

THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM IS COLLABORATIVE

COLLABORATIVE JOURNALISM



WORKBOOK

A workbook for planning and managing the details and logistics of inter-organization news collaboration.

COLLABORATION IS HOW WE

COVER STORIES THAT WE LACK THE **RESOURCES** TO COVER BY OURSELVES.

BUILD **TRUST** WITH AUDIENCES AND CREATE **ACCOUNTABILITY** BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS.

FOSTER **DIVERSITY** OF THOUGHT AND PERSPECTIVE.

BOTH OBTAIN AND PROVIDE **EXPERTISE** NEEDED FOR COMPLEX REPORTING.

EXPAND THE **REACH** AND **IMPACT** OF CONTENT THAT REQUIRES LARGER AUDIENCES.

CREATE **ACCESS** TO NEW TOPICS, REGIONS AND SOURCES WITHOUT DUPLICATING EFFORTS.

MARSHALL **INFLUENCE** THAT WE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO CREATE ALONE.

FOCUS THE **ATTENTION** OF THE PUBLIC ON IMPORTANT STORIES.



ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook is intended to help you and your team organize and make decisions that will help you manage your collaborative projects.

There are a million possible details to account for when it comes to designing, managing and learning from a collaboration. It can be a little daunting to start. This workbook is structured to walk you through some of the big decisions that will set you on the right path and along the way, introduce you to some ideas and examples for ways you can collaborate.

The following pages are designed such that you have space to use this book in planning your next collaborative project. The sections are structured to encompass the four significant phases of a collaborative endeavor.

CONSIDER

WHEN COLLABORATION IS THE RIGHT PATH

DESIGN

TO CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS

MANAGE

FOR EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE WORK

ASSESS

TO LEARN AND IMPROVE THE PROCESS AND EXPERIENCE

I hope you find this workbook useful and welcome any feedback for improvements or additions that you would find helpful in your collaborative process.

CONSIDERING COLLABORATION



Collaboration exists in many forms with a wide range of goals. It can be a formal arrangement with the paperwork to back it up or a impromptu phone call that turns into years of helping one another out. There is no one right way to do it and the only wrong way is to never consider it at all.

Collaboration isn't necessarily the right option for every project, but it's certainly one that's always worth discussing. Much like any other format or approach to reporting, collaboration is a tool that can elevate the quality and impact of a story.

WHEN COLLABORATION IS THE RIGHT OPTION

DO YOU HAVE A PROJECT YOU WANT TO COLLABORATE ON?

It's easier to start with a project or goal and then evaluate whether it's right for collaboration or not. Every story can be collaborative but not every story necessarily needs to be and it's important to figure out what you have the bandwidth for and when collaboration will help you achieve something you and your organization can't do on your own.

DOES COLLABORATION MAKE SENSE FOR WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE? WHY?

HOW WILL COLLABORATION SPECIFICALLY HELP WITH YOUR GOALS?

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE THE CAPACITY TO BE A GOOD PARTNER?

IS THERE ADEQUATE BUY-IN FROM YOUR TEAM AND YOUR ORGANIZATION?

If you have a project in mind, a clear sense of your goals, realistic expectations for how collaboration will contribute to your success and the requisite capacity and buy-in, you're on the right track to pursue a collaborative project.

WHAT COLLABORATION COULD LOOK LIKE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

If you're just getting started or you're thinking of expanding your current collaborative efforts, it can be helpful to think about how collaboration might play a role in your reporting. Here are a few examples of how collaborations are unfolding in newsrooms.

CONTENT SHARING

Sharing photos, audio, video or some other piece of content.

This commonly takes the form of a newsroom sharing a photo or other piece of content with another newsroom to integrate into their own coverage. The content should always be used in a mutually agreed fashion regarding attribution and linking back.

CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

Presenting content from a partner to your audience and vice versa.

One of the most potentially powerful forms of collaboration with the least amount of extra effort is sharing content with another newsroom to publish on their platforms. For small and local publishers, this is a way to put stories in front of a bigger audience. Depending on the level of coordination that exists, this can also help with more strategic use of resources.

COORDINATED COVERAGE

Strategically covering a large story so that resources are well deployed.

We're working in an age of big stories with increasing amounts of data and complexity. It's getting harder for any one newsroom to be capable of sufficiently covering a complex story by itself. Coordinating coverage across newsrooms for thorough expert coverage that preserves local perspective is a high-impact form of collaboration.

CONTRIBUTION TO A LARGER PRODUCT

Contributing individual reporting to a larger project not possible independently.

Most commonly seen in the public media space, contribution to a larger project is another form of collaborative journalism.

PEER REVIEW

Getting feedback and review on complicated reporting such as complex data sets.

Traditional fact checking is hard to apply to data-driven stories. As is commonly the case, small newsrooms often don't have enough people with the skills to vet the methodologies and data.

PARALLEL REPORTING

Each partner contributing to a story uniquely.

A little less work intensive than joint reporting, this is separate because while the partners are working on the same story, they are working on different outputs. This form of collaboration is most beneficial to newsrooms that have different core platforms such as a radio station and a newspaper.

JOINT REPORTING

Reporters from different newsrooms working together on the same final product.

This is distinct from Parallel Reporting in that this is the direct collaboration by reporters working on the same piece of content. This one can be harder. It's meshing partners with potentially different editorial processes, editing standards and approaches to reporting. But it leads to stories reflecting a greater depth of knowledge and a wider, more diverse set of sources contributed by each reporter..

SOURCE REFERRAL

Referring partners to people with expertise needed for a story.

Every reporter has their go-to people for policy expertise, context and reality checks. Helping out fellow reporters with connecting them to quality sources is a low-cost form of collaboration.

SHARED REPORTER

Combining resources to fund the cost of a reporter for a specific topic or location.

Few small newsrooms can afford their own correspondent in another location, or a reporter focused on a topic that's important to an audience but perhaps is only important at certain times. When newsrooms need a reporting presence but for whatever reason cannot afford or justify that additional position, joining together with another newsroom to support that position and share their content can be a viable solution.

NEWSROOM EMBEDS

Putting a reporter into a partner newsroom either to learn or for better access to a story.

A change of scenery is always helpful and newsroom embeds are a way to accomplish this. This can either be a mechanism to gain a different kind of access for a story that a reporter is already doing or a method of giving a reporter a chance to work on stories for their host newsroom and learn from their colleagues.

BACK END RESOURCE CONSOLIDATION

Optimizing resources in the back end in order to more fully support or fund the news operation.

This is similar to a shared reporter collaboration, however it is a more complex and long term partnership. Back end resource consolidation is a way to strategically use resources. It is more cost-effective to hire a couple of people to take care of the needs for multiple small newsrooms than for each newsroom to hire someone for each of these positions.

JOINT EVENT HOSTING

Multiple newsrooms planning and managing a news event.

This is an area where different media operations in the same community especially have a chance to shine by uniting to provide an enhanced level of coverage for their audiences through creating news events in the community.

ICE DISTRIBUTION

Serving as a safety or backup to newsrooms/reporters in areas/ situations where they cannot publish or cannot publish safely.

This involves the most trust and communication of all the partnerships but can have major impact, especially for small newsrooms.

COORDINATED FOIA/LAWSUITS

Newsrooms supporting each other/ freelancers in information requests.

Governments and companies are working harder than ever to limit access to information. Supporting each other in ensuring access is a no-brainer for collaborations that matter.

DOMAIN EXPERTISE TRAINING

Sharing expertise of a newsroom via training opportunities with others.

Newsrooms often cultivate people and teams with excellent skills in specific areas. Hosting training workshops to help spread those skills to other newsrooms is how we elevate the quality of stories coming from more newsrooms.

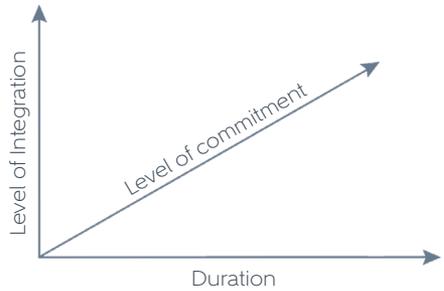
WHAT LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT MAKES SENSE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

In research from the Center for Cooperative Media, Sarah Stonbely identifies two parameters that she considers the two biggest factors in how collaborations are organized:

“We have identified two of what we think are the most important elements by which collaborations are organized: duration of time, and degree of integration among partner organizations.

As both of these increase, the level of commitment required to make the collaboration work also increases. Using these two variables, we have identified six different models of collaborative journalism.”

The variables of collaborative models



	One-Time Finite	Ongoing Open-Ended
Partners create content separately and share it	Temporary and Separate	Ongoing and Separate
Partners work together to create content	Temporary and Co-creating	Ongoing and Co-creating
Partners share content/ data/resources at the organizational level	Temporary and Integrated	Ongoing and Integrated

Models of Collaboration Matrix. Courtesy Center for Cooperative Media, Montclair State University.

These two components, and resulting models, can help you assess the overall complexity of a collaborative project.

For more on this research, visit collaborativejournalism.org

NOTES

A space for your consideration notes...

DESIGNING A COLLABORATION



Like any endeavor made up of multiple people with their own demands and responsibilities, any decisions you can make in advance of working together reduces the number of decisions you'll have to make in the moment. This prior planning makes it easier for everyone to share an understanding of what's going on and what the workflow is. An efficient and effective collaboration is one where partners have come together to make decisions about how they will work together and to learn about each other so that the work comes from a place of mutual understanding.

PLANNING AHEAD FOR SHARED DIRECTION AND CLARITY

WHAT IS THE PROJECT AND THE SCOPE OF COLLABORATION?

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THE OVERALL PROJECT?

WHAT ARE THE SHARED VALUES OF THE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS?
(What is each partner trying to achieve with this collaboration?)

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS THAT APPLY TO EVERY PARTNER ORGANIZATION?

(Think about communication, time, staffing, attention, etc.)

WHAT ARE THE UNIQUE EXPECTATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS?

(List the partners and a few bullet points summarizing their contribution)

WHAT IS THE CAPACITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS?

(List the partners and a few bullet points on their level of contribution)

WHAT ARE THE TIMELINES FOR EACH PARTNER'S CONTRIBUTION?

(List the partners and a few bullet points on their individual deadlines if any)

WILL YOU HAVE A LEAD EDITOR, A TEAM OF EDITORS AND/OR A PROJECT MANAGER?

WILL THIS PERSON/THESE PEOPLE COME FROM THE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS OR WILL A SPECIAL HIRE BE MADE?

WHICH INDIVIDUALS FROM EACH PARTNER ORGANIZATION WILL PARTICIPATE?

WHAT IS THE EXPECTED CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION FROM INDIVIDUALS TO LEADS?

WHAT ARE THE BENCHMARKS AND METRICS THAT WILL BE TRACKED FOR THIS PROJECT?

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPILING METRICS AND DISTRIBUTING THEM TO PARTNERS?

IS THE PROJECT TIED TO SPECIFIC FISCAL INVESTMENTS EITHER FROM OUTSIDE PARTIES OR FROM PARTNERS THEMSELVES (beyond staff time)?

IF YES TO PREVIOUS QUESTION, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION REQUIRED?

HOW FORMAL DOES THE PARTNERSHIP NEED TO BE?

(Will you need MOUs or contracts?)

THIS DESIGN PHASE SHOULD ACCOMPLISH MULTIPLE THINGS:

- Establishing the scope of the project and the goal of the collaboration.
- Avoiding misunderstood or misaligned incentives.
- Collectively identifying the distinct strengths, capacity and needs of each partner and what each partner can contribute.
- Collectively agreeing on reasonable timelines that make sense for the capacity of the partners in balance with the needs of the project.
- Establishing how leadership of the project will be handled and how those people will support the teams and projects.
- Ensuring the work done has appropriate benchmarks and metrics that will help partners evaluate the success of the collaboration.
- Determining whether additional support is needed if it's a formal (or contractual collaboration) or whether shared clarity on the scope and details is all that's needed.

Each of these questions can be explored further depending on how much detail your organization needs to establish for the project. However, even short answers to these questions can help shape the direction of the project.

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A space for your design notes...

MANAGING A COLLABORATION



If you're at the point where you have a project, partners and a rough idea of how to proceed, it's time to think about the day-to-day logistics of working collaboratively.

KEEPING THINGS MOVING ALONG

HOW WILL ALL RELEVANT PEOPLE AND PARTIES COMMUNICATE AND WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS FOR FREQUENCY AND LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION?

Communication is the linchpin of every collaboration and ensuring there's a plan, platform and expectations set around how the team communicates is an important component to keeping the project moving forward.

WHAT IS THE WORKFLOW? WHAT TOOLS ARE INVOLVED?

Putting a plan in place for where you will work and what the steps are in the workflow is a vital part of collaborating. The workflow is largely dependent on the style of collaboration.

Co-creating: When partners are actively creating content together, co-producing stories and everyone needs to be informed about the status of the content. This requires being able to communicate about the editing process, final reviews and publishing.

Coordinated: This is a bit simpler as your editing process is likely more contained within your team and your responsibilities to your partners are more about communicating what you're doing and your timeline.

WHAT SHARED LANGUAGE AND ASSETS NEED TO BE AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE?

Details about which logos each partner would like to be used, the tagline that identifies the project and how partners will be identified are straightforward decisions that should be made before publishing starts. It's also important for it to be an equitable recognition of all the partner efforts. Creating a style guide for logos, tagline and links will give everyone the assets to work with and will ensure consistency in branding for audiences.

HOW WILL YOU ACCOUNT FOR POSSIBLE TURNOVER WITHIN THE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS?

It's important to think about the roles that are essential to keeping the collaboration moving forward and what you can do to document things so that a project's momentum is not derailed by an exiting team member.

HOW WILL YOU DOCUMENT THE PROJECT SO THAT EVERYONE IS LOOPED IN ON SPECIFICS?

Things to consider documenting:

- Tools and how to use them
- Workflows and any specific processes
- Important links
- The people involved and what they do/are responsible for
- Attribution and links for attribution
- Social media language and hashtags
- Any shared branding materials

IF THE PROJECT EXPANDS, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ONBOARDING?

HOW CAN YOU PLAN FOR BREAKING NEWS INTERRUPTING ONE OR MORE PARTNERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT?

News is always happening, and there's no telling when something could happen—from hurricanes to a public tragedy—that will divert teams from a collaborative project. Is your project time-sensitive, requiring contingency plans to keep it going or is it flexible enough that partner participation can ebb and flow?

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR HANDLING THE SITUATION IF A PARTNER GOES ROGUE?

Even with the best of intentions, whether it's a mistake, miscommunication or just misbehavior sometimes partners will violate previously agreed upon rules. Having mutually established parameters for the partnership make it easier to identify and talk about such missteps and can also help when talking about whether an action means a partner leaving a project.

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A space for your management notes...

ASSESSING A COLLABORATION



When you're at the point of assessing the status of your collaboration, it's an opportunity to really think about what's worked and what's not and turn that information into actionable lessons. Here are a few questions to guide the process of either a post-project evaluation or a check-in during the project.

LEARN AND IMPROVE

DID A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH HELP YOU ACHIEVE THE IMPACT YOU SET OUT TO MAKE?

It's important to think about which parts of the project were absolutely dependent on the collaboration so you can figure out when and how collaboration works best for your organization.

WERE GOALS MET?

Taking a look at the original set of goals established for the project and think about what worked and what didn't and which things occurred that you might not have previously thought to measure but turned out to be important.

WOULD YOU WORK WITH THOSE PARTNERS AGAIN?

Reflect on which partners were part of a good working experience and which ones may need improvement or are just not compatible with your organization when it comes to future projects. Consider if there is any part of this that would be possible to pass along as constructive feedback.

WOULD YOUR PARTNERS BE WILLING TO WORK WITH YOU AGAIN?

Think about where your team shines and what are the things you'll need to pay special attention to next time so that organizations will want to continue to work with yours.

HOW DID INDIVIDUAL TEAM MEMBERS FEEL ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE? IS THERE FEEDBACK THAT YOU COULD COLLECT?

Surveying participants on the production side will help you collect feedback about what worked, what didn't, what was hard and what made sense.

WHAT WERE THE SURPRISES?

It's impossible to plan for everything making it important to track the things that were never on paper. This is great information for post-collaboration documentation and valuable lessons to share with other newsrooms.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR DESIGN OR MANAGEMENT COULD BE IMPROVED OR REFINED IN FUTURE COLLABORATIONS?

WHAT PARTS OF THE COMMUNICATION PLAN WORKED OR DIDN'T WORK?

Whether it was the frequency, redundancy, the engagement of the team or platform, improving communication is important, making this assessment point a critical part of a post-project evaluation (or regular check-in if the project is ongoing.)

HOW CAN YOU SHARE ANY OF WHAT YOU LEARNED SO THAT FUTURE COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS CAN LEARN FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE?

If you have an incredibly successful project or one that falls apart, if a few years pass and churn has folks moving on, it would be really unfortunate if your organization repeats the same mistakes or misses out on the keys to your previous success.

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A space for your assessment notes...

OTHER THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Collaboration won't solve all of your problems overnight and it's not necessarily going to make your job easier. But what it will do is create the capacity and the ability to do things that you wouldn't have been able to do otherwise and to connect you with people you will benefit from working with.

It's important to keep in mind that this cultural change is very much still happening and there's a lot to consider when approaching the idea of how you might manage your collaboration.

Some of the larger conversations in the space are on the nature of collaborative partnerships with the historical context of newsroom dynamics when it comes to the histories of national and local newsrooms, newsrooms of low diversity and newsrooms that better represent their audiences and communities, newsrooms of vastly different resources and capacities, not to mention the complexities of cross-border collaborations or newsrooms collaborating with non-news partners.

It's the very rare instance that you will be collaborating with a partner that operates exactly on the same playing field as your own organization. Those differences will require intentional planning and collective discussions of some of the questions in this workbook.

Collaborative partnerships must be true dialogues and partnerships, not extractive dynamics or attempts at token representation. And we're all still very much navigating these conversations and learning from each other on the best paths forward. As you move forward in your collaborations, embrace the work required to build quality professional relationships with the people that you want to work with. More than workflows, technologies or the specific projects, collaborative endeavors rise and fall on the communication and trust between partners and the generosity that we can show each other.

TAKEAWAYS

There's no specific path to success in collaboration any more than there is a specific path to success in journalism at large. This is an ongoing process to be continually refined and improved. But collaboration is one of our best opportunities to succeed in our work in a time where every newsroom is under incredible pressure. We're underfunding, overworked, under fire, under staffed but we want to do our jobs well and the world needs us to. Collaboration is how we can do that.

Building a successful collaborations is a lot like building something with magnets. There has to be some level of an attraction, you have to connect the right ends for it to stick, the bond is strong but it doesn't have to be permanent, the arrangement can change and take different shapes, the components don't have to be the same or even similar sized in order to be able to connect and most of all, you can build with many something simply not possible with only one.

With this workbook, hopefully you find yourself better equipped to address some of the big questions in considering, designing, managing and assessing a successful collaborative journalism project.

More than anything else, I hope you acquire these essential components to effective collaboration: the necessary trust and relationships among your team and partners, an openness and clarity about your shared goals, and a clear direction that you can all move forward in together.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hi, I'm Heather Bryant, the director of Project Facet. I started in journalism in Alaska where I learned firsthand the incredible power and value in newsroom collaboration. I'm a journalist, software developer, and designer and I am completely fascinated by the processes that underpin our work and how we can make them better in order to serve our audiences and live up to the ideals of quality journalism.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The information in this workbook is the product of years of conversations and learning from some of the smartest and hardest-working people seeking to help newsrooms collaborate better. A collaboration is as only good as the people working on it and the same is true for learning about collaboration. And in this community, I've been very fortunate to interact with so many who've been incredibly generous with their time and collaborative experiences.

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RESOURCES

Join the community of journalists talking about collaborating journalism

bit.ly/collaborativeslack

www.collaborativejournalism.org

(Managed by the Center for Cooperative Media)

FEEDBACK

Much like collaboration, this workbook is a living process that can be constantly evaluated, refined and updated. If you have any feedback, ideas or comments on the content of this workbook or ideas for how it could be even better, please tell us about it.

www.projectfacet.org/workbookfeedback

P R O J E C T F A C E T

Facet is the infrastructure of collaborative journalism.

Our work is supporting effective, meaningful editorial collaboration with an open source ecosystem that helps newsrooms manage the multifaceted challenge of planning and executing collaborative projects across different platforms with various kinds of partners.

Facet helps newsrooms manage the logistics of creating, editing and distributing content; managing projects, facilitating collaborative relationships and supporting the ecosystem of collaborative partners.





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