Measuring Collaboration: the Micro or Process Variables

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"Co-Labor"

- Collaboration is "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond what their own limited vision of what is possible (Gray, 1989)

- Collaboration is a process put into place for an intended outcome

- The process variables need to be researched to identify those that are most effective in helping the collaborators get to the intended outcome

- Collaboration is only as good as the process that is designed to support the interaction of the people who are supposed to engage in "co-labor"

- The collaboration meeting is the "co-labor" "work environment" and therefore, needs to be facilitative of the work to be done

Design the Process for "Co-Labor": the "Work Environment"

- Who is the "workforce"?:
  - stakeholders, leaders, experts, depends on purpose
  - Numbers matter: 10-15
  - Consistency in meeting attendance: no reps
- What is the "work environment"?:
  - Establish common ground: vision, language, shared understanding on current context/challenges/resources
  - Attend to effective meeting logistics that promote effectiveness, efficiency and ownership/buy-in: frequency, length, convenience, ground rules, also balancing the need to be timely and action oriented
  - Provide resources (FTE, time, money, workscope,etc)

Measure the Process Variables

- Evaluate the "co-labor" and "work environment" or micro/process variables:
  - Survey's, interviews and other qualitative methods to obtain perceptions of the effectiveness of:
    - Membership
    - Numbers
    - Consistency
    - Group norms (values, vision, shared language and concepts, meeting logistics, ground rules, etc)
    - "ownership" strategies
    - Resources and supports both within the collaboration as well as within each organization
    - Efficiency (were objectives, vision, action plans met?)

Process and Outcome Measures

Outcome Measures:

– Objectives and action plans (*goal attainment, content analysis, etc*)

– Effects on systems, policies (*environmental scans, focus groups, policy analysis, content analyses, etc*)

– Effects on consumers (*measures of child outcomes, family outcomes, program outcomes, personnel outcomes, etc.*)

Can we measure the link between process variables and intended and unintended outcomes?