up for the work and to be able to be an engaged stakeholder.

Oftentimes managers themselves "create" or convene the space. Another manager gave more detail as to what this space looks like:

so much of it is how do you create a space that feels safe enough so that everyone feels like they can put their true thoughts and feelings out there,

because everyone has to feel like they participated, they have to feel empowered, because that's what keeps them coming back and being enthusiastic to participate.

While the members play the decision-making role, managers often create and hold a space designed to help move the collaboration forward, which includes who to invite into that space. One manager noted, "we convened eight different meet-ups around each of the indicators and have had private and public and some city folks, government." Because managers have positional influence sitting at the hub of relationships within the collaboration, they are able to convene members more effectively than other people within the collaboration.

The managers' intimate knowledge of what is going on in the collaboration gives them a sense for what needs to happen moving forward. Reflecting on the influence a manager has in creating the space, one manager noted,

That's probably the most manipulative influence I carry is my ability to convene the space, to give attention to particular things. And that's a lot of power right there in and of itself. I say, "Well, this is important, let's create the space around it." That's hugely influential. What I choose to give attention to and not give attention to is definitely my influence. Certain things I want to avoid.

Not only do the managers create the space, they hold the space: "skilled managers were able to bring everybody together and keep everybody together. They could negotiate the work moving forward so that they didn't cut issues and groups out." Every manager interviewed for this thesis brought various groups of people together for various reasons to move things forward.

Table 9 is a summary of the factors relating to spaces they create that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 9. Process Steps—Spaces They Create

Process Steps—Spaces They Create
Convening members, “bring to table”
Creating a safe space
Allowing leadership to do the work

While managers may not actively participate in the content of dialog, they have a large influence in deciding what to give attention to, whom to invite to be a part of that conversation, and how they will hold the space they create. Because of their positional influence, managers have a greater capacity to convene, and these gatherings often set the direction for the collaboration itself.

Gatherings they facilitate. Every manager interviewed for this thesis serves their membership in the capacity of a neutral facilitator. As one manager noted, “There’s a lot of facilitation skills that I think are necessary for effective collaborative leading.”

Another manager noted,

Again, I wasn’t overtly facilitating, but I was playing that role of trying to bring people together, bridge. I think what gets communicated is “You’re being heard, you’re being heard, you’re being heard as well, and we can hear each other,” and then suddenly people just sort of open up a little bit.

Good facilitation skills create a space where all members can participate in the conversation. Managers use a variety of process tools to facilitate dialog within various gatherings of members, including small group work, graphic facilitation, annual retreats, open space, and more.

One funder noted the manager’s influence on setting meeting agendas, which all managers interviewed for this thesis actively shape:

And they have facilitated all of the steering committee meetings. Obviously as a facilitator and setting the agenda, they have a lot of influence on what gets on the agenda, how the meeting gets run, even though I know they are trying to bring in the committee members more.

Another funder noted the following when referring to the manager: “[The manager] has direct influence . . . sets the agenda and chairs the meetings and that kind of thing.” By setting the agenda for meetings, managers are influencing what gets talked about and how the collaboration ultimately moves forward. It is during these gatherings that managers help members negotiate multiple agendas and develop a common collaborative agenda.

Managers are perceived as neutral, but it is often not that simple. As one manager noted,

And so I find that I have the strongest effect if I do not come across as opinionated. So I usually sit and I wait and facilitate discussions. If nobody else raises it, then I’ll pose the question, not as an opinion of my own, but as a question. Which to me is a key tool in facilitating collaborative discussion.

But even posing the question itself can influence the direction of where the collaborative goes. The same manager continued, “But I think 99% of them feel relief that someone is directing them all. . . . You know, I don’t know if they could tell you why, they just feel like they got things done. Or they felt heard or whatever it is.”

Most of the time, the decisions managers make are visible to the group (either in a large group or small group setting). As one funder put it, “They all have good facilitation skills. When people are around the table, they know how to manage a conversation and draw out of people productive comments to move things forward.” But oftentimes managers choose to initiate conversations outside of group settings (one-on-one conversations) or respond to requests by members of the collaborations they serve. As one manager stated,

If I have an idea that I think is great, I’ll field it with a couple of people ahead of time and if I get the same response, then I’ll bring it to the group but pose it as a question, not as ‘Here’s what I think.’ So using questions as tools, using one-on-

ones as tools, because you want, it's like a board meeting in a way, you want decisions to be made.

Another manager noted, "Definitely one-on-ones have to happen with the major partner leads and developing a relationship there. I think that's the number one tactic for any management role of a collaborative." Because many of these conversations take place as one-on-one conversations, they can be perceived as taking place "behind the scenes." All managers interviewed for this thesis participated in "offline" conversations with various stakeholders in the collaborations they serve.

Table 10 is a summary of the facilitation factors that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 10. Process Steps—Gatherings They Facilitate

Process Steps—Gatherings They Facilitate
Facilitate groups to work together and reach agreement
Developing meeting agendas
One-on-one conversations
Facilitating effective communication between members

Managers often set the agenda for meetings and facilitate those meetings. As facilitators, they work to help the collaborations they serve to discuss important issues and make decisions. To ensure effective meetings, managers need to be thoughtful about how and when they intervene in the meeting process. Their neutrality is trusted by members, even if at times the managers are not completely neutral in their perspective on what needs to happen.

Agendas they negotiate. The word agenda has two meanings in this research. In the previous section on "gatherings they facilitate," the term agenda referred to meeting agendas. Meeting agendas help guide a group's discussion during meetings.

As this research noted, managers often shape that agenda, which influences what gets talked about. This section, “agendas they negotiate,” relates to the actual goals and strategies of organizations and individuals that make up the collaboration’s membership. These goals and strategies may be similar in some categories and very different in others. The work to develop a common agenda among participants that aligns with organizational and individual agendas can be very challenging, but it is critically important in order for the collaboration to succeed.

This area of influence generated a healthy amount of discussion from managers who are tasked with having to manage multiple and often competing agendas, including their own. Oftentimes, these discussions can be tense, as one funder noted,

it was kind of a power struggle, because there were lots of things we can do with this collaboration, this thing that was being funded, this start-up. We had some pretty tense discussions about it and some people quit and left. It was clear that they weren’t going to get their thing. But then . . . we got . . . money; that changed everything.

Managers understand that each member organization and its representatives have their own agenda. One manager captured this, referring to the members they serve by saying,

It’s understanding [*sic*] they have an agenda, and that’s okay. Everyone has an agenda. They have particular needs for the organization. So it’s accepting that fact that’s a reality and then saying “How can we capitalize on that? How can we make this a win-win, you know, for you, for the organization, for the whole collaborative?”

A simple way to do this was shared by another funder describing a manager: “they can articulate that, ‘What’s in it for you.’” With skills and actions like knowing what each organization wants, managers often serve as a glue to keep the collaboration together.

Managers influence the creation of a collaborative-wide agenda and often work to great lengths to do so. As one manager noted, “so I think part of it is also stepping in

and reminding people not only at a group level, and also on that one-on-one level, that there is a larger goal, collaborative goal.” The negotiation is ongoing and involves managers communicating the value proposition of the collaboration, that members are able to accomplish something for their own organizations by participating in the collaboration that they would otherwise be unable to accomplish on their own. One manager noted a way to do this: “so kind of leveraging opportunities to showcase the work of members is how I’m trying to diffuse the competition amongst them.”

Part of the messiness of collaboration is the various motivations members show up with at the table. Some may respond to the funding possibility but have existing tension with other members in the collaborative space. Managers recognize these currents and work to transform them. A funder from a different collaborative put it this way,

They understand what their intrinsic motivations are, what their organization motivations are, and they can get to the core of what makes people tick and take a leadership role that’s maybe a vocal leadership role when it needs to be, but they also know when to step back and let other people lead the work.

The negotiation of agendas also includes incorporating the manager’s own personal agenda into the mix. On one end of the spectrum, managers work to directly influence the outcomes of the collaboration:

My passion is around the . . . [name of policy] piece and so, and that created, I didn’t push that agenda, I think having . . . [name of member] connected, . . . the one pushing it. I was supporting . . . behind the scenes and then when there were conversations where, you know, the business community was voicing concerns around something or labor was unfriendly, it was helping . . . [name of member] navigate those waters behind the scenes, and not being seen as the one pushing that.

The opposite approach was taken by another manager:

he probably thought “I wonder if . . . [manager name] had engineered this.” Now if I had, that would have been a disaster in terms of his trust and others’ trust in

me. So there's no way I could, I think you just kind of trust a group process. You see, I don't engineer things that way. And I think to the extent as the central coordinator, the manager, to the extent that you do try to engineer it, you're not fostering the capacity for the organism to deal with it yourself.

A middle ground was shared by another manager:

it's not about having an agenda and pushing it, even though I might have an agenda secretly, but your communication style and commitment in the context where there is a conflict happening is not to push your agenda, even if you have one, it's actually about, a little more surrender, and willingness to be fluid, I've used that word like a hundred times already, I think it's an important word, and really listening and reflecting back.

Table 11 is a summary of the factors related to negotiating the agenda that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 11. Process Steps—Agendas They Negotiate

Process Steps—Agendas They Negotiate
Developing shared agenda (group priorities)
Developing strategy
Understanding what motivates members
Trusting the group process and refraining from advocating manager's agenda
Working "behind the scenes" or "back door"
Supporting members (who support manager's agenda)
Demonstrating value proposition of collaboration for member organizations

One of the biggest challenges a manager faces is managing competing agendas within a collaborative space. First, skilled managers must understand what motivates their members and then facilitate a negotiation process to develop a common, shared agenda. In that process, they need to be aware of their own personal agendas and make sure they put their own interests aside and trust members will decide what is right for them.

Conflict they manage. Conflicting agendas combined with a mix of personalities usually create a healthy level of conflict in any collaboration. Managers influence

positive relationships by identifying potentially destructive conflict, managing it, and ideally transforming it. One manager noted,

we've been asked to kind of hold space to reconcile some difference of opinion across different sectors of the work. It hasn't always been very explicit, but I do think it's been there, and we've been able to play that role, and it's helped kind of air some things out.

While that manager responded to a request, another manager took a more proactive approach based on the funder's perspective, "I'm one who avoids conflict. They will actually create conflict in order to address it." These conversations are considered "tough conversations," having to deal with some existing tension and work to transform it.

As one manager noted, "I do think that boils down to leadership and our ability to be resilient through hard times and conflict and to be, you know, keep the faith given when other people are like 'This is all whacked' and pulling their hair." When things get messy in collaboration, which they usually do at some point, a manager is uniquely positioned to respond. In fact, managers are often sought out for this role because of their perceived neutrality, strength of existing relationships, and fact that they are getting paid to serve the collaboration.

How managers approach conflict also influences positive outcomes. One manager shared, "And the thing with mistakes is we recognize we make mistakes, and it's an opportunity to learn from them that builds trust." Conflict then can be considered an opportunity to correct mistakes and build trust. Managers approached conflict in different ways. For one manager,

it starts with a one-on-one, but if it ends up being a conflict between two different organizations, then actually having the talk with more than one organization together to make sure that they're all seeing eye to eye. But yeah, eventually it does lead to a conversation where you have to be very clear.

The managers' facilitation skills help them navigate conflict as they create a space for members themselves to resolve the tension through dialog.

Managers with an awareness that tension is normal in collaboration are more prepared to deal with it. Because of their perceived neutral role, they are in a position to manage and potentially transform conflict using a variety of methods. These methods include one-on-one conversations and small group dialogs. Managers can help groups find their common interests, instead of focusing only on their positions. Managers can also help organizations better understand each other. It is quite normal for organizations with very different organizational cultures and assumptions to participate in the same collaboration. Often, conflict arises out of a misunderstanding because organizations naturally do things differently. A manager can hold the space for organizations to better understand each other and better communicate with each other, which often helps improve relations.

Table 12 is a summary of factors related to transforming conflict that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 12. Process Steps—Conflict They Manage

Process Steps—Conflict They Manage
Being able to have the “tough conversations”
Conflict resolution

Accountability they bring. Depending on the collaboration's context, managers have differing levels of authority to hold members accountable. These range from situations where managers need to work to create the space for members to hold each other accountable because membership is open and unpaid to other instances where managers do have certain project management authority over members (the situation

where accountability came up most in the interviews). In some collaborative contexts, members are funded to be a part of the project and have specific scopes of work. In these cases, if the members do not do the work, the manager often holds them accountable. Managers influence positive outcomes by holding members accountable to whatever commitments they have made. As one funder noted, “You’re right, it wasn’t a very easy conversation to have, but they had to assume that role as project lead and say ‘Okay, well, you know, [the funder] . . . is holding me accountable to it and now I have to hold you accountable to it.’” Because the manager is tied to the funder in these situations, their combined influence helps keep members accountable because of a member’s interest in continued funding.

The area that received the most attention from managers was holding individual organizations accountable to work towards the larger collaborative agenda, as was mentioned in the previous section.

Table 13 is a summary of the factors related to accountability that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 13. Process Steps—Accountability They Bring

Process Steps—Accountability They Bring
Holding members accountable to task or to collaboration principles/agreements
Holding members accountable to collaborative spirit

Managers support the collaborations they serve by holding members accountable to their commitments. This means managers must be willing to have difficult conversations in order to ensure the work of the collaboration gets done. Since managers are not anyone’s formal boss, they must hold member organizations accountable in a way that influences members to do their work.

Role they clarify. Because there are multiple sources of influence in collaboratives and a manager's role is to create the space for members to shape the collaboration, successful managers clarify their role with their members, the member leadership, and the funder. As one manager noted, "So, I think, the thing with managing collaboratives is you can get sidetracked in all sorts of things. You have to construct the framework, the parameters of your role, and then you have to live by it every day."

While this manager worked to clarify the role as a strategy to build trust, another funder lacked clarity about the manager's role:

this last section about this role of the managers . . . is unique in that there's the network, there's the leadership, there's the committees, and there's staff. So with all these various entities, role clarification among those different groups has evolved and has been a little challenging, I think. . . . One of the challenges for the . . . [collaboration name] moving forward is figuring out the charge or scope of the groups and how they relate to each other.

Managers interviewed for this thesis ranged in having clarity in their roles.

This contracting for a manager's role is done either formally or informally, and the role often evolves along with the collaboration. One manager noted,

. . . things I used to check in with other people on, I've learned that nobody really cares anyway, so, you know, in terms of the bigger picture . . . And things that I used to just email everybody on, in terms of, I don't do that anymore. Like it's clear to me after a year and a half who informs what, so I'm very strategic now in who I include.

Table 14 is a summary of the factors related to clarifying the manager's role that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 14. Process Steps—Role They Clarify

Process Steps—Role They Clarify
Clarifying role of manager
Role evolves over time based on interactions with membership
Management Decisions
Staffing/consultant hiring/management
Where to invest time/resources
Budgeting decisions

Managers have a specific role to play in influencing the collaborations they serve. Whether or not the manager or other members of the collaborative work to clarify their roles is something that occurred in some, but not all, of the collaborations interviewed for this thesis. There is a spectrum of formality, and different managers had different levels of specificity to their role. All recognized their role evolved along with the collaboration, and much of their role gets shaped as the manager interacts with others in the collaboration. Through these interactions, norms and expectations develop within the collaboration, which ultimately shapes the collaboration's culture.

Culture They Shape

Because of a manager's positional influence, they are constantly talking about the collaboration they serve, both to internal members and external stakeholders. These narratives help develop the overall culture of the collaboration and how the collaboration is viewed by the larger community.

One manager noted, "What you give attention to also dictates your community narrative." The same manager noted,

I think I've had a lot of influence really in shaping the culture in . . . [name of collaborative]. That one being, principles of abundance and generosity and honesty and authenticity and proactive conflict management. Those kinds of things, you know, also just cultural competency, respect, linguistic access. These are all things we could all be doing a lot better, but at least trying to bring that frame to our work.

A funder from another collaborative shared a similar thought: “But there are positive lessons learned that we need to be able to synthesize all of that information to tell a story about this project and this collaborative.” How they talk about the collaboration and how they frame the collaboration’s success shape how it is perceived by a broader set of stakeholders.

Another manager noted the desire to cultivate a culture of learning

so I think that is where I personally feel there is a success is if they’re seeing it as more an experimental learning situation since, I mean, obviously with some goals there, at the end of the day, we’re also a collaborative that needs to learn from each other.

Another manager noted a subtle difference in language that builds a more collaborative culture, “Whereas everybody else in the collaborative usually speaks with ‘I’ statements, ‘Well, I kind of think we shouldn’t do that because’ so then I’ll be like ‘What does everyone else think about that?’ ‘Is that a concern that anyone else considered?’”

Another way in which managers shape the culture is by shaping the overall design for the collaboratives they serve. This could include the collaboration structure and processes. While a manager is not a “leader” in the traditional sense of the word, the manager’s actions still influence the collaboration design. Several managers worked to influence the overall governance structures and process. As one manager noted, “I think the decision to form working groups was one of the best decisions we made and has led to our greatest successes.”

A funder had this to say about the manager of the collaborative,

So I would say their role, that role of the manager is influential, in that they set up the governance structure. They facilitated the process of creating our steering committee and our bylaws. So, you know, obviously the way that has been developed, that’s a big influence when things were rolling out.

While this took place in the past, another manager mentioned something similar happening in the present,

I'm taking a stab at revising the governance documents. They were fine before, but they didn't lay out any procedural information and so it was, we want to do this, but they didn't say how things got done, which is a serious problem if you have a membership organization. There have to be very clear roles and responsibilities and there were not. What happens if this, what happens if that? It didn't exist. So, I've revised within the structure we have how we get things done. So those conversations will be happening in the new year.

The governance of collaborations ultimately helps shape the overall culture of the collaboration by clarifying how decisions will be made and what the various roles and responsibilities are.

Finally, managers help shape a culture by measuring the impact of the collaboration. Part of the narrative describing the collaboration includes sharing the impact of the collaboration's work. This not only gives credibility to the collaboration from outside stakeholders, but it also helps demonstrate the value of the collaboration to its members who also have their own internal agendas. There was no uniform set of criteria that collaborations interviewed for this thesis used to measure their effectiveness. But all managers did take on a role of sharing the impact their collaboration made on both the larger community which the collaboration aimed to influence along with the members that composed the collaboration.

Table 15 is a summary of the factors related to shaping the culture that were named by at least four funders or managers.

Table 15. Culture They Shape

Culture They Shape
Structure
Governance
Measuring Impact
Program management (making sure deliverables get met, keeping time)
Positive personal feedback
Members do their work/continue coming to meetings/increase their engagement
Influence in region

Managers, with every conversation they have, influence the culture in which they play such a pivotal part. They do this by sharing a narrative, influencing macro-structures within the collaboration, and measuring their success.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Based on the findings presented in chapter 4, this chapter discusses how each of the findings from this research relate to the literature reviewed for this thesis. This chapter also discusses the broader implications for research and practice related to the topic of management influence on collaboration. The chapter continues with the limitations of this research and suggestions for future research, followed by some closing thoughts.

Discussion Relating Findings to Existing Research

This research builds and elaborates upon the existing research into managers of collaborative change initiatives. Each of the themes presented in this thesis relates to at least one theme found in the literature review. Several findings span multiple strands found in the literature which highlights the complexity and interconnectedness of this topic.

Managers have positional influence. As Huxham and Vangen (2005) noted in the literature review related to guidelines and process steps, managers carry a tremendous amount of influence based on their position within the collaboration. While multiple guidelines and process steps exist for collaboration, they often focus on best practices for the collaboration as a whole. This research builds upon those guidelines by giving more attention to building the capacity and effectiveness of the managers given the unique position in which they serve as a hub in a network of relationships. By naming the positional influence managers have in collaboration, managers can better understand their potential role to serve collaborations.

Collaboration dynamics shape a manager's influence. This second contextual factor mentioned in this thesis relates to the first theme explored in the

literature review: life cycles, phases, and stages. Each manager and funder interviewed for this thesis worked in a related but unique context. In addition to having an understanding of the phases and stages, several managers reflected on how they themselves (often in partnership with the funder) actively shaped the collaboration itself. This relates to the second theme from the literature review: analytic conceptualizations. Managers themselves played a role in shaping what the collaboration looks like. They also operated within different types of collaborations. For example, some collaborations interviewed for this thesis were more project focused with a smaller amount of funded partners, and others took a broader approach in shaping policies that involved a much greater set of stakeholders, many of them unfunded. In the project-based collaborations, managers had a greater ability to hold members accountable because all the members received funding and signed contracts for their participation in the work. Just as knowing what phase a collaboration is in, manager awareness of the type or model of collaboration they serve helps increase their ability to influence positive outcomes for the collaboration.

Personal characteristics and skills. This research notes how a manager's skills, behaviors, experience, and personality shape his or her ability to influence. This directly relates to the fourth theme found in the literature review: competencies, behaviors, and tasks. Because both managers and funders affirmed this theme in the interviews, this research further adds to the evidence that personality matters when managing collaboration. This research differed slightly in that it looked into personal characteristics and skills relating specifically to the managers' ability to influence the collaborations they serve. These characteristics and skills are more facilitative in approach as opposed to directive.

Relationships they cultivate. Much of the literature related to success and failure factors suggests the importance of building effective relationships in collaborations, which relates to the competencies, behaviors, and tasks theme from the literature review. This research affirmed that managers not only play a critical role in cultivating relationships, both within the collaboration and with external stakeholders, but that they also allocate a significant portion of their time and energy to this process. Feedback from funders interviewed for this thesis affirmed this. This research connects the positional influence managers have with an important role they can play serving collaborations: cultivating relationships. Relationship building also relates to the themes approach and reflective practice theme as it relates to issues around membership and identity. Reflective managers will note the complexities involved with building relationships given the dynamics around membership and identity. Skilled managers will recognize there are potential pitfalls to this work and will be more effective if they are strategic in their relationship building. The invitation managers received to participate in these interviews included the following, “I’m hopeful that in addition to generating research that helps me answer my research questions, the experience also gives you a space to reflect on your work.” In deciding to take the time to participate in this research, these managers affirmed the value of the themes approach and reflective practice. By participating in a reflective space, managers identified and accessed critical relationships they need to cultivate in order to serve.

Membership they support and empower. Managers play an important role in providing capacity-building support for members and a space for members to take ownership in the collaboration. This relates to the success and failure factors theme found in the literature review. The ability for members to be empowered and have their

capacity built depends partly on the theme of analytic conceptualizations. Managers interviewed for this thesis worked in different ways to build membership capacity and empowerment. Some of the collaborative designs better facilitated member involvement. Finally, in order to do this work, managers used another theme found in the literature review, tools and facilitation. Managers themselves often facilitated groups of members, but also worked to create a space for members to lead. Managers used a variety of tools to engage members with varying degrees of success. Facilitation as a tool assists members within the collaborative to discuss, decide, and ultimately commit to the collaborations they participate in.

Processes they manage. Managers serve as process stewards for the collaborations they serve, which most relates to the tools and facilitation theme found in the research. This research elaborated on a set of related but different processes managers facilitate: spaces they create, gatherings they facilitate, agendas they negotiate, conflict they manage, accountability they bring, and role they clarify. Facilitation is its own skill and effective managers must have an ability to use it. They serve as a neutral third party to help groups make key decisions together. One of the biggest decisions a manager assists members with is creating a common agenda for the collaborative. This relates back to the themes approach and reflective practice, which notes the challenges of managing multiple agendas given each organization and individual has its own agenda it brings into the collaborative space. This research elaborated on this concept and introduced another level of agendas to the mix, the manager's agenda. This research noted some differences on how managers either pushed or let go of their own personal agendas. The interviews for this thesis gave managers a space to reflect on this.

Culture they shape. This research noted that what a manager pays attention to helps shape an overall culture of collaboration. The overall culture of collaboration is reflected in the theme found in the literature related to analytic conceptualizations—typologies, models, and diagnostics. What managers pay attention to is also partly influenced by their own competencies, behaviors, and tasks, another theme found in the literature.

Summary. Overall, this thesis affirmed many themes found in the existing research. This research added to the conversation by engaging in a dialog directly with managers and funders to reflect on the influence of managers. This research helped identify specific ways in which managers influence the collaborations they serve. The research not only helped clarify, but it demonstrates that managers play a key role in shaping positive outcomes of the collaborations they serve.

Implications for Research

Whereas previous research looked into how to manage collaboration, this research sought to understand how managers influence the collaborations they serve to achieve positive outcomes. Influencing is related but different from management. Managers may be more willing to talk about how they manage the collaborations they serve than share how they themselves directly influence the collaborations through their actions. Their initial thought may be that they do not have an influence on the collaborations they serve. They might say their role is to manage it but not influence it. They would say it is the job of the members to influence positive outcomes for the collaboration. But the reality is, managers have a tremendous amount of influence on the collaborations they serve.

This research helped clarify where a manager can have an influence in collaboration, a term some may be initially hesitant to talk about. In fact, the interview protocol was designed in such a way that the topic of influence was eased into as opposed to having the first question focus on influence. After asking managers to describe the collaborations they served, what influenced them to take on this work, and who had influenced them in their role of manager, it was a natural next step to then reflect with the managers on how they themselves influenced the collaborations they served. This research opened up a conversation explicitly focused on influence: What influence do managers have? How do they go about influencing? What decisions have they made that have had the most influence?

Implications for Practice

This research was designed with the practitioner in mind and aims to serve as another guide to best practices for managers serving collaborative change initiatives. Whereas much of the literature focuses on collaboration as a whole, this research looks at the role one individual can play in shaping positive outcomes for the collaborations they serve. This research helped clarify a handful of ways in which managers can influence positive outcomes for the collaborations they serve.

In many ways, managers can serve collaborations by functioning as the glue to help keep it all together. The best practices identified in this research—specifically the relationships they cultivate, membership they support and empower, and processes they manage—provide the environment for a collaboration to flourish. Given the agendas that members bring to collaborations they participate in, managers are in a better position to serve as the glue for collaborations they serve. It is hoped that the more managers understand that their influence is not only needed, but is essential for

the collaborations they serve, the more they will focus their energies into a set of practices that have the greatest positive impact.

This research also affirmed that the personal qualities of the manager matter and not all individuals will succeed in the position. It helps if managers believe in the cause, have experience, know the local landscape, can handle resistance, and have the capacity to reflect on their actions. Someone who is politically savvy and has strong facilitation, project management, negotiation, community organization, and interpersonal skills will also more likely succeed in a collaborative space. As funders consider hiring managers in the future, these considerations could assist them in the hiring process.

As this research was conducted, it became clear that managers for collaborative change initiatives often act in isolation from other managers. While all managers mentioned the web of relationships they connected with in their own collaborations, only one manager mentioned having relationships with other managers of collaborative change initiatives, and that was within a network his collaboration participated in. There does not seem to be a handbook practitioners can turn to specifically to manage and positively influence collaborations they serve from their unique role. Findings from this and other related research potentially could contribute to a best practice guide designed specifically for managers of collaborations.

Limitations of Research and Suggestions for Future Research

While this research generated more information about the specific influence managers have on the collaborations they serve, additional research could be done to develop a more detailed understanding of their influence. Given the limitations of this research, more research could not only help understand the influence of a manager, but also gain a better understanding of different actors in a collaborative space and how

their relationships influence the collaboration. For example, what influence does the funder have in collaborations? What influence do individual actors in a collaborative space have, and how do they contribute to the collaborative's success and/or failure? This research could be replicated and expanded upon to understand the influence and impact of individual actors in a collaborative space.

This research generated its data from one-on-one, individual interviews asking managers and funders to reflect on the influence of the manager. Given the fact that the manager interacts with so many different people within a collaborative context, additional research could ask the same set of questions to a broader cross-section of people connected to the collaboration: members, members taking on leadership roles, former members, the manager's boss (if there is one), and external stakeholders. Doing this 360-degree type of evaluation would give a more detailed picture of the perceived influence of the manager. It is likely that different perspectives would have different ideas on what manager influence looks like.

Focus groups with different groups of stakeholders might generate a richer picture of manager influence as participants build upon each other's perceptions and come to a common understanding of manager influence. Real-world observation of a manager in action would likely generate an even deeper level of understanding because the research would see how the manager acts in real time as opposed to just using data from a manager's own reflections.

Beyond the manager, these various methods of research could be applied to other stakeholders in a collaborative space. The original idea for this research was to also focus on funder influence on the collaborations they support, but the scope was deemed too broad. Recognizing there are different kinds of collaborative funders out

there, researching their own impact on the initiatives they support could help them be more effective in the future. A funder's influence often includes picking the manager, which, as seen from this research, carries a tremendous amount of influence. Funders recognize the need for collaboration and are supporting it more. Research on funder influence would not only help funders be more strategic, but it would help them recognize how their own actions play a major influence in the initiatives they support.

Another idea explored at the start of this research included how the specific relationship between the manager and the funder influences the overall collaboration. While some insights came out of this research recognizing the importance of this relationship, an entire thesis could focus specifically on this question. The manager relationship to the funder was similar in each of the collaborations but also differed in dramatic ways as well. Given the positional influence of both of these individuals (and, in many cases, it may be more than two people), further study into how their relationship impacts the larger collaboration could yield valuable insights.

Beyond the scope of the manager-funder relationship, numerous other relationships could be explored. Further research could be done looking into the relationship managers have with members. Several managers noted they went to trusted members within their collaborations to reflect and strategize. How do these relationships influence the overall direction of the collaboration? Outside of the membership within the collaboration, another line of research could look into how powerful stakeholders outside the membership of a collaboration influence it. This research showed that one such powerful stakeholder altered the course of one collaboration interviewed for this thesis. Further research could explore what the relationship looked like between this external stakeholder, the manager, and the funder.

Beyond relationship building, further research could be done exploring the most effective ways to build membership capacity. While this research noted general themes in this area, how managers actually went about doing this varied. This fluctuated partly due to the different personalities at the helm and also because of the context each operated in. In the nonprofit sector, the majority of capacity building is aimed at enhancing the capacity for the organization. In a collaborative context, building their capacity also includes how to best operate in a collaborative space, which has a different set of dynamics. Traditional capacity building may not work in collaborative spaces because it just reinforces organizational interests at the expense of collaborative interests.

On a related note, further research could reveal best practices to engage and empower membership collaborative spaces. Research could compare a manager's approach with how it was received by membership. Research also could develop a set of indicators that communicate a spectrum for how engaged members of collaborations are and how it might change over time.

While many best practices already exist for facilitating within a collaborative space, additional research could yield insight on how a collaborative as a whole manages different agendas through time. Research could map what the process looks like for organizations to walk in with their own agendas and reach agreement on a collaborative agenda that also works for their organization's bottom line. As part of that, research could look into the variety of ways in which organizational members give something up to be a part of a larger whole. Research could look into what influences an organization to give up certain things. This research could then provide a guide to collaborative stakeholders to help them negotiate future agendas.

While there are various diagnostic tools for collaborations as a whole, additional research could be done to develop individual diagnostics for how people contribute to the collaborations they are a part of based on their role. A tool like this could help reduce a culture of blame that sometimes occurs in collaboration and replace it with self-accountability. It would be helpful if a tool like this were translated into resources active practitioners in a collaborative space could use as a guide based on specific roles such as manager, funder, and member. Given the complexities of collaboration around the role of the manager, the possibilities for research into collaboration are vast.

One final limitation of this research relates to the types of collaborations interviewed: cross-sector partnerships to help solve some pressing environmental, social, or economic challenges experienced in the Southern California region. While businesses and government participated in these collaborations, the majority of members came from the nonprofit sector, giving the role of the funder much more influence. Collaborations between companies would likely yield a different but related set of dynamics.

Conclusion

This research aimed to build upon the existing literature by investigating an aspect of managing collaboration: influence. The majority of the findings relate to existing research and elaborate on the concepts, with specific examples shared directly by managers and funders of collaborative change initiatives themselves. These themes came out not by asking managers how they manage collaboration but, rather, how they influence collaboration.

For research on collaboration, it is hoped that this thesis begins a new dialog, specifically around influence, that may continue in a number of formats. Additional

research questions could also ask a set of questions related to power as it relates to the managers of collaborative change initiatives and how they use it.

The broader implications for practitioners revolve around how the best practices uncovered in this research can make their way to practitioners on the ground. One example for what that could look like would be a handbook designed specifically for managers of collaborative change initiatives.

While this research generated new light on the influence managers have, its overall scope was limited to one type of methodology, one-on-one interviews. Other methodologies applied to the same or other collaborative change initiatives would likely yield related but different results. Beyond investigating the role of manager, the same process could be applied to the funder or the relationship between the manager and the funder. Considering collaboration appears to be growing as a strategy to address society's most challenging issues, further research is needed to help maximize its impact, specifically around the role of manager.

While there are many co-creators in any collaborative space, there are usually only one or a few people who play the manager role. If this role with its many challenges and pitfalls could be played more effectively, then the collaborations they serve would likely increase their impact. Given the scale of problems these collaborations aim to transform, every little bit to increase a manager's impact will help the overall collaboration positively influence society for the better.

By understanding their position and the context they operate in, managers do influence the collaborations they serve by who they are, the relationships they cultivate, the membership they support and empower, the processes they manage, and the culture they shape.

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Appendix A: Interview Request Email

Interview Request Email

Dear (Collaboration Manager),

I'm researching best practices in leading collaborative change initiatives in Southern California for my master's thesis in organization development at Pepperdine University. The purpose of my study is to learn how to shape positive outcomes for collaborative change initiatives by better understanding the influence of designated and paid collaboration managers. I am writing to invite you and the primary funder you work with to participate in my research.

I have compiled a list of collaborative change initiatives and am interviewing a select set of leaders from five of these collaborations. I'm hopeful that in addition to generating research that helps me answer my research questions, the experience also gives you a space to reflect on your work.

To complete my research, I will conduct separate interviews with you and the primary funder of the collaboration you manage. I expect these to last anywhere from ½ hour to an hour. If you are interested in hearing the results of my research at a later date, I would be happy to schedule a time to treat both of you to lunch and discuss my findings in an informal setting.

Can you forward this email to the primary funder you work with and let me know if the both of you are interested in participating in this study? I plan to schedule these interviews during the month of October.

This thesis directly relates to my work as a consultant serving collaborative change initiatives (primarily in the form of serving as a facilitator). By investing my time and energy into this project, I hope to build my capacity to more effectively influence positive outcomes for collaborative change initiatives.

Thanks,

Ron Milam

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Opening

- Thanks for taking the time to meet with me. The purpose of this interview is for me to better understand the influence collaboration managers have in shaping positive outcomes for the collaborations they support. I have five areas that I have specific questions I want to ask you, but have left room for us to discuss anything that comes out of these questions. I'm interviewing four other sets of collaboration managers and funders and am curious to see both the similarities and differences for how each collaboration is shaped by the collaboration manager. In addition to helping me with my research, I hope you find this time a valuable space to reflect on your role in shaping positive outcomes for the collaboration.

- For Manager: I have a couple of quick questions to start us off to get a better understanding of the collaboration you manage. When did this collaboration start? How many members are there? How many sectors do they represent? How often do members meet? How is the collaborative funded?

2. Personal Background Info

- How long you have been involved with this collaboration? What influenced you to take on this work? Now that you're here, who has had a positive influence on you as you have carried out this work?

3. General Influence

- For manager: What influence would you say you have in shaping positive outcomes for the collaboration you manage?

- For Funder and/or Participant: What influence would you say the manager has in shaping positive outcomes for the collaboration you fund/participate in?

4. Influencing Tactics

- For manager: How do you go about influencing the collaboration? Do you have an example of a situation in which you were influential and it led to a positive outcome for the collaboration? Would you explain further? How do you know if your influence led to a positive outcome for the collaboration?

- For Funder and/or Participant: How do you see the manager going about influencing the collaboration? Do you have an example of a situation in which you saw them be influential and it led to a positive outcome for the collaboration? Would you explain further? How do you know if their influence led to a positive outcome for the collaboration?

5. Decision-making

- For manager: What decisions can you, as a manager, make unilaterally? What decisions do you need to ask the funder for input? What decisions have you made that had the greatest influence on the collaboration?

- For Funder and/or Participant: What decisions can the manager make unilaterally? What decisions do they need to ask you for input? What decisions has the manager made that have had the greatest influence on the collaboration?

6. Ending Questions

- Is there anything else that we should have talked about that we haven't yet?
- Is there a participant in the collaboration that you recommend I speak with to reflect on your influence on the collaboration?

Thanks for taking the time to meet with me. I really appreciate your perspective and will incorporate it into my thesis. If you're interested in meeting once I put together my findings, I would be happy to take you and the other people I interview from this collaborative out to lunch to discuss in a more informal environment.

Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent Form

Research Background

Ron Milam is conducting this research in partial fulfillment of his thesis for Master of Science degree in Organization Development at Pepperdine University.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to learn how to shape positive outcomes for collaborative change initiatives by better understanding the influence of designated and paid collaboration managers.

Confidentiality

Your responses will be kept confidential. Ron will verify any quotes by you before including them in his thesis.

Recording

Ron will record the conversation using his iPhone. Ron will store these in a locked file on his computer. Ron will dispose of these files three years after the completion of his thesis.

Voluntary Nature of Research

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty. You may also choose not to answer any question. If you have questions about your rights as participants in the research, you can contact Ron's faculty supervisor of his research: Ann.Feyerherm@pepperdine.edu or [deleted]. Or, you can contact Doug Leigh, doug.leigh@pepperdine.edu, who is the chair of the Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine.

By signing this form, you indicate you understand and have agreed to participate in this research.

Name

Date