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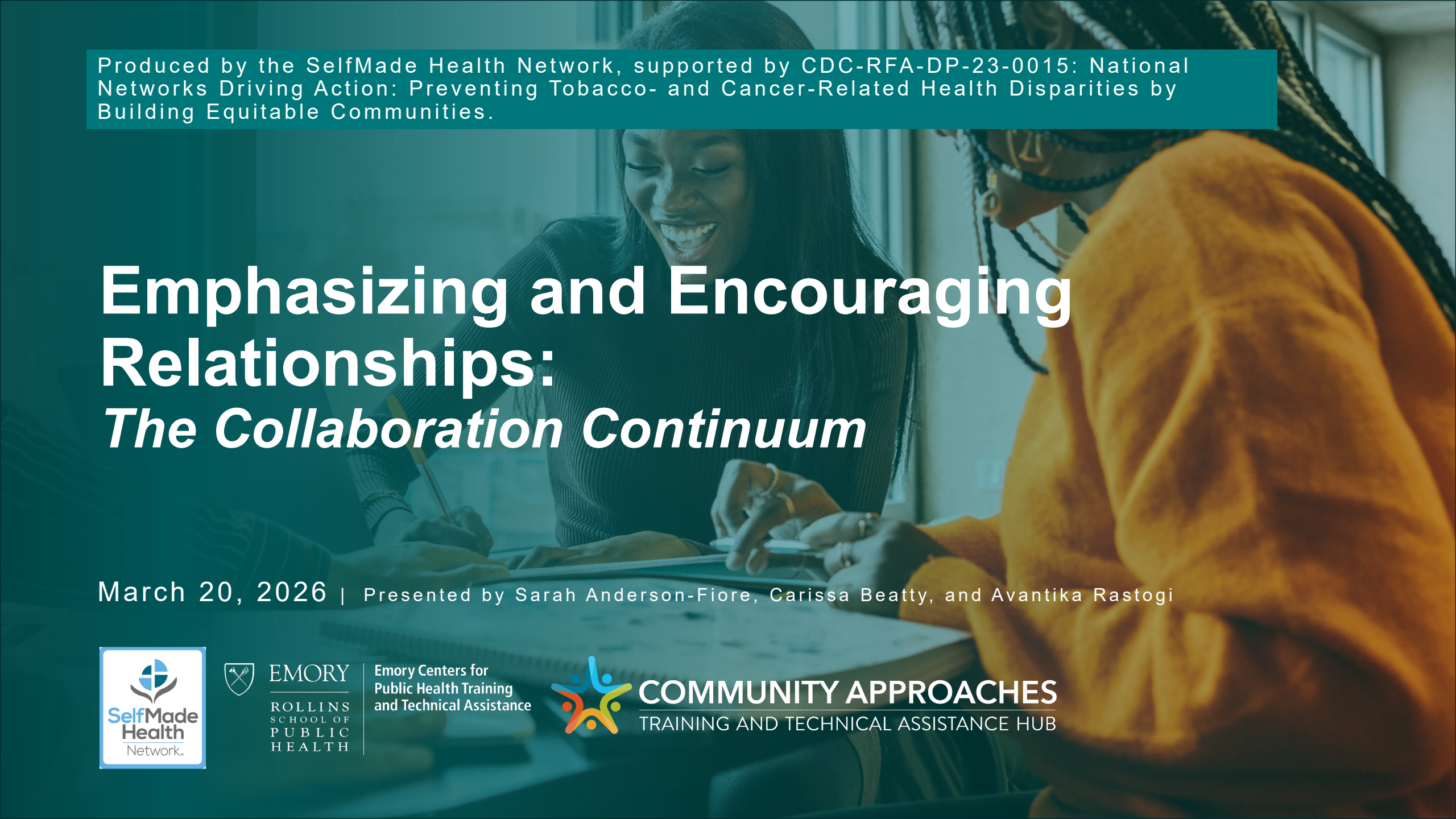

Emphasizing and Encouraging Relationships:
The Collaboration Continuum

March 20, 2026 | Presented by Sarah Anderson-Fiore, Carissa Beatty, and Avantika Rastogi

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Wrong Answers Only!!

What is the best way to be a terrible partner in a collaboration?

i.e., Only respond to emails at 3 am

Communicate exclusively through riddles…

What keeps effective programs going over time?

Hint:

It's more than money!

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Intro and Context

Program sustainability has many facets.

High-functioning partnerships can mitigate sustainability challenges and move evidence-based strategies forward!

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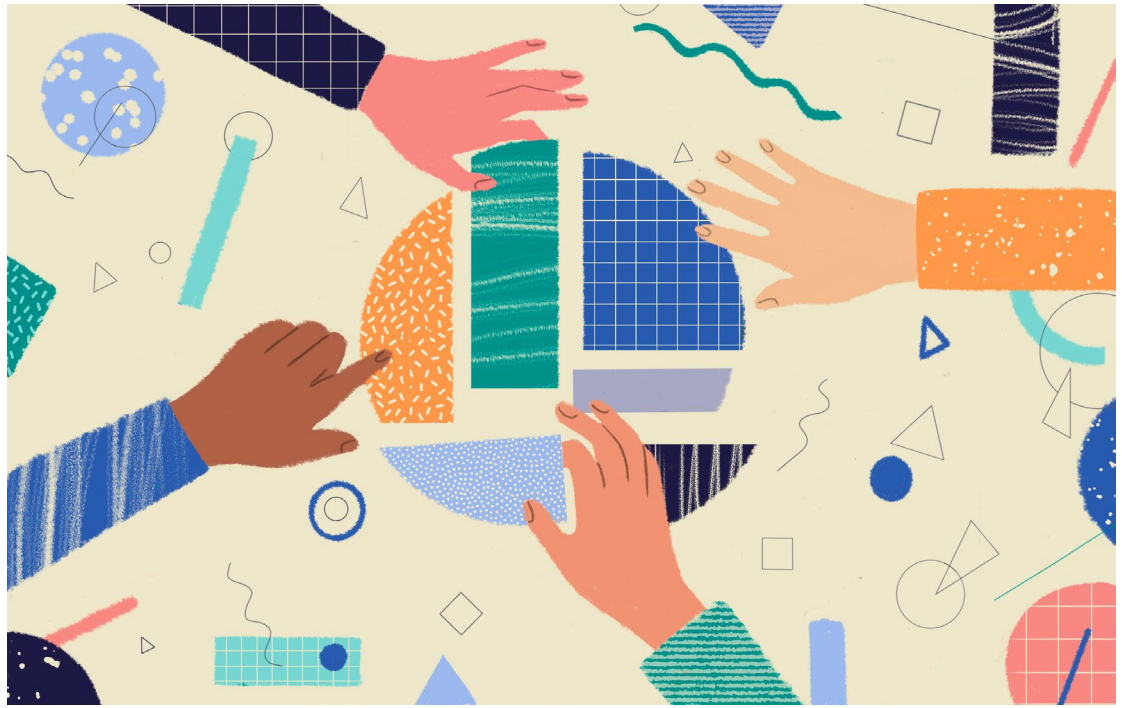
Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, you'll be able to:

1. Define the key steps along the collaboration continuum.
2. Differentiate the appropriate collaborative relationships needed to move your public health initiatives forward with partners.
3. Identify strategies for adapting collaborative relationships to enhance programmatic outcomes for populations experiencing health disparities.



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Collaboration Benefits and Challenges

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Benefits of Collaboration

Working collaboratively allows you to reach your goals by:

- ✓ Pooling limited resources
- ✓ Incorporating diverse perspectives and skills
- ✓ Expanding reach and capacity
- ✓ Reducing duplications of effort
- ✓ Better understanding community needs and assets
- ✓ Enhancing credibility and trust
- ✓ Strengthening advocacy efforts
- ✓ Developing community buy-in

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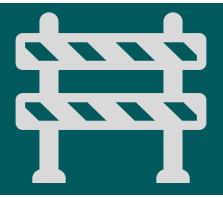
Barriers to Collaboration



- Competition
- Unclear purpose
- Waste of time
- Misalignment
- Lack of innovation
- Poor communication
- History of mistrust
- Representation
- Not meaningful
- Unrealistic expectations
- Politics & power
- Barriers to participation

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Ingredients for Collaboration: The 3 T's

Time

Trust

Turf

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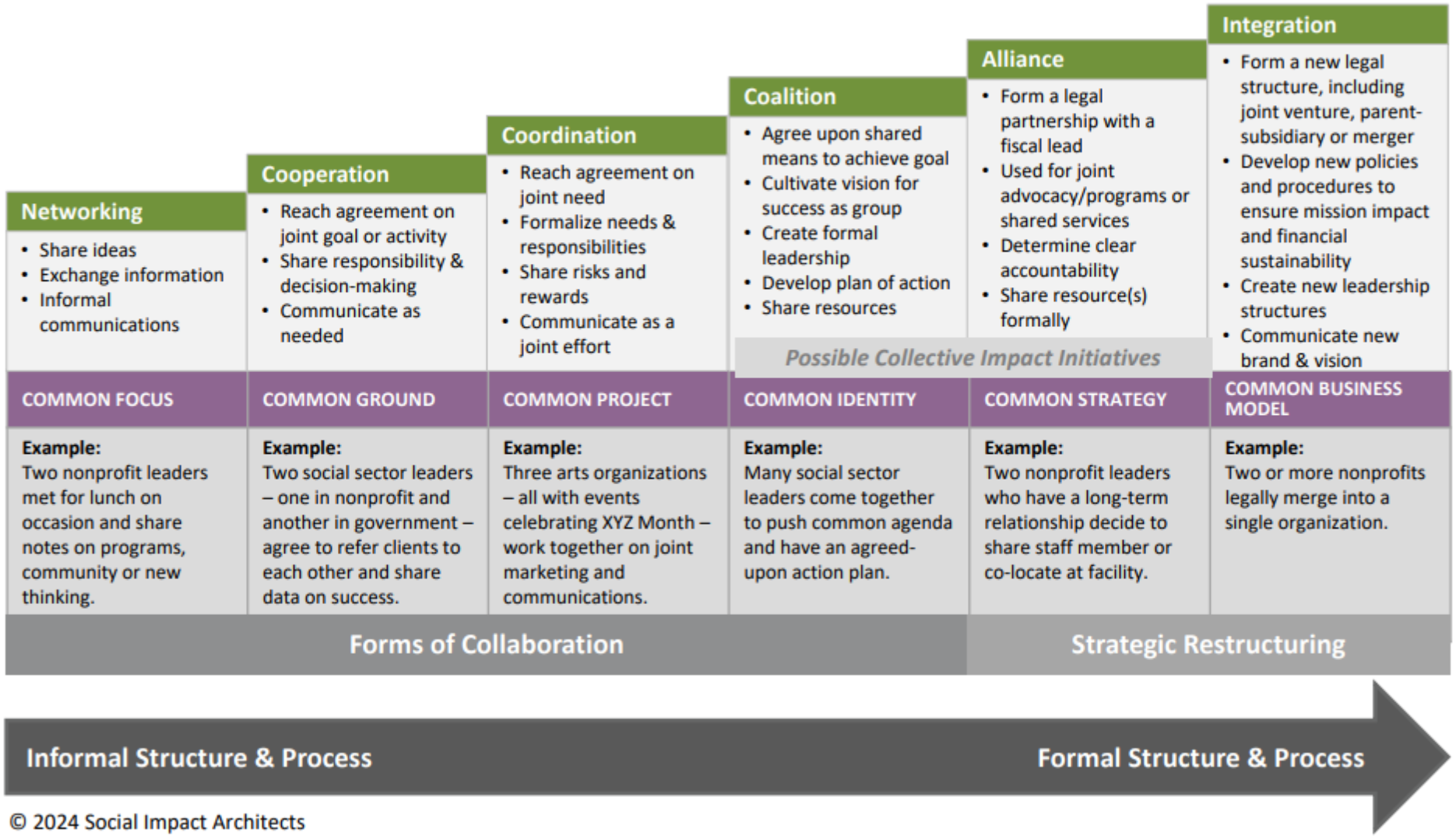
The Collaboration Continuum

Strategic Collaboration Continuum



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Networking

Think: Common Focus

Looks like:

- Sharing ideas, updates, and information
- No joint goal-setting or intentional planning

Communication: Informal

Time Commitment: Minimal

Trust Needed: Minimal

Turf-Sharing: Minimal to none

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Cooperation

Think: Common Ground

Looks like:

- Activities conducted to meet a common goal
- Some joint activities and decision-making
- Sometimes resource sharing

Communication: As-needed

Time Commitment: Higher than Networking

Trust Needed: Higher than Networking

Turf-Sharing: Minimal

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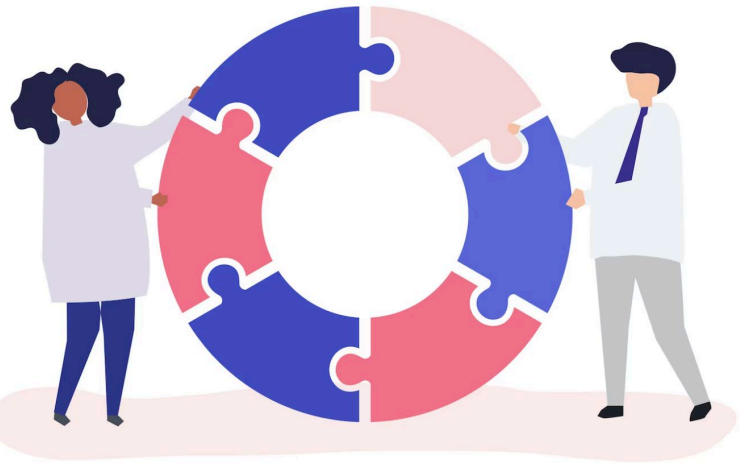
Coordination

Think: Common Project

Looks like:

- Address a joint priority or work on a common project
- Altering individual processes to meet needs
- Some resource sharing (space, staff, funds)
- Sharing risks and rewards
- May have formal written agreements



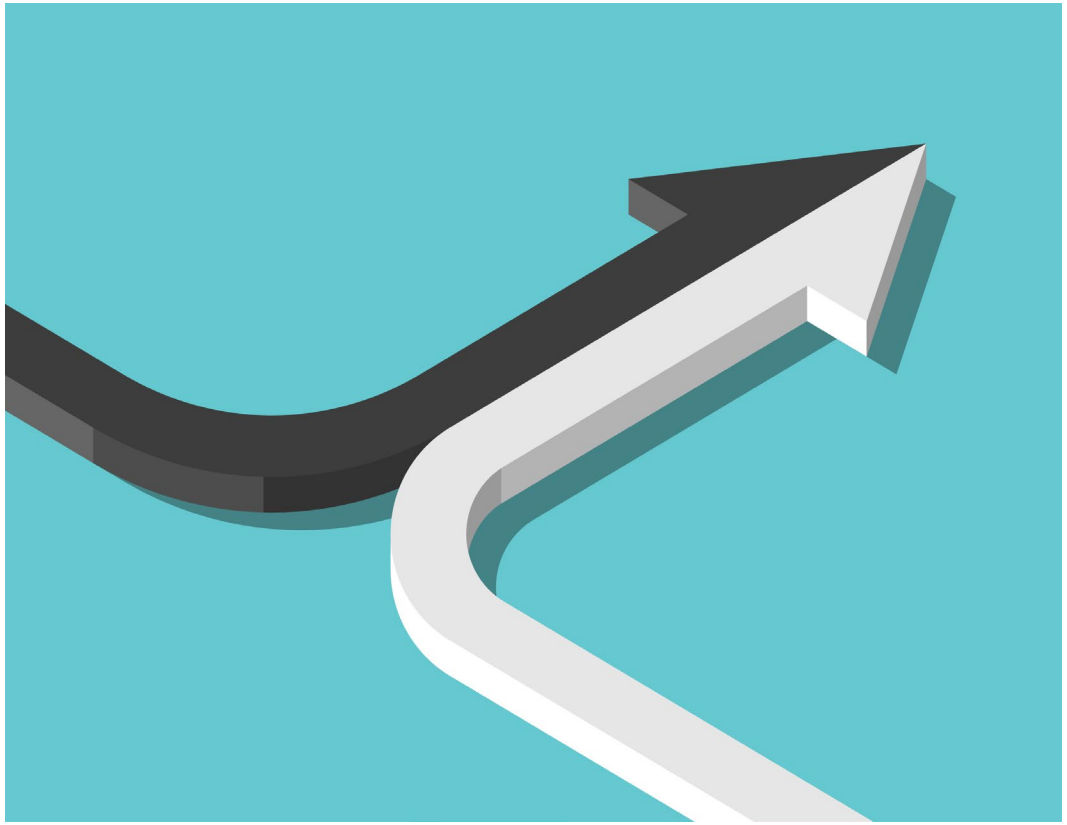
Communication: Routine, joint effort

Time Commitment: Higher than Cooperation

Trust Needed: Higher than Cooperation

Turf-Sharing: Sometimes

Coalition



Think: Common Identity

Looks like:

- Formal leadership structure
- Cultivated vision for group success
- Agreement on a shared way to reach a goal
- Formal resource sharing
- May have formal written agreements

Communication: Routine

Time Commitment: Significant

Trust Needed: Significant

Turf-Sharing: Significant

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Restructuring: Alliance and Integration

Alliance

Think: Common Strategy

Looks like:

- Legal partnership
- Joint advocacy or shared services
- Formal sharing of resources to reach a goal
- Clear process for accountability
- Partners remain separate entities

Communication: Structured

Time Commitment: Significant

Trust Needed: Significant

Turf-Sharing: Significant

Integration

Think: Common Business Model

Looks like:

- Form a new legal structure
- Develop new policies and procedures
- Establish a new leadership structure
- Communicate a new brand and revised vision
- Different entities are no longer discernible

Communication: Structured

Time Commitment: Significant

Trust Needed: Significant

Turf-Sharing: Complete

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Let’s Get to Work!

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Activity: Where Do You See Your Partnership?

Competition	Coexisting	Networking	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Alliance	Integration
Separately pursuing the same clients, resources, partners, public attention	No systematic connection between groups/agencies	Interagency information sharing	As needed, often informal, interaction on discrete activities or projects	Systematically adjust and align work with each other for greater outcomes	Longer-term interaction based on shared mission, goals; shared decision-makers and resources	Formalized legal partnership, formal sharing of resources, programs, and/or services	Fully integrated programs, planning, funding

Turf-sharing
Trust
Time

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Remember: There is no one objectively "right" place – just the right arrangement for your partnership, right now.

If you aren't where you want to be on the continuum…

What can you do?

Partnership Discussion Questions

Reflect and discuss with your partners:

1. What are our shared **motivators and goals**?
2. What are our **expectations** of each other?
3. How are we going to **work together**?
4. What **resources** can we each contribute?
5. What is making the collaboration **difficult**?
6. What would make the collaboration **easier or more worthwhile**?
7. What **level of commitment** is realistic for us right now?
8. What **incentives** will sustain the partnership?

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Ideas for Moving Forward with Your Collaborators…

Possible action steps:

- ❑ Re-establish and agree on the **scope** of the relationship or collaboration.
- ❑ Clarify **communication** processes and channels.
- ❑ Conduct an inventory of partner **assets to fill identified gaps or expected challenges**.
- ❑ Co-create a plan for regularly **checking the progress** of the collaboration.

Adapted from: *Moving along the collaboration continuum* from the United Way

Activity Setup: Guidelines for Our Conversation

- Honor privacy: Discuss ideas, not who shared them, outside this group
- Focus on solutions
- Criticize ideas, not people
- One person speaks at a time
- Notice intent vs. impact
- Expect uncertainty (i.e., we won't figure everything out today)
- Be curious and respectful of differences
- Speak up and share what you know // leave space for others

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ASSESS your situation.

Who are you working with? On what?

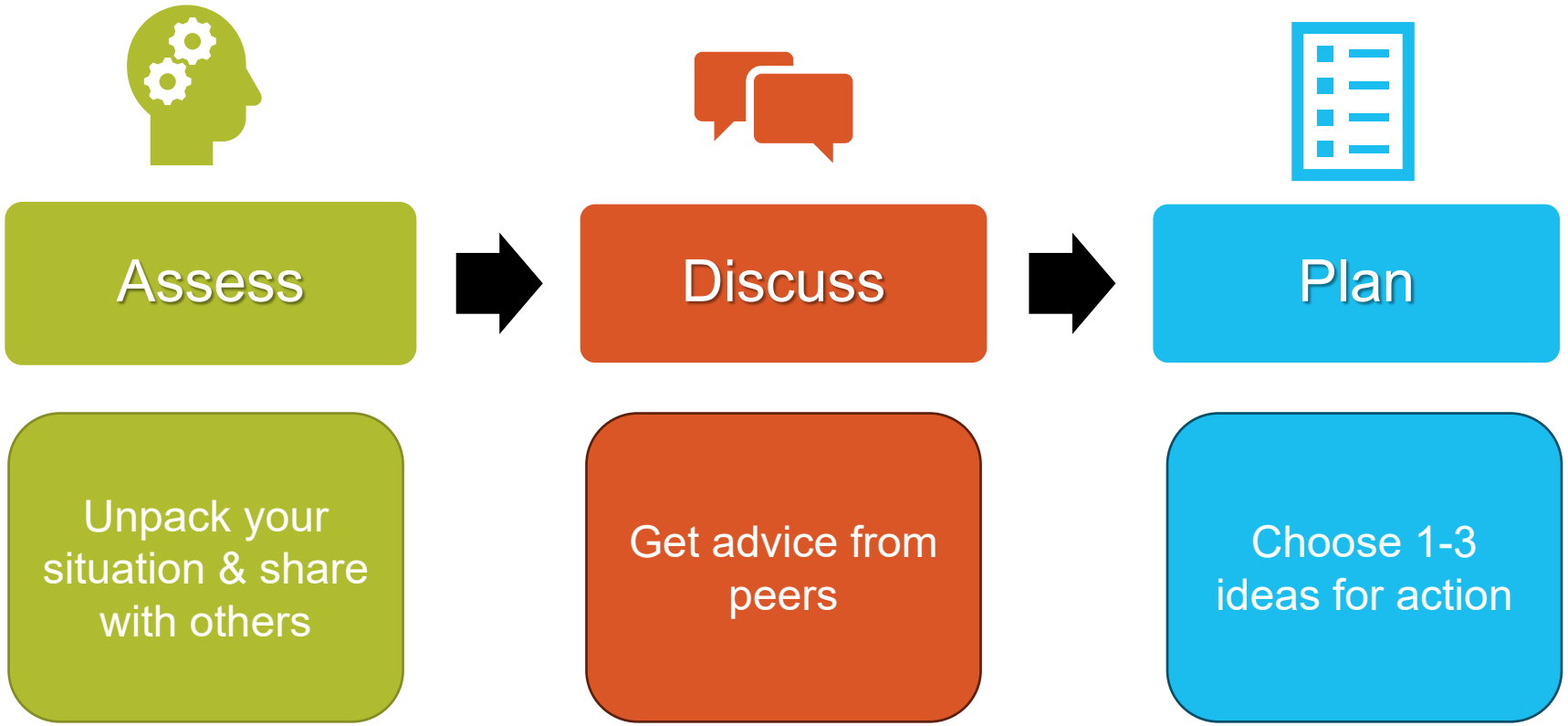
What are the goals of the collaboration? What evidence-based public health strategies does it move forward?

Where are you on the Collaboration Continuum? Where do you want to be?

What might you need to discuss with your partner to move toward your preferred level?

Breakout Activity: Improving a Current Collaboration

Rotate so everyone gets a turn:



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Debrief / Q&A

Organizations don't collaborate, PEOPLE DO!

Relationships Matter!

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Now What?

- ❑ Follow through on the action steps you identified today
- ❑ Visit the CA Hub website for additional resources about partnerships
- ❑ Reach out to the CA Hub Team for 1:1 support
- ❑ Spread the word!

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Thank you!

Request help for your organization: bit.ly/CA-Hub-Request-Form

Other questions? TACenters@emory.edu

Explore resources: https://EmoryCentersTA.org/Community-Hub/

Please complete the evaluation survey for today's webinar! →

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