

# If I Knew Then What I Know Now:



Project Leadership in Multi-System  
Change Efforts to Address the  
Co-Occurrence of Domestic  
Violence and Child Maltreatment

*Lessons Learned from the Greenbook Project Directors*



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JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

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# I. Introduction

In 1999, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges published *Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice*<sup>1</sup> (the *Greenbook*), which offered a set of principles and recommendations to improve outcomes for battered women and their children while at the same time increasing the capacity of systems to hold men who batter accountable for their violence. The *Greenbook* was designed to guide collaborative efforts among local child protection agencies, domestic violence advocacy programs, the family or dependency court, and other organizations, to more effectively serve families experiencing domestic violence. Its authors and others recognized the challenges inherent in encouraging these entities to trust and work together, but that doing so had the potential to create greater safety for adult and child victims. The *Greenbook* Initiative (Initiative) formalized this type of work through deliberate collaboration. This document shares many of the leadership lessons from the perspective of the *Greenbook* project directors and is one of several publications that document the *Greenbook* sites' experience.<sup>2</sup>

According to a recent study, “collaboration” is defined as “a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual accountability and authority for success; and

sharing of resources and rewards.”<sup>3</sup> Researchers found that of the 20 different factors that contribute to the success of collaborative relationships, skilled leadership is one of the most critical.<sup>4</sup>

Multi-system collaborations need strong leaders with vision, commitment, and an ability to inspire others to move forward with the desired project.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this document is to provide a tool for collaborative leaders in systems change efforts that will:

- Inspire deeper reflection, bolder innovation, and more thoughtful leadership action in new and already existing change efforts;
- Recognize and offer solutions to the complexities that arise when promoting cross-systems change; and
- Save leaders time, energy, and other resources by offering specific strategies that others have used to implement systems change efforts.

Some collaborative efforts may have the resources to employ a project director as leader, but leadership may be structured in different ways. The lessons and stories from multi-system collaborations without a paid project director may depart from some of those shared here. Nevertheless, the project directors expect the stories may also reveal some similarities, as the roles and functions of project leadership in any multi-system collaboration share similar challenges, no matter what the role or configuration of the leadership team.

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1 Susan Schechter & Jeffrey Edleson, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, *Effective Intervention In Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines For Policy And Practice* (1999).

2 For additional resources from The *Greenbook* Initiative, visit the *Greenbook* online at <http://www.thegreenbook.info>.

3 See Paul Mattessich et al., *Collaboration: What Makes It Work* (2nd Ed. 2001). See also *Promising Practices Network, Forming, Funding, And Maintaining Partnerships And Collaborations* (2007), available at <http://www.promisingpractices.net>.

4 *Id.*

5 For more information, visit *The Community Toolbox: Bringing Solutions to Light*, available at <http://ctb.ku.edu>.

## II. The *Greenbook* Initiative

From 2000-2007, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Justice funded six demonstration sites to implement the policy recommendations outlined in the *Greenbook*: El Paso County, Colorado; Grafton County, New Hampshire; Lane County, Oregon; San Francisco County, California; Santa Clara County, California; and St. Louis County, Missouri. The project became known as the *Greenbook* Initiative, and sites were referred to as “*Greenbook* sites.”

The *Greenbook* was written with the goal of increasing safety for mothers and children experiencing the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment by encouraging partnerships among system stakeholders. At the time the *Greenbook* was conceived, such partnerships did exist between child protective services and domestic violence advocacy programs; however, the Initiative was the first to include family or juvenile courts. Along with the federal partners, several private organizations, including the Family Violence Prevention Fund, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and the American Public Humane Services Association, provided technical assistance and support to the six funded *Greenbook* sites. The Initiative also included a comprehensive national evaluation conducted by Caliber Associates and its partners the National Center for State Courts and the Education Development Center.

### The Unique Challenges of the *Greenbook* Initiative

Child maltreatment and domestic violence generally are treated as separate problems, yet there is evidence that both types of violence often co-occur within

the same family. Traditional approaches to working with families, however, have focused on one type of violence or on one victim. Furthermore, the history, bureaucracy, and mandates of the systems charged with responding to different types of family violence often are at odds with one another. Child welfare agencies, charged with the protection of children, traditionally have held the available parent (usually the mother) solely accountable for the child’s abuse or neglect. Similarly, dependency courts work with child welfare agencies to respond to charges of child abuse and neglect, often without addressing the domestic violence that may be occurring in the home. Domestic violence service providers generally are grassroots organizations, committed to empowering battered women and concerned that child welfare agencies often re-victimize women by blaming them for not protecting their children and by placing or threatening to place their children into out-of-home care.<sup>6</sup>

A multi-system approach to domestic violence and child maltreatment can enhance safety and well-being for families, but there are also a number of obstacles in establishing and using this approach. Not only did the *Greenbook* project directors and agency partners grapple with these obstacles, but they also learned as much as possible about the process of collaboration in order to educate others who may establish and maintain similar efforts. A number of the obstacles faced by the *Greenbook* sites remained challenges throughout the Initiative:

- System tensions, including the inherent power differential between systems, and historic mistrust;
- Tension in procedure often based on adherence to past practice, lack of understanding about how

<sup>6</sup> The *Greenbook* National Evaluation Team, ICF International, *The Greenbook Initiative Final Evaluation Report* (February 2008) available at [http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/FinalReport\\_Combined.pdf](http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/FinalReport_Combined.pdf).

- an agency carried out its mandates, or assumptions about how current practice dictates current belief systems;
- Lack of effective communication or difficulty in communication due to the many differences in organizational culture. The larger and more bureaucratic the system, the more time it took to identify, understand, and begin to work through these differences;
  - “System bashing,” wherein committee members struggled with how to talk about meaningful change and accountability without deriding the other system;
  - Resistance even from the agencies involved in the project despite already agreeing to work collaboratively;
  - Differing language and terminology among each system and agency. Child protection agencies defined “re-victimization” or “risk and safety” one way, the domestic violence agency defined them another way, and battered women defined them a third way based on their situation. It was imperative to clearly define the language and terminology that was being used and to connect them to the realities of families;
  - Turnover, burnout, agency inertia, reduction in time and resources, and inconsistent commitment over time;
  - Difficulties in institutionalizing efforts and informing the mid-level and front-line workers as to the expectations of the project; and
  - Sustainability. Grant funding was limited; however, it was often difficult to think about sustainability when each site was still testing processes and applications.

Multi-system collaboration is markedly more complex and challenging than other organizational relationships. It requires that the parties give priority to the goals of the collaboration as related to the

common good of the community<sup>7</sup> over any narrow institutional self-interest. Because of the challenges discussed above, it was common for the *Greenbook* sites to want to develop a standardized, one-size-fits-all approach to families experiencing the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment. However, sites experienced the greatest successes where they had developed responses that had the flexibility to address the complex needs of families in multiple systems with multiple issues. The *Greenbook* sites learned an important lesson in the final years of the project: collaboration is one potential *strategy* to use to achieve results, not an *outcome*. Therefore, the challenges in collaborating should be considered at the outset of any multi-system effort so that those challenges do not overshadow the ultimate goal of change.

Leadership in any collaboration is not an easy task; however, when leadership must guide the change of three very different complex systems in an effort to decrease violence within families, the task becomes monumental. Each *Greenbook* site was asked to develop a collaboration to meet the goals of the federal initiative. Each site’s approach took on a different shape according to the histories and needs of its own particular community. Coming together in this way necessitated that child protective services, domestic violence advocacy programs, and the courts explore their own histories, philosophies and values, agree to change to “be the best they could be” for these families, and support and coordinate with the efforts of the other systems. This multi-layered and complex collaboration required skilled leadership from each system. The *Greenbook* site experience was, in a significant way, the experience of identifying the qualities and nature of leadership required for multi-system change and this document is a recitation of those lessons in leadership.

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<sup>7</sup> See *The Community Toolbox*, *supra* note 5.

# III. Laying the Foundation for a Multi-System Change Effort

“It truly takes a good deal of courage and strength to be a leader in a complex collaborative.”

— *Greenbook project director*

## Decide Which Strategy to Use to Build Relationships and Accomplish Results: Networking, Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

The sites learned an important lesson in the final years of the project: collaboration is a potential strategy to use to achieve results, not an outcome. One of the first steps in establishing a multi-system effort is to determine what strategy or strategies will be most effective in building relationships across systems. It is important for organizations to review their goals and consider which strategy is most likely to lead to the optimal relationships and results. Generally, there are four primary ways that organizations may work together to achieve better results: networking, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration.<sup>8</sup>

- **Networking**, the most informal, is exchanging information for mutual benefit.
- **Coordination** is defined as exchanging information and altering activities for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose.
- **Cooperation** includes exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose.

- **Collaboration**, the most developed relationship between organizations, includes all of the above, plus enhancing the capacity of another organization to achieve a common purpose.

The difference between cooperating and collaborating is the willingness and capacity of each partner to want the other partners to be the best that they can be.<sup>9</sup> When groups decide to collaborate, they need to realize that “collaboration is a much bigger enterprise than networking, coordinating, and cooperating; but the potential for change can also be greater. It implies a much higher level of trust, risk taking, sharing of turf, and commitment.”<sup>10</sup> Even more challenging, but with the potential for even greater change, is the multi-system collaboration. Project directors resonated with the following quote during collaboration training provided by Karen Ray:

“When your organization becomes a partner in a collaboration, you expect to change some other organization, or some system or problem other than your own organization. When you create a nimble collaboration, you change YOUR operations, programs and services. You stop thinking of the people you serve in terms

<sup>8</sup> See Arthur T. Himmelman, *Collaboration Defined: A Developmental Continuum of Change Strategies* (2002) available at [http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/4achange.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/4achange.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> See *The Community Toolbox*, *supra* note 5.

of their experience with you; instead, you think of them in terms of their experience with the system. You influence other agencies to change, and you accept the feedback about changes you need to make. You change your financing and budgets to reflect what you learn about best practices and customer success. You look different ‘three years’ from how you looked at the beginning of the collaboration.”<sup>11</sup>

If, however, the group comes to believe that every action taken must be done “collaboratively,” then collaboration may actually become a barrier to progress instead of a valuable strategy for the overall work together. Collaborative leaders should determine when networking, coordination, or cooperation may be a better strategy than collaboration in certain circumstances, at certain times, and with certain partners. Using multiple strategies within the overall context of collaborative work gives flexibility and fluidity that system change work needs to sustain itself. As one *Greenbook* project director commented at the end of the project:

“If I knew then (the beginning to the project) what I know now, I would have spent the first six months figuring out if and when collaboration was the best strategy for our site to use to accomplish our stated results. There were times when collaboration was useful, but our site emerged into thinking we must collaborate to get everything done. You can change an intake form without collaboration. Networking, coordinating, and cooperating may be equally valuable strategies to work together.”

While it is important to choose the best strategy to build relationships and accomplish results, it is also important to remember that the goal of the collaboration is to accomplish specific results. *Greenbook* project directors noted that collaboration itself

became the goal instead of it being one strategy to accomplish the results. One project director stated,

“Over time, my role evolved into making the collaboration ‘work’ and we often lost sight of the ultimate goals of the project. If appropriate time was spent up front designing and agreeing on the vision and relationships, structure and responsibilities, authority and accountability, and the resources that were required, more time may have been available to *collaboratively* prioritize and accomplish the work efforts. Instead, we focused too much time managing the relationships, reminding the partners that the vision of the project was to design a differential response, and revisiting the goals of the project at almost every meeting.”

If relationships and results are not held in equal regard, the genuine desire to be on good terms with people in other agencies or programs unknowingly becomes the focus instead of what might be the best result for a particular family. Information sharing or other critical boundaries within and between organizations may become breached and may ultimately compromise the goals of safety, support, and accountability. Agency relationship pitfalls should be paid attention to in the best interests of serving families effectively.

## **Adopt a Shared Leadership Model of Governance to Make Decisions**

Once organizations have determined their primary strategy for working together, they then must determine how the joint effort will be led. As discussed above, it is important that organizations consider all forms of joint effort, but this report focuses on collaborative leadership since the experiences of the *Greenbook* project directors apply most completely to collaboration.

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11 See Karen Ray, *The Nimble Collaboration: Fine-tuning Your Collaboration for Lasting Success* (2002).

Collaboration, by its nature as a mutually beneficial relationship, precludes use of the model of one singular authoritative, autonomous leader and requires collaborative leadership. Collaborative leaders accept responsibility for building—or helping to ensure the success of—a heterogeneous team to accomplish a shared purpose. The ability to convene and sustain relationships and the ability to find and sustain common self-interests among independent actors defines the effective collaborative leader.<sup>12</sup> In a multi-system collaboration, a shared leadership model with at least one collaborative leader from each system is ideal. To have the greatest chance for each system in a multi-system collaboration to effect change, the leadership team should include a person from each system who is able to affect the particular type of change for that system, a policy leader for policy change, a practice leader for practice change, and so forth. The team creates a shared vision, builds trust and safety, shares power and influence, and has the right mix of stakeholders and decision-makers at the table.<sup>13</sup>

A critical element to a shared leadership governance model is to clearly outline the decision-making process. Project directors learned that a discussion of this important leadership team function is best held in the beginning of the collaboration. In theory, the leadership team could agree to collaborative decision-making where all partners have equal say in the decision and all should agree to any major changes in

intent or program. In practice, however, collaborative decision-making poses considerable challenges when one partner is charged with fiscal management and has specific legal obligations.

The individuals serving on the *Greenbook* leadership teams had demanding full-time jobs in addition to working for the *Greenbook* Initiative. Fortunately, groundbreaking and innovative leaders in these systems recognized that multi-system collaboration benefited the families they served, the organizations for which they worked, and the community as a whole.<sup>14</sup> They were also aware that this type of long-term collaborative effort required time and resource sharing, and that one way to share resources was to hire a project director to become a neutral partner in this effort.

Building a structure that will support and sustain the relationships and results is one of the very first challenges of an effective collaboration. To meet this challenge, each *Greenbook* demonstration site developed a similar governance structure in order to carry out the work of the Initiative. Collaborative structures do not have to operate the same way, but the *Greenbook* sites felt as though their model worked to maintain relationships and accomplish results. The model consisted of process support, a decision-making body, a larger group of key stakeholders, and workgroups to carry out the work of the initiative. The model is described in more detail below:



12 Hank Rubin, *Collaborative Leadership: Developing Effective Partnerships in Communities and Schools* (2002).

13 *Turning Point, Collaborative Leadership Learning Models: A Comprehensive Series* (2005) available at <http://www.collaborativeleadership.org>.

14 See *The Community Toolbox*, *supra* note 5.

## Process Support

A *Greenbook* project director was hired to oversee, guide, and support the forward momentum of the project. In some sites, administrative support or a project coordinator was hired to assist the project director. Also, a local research partner was contracted to work with the national evaluation team, assist in the development of a logic model,<sup>15</sup> conduct locally determined evaluation activities, facilitate some meetings, and write evaluation reports.

## Decision-Making Body

The executive committee, representative of at least the three primary systems (child welfare, courts, and domestic violence advocacy agencies) and often other formal partners, were responsible for making fiscal and administrative decisions associated with the project. The executive committee members were high level leaders in their respective agencies and led the implementation of *Greenbook*-related policies and procedures. Most *Greenbook* sites identified chairpersons from the executive committee to further facilitate the *Greenbook* project.

## Key Stakeholders

Although formal decisions were made by the executive committee, a second, larger group of key stakeholders often informed the decision-making process. An oversight/steering/advisory committee consisted of a larger group of community agencies. Their role was to brainstorm and develop ideas, vet philosophical issues, and develop recommendations for the executive committee to consider prior to making a formal decision.

## Workgroups

The final level of the *Greenbook* governance structure consisted of workgroups tasked with a specific

objective(s). Each workgroup consisted of members of the steering/oversight/advisory committee and often consisted of mid-level managers or front-line workers from other areas of the system. The workgroups were assigned a “committee charter”<sup>16</sup> and were responsible for working through the philosophical tensions, developing resources, writing drafts of new policies and procedures, creating trainings, and identifying gaps and potential solutions to the gaps identified during the gaps/needs assessments processes. The workgroups, both cross-system or system-specific, needed to consciously design opportunities for dialogue about underlying philosophical differences that informed the language, policy, and practice of a variety of organizational cultures. System-specific groups offered a place for an agency or group to talk about or work through sensitive issues without another agency challenging its belief systems. Both cross-system and system-specific groups can be configured for philosophical conversations or may be convened to produce protocols, policies, and curricula. Workgroups should be created with an ongoing review mechanism to reflect ongoing systems change and to offer a sustaining mechanism for practice change.

The *Greenbook* project directors helped develop a series of questions<sup>17</sup> that may lead to a quality and sustainable collaborative governance structure. Communities should answer the following questions early in the planning process:

- What does the collaboration want to achieve for families that the partner agencies cannot achieve by acting alone? What are the benefits or unintended consequences of working together?
- Does the collaboration need to conduct a needs or readiness assessment to outline systems interac-

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<sup>15</sup> See page 17 for an in-depth description of logic models.

<sup>16</sup> Sample workgroup charters may be found at <http://www.thegreenbook.info>.

<sup>17</sup> See Family Violence Prevention Fund, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, *Community Assessment Tool: For Agencies Addressing the Co-occurrence of Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment* (2008) available at [http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/Community\\_Assessment.pdf](http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/Community_Assessment.pdf).

tions, communication strategies, goals and results, opportunities and challenges, current collaborations across agencies, and practice implications?

- What are the vision, mission, and goals of the collaboration? Should the collaboration create a logic model, or other planning and evaluation tool?
- How will decisions be made? How will processes be informed? How will the collaboration include the voices of battered women, front-line workers, mid-level managers, and administrators in the decision-making processes?
- What data is currently available or needed to support assumptions about current practice? What are the experiences of families using the systems?
- Does each collaborative leader clearly understand the goals of the collaboration and what is expected from his/her agency? Has each agency written a detailed letter of commitment to the project or a memorandum of understanding?
- How will the collaboration measure success of the collaboration, the committees, and other structures? How will it solicit feedback from families?
- What are the collaboration's operating values? How will the collaboration handle conflict between individuals or partner agencies?
- Who is the financial administrator and how will decisions be made regarding the budget?
- Who will be accountable for new products or positions that are created as a result of the collaboration? How will the collaboration institutionalize its efforts?
- What are the major policy issues that need discussion/review/revision?
- How will partners hold each other accountable to the collaborative work efforts? To whom is the collaboration accountable?

## Consider Hiring a Project Director

The leadership team should understand the nature of shared collaborative work and leadership. Systems leaders may have a varied understanding of collaboration and collaborative leadership based on their own

organizational cultures. Once the leadership team determines how they should work together, they may decide to hire a project director or coordinator to facilitate and lead the collaboration with them. It is ideal if the leadership team has the benefit of being educated on the differences among networking, coordination, cooperation and collaboration, and on collaborative leadership.

The leadership team of a multi-system collaboration should take the time to determine if hiring a project director or a project coordinator is an appropriate next step. The collaborative team should outline exactly what they need in a project director and create a job description and title based on their particular needs. Explicit lines of authority and accountability should be outlined, as supervising structures may become confusing (e.g., does the project director report to the agency in which he/she is housed or does the director report to the collaborative partnership, or both?). To a large extent, the role of the *Greenbook* site director or a coordinator was determined by where the position was housed, an important consideration.

While it is difficult to describe the perfect candidate for the role of project director, the *Greenbook* sites learned a number of qualities were necessary to effectively lead the collaboration. If a community decides to hire a project director to guide a local collaboration, qualities to look for might include:

- The ability to be flexible and creative when responding to new situations and issues;
- Strong and diverse facilitation skills and the ability to know how/when to move easily from one facilitation approach to another;
- The ability to see things from the various perspectives of the collaborative partners, while holding both the big picture and the close-up details of the effort;
- The ability to value conflict and to identify strategies to work through conflicts that arise between individuals and organizations;

- A commitment to the goals of the effort;
- A personal style that makes people feel comfortable;
- The ability to recognize what is needed, personally and for the project, and to ask for help; and
- The ability to challenge as well as support collaborators.

## Clarify Roles and Responsibilities of the Project Director

In the Initiative, each community identified differing needs and hired one or more persons to fulfill different functions. Each site hired a project director who was responsible for a variety of responsibilities and most sites also hired an administrative assistant or coordinator. One of the major challenges for project direction is having the leadership team clearly define expectations for the project director. Although attempts were made, this was not accomplished very well in the *Greenbook* sites. When the role and limits of the project director are unclear, expectations may become overwhelming. By default, the project director may become the sole leader, accountable to all but with little to no authority to make the necessary changes within a particular agency. The roles of the *Greenbook* project director included facilitator, teacher, translator, communications director, liaison, mediator, logistical support, organizer, technical assistance provider, administrative assistant, manager, and collaborative leader. At times, the work became frustrating and time consuming as the project director tried to sort out her role with other leadership partners. One *Greenbook* project director described the negative aspects of her role this way:

“Administrative leaders often looked to us to create, implement, evaluate and inform the change process, but we had very little authority to make the changes in each agency. When we did try to push change, we were often asked to retreat. In addition, we felt like logistical coordinators: got coffee, ordered food, made copies, planned the

agenda, facilitated meetings, completed all the work that the committees should have done but did not complete, informed others about what work had been done or needed to be done, completed the work, articulated challenges and successes, and raised the hard issues without losing our ‘neutral’ role. This was not an easy position to navigate.”

Without a doubt, the Initiative would not have moved from coordination to cooperation to collaboration and made progress toward goals and intended outcomes without the committed participation of the member agencies’ leaders. However, the role of the project director became significant in achieving success at each site and, in particular, to make the collaboration work between meetings. The project director, with help from other project staff, worked diligently and daily to make sure that forward momentum of the Initiative was assured. This involved:

- Meeting planning and coordination - thinking about content, scheduling, minutes, reminders, copies, food, beverages;
- Managing relationships and communications with the federal, technical assistance, and evaluation teams;
- Handling day-to-day conflicts that arose, often without bringing them to the attention of the larger group;
- Managing the budget and making appropriate decisions;
- Project planning, implementation, and ongoing assessment and evaluation;
- Supervising contractors, project staff, and committee work;
- Building relationships within the project and with concerned others;
- Engaging partner agencies;
- Providing community outreach about the project and the issue;
- Presenting to local, state, and national communities about the progress of the initiative;

- Supporting the committees and offering technical assistance;
- Assuring consistent, written, and oral updates would be available to the partners and their staff;
- Helping to define and advocate for appropriate roles and responsibilities for member agencies and the Initiative at large;
- Asking the hard questions;
- Raising philosophical issues;
- Maintaining engagement of members;
- Managing partners' perceptions about all the above.

“Collaborative leaders recognize that system change is not a small or simple task, that it takes time and includes partners from many places in the community.”

— *Greenbook project director*

If each leadership team partner recognizes the potential pitfalls before hiring a project director, the team might better define the roles and responsibilities of the project director, as well as their own leadership roles within their own agencies and the collaboration. The project director might then be supported with a shared leadership model and expectations of shared accountability and shared responsibility for getting the leadership work done.<sup>18</sup>

it difficult to move forward. Some partners may think others are wrong, or that they just do not ‘get it.’ Turf issues and the need to compete for scarce resources can make partnering tough.”<sup>19</sup>

The following series of general questions were used by one project director to match the focus of the project with the partners who became engaged to achieve it:

## Identify Partner Agency Representatives

Identifying partners for the multi-system collaboration is one of the most important steps to getting started. But how does the leadership team identify partners? It has been said that partners determine the substantive focus and the substantive focus in turn determines the partners. According to the Institute for Educational Leadership, “making sure the partners and the focus match seems easy, but all sorts of issues underlie the relationships among the potential partners. Issues of race, class, culture, power and resource differentials are present, sometimes making

- What is the makeup and demographics of the community in terms of perspectives people hold?
- Who does the collaboration need to get things done?
- Who can genuinely speak with authority on the challenges the collaboration is seeking to address?
- What are the “hidden communities” within the community?
- Does the collaboration want staff members or board members from participating organizations?
- Does the collaboration have representatives of the families/consumers served by the partner agencies?
- Who is missing and who needs to be invited?<sup>20</sup>

18 Terry Schwartz, Ph.D. and Amber Ptak, *Exploring New Directions for Systems Change to Address the Co-occurrence of Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment: Final Report from El Paso County, Colorado Greenbook Initiative* (September 2007) available at [http://thegreenbook.ncjfcj.org/documents/EPC\\_GBK\\_Final\\_Report\\_Sept07.pdf](http://thegreenbook.ncjfcj.org/documents/EPC_GBK_Final_Report_Sept07.pdf).

19 *Institute for Educational Leadership, Building Effective Community Partnerships* available at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/resources/files/toolkit1final.pdf>.

20 *Id.* See also David M. Chavis, *Building Community Capacity to Prevent Violence through Coalitions and Partnerships*, 6 J. HEALTH CARE POOR & UNDERSERVED 234 (1995).

*Greenbook* leaders were initially challenged by matching the focus with the partners because of the sheer number of partners in the community who were involved with families where there was co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment. For example, in one community, there were 25 domestic violence programs—and that was only one system of the multi-system collaboration. In other communities, child protection services incorporated many different child advocacy groups and organizations. In the courts, both administrators and judges were needed since their roles were significantly different. Additional members were critical to the effort, such as batterer intervention services, children’s mental health services, and law enforcement agencies. One *Greenbook* project director stated:

“There were moments when some partner agencies were asking, ‘Why am I here?’ I responded, ‘Why do you think you are here? Why do you want to be here? How will you contribute to the goals of the project? What can we do to help make your participation meaningful?’ There were also times when we had too many people at the table. We couldn’t make a decision. We needed to be deliberate when we invited people to the table and our partner agencies needed to be deliberate in their reason for participating.”

The sites found that the numbers of members and their roles and responsibilities were as varied as the communities represented at each *Greenbook* site. They were challenged by turnover in membership and in keeping the momentum going; however, they were generally impressed by the commitment of those partners who were present. The *Greenbook* project directors quickly discovered the importance of having the right partners at the table. One project director describes this experience this way:

“We were having a team meeting to set out work for the year. The team decided to establish a program that would improve the protocol for

child welfare. We spent 18 months reviewing the whole process from beginning to end, but the proposed plan stalled in its implementation. After nine months of development, with really passionate people and really good thinking, we just didn’t have the right people at the table to put it into action. Fortunately, we were able to find a way to get to the right people, use the work, and move forward.”

## Decide How to Incorporate the Voices and Experiences of Families

Two *Greenbook* sites focused on the inclusion of family representatives (e.g., survivors of family violence or individuals who have used family violence). One director identified this part of the work as the most challenging because she felt personally responsible for survivors having a voice at the table. She explains the challenges inherent in involving family representatives this way:

“Survivors’ experiences and insights are critical to understanding how systems are currently functioning and how they should change to meet the goals of the Initiative. However, we found even when family representatives are invited, welcomed, paid appropriately for their time and expertise, it can be hard for them to feel comfortable and equal in a group of professionals. Like one family representative said, ‘I just always felt less than everybody else. They had all these organizations and power behind them and I didn’t.’ It is heartbreaking to hear how we (the separate systems) have failed. Systems need to learn to listen, and they need to figure out how to make the involvement of family representatives useful and meaningful.”

Another project director saw the challenges this way:

“Including family representatives was really a fantastic idea—everyone was excited to make

this part of our *Greenbook* project. But, it was the most heartbreaking and difficult thing to do because the reality is so complicated. The court couldn't be at the table with a person who had an open dependency case, so we had to create several different processes. The family representatives then felt cut off from the *real* meetings, and felt like they really didn't matter to the process."

One project struggled with how to bring in survivors and other family representatives. They found a way to bring in outside consumers in a way that could be useful for future collaborations:

"We really didn't involve survivors until the end of the project. We brought in nationally known survivor Sharwline Nicholson and I will never forget what happened. A guardian *ad litem* stood up and said, "I will never again request a placement for a child without thinking about the impact that removal may have on the kids." That was huge. She clearly thought about the child's physical safety but not about the emotional loss associated with removal."

## Determine Partner Agency Roles and Responsibilities

In a multi-system collaboration, each organization, or partner, should clarify its need for participating in the relationship, its definition of the problem, and how it thinks the collaboration could help. The time necessary for this process will vary depending on how many organizations are involved and the scope of the problem to be solved. If partners have not yet defined the problem, this process will take a while, and that should be built into the plan.<sup>21</sup>

Determining partner agency roles and responsibilities is as important as determining leadership roles and responsibilities. One *Greenbook* site created the fol-

"We need to ask, 'What is meaningful participation?'"

— *Greenbook project director*

lowing questions to use as a guide to clarify roles and responsibilities:

- How do the vision and goals of the project relate to the role of your organization?
- How will your organization participate in the project? Specifically, how will your organization contribute to the overall effort?
- How will your organization incorporate the lessons learned from the project?
- How does your organization wish to be held accountable for the collaboration and its work efforts?
- What does your organization need to stay motivated and connected to the work effort?

The ways that partners choose to participate may differ according to their organizational or personal interests. A partnership agreement, much like the leadership team's memorandum of understanding, can be helpful. One project director describes her experience with partnership agreements that surfaced late in their collaboration:

"To ascertain expectations, we developed a letter of commitment that included the agency's own articulation of the project mission, what they wanted to get out of the project, what they would give to the project, how they wanted to be held accountable, and how they would be accountable to the group."

<sup>21</sup> See *The Community Toolbox*, *supra* note 5.

## Navigate Power and Politics

It is imperative to discuss another potential pitfall that occurs in collaborations: the idea that every partner in the collaboration is equal. The desire for equal power is understandable but becomes an unreasonable expectation when there are recognized power differentials not only within some organizations and agencies but also among them.

In a shared leadership model of governance, the leadership team should define how power and politics affect their efforts at changing their own systems as well as the efforts of the collaboration. The project director plays a key role in managing these real and perceived notions of power and politics, but he or she should not be the only one responsible for managing these tensions and dynamics. The leadership team needs to recognize that power and politics will always be present in multi-system collaborations. One project director shares this story of power, politics, and decision-making as it related to her site's efforts at sustainability:

“The perception of power within the leadership group was a real issue for us. Over the years, we learned who had the power to make what decisions. We learned where our judge could and could not make change. For example, he could make many changes in his courtroom but he did not have influence over the court's budget. It wasn't until we had a detailed discussion about each member's sphere of influence that we were able to strategize. This detailed discussion successfully challenged assumptions and shifted everyone's perception of power. Power imbalances are there, but sometimes they are different than what we initially think.”

As a group, *Greenbook* project directors have found that these power imbalances need to be revealed and discussed whenever possible in the leadership team in order for them to be more effective in moving

the whole collaboration forward without significant obstacles. One project director describes a common mistaken assumption that can ultimately be reflected within the multi-system collaboration if not adequately addressed from the start:

“As much as we like to think that everyone is equal at the collaborative table, our power differences will come into play at different times. Smaller agency partners may hold contracts from larger agency partners that are critical to their budget and operations. Some leaders may be more politically well-connected than others. Whatever these differences may be, it is important to be aware that they exist and be sensitive to when these differences are affecting the work of the collaboration.”

Discussions about power and politics may be easier at the beginning of the collaboration if there is a history of trust among leadership partners. It also helps to revisit the topic during the collaboration because roles, positions, politics, and power change over time and in different circumstances.

Additionally, power and politics issues need to be transparent as the leadership team decides who will be the fiscal agent (if there are any outside funds), who will hire the project director, and what will be the relationship among the fiscal agent, the project director, and the team. In an ideal world, these issues are thoughtfully considered prior to the application and receipt of funding; however, as is common in grant-funded collaborations, time for application is usually short and these issues are not thoroughly vetted ahead of time. In the best-case scenario, teams develop memoranda of understanding that clearly outline collaboration history, partner roles and responsibilities with specific commitments, in-kind support and other resources, a detailed timeline, and a review date. These documents are useful for planning and reviewing commitments made by partners.

## Develop a Vision, Goals and Objectives, and Create a Planning and Evaluation Tool

Without a common vision, the collaboration will be a constant struggle between varying ideologies and philosophies. Without an understanding of the various ways of working together including networking, coordinating, cooperating, and collaborating, the group will not have a shared understanding of the multiple ways they can work together in a multi-system collaboration, with or without power imbalances. And without common agreement as to the goals and objectives of the projects and a buy-in on the activities proposed or commonly generated, there will not be enough energy or commitment to sustain the collaboration through the extended time it takes to create systems change.

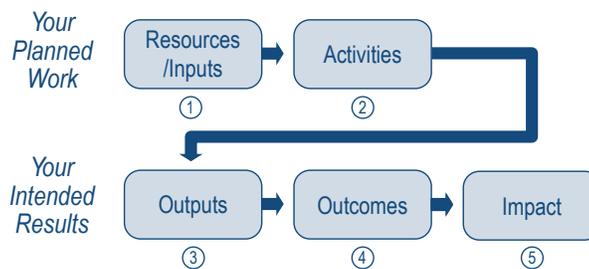
Toward this end, the *Greenbook* sites focused on these questions:

- How does the collaboration want the system or each agency to be structured at the end of the collaboration to better meet the needs of families?
- What is the best strategy to create a logic model, or other program planning and an evaluation tool, to help guide planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts?
- What are the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of *this* collaboration, based upon our current needs?

Although the *Greenbook* outlined a vision for each site, collaborative leaders learned early on the multi-layered complexities of systems change. Looking back, the project directors wished they spent more time assessing the strengths and current challenges of the system responses, conducting needs and readiness assessments, mapping organizational case flows,

discussing (not debating) organizational philosophies, and finding data to support current assumptions about practice. Creating a vision, mission, goals, and objectives for the collaboration should be informed by current practice and time should be spent up front identifying the real issues experienced by families in each system or agency.

The local research partners at each site facilitated the development of a logic model to help the collaboration clearly articulate its vision, mission, goals, and objectives. A logic model is a general framework for organizing work in an organization or, in this case, the collaboration. One of the most important uses of the logic model is for program planning. It helps collaborative leaders focus on the results of the collaboration, rather than spend too much time on the tasks that need to be done to accomplish the results. A logic model is a systematic and visual way to present and share your understanding of the relationships among the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you plan, and the changes or results you hope to achieve. The most basic logic model is a picture of how you believe your program will work. It uses words or pictures to describe the sequence of activities thought to bring about change and how these activities are linked to the results the program is expected to achieve. A visual depiction of a basic logic model is as follows:<sup>22</sup>



*Greenbook* sites used the logic model to develop action plans that promoted differential responses to

22 W.K. Kellogg Foundation, *Using Logic Models to Bring Together Planning, Evaluation, and Action: Logic Model Development Guide* (2004), available online at <http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf>.

families experiencing the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment and was modified as needed. In order for the logic model to be useful, it should be a user-friendly document, created collaboratively by the leaders, and referred to frequently throughout planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The *Greenbook* sites learned that after the vision and goals were defined by the collaboration, the group had to decide what activities or projects would accomplish the goals, how they would structure their teams to get the work done, and how they would measure success. The process of identifying the best activities or projects to accomplish their goals was one that gave form and clarity to the often muddy waters of developing a shared vision and goals. This process also generated excitement and energy for group members. Measuring success and planning for sustainability were critical for project leaders, including project directors. In using processes for data collection, evaluation, and attaching sustainability to specific goals of the collaboration as underlying structures for change, the multi-system collaboration created an overall flexible and ongoing structural model for managing multiple strategies for change. When organized in this way, the teams, whether cross-system or system-specific, had a clear road map that linked to the other teams through evaluated activities and projects that served to accomplish the goals.

## **Train the Collaborative Leaders and Project Director**

It is important for leadership partners, including the new project director, to have a basic understanding of leadership in multi-system collaborations and the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment. Additionally, leaders should clearly understand the current challenges families face in the system and how each system is structured to respond to the co-occurrence. In the Initiative, different sites used different strategies to train and orient the leadership

partners, including agency presentations at the start of each collaborative meeting, brown bag lunch meetings, myth and reality exercises, and multi-disciplinary cross-trainings. These same strategies were used to help train and orient managers and front-line workers to *Greenbook* work. One *Greenbook* project director explained the valuable process she experienced:

“Near the beginning of my tenure as *Greenbook* project director, the chair of the steering committee had me take a ‘tour of the world.’ This involved individual interviews with key stakeholders representing the three core partners and others. I shadowed staff in the various systems to learn more about their organizations. We talked about the difference between ‘silo’ thinking (where everything is viewed from the standpoint of your own stakeholder group and their goals) and collaborative thinking (where issues are viewed from the standpoint of common values and goals).”

Another described her experience:

“We hired an expert in collaboration to talk to our partners about the power and pitfalls of collaboration—which was just the infusion of energy that we needed. Learning about collaboration was a significant part of our work over the five years, but the learning came in pieces. If I knew then what I know now, I think it would have been easier to train leaders up front.”

## **Summary of Lessons Learned on Laying the Foundation:**

- Create a shared framework and a shared understanding of the multiple ways to accomplish work within the collaborative group by having a conversation and training on networking, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. This should be done early on in the partnership; first with leadership, including the project

director, and then with the entire membership. The framework may at times be collaboration, at other times it may be cooperation or coordination. Good facilitation of meetings is critical and every meeting should be meaningful for the collaborative leaders. Plan to change.

- Design a clear, deliberate, shared leadership governance model for accountable, transparent leadership. Clarity will ease transitions that occur with turnover in positions. Develop a detailed Memorandum of Understanding to the collaboration. Create a process for resolving conflict between individuals and organizations.
- Decide if the collaboration would benefit from hiring a project director. Clearly define and articulate the role, expectations, and accountability structure for the project director early in the process, ideally before he or she is hired. There should be an ongoing discussion about the project director's role as the collaboration evolves.
- Create a collaboration consisting of people in a range of roles including family representatives, organizational leadership, middle managers, and front-line workers. Invite and work with various members of these systems according to which role would most be needed for taking action. Find champions in each system to help the collaboration accomplish its goals.
- Meet with family representatives to reiterate their roles, responsibilities, values, and limitations. Be clear about what may or may not happen with their input and participation to avoid setting up unrealistic expectations. Identify how family representatives would like to contribute (focus groups, attending meetings, written submissions, etc.).
- Identify power differences (real or perceived) at the leadership level at the onset and every time governance group membership changes to ensure the collaborative governance is not undermined by any one agency interest. Recognize shifts in power and influence over time and seize opportunities for wise use of shared power. Explore and define the realities of power.
- Remember that organizational culture is an important consideration. Organizations differ in communication patterns, decision-making processes, pace, and acceptability of change, values, importance of artifacts, and more. The larger and more bureaucratic the system, the more time it takes to identify, understand, and begin to work through these differences.
- Ensure the project director and the collaborative leaders have an in-depth understanding of each primary system—the languages, stories, philosophies, and values that guide action. Explore system definitions of safety, support, accountability, and collaboration. Identify organizational boundaries and flex points in order to ensure future specific agency integrity as well as integrity of the shared mission during collaborative processes. Recognize that each system partner brings a unique, valuable perspective to the table.
- Be flexible with the structure and membership of the collaboration as this structure and membership may need to change as the project changes. Ask the leadership team to create a mechanism for the project director's training and immersion into each system.
- Discuss beliefs and attitudes, and have philosophical conversations. Address myths and realities associated with each agency and challenge terms, definitions, and language. Partner agencies do not necessarily need to agree on everything, but understanding and honoring belief systems will help the collaboration find common ground.

# IV. The Process of Change: Reflecting on the Strategies Used to Accomplish the *Greenbook* Sites' Goals and Objectives

“Change happens in unexpected ways and if we are not flexible, we may miss opportunities.”

— *Greenbook* project director

Collaborations are like shifting sands. Leaders should learn how to continually create, learn, and evolve amidst turnover and external changes (such as funding cuts). To do this successfully, the implementation plan should be flexible and linked to good, measurable outcomes. In the Initiative, when a good plan was developed with the collaborative partners and was based on data gathered in a needs or other community assessment, the next step was to continue to create innovative and effective strategies, monitor the results, and evolve the plan with all of the collaborative partners involved in the implementation and evaluation activities. The process of change included verifying current practice and assessing the impact and benefits of the changes, as well as determining the unintended consequences of the changes. Project directors created awareness of the need to change and negotiated the process versus sell the “problem.” Site leaders continually asked themselves:

- Who sees what as a problem?
- What needs to change?
- What should stay the same?<sup>23</sup>

Each site created its own process of change; however,

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<sup>23</sup> Gerald Smale, *Mapping Change and Innovation* (1996).

the sites agree that they used similar strategies to implement the ambitious vision of the *Greenbook*. These efforts were invaluable and provided a wealth of information for several publications that were developed during the course of the project. For the project directors and the other collaborative leaders, these strategies were a source of both great pride and great challenge. The many lessons learned and stories shared regarding each strategy cannot be fully described within the scope of this paper. However, the strategies used to reveal the particular sources of pride and challenge for the *Greenbook* Initiative sites are highlighted throughout.

It is important to recognize that these strategies were developed over time and were managed and evaluated frequently by the project directors and collaborative leaders. The process of creating the strategy was often as important as the strategy itself.

## **Data and Evaluation: Use as a Tool for Change**

Access to good data is important for the learning organization. Focusing on data confronts individu-

als with hard evidence that may challenge existing perceptions of success; discrepancies raise sharp questions about what is happening and why. In addition, monitoring data provides a good way of tracking the effects of change efforts.

Data can be especially important in convincing collaborative group members that they can achieve more than they thought possible by showing the amount and degree of impact systems change efforts are having. Access to data often leads to a desire for more information. As reform efforts proceed in learning organizations, the collaborative group can generate increasingly sophisticated data and use it in more meaningful ways.<sup>24</sup>

When data and evaluation are an integral part of the planning process, it can help program planners demonstrate need, target programs to the appropriate audience, and monitor changes in attitudes, behavior, beliefs, or knowledge among the target audience. It can also measure progress toward project goals, inform whether mid-course changes are needed, uncover unexpected benefits or difficulties, produce data on which to base future programs, and demonstrate the effectiveness of the program to the target population, to the public, to others who want to conduct similar programs, and to those who fund the program.<sup>25</sup>

Although *Greenbook* project directors found that data should always inform practice, project goal setting, work planning, and prioritizing, they did not always know what data was available or how best to collect and analyze it. The project directors generally recommend having a local research or evaluation partner on board and available from the beginning of the project, perhaps even before the collaboration is established. This would help the collaboration

determine what data is available, how one might interpret the data or identify what data is missing, and create strategies to collect it in the future. Data collection processes do not have to be complicated or expensive; simpler processes are more timely and easy to explain to stakeholders in the collaboration. *Greenbook* project directors found both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews, focus groups, and participant observation) data useful during their planning and implementation efforts. When quantitative and qualitative data is sought, it is useful to discuss the intent of the data the collaboration is seeking, how the results will be used, when the results will be released, who is in charge of releasing the findings, how to handle disagreements relating to the findings, and how to make the results meaningful for future planning.

What is not useful are the delays in gathering information and the absence of baseline data from which to measure progress. As one project director describes:

“Our baseline data came out three years into the process. When the baseline report was distributed, it was too big and it combined all the systems. I think it would be more helpful to have it separated out by each system, to make it more user-friendly and easier to understand. Ultimately, the report should feed the goals and objectives of the project from the very beginning before it is too late in the process.”

Another project director notes the challenge of timeliness and meaningfulness to the front-line workers:

“Results of the evaluation reports really need to be meaningful and timely. We would write up the

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24 National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, *Building a Better Collaboration: Facilitating Change in the Court and Child Welfare System* (2004).

25 U.S. Dept. of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Community How To Guides on Underage Drinking Prevention, Evaluation* (2001), available online at [http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/Community%20Guides%20HTML/Book3\\_Evaluation.html#Purpose](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/Community%20Guides%20HTML/Book3_Evaluation.html#Purpose).

evaluation information and it didn't make sense to anyone on the front-lines. The results from the many national evaluation initiatives were not released until more than 18 months into the project or sometimes not at all. Workers became reluctant to participate in evaluation activities because they never saw the results from previous activities or they were afraid the report would say something negative about their practice.”

Sometimes, evaluations are rejected by partners for a variety of reasons. One project director describes what took place in her county:

“There were disagreements on releasing the summary of one evaluation report because an individual felt the tone was sympathetic to batterers and questioned why the group was giving this platform to batterers in the first place. The executive committee could not come to agreement, so we did not release the report as a whole, but released some of the work through other avenues. If I were to do that over again, I would have done more work on the front end determining the intent of the research and how to resolve potential disagreements.”

As a result of their experience, the *Greenbook* project directors developed the following questions to help future collaborations determine what type of data to collect and evaluate:

- Who currently collects data relating to the focus of the collaboration? How are data collection procedures aligned across systems or agencies?
- What baseline information does the collaboration need? What kind of information is needed

(quantitative or qualitative data) to help the collaboration develop an implementation plan?

- How does data inform current practice? How does it drive actions the collaboration currently takes towards addressing the focus of your collaboration? How is data utilized?
- What is the data's relevance to the collaboration's vision and what story does it tell? Is the data culturally relevant?
- Does the collaboration have access to a local researcher or evaluator who can be a partner in the work?
- How does the collaboration define success as it relates to each initiative? How will the collaboration measure success?<sup>26</sup>

## Specialized Positions: Utilize to Build Capacity<sup>27</sup>

*Greenbook* project directors found that specialized positions, domestic violence and accountability specialists developed in many of their communities, were key partners in the work. Specialized positions became great resources for the workers in the particular agency in which they were housed and key allies in the evolution of practice on co-occurrence issues. These positions can be designed to provide specialized training, support front-line workers, help manage the paradigm shift that needs to take place during systems change efforts, and enhance credibility to domestic violence programs within child protective services, the courts, and the broader community. While they were a key element of systems change efforts in the *Greenbook* sites, several challenges also were revealed during the Initiative's time. Challenges included the various roles and responsibilities of a single position, where the position was

<sup>26</sup> Family Violence Prevention Fund, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, *supra* note 17.

<sup>27</sup> See Ann Rosewater, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Family Violence Prevention Fund, *Building Capacity in Child Welfare Systems: Domestic Violence Specialize Positions* (2008) available at <http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/BuildingCaps.pdf>. See also Shellie Taggart and Lauren Litton, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Family Violence Prevention Fund, *Reflections from the Field: Considerations for Domestic Violence Specialists* (2008) available at <http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/Reflections.pdf>.

housed, who the position reported to in a supervisory structure, how their invaluable efforts would be evaluated and sustained, and how to define the boundaries and the limits of their information sharing and confidentiality practices.<sup>28</sup>

Planning for specialized positions is a critical step to achieving success and avoiding pitfalls. The agencies supporting the specialized position should agree on goals and expectations for the position, supervisory and support structures, and conflict resolution processes. Pay careful attention to where these positions are located and how they fit within the overall accountability structure of the work. The specialist should be able to voice challenges within the system where they are housed and avoid the temptation to align with the system's processes and failing to advocate for necessary changes. If the specialized position is not achieving the goals it was set to accomplish, it is critical to review the structure or the model prior to giving up on the position. A few changes to the roles or responsibilities can be what are necessary to achieve the position's intended results.

Questions and challenges relating to specialized positions will continue to evolve as the positions evolve. Dialogues exploring the benefits and challenges of these models will need to continue.

## **Cross-System Training and Shadowing: Build Empathy and Relationships**

When partners enter into a multi-system collaboration, one of the major challenges to success is the lack of information that each system or worker has about the work of the other agencies. In multi-system collaborations working on the issues of domestic violence and child maltreatment, it is essential for all partners to understand the roles and practices of the other partners from the inside out and to develop

institutional empathy for their practice. To better promote this type of understanding, most *Greenbook* sites engaged in cross-training efforts that included shadowing programs where workers from one agency followed or “shadowed” the worker from another agency to get a real on-the-job sense of their work. These efforts were critical to building shared understanding and empathy for the other partners' challenges. One project director describes the difference this way:

“It felt like cross-training through shadowing was an important part of empathy building, much different than a Domestic Violence 101 presentation. I think that some people in the community thought that a key part of system change would be to do a lot of Domestic Violence 101 presentations and other agencies would ‘see the light’ and change their practices. Shadowing and cross training brought about so much more understanding about domestic violence and the ways in which agencies address the issue.”

Cross-training has the potential to both create empathy for the other partners and to actually change practice. When one agency worker understands more fully what the others do and why they do it, change happens in one's own practice. One project director noted that practice in the local domestic violence advocacy program changed in terms of outreach after the advocates shadowed the child protection workers. Cross-training and shadowing both have the potential to change the lens of how one worker sees the other agencies regarding their limitations or capacity to change practice. One director described it this way:

“One unintended benefit was that people from other systems had a reality check on other people's power to change. They could see, sense, and feel other people's power struggles.”

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28 *Id.*

Cross-training provides powerful opportunities to understand the points of view of others and may also provide unexpected opportunities to understand our own agencies at a deeper level. As this project director explains,

“What we found in our cross-training with the courts is that while our objective was to introduce the courts to the other systems, there was a large amount of training for folks within the court system on how each part of the court system works. While not our objective, it was really an important effort and we learned how most systems really need mechanisms for dialogue across the various departments or segments within their own agencies.”

Generally, cross-training and shadowing were found to be powerful ways to gain a shared understanding and begin the process of both individual agency and cross-system change. A caution that one director offers is that while it is important to increase the capacity for one agency to build empathy for another, it is equally important to remember to build that capacity within the work each person does with a particular family. Each institution or agency needs to continually pay attention to its empathic response to families struggling with domestic violence and child maltreatment.

### **Cross-System Dialogues: Enhance Knowledge and Challenge Assumptions**

Cross-system dialogues (dialogues) were developed and initiated in most *Greenbook* sites and used to address barriers to communication and enhance understanding across partner agencies. The process of developing a dialogue is an important one and is often refined based on a community’s specific

needs.<sup>29</sup> In the beginning, many *Greenbook* sites used these dialogues to agree on a shared vision and to have philosophical discussions about people, policy, and practice of each agency. These dialogues proved invaluable to create common ground, common vision, and a place from which the participants could reach agreement on an issue. While sites did not start a dialogue with a hot button issue, having an explicit structure with facilitated conversations provided a safe way to have difficult conversations. One project director describes how the dialogue was used later in the process for another difficult issue:

“Our county was one of the original sites to develop the cross-system model. We built it over an 18- to 24-month process. It was absolutely critical to our community and led to a dialogue about race that happened later in our *Greenbook* experience.”

Another director found it helpful for issue-specific conversations involving controversy and conflict:

“We used a multi-disciplinary committee to develop agendas and choose topics, and we used expert facilitation on mandated services, batterer accountability, what children need, and how to respond to children exposed to domestic violence. It was fascinating to see how the planning process actually reflected the same tensions and challenge points as the discussions themselves. These planning meetings became a place where a lot of training and learning actually took place.”

No matter how the model was used, the *Greenbook* project directors found cross-system dialogues useful to building understanding and challenging assumptions.

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29 Stacy Lowry and Olga Trujillo, *Cross-system Dialogue: An Effective Strategy to Promote Successful Collaborations Between the Domestic Violence Community, Child Welfare System and the Courts* (2008), available at <http://www.thegreenbook.info>.

## Resource and Protocol Development: Develop Tangible Results<sup>30</sup>

The vast number of thoughtful and valuable products developed by the *Greenbook* sites demonstrates a commitment to employ mechanisms that focus on building sustainable partnerships, agreements, and practice changes. Products are useful to document the process and result of a cross-system effort designed to change policy and practice. With built-in review mechanisms, these products can be revised as practice shifts and evolves. There is also a valuable process component for the participants in a product development process. As one director describes:

“It’s really important to not underestimate the need for a clear sense of accomplishment. Specific product development and tangible results were amazingly energizing for people. This energy carried into the child welfare agency sustaining the two specialized positions supported by *Greenbook*. And, they are about to hire a senior staff domestic violence coordinator to engage in agency policy.”

It is important to decide who will participate in the development of a protocol or resource through discussion, writing, research, review, and feedback. Not every system needs to be involved in every effort at the same level. Some products are clearly cross-system efforts such as memoranda of understanding and curricula for cross-trainings, while other efforts are system-specific such as policy changes and practice guides. Decide who has ultimate authority regarding the content of the product and develop a comprehensive implementation and training plan that is reviewed on an annual basis. In these system-specific processes in the *Greenbook* sites, the agency that was responsible for enacting the policy or practice change was the one to review and make changes. The collaborative piece of this solo system work was

that the team assessed the impact on other partners as they revised the products. Final decisions on these products rested with the agency; however, they often clearly worked in collaboration with other partners during the process. There are challenges to creating products whether in cross-system teams or system-specific teams, but most *Greenbook* project directors have found them to be ultimately useful to building partnership, agreement, and practice change when they are created and used.

In addition to resources for workers, a number of sites created resources to help families navigate the systems. In the midst of assessing gaps in each system, it became clear that families had difficulty navigating the child protection system and civil and criminal legal systems. One project director highlights the resources that were developed at her site:

“We spent so much time helping the workers and administrators understand what agencies were involved, who was doing what, how they do it, and why they do what they do. We then realized how difficult it must be for families we serve to navigate the same system from the ‘other side.’ We created a legal resource guide for battered women, a comprehensive booklet of resources that families can access, and a crisis line for children to call if they had questions or needed someone to talk to about their experiences.”

## Community Training: Increase Competency and Knowledge

The *Greenbook* sites realized that limiting training to just the collaborative leaders would fail to institutionalize the efforts of the collaboration. In addition to cross-system training, shadowing, and dialogues, all *Greenbook* sites prioritized the need to increase opportunities for the community to learn about the dynamics of domestic violence and child maltreatment and promote adult/

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<sup>30</sup> Resources and protocols developed by the *Greenbook* Initiative are available at <http://www.thegreenbook.info>.

child victim safety and offender accountability. It is imperative to assess what types of training, relevant to the collaboration, currently exist within and across systems.

A variety of public education and training activities were implemented at the *Greenbook* sites to increase outreach to the community members and agency workers that were not a formal partner in the collaboration. Training was provided on a variety of topics, including the dynamics of domestic violence and child maltreatment; ways that systems and agencies can improve their response to families to help keep them safe; regular updates on the successes and challenges of the *Greenbook* sites; how to incorporate battered women's safety into decision-making; parenting in the context of domestic violence; and leadership in multi-system collaborations.

Most training provided to the community was conducted locally. Many sites brought in outside experts to conduct the trainings. While many communities cannot afford to bring in national experts to conduct local trainings, the *Greenbook* sites found that when an outside consultant could be used, he or she was more likely to cause a shift in thinking among the participants. Experts were also used to train local trainers so that the sites could build their own capacity, knowledge, and expertise. The key to effective training was to develop creative, interactive, case-based models for cross-system interaction that built in a requirement to "act" upon completion of the training. For example, participants at every community training at one site committed to one thing he or she would do differently as a result of the training and identified a mechanism for self-reflection or evaluation. Sites also took advantage of national trainings; sending collaborative partners or community members to learn and engage in national dialogues about the issues their local communities were facing. The opportunity for workers from different systems to travel together, represent their sites, and learn new strategies to bring back was an incredible tool for systems change.

The *Greenbook* sites reported several mechanisms for increasing public interest and knowledge about the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment and local *Greenbook* efforts to address it. Several sites disseminated newsletters that typically included information on *Greenbook* issues, local *Greenbook* activities, or policy and practice changes implemented by the *Greenbook* collaboration. Such publications also can target direct service workers.

## **Sustainability: Plan and Assess for Long-Term Change**

Perhaps one of the most important lessons learned in the *Greenbook* experience was the importance of considering sustainability of systems change work as soon as possible in the development of the multi-system collaboration. For most *Greenbook* project directors, this did not happen until 18 to 24 months before the end of the Initiative. Picture what "sustainability" looks like at the onset and be sure to continue to use this lens as the collaboration moves forward. Given the complex and time-consuming process of building a multi-system collaboration, it may be reasonable to assume sustainability planning may not be able to occur sooner. As this project director says:

"We started our sustainability process when we knew we had another two years for the project. We learned that when an Initiative site received substantial grant funding, it is impossible to do everything. You need to be realistic about the time, resources, and commitments that you want to move forward, and set goals and objectives that will match the reality of those resources. Toward this end, we looked at every program we implemented and we asked a series of questions about whether a current project should be 'embedded' into current practice; who was responsible for embedding the project; how the project would be funded, if continued; what data would be needed to continue the project; how

the project would be evaluated for short-term and long-term results; and, most importantly, how the project would be accountable to battered women and their children's ongoing safety. We worked on sustainability with a facilitator at every meeting for over a year. As a result, our sustainability plan included the formation of a new collaboration to take on some of the recommendations we made."

Sometimes, leadership sustainability planning specifically leads to action as this project director describes:

"What really helped push the executive committee into the sustainability planning process was when, during a meeting, an invited consultant asked the project directors to leave the room. She was trying to get the committee to not rely on the leadership of the project directors since they were not going to be sustained after the funding ended. The strategy worked very well. We planned primarily in two areas: what relationships do we want to sustain and what positions do we want to sustain. We needed to do work on how to fund certain positions. Today, the people in these positions are still doing the work."

Looking at already existing structures to continue the work is a helpful and natural bridge to the future, as is creating links to other relevant initiatives in the community as soon as possible. If they have a more stable and developed structure, funding and capacity, existing structures or initiatives may offer a way to move work forward and sustain specific or overall efforts of the collaboration as in this situation:

"Before *Greenbook*, our state developed a partnership between the child protection agency and the domestic violence coalition that created co-located specialized positions—employees of the local domestic violence program who were located in child protection offices. This partnership, known as the DVS program, was a critical partner in

our county's *Greenbook* project. When we were looking to sustain the work, we turned to their already existing structure to maintain some of the practice pieces we started. To have a mechanism already in place is a huge part of sustainability and I am sure that this work will continue with the DVS program."

And sometimes, the group will need to decide whether they will continue the work, as in this project director's experience:

"Discussions about sustainability were really tough for our county since it seemed most people wanted to be released from this obligation after it was done. It felt like people believed that they learned a lot, but we had a hard time getting the commitments to continue. Amazingly, there was a great post-*Greenbook* effort initiated prior to *Greenbook* ending on the part of child welfare to sustain the specialized positions and add a policy person."

When feasible, bring in a consultant to facilitate sustainability discussions to challenge collaborative leaders to think outside of the box and force them to make difficult decisions that the project director cannot do alone. Deciding what to maintain and what to let go—even if only temporarily—is quite difficult for those who are invested in the project for substantial lengths of time. A neutral and objective perspective can be very useful in sorting things out.

Particularly when an initiative has received substantial grant funding, it is impossible to continue to do everything. Collaborative leaders should be realistic about the time, resources, and commitments they move forward and should set goals and objectives that match the reality of those resources.

One *Greenbook* site used an "embeddedness" framework to think about whether or not the work efforts, positions, and organizational changes would sustain

past the life of the project. It was helpful for the oversight committee to respond to the following questions, relating to “embeddedness” and sustainability of every *Greenbook*-related work effort:

- **Need:** What evidence does the collaboration have to justify moving the effort forward?
- **Leadership:** Who will take responsibility for moving it forward?
- **Resources:** What resources (time, money, staff) are needed to sustain the project?
- **Data:** What data is available or needed? Who will review relevant data and report back to the group?
- **Ongoing assessment and evaluation:** How will the collaboration evaluate the success of each work effort?
- **Policy/Procedure change:** What is needed to institutionalize the practice or policy changes? How will changes to the policies and procedures be kept up-to-date?
- **Training:** How is training built into the regular training programs of the agencies?
- **Accountability:** How is the work effort accountable to battered women, children, fathers, and the broader community?

### Technical Assistance: Access Consultants, Resources, and Support

It is common to seek assistance when first beginning a new collaboration and it is strongly advised. However, when working to improve systems, there are often unexpected events that challenge collaboration and may make it difficult to find the type of help needed. In these situations, finding the right expertise and support are critical. To guide action, the following questions may be helpful:

- What action is it that the collaboration wants to take?
- What does the collaboration need to move forward? What help does the collaboration have and what help is available?

“If you say, ‘I am not going to ask for help and I will go it alone,’ you pretty much have countered the whole idea of collaboration.”

— *Greenbook project director*

- Does the collaboration need specific knowledge or help understanding this topic?
- Does the collaboration have an adequate understanding of the inner workings of each system?
- Does the collaboration have a clear picture of history, conflict, philosophies, and power issues (real or perceived) between partners?
- Is a consultant better for this particular purpose?
- Is there a structure for peer support? Who and where is it?

*Greenbook* project directors and the sites used the support of many consultants over the years who had particular expertise in defining collaboration, engaging with sustainability, facilitating difficult dialogues, working with men who batter, implementing strategic planning, performing safety and accountability audits, assessing communities, and developing training curricula. The relationships and results of these project director and consultant partnerships are strong and represent the positive outcomes that can occur with shared leadership and collaboration. Here is just one example:

“I really learned that by using consultants, we got a lot more work done in the final 10 months than we were able to in the preceding 16-17 months by just using me as the project director. For example, we used someone with specific expertise and credibility with the child protection system to develop a training curriculum. Few others could have done it. Professionally, it was much more satisfying for both the project and

me. We should have used consultants earlier and not just at the end. People from the outside have the ability to push in a way that someone in a system just doesn't have."

Weighing whether to bring in a consultant depends greatly on the question to be resolved and the credibility of the consultant within your planning group. For example, one project director remembers:

"Don't bring in national people just because you can. We found it important to ask, 'What's the goal? What do we want to accomplish? Who is the person we need? What do we want to do after? Why should we utilize national consultants instead of local experts?' We have wonderful local people who are great assets and we may turn to them first. However, there were times when a national consultant was the best person to inform our group."

There are a variety of resources available to communities. Project directors found it useful to identify and use existing resources, products, and websites. They used speakers and national experts to train local individuals who then filtered expertise throughout the community, but they were cautious about overusing and becoming dependent on one particular consultant. Communities should identify consultants who have expertise and credibility within the particular system the collaboration is working with to change. And while not often utilized, communities should not be afraid to build relationships with funders. They have access to an incredible amount of helpful information and may be able to provide critical support.

Finding peers becomes a challenge for leaders of multi-system collaborations because they may feel quite isolated and alone in their work. In *Greenbook*, the project directors were fortunate to have peers who were doing this work in other geographic areas

and the support they received from each other was incalculable to the success of the project. Peer support should not be underestimated. For multi-system collaborative project directors, it could be critical to success. *Greenbook* project directors began to participate in monthly calls two years into the project, but most wished that they implemented these calls at the beginning. Through these calls, peer support became stronger and deeper over time.

## Summary of Lessons Learned on The Process of Change:

- Assess community or collaboration readiness, implement gaps assessments (map the systems, implement an Institutional Safety and Accountability Audit<sup>31</sup>), and collect baseline evaluation materials during the early stages of the collaboration. Link all project activities to the collaboration's logic model or outcomes and translate data to make it meaningful to the front-line and mid-level managers. Prepare to manage unexpected or unfavorable information and set up a process for constructive airing of the results.
- Plan carefully and deliberately for specialized positions. Pay careful attention to where these positions are located, how accountability structures are created, and how they meet the outcomes developed by the collaboration. If the specialist positions are not achieving the intended outcomes, review the model that is used and make changes before eliminating the position.
- Develop a process for cross-training and shadowing early and throughout the project to help build institutional empathy and respect across systems, however, be careful to maintain empathy for the families' experiences. Cross-training and shadowing are powerful tools for workers to

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31 For more information on Institutional Safety and Accountability Audits, visit Praxis International's website at <http://www.praxisinternational.org>.

learn about and understand each other, as well as increase opportunities for practice change.

- Utilize cross-system dialogues to build knowledge and challenge assumptions inside and across agencies. Good facilitation is critical, as is having a basic understanding of the chosen topic that is explored.
  - Develop new resources and protocols to energize a partner agency's commitment and to document the process and result of a cross-system effort designed to change policy and practice. With built-in review mechanisms, these products should be revised as practice shifts and evolves. Consideration should be placed on who is involved in the product development, who has authority over the product, how the product will be evaluated, and how the product will be institutionalized over time.
  - Create community training to enhance knowledge and competency within each agency as well as the broader community. Whether the training is provided locally or nationally, an introduction to key concepts and new practice is important to begin challenging current attitudes and beliefs.
- Training that infuses practice-based scenarios rather than just a presentation of material is more likely to challenge thinking.
- Consider utilizing an “embeddedness” framework to develop a comprehensive sustainability plan. Think about whether or not the work efforts, positions, and organizational changes should sustain past the life of the project. Respond to specific questions around leadership, resources, data, ongoing assessment and evaluation, policy changes, training, and accountability. Consider utilizing a consultant to help develop a sustainability plan. Create links to other relevant initiatives in the community as soon as possible to help sustain the work of the collaboration.
  - Access technical assistance early in the process to help create a sustainable collaboration and identify a vision for the future. Utilize national experts who have the expertise and credibility within the particular system the collaboration is working with at any given time, but be cautious about overusing and becoming dependent on one consultant. Identify and use existing resources, products, websites, and national resource hotlines.

# V. Leadership in the Hard Places

## Sharing Risk and Building Trust

Collaborative leaders recognize that when groups engage in difficult dialogues, it is often messy, uncomfortable, and full of tension. To be successful, leaders should share the risk and build trust among the partners to construct safe and supportive spaces for difficult discussions, including those that may require an examination of one's biases and assumptions.

Sharing the professional and personal risks associated with the difficult conversations involves at least two actions. First, collaborative leaders should share some foundational information to create context around the purpose of the conversation. Second, leaders should set ground rules for civil dialogue. The conversations should be based on relevant, contextual information, and boundaries should be set to create a safe space for both professional and personal risk-taking.

*Greenbook* project directors identified several conversations that required partner agencies to share the risk and build trust. These conversations carried strong assumptions, evoked the most passion, and were often the most critical areas for creativity and innovation in safety and support to families. These conversations included moving beyond 'cultural competency' (within families and collaborations and including race, class, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability); working with men who use violence against their partners and children to change their behavior; addressing the needs of children who experience domestic violence or child maltreatment; and working with mothers involved with child protective services or women who use violence. These conversations are complex and involve both professional and personal risk. Although the conversations were difficult at times, they were also the conversations that led to the

greatest source of rewards for the individual, family, organization, and community.

## Moving Beyond Cultural Competency

*Greenbook* project directors found that a foundational discussion included the differences in families served by each system or agency. It is likely communities will find that people of color, people who have recently immigrated, people without sufficient economic resources, people with limited English speaking capacity, and people with disabilities are most neglected and marginalized systemically. Many systems are not designed to adequately respond to families and their identified cultures. Any collaboration that is working on cross-system change will need to identify their community's diversity, and will need to examine how the dominant culture may be contributing to the oppression of less privileged groups.

A difficult situation may occur when an individual's risk to engage in these conversations is too great. For example, a person who is worried about how they are perceived in the community may have a difficult time expressing their views on race, class, or gender. One project director described the challenge of revealing both the professional and personal risks in this situation:

“Race was the biggest unspoken issue in our county. It was challenging to figure out how we were going to raise the issue and put it on the table instead of leaving it out. There was a feeling that people were scared, defensive, and that they felt as if they couldn't have open, honest dialogue.”

One *Greenbook* site developed a self-assessment tool<sup>32</sup> to assist the community in identifying the diversity in

32 See El Paso County, Colorado, *Greenbook Initiative, Cultural Competency Organizational Self-assessment Toolkit* available at [http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/El\\_Paso\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/El_Paso_toolkit.pdf).

their community and what actions might be helpful to address the “-isms” (racism, classism, sexism). This process was also helpful to resolve the overwhelming feeling by the partners that these issues were too big to address. The project director in this community describes this experience:

“When we first discussed the need to address diversity, there was a general feeling of, ‘How on earth will we be able to fit in cultural competence on top of everything else we do?’ It was seen as an ‘add on’ instead of a fundamental piece of how we do the work. Through using a process of self-assessment, that general feeling changed to, ‘How can we *not* address this issue? We must prioritize inclusivity and diversity as a way of understanding how families’ safety can be incorporated into our decision-making.”

Another project director found that using consultants helped to give the community a cultural, contextual framework for the collaboration. She explains,

“For us, the issues of diversity that were most relevant to our community were ethnicity and culture and particularly working with the Latino community. We hired consultants to talk with us at various points in our process. The notion of ‘culture as a protective factor’ resonated with our group. When we connect to the strength of people’s cultures, it helps us figure out how the dominant culture has put barriers in place and how they might be removed. It was a fantastic reframing from ‘the barriers of being a Latino family’ to ‘those who have put the barriers in place can remove them.’”

If the leadership team initiates the discussion over time and with persistent attention, this responsibility could become shared by every participant in the collaboration. In the best-case scenario, the community itself will step forward to make cultural competency a priority right from the beginning. This *Greenbook*

project director shared how critical discussions on culture was to their community, and how it took on a life of its own impacting all aspects of the Initiative:

“The Respect for Culture & Community Initiative (RCCI) was important to me as a leader because this county is very diverse and it is important to get the stories of the different community members. In our county, there are large communities of Filipinos, Asians, and Latinos, and we were just not going to be effective if we did not have their voices as a very big part of this project. Throughout all of our work, we were able to use their feedback to make changes.”

It seems important to note that these *Greenbook* stories do not reflect all the issues of diversity. Missing are stories from the Native American, Pacific Islander, and many immigrant communities; missing are the stories from the gay, lesbian, transgender, and intersex communities; missing are stories from those with cognitive, emotional, and physical disabilities, those with diverse religious and spiritual affiliations, and those with a variety of socioeconomic circumstances.

## **Working With Men Who Use Violence against Their Partners and Children**

In the past several years, more attention is focused on the idea that to increase a woman’s access to safety for herself and her children, a man who uses violence against them should be held accountable and should be shown the impact of his violence on his family. Batterer’s intervention programs exist all over the country and continue to evolve, yet in many areas, accountability programs for men who use violence against their partners or children do not exist. Establishing quality programming is of utmost urgency. In many communities, batterer intervention programs are critical partners in the work to end domestic violence and child maltreatment. Conversation about appropriate batterer intervention may be difficult.

Many believe that changing the behavior of men who use violence is not a realistic or effective way to end violence in the family while others believe that a quality batterer accountability program addressing the father's understanding of how his children were affected by his violence can be successful.

The issue of whether a man who uses violence can change his behavior is one that challenges deeply held beliefs and values about men, women, children, and violence in all systems. One *Greenbook* project director describes her attempt to engage the collaboration in the conversation and the level of risk assumed by the domestic violence partner in the collaboration:

“We realized that the collaboration needed to focus on who is causing the problem in the family. We tried lots of ways to have these conversations, lots of styles and settings, and with different groups. We found little consensus among the advocacy community about whether to work with men who use violence and whether they will change. We hosted a series of community conversations with advocates that asked a series of questions about hopes and fears about the community ‘connecting’ with batterers. We talked about the fact that some men who batter see themselves as good fathers, but we know that using violence makes that not true. And we know that a man in jail for strangling his partner in an attempt to murder her is not someone whose behavior we are likely to change. We established a foundation about when it is appropriate to work with men who use violence and when it is not appropriate. It was a great exchange of withheld beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes.”

Another *Greenbook* project director described the fear in working with men who use violence and the strategy they used to address the issue in their community:

“One thing we found is that many child protection workers were very honest in expressing their fear around interviewing men who batter and it is the reason we brought in special consultants to do a two-day institute on the multi-disciplinary approach to working with men who batter. All attendees received the monograph: *Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men: A New Child Protection Response to Increasing Family Safety*<sup>33</sup> and the monograph transformed our thinking.”

There are many innovative programs that incorporate accountability and connection with men who use violence, from hiring batterer's intervention program specialists to work within one of the three systems, to proactive community work with men, to leading men to take public non-violence pledges. There are programs challenging young men's use of violence against their girlfriends, mothers, and sisters. All of these programs are important to community efforts, but many struggle to define their effectiveness and whether the programs actually stop men's violence against women. These are issues that have also been a great part of the *Greenbook* sites' experience. For *Greenbook* leaders, this area was fertile ground for testing the strength of their collaborations. Their lessons and stories reflect this continuing challenge for everyone involved in this work.

## Addressing the Needs of Children Who Experience Domestic Violence or Child Maltreatment

It is not uncommon in multi-system collaborations created to end domestic violence and child maltreatment that children seem forgotten or invisible when focusing on the parents—even by programs or systems designed to respond to them. In the Initiative, this concern was evidenced in many conversations related to the mission and focus of the project.

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33 Fernando Mederos, Massachusetts Department of Social Services, Domestic Violence Unit, Family Violence Prevention Fund, *Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men: A New Child Protection Response to Increasing Family Safety* (2004), available at <http://endabuse.org/programs/children/files/AccountabilityConnection.pdf>.

One project director describes the overall context and how important the visioning process is to make sure children are attended to and connect to their mothers and fathers:

“Early on, the group should decide how to achieve a balance between focusing on child and adult victims of domestic violence. Some of our community partners were concerned that we would focus on how the public systems have ‘wronged’ battered women, with children’s issues secondary. Another focus often deemed secondary was the adult perpetrator of the violence and his role as a father. These are areas of both great tension and great opportunity.”

Sometimes, even with an expressed desire to act to improve the response to children who experience domestic violence and child maltreatment, the issue becomes too overwhelming to address. One *Greenbook* project director explains:

“It took us a long time to focus in on the kids and I am not sure we did it very well. Primarily, we talked about child protective services-involved children, but the reality is that we were missing most of the children that are exposed to and experience domestic violence. We have very few resources in this community to work with these kids and we really needed to shift our thinking from, ‘What happens to children who are exposed to domestic violence?’ to ‘What do children that are exposed to domestic violence need from us?’”

In this situation and in others, often the talk turns to the child protective services response, which in some ways makes sense given that the response to children who experience violence is a function of the child protection agency. When agencies begin to have conversations about themselves, it becomes more about how the various systems respond to them instead of what they might need. While system response is an

important component of these collaborations, dialogues can become stuck in trying to sort out when a child’s experience with domestic violence becomes solely a child protective services issue. Since a child’s individual experience may differ dramatically and may be served from outside and inside systems, this is a difficult and complex area to begin with in co-occurrence collaboration.

However, if a community thinks broadly and beyond the response of one agency (as one might endeavor to do in a multi-system collaboration), it might include families who are not involved with child protective services to determine the best response to all children in the community. A *Greenbook* project director explains how this understanding shifted the work of the collaboration to benefit all children in her community:

“In our community, there was a desire to first look at the response of child protective services, which led to a long and difficult conversation about when a child’s experience of domestic violence in and of itself constitutes child abuse that needs to be addressed by the child protection agency. It often felt like we were spinning our wheels, going nowhere fast. We decided to shift our focus to the needs of children who experienced domestic violence and child maltreatment in their home. Once reframed, we were able to go one step further and develop some action steps in the community to better serve children. Certain people took it on and really made things happen. Common ground is very helpful as a starting point to future policy discussions and it grounds the work in the very different experiences of children.”

Sometimes the discussion about what children need initiated changes in partner agencies. These changes would not have occurred if the sites refused to work through these challenging conversations. The level of risk-taking in acknowledging shortcomings of one’s

own agency should not be underestimated; when leaders take those risks, they can identify powerful ways to change practice.

In many communities, despite the good work done within agencies to address children's needs in new and innovative ways, there still remains an identified lack of services both inside agencies and in the community. There are several efforts around the country to create a differential response to children who experience violence in a number of different ways. These efforts offer a promising direction for collaborative relationship building that promotes individual relationship building, results, and resiliency for children who experience domestic violence and child maltreatment. *Greenbook* project directors all agree that support to these efforts is critical to the work of multi-system collaborations.

## Working with Mothers Involved with Child Protective Services or Women Who Use Violence

In co-occurrence collaborations, leaders will find that providing services to women who are battered is an ongoing conversational “hard place.” The questions of whether a woman chooses to leave or stay, whether she abuses or neglects her children, or whether to mandate services for battered women involved with child protection, are complex. When discussed, they may reveal many widely held beliefs about women who are battered and judgments as to her culpability as a victim.

Working with women who have been battered challenges those who work with them to understand why someone might choose a course of action other than what a worker might choose for themselves and their children. As one project director explains,

“Probably the most difficult question for domestic violence advocates and maybe for all of us is,

‘What do we do when women choose what we don't want them to choose?’ If instead, people working with women who have been battered could start with ‘What do I feel about this choice, this situation? Not professionally but personally?’ If they can empathize, then we might get somewhere. This is definitely a conversation to have a skilled facilitator lead the way. When we reflect on our own assumptions and bias, we can learn. There is a potential vulnerability, but also an incredible opportunity.”

In her recent study of women arrested for domestic assaults, Susan Miller found that 95 percent of the women used violence in reaction to a partner's violence.<sup>34</sup> As Miller explains, “Typically, women's use of force is in response to their current or former partner's violence or can be characterized as a reaction that results from past abuses and their relative powerlessness in the relationship.”<sup>35</sup> Battered women continue to be arrested for domestic violence, or lose custody of their children as a result of the arrest or involvement with the criminal justice system. Additionally, and our communities fail to recognize context in our response to domestic violence.

Uniquely crafted services for battered women are often a challenge for agencies and communities, but it is one area of focus for co-occurrence collaborations to work on together. Developing quality, culturally-competent services for women that include information about child protection, substance abuse, mental health, and immigration issues are emerging around the country, but there are varying ideas as to what works in this area. There are also deeply held biases that need to be challenged about women, their responsibilities as a mother, why some battered women use violence, why some women choose to leave, and why some choose to stay and continue to love the person that perpetrates violence against them and their children.

34 Susan L. Miller, *Victims As Offenders: The Paradox of Women's Violence in Relationships* 116-120 (2005).

35 *Id.* at 130.

Innovative program services, whether provided by local domestic violence advocates or advocates in specialized positions, continue to challenge conventional responses to services and interventions. They will continue to require careful, deep, and difficult dialogues about safety, support, and stigmatization that surface in all three systems: domestic violence programs, child protection services, and the courts.

## Summary of Lessons Learned About Leadership in the Hard Places

- Define culture broadly and think about issues of diversity before engaging in multi-system collaborative work. Incorporate diverse representatives in ways that are genuine, inclusive, and do not tokenize. Use consultants to ask the hard questions, help organizations and individuals see their own biases and blind spots, and challenge practice in ways that might be hard for partners to do with each other. Support those at the table who may be taking significant risks in advocating for change within their organizations.
- Acknowledge the hopelessness some people may feel in working with men who use violence. Consider inviting non-traditional partners to the table to help vision capacity to change (faith allies, coaches). Recognize some women want their children's fathers involved safely in their children's lives.
- Reframe the conversation to identify what children who are exposed to violence need from inside and outside of the systems rather than discussing how exposure impacts children. Acknowledge the harm children experience and begin to explore children's resiliency and the unintended consequences of not addressing children's needs through policy changes.
- Work with programs who serve women who have recently immigrated to this country, women who are struggling with substance abuse or mental health, or women living with disabilities. Look for or develop model programs for specialized populations in collaboration with community partners with expertise in these areas.
- Understand the dynamics that may contribute to a woman's use of violence against her children, or neglect of her children, in the context of domestic violence. Identify ways to increase safety and support while paying attention to accountability for her use of violence. Examine why workers continue to talk about battered women's roles or failures as mothers and why workers do not focus more on the accountability and connection with men.

# VI. Conclusion

While the *Greenbook* Initiative focused on the complex issue of co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment, it is important to recognize that the lessons shared by the project directors are cross-cutting and apply to a variety of community collaborations. Collaborative leaders should take great care to lay the foundation for a multi-system change effort, identify the best strategies to accomplish the goals and objectives, and be willing to share the risk and build trust to provide leadership in the “hard places,” regardless of the issue the collaboration will address.

The *Greenbook* project directors learned that collaborative project leadership is complex, consists of multiple roles, requires many skills and areas of knowledge, and it all changes over time. Collaborative leadership includes building the appropriate structure to support and sustain relationships, but it also includes the very complicated management of active relationship work among partners, a focus on results, and the ability of the collaboration to be resilient.<sup>36</sup> A collaborative leader should be committed to patiently and persistently balancing the need for process and product. Collaborative leaders recognize that systems change is not a small or simple task and that it takes time.

Despite more than seven years of intense work on the Initiative, the collaborative work of child protective services, domestic violence agencies, the courts, and the broader community will continue. Community leaders will continue to learn new ways to partner with battered women and build equitable partnerships with families. They will continue to explore accountability and connection with men and explore

alternative solutions to domestic violence outside of the criminal justice system. They will forge new alliances with non-traditional communities and service providers to provide real help for families. They will continue to build capacity in organizations and communities to adequately support families dealing with temporary imbalances, including substance abuse and mental health issues. They will challenge biases towards battered women, hold each other accountable for the safety and well-being of communities, and prioritize the needs of children. And they will continue to have the hard conversations about the oppression, including racism, classism, sexism, and ableism, to clearly understand how to best serve women, children, and men.

Project leadership takes many forms and works within many structures. However, in a multi-system collaboration, it is especially complicated due to the multiple organizations, cultures, and communities that participate in the process. Creating a successful collaboration takes time, dedication, and a commitment to change. The process of creating the collaboration should be thoughtful, deliberate, and focused on the needs of the families served. Collaborative leaders will embark on a journey of self-exploration that may challenge their biases and enrich their lives. Although the process was often difficult, the *Greenbook* project directors agree that the process was worth it. One project director describes her experience this way:

“Providing leadership in a complex collaboration like the *Greenbook* was hard, frustrating, and a challenge to navigate. It was also rewarding, full of surprises, and the experience enriched my life. I am a better person as a result of this experience.”

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<sup>36</sup> See Karen Ray, *supra* note 11.

# Notes





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