GrantSpace - Collaboration Hub

Boys & Girls Clubs of West-Central Wisconsin

Participating Organizations

- Boys & Girls Clubs of Baraboo/Sauk County, Baraboo, WI

Please note that all data below was derived from the collaboration's nomination for the Collaboration Prize. None of the submitted data were independently verified for accuracy.

Formation

Type of Collaboration:

- Joint Programming to launch and manage one or more programs
- Administrative Consolidation to share, exchange, or provide back office services such as accounting, IT, human resources
- Merger by which governance, programs and administrative functions have been combined but which may or may not have included the integration into a single corporate entity.

Geographic Scope: Multi-County
Collaboration Focus Area: Other
Population Served: Children and Youth
Year Collaboration was Established: 2008
Goals Sought Through Collaboration:

- Develop a stronger / more effective "voice"
- Achieve administrative efficiencies
- Serve more and/or different clients / audiences

Reasons Prompting Collaboration:

- Parent organization request
- Potential closure of one or more of the partnering organizations
- Financial problems / pressures within one or more of the partnering organizations

Who Initiated Collaboration: Parent organization
Number of Participating Organizations: 2
Were Partners Added or Dropped?: No
Consultant Role:

- To conduct financial due diligence
- To draft the governing agreement or provide other legal advice
- To advise on human resources, benefits, or compensation
- To determine the value of assets (intellectual or physical property)
The Boys & Girls Club of Baraboo/Sauk County closed its doors on 11.1.2007 so the board could focus on raising money to re-open. There were leadership challenges on staff and the board. If they raised the funds they were still faced with the challenge of hiring a new Executive Director.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Tomah was approached by the Regional Service Director from Boys & Girls Clubs of America to talk about a Management Agreement. Baraboo and Tomah are similar in size and located within a one-hour drive. The Tomah Executive Director would manage the Baraboo Club while both boards investigated the pros and cons of merging into one strong organization.

The management agreement was originally a 6 month agreement that automatically renewed unless cancelled by either party. The management agreement lasted for 18 months. While at first this seemed to be an extraordinarily long time this 18 month window allowed the Executive Director to gain trust of all board members on each board and to work with staff to prepare them for a merger. It was not without frustration, however this long "engagement" period allowed the two boards to get comfortable with each other and also helped the new organization's board development committee to set priorities and a base for the new corporate culture building on the strengths of each individual organization and diminishing the challenge areas of each individual organization.

**Management**

**Management Structure:** One Executive Director / CEO / President

The collaboration started because of the need for experienced management in Baraboo when the Club re-opened. The Tomah Executive Director had 3 years of experience as an Executive Director of a like-size Club with a supportive staff team in Tomah to assist as needed. The Regional Service Director was instrumental in making this case to both boards.

While it was challenging to work with 2 different boards for 18 months, sharing an Executive Director for 18 months made the transition go smoothly when the merger did happen. All resources, plans and procedures were shared and similar when it came time to merge.

When the two boards sat down at the same table to really discuss merging every board member looked at the Executive Director as "theirs." It was also a catalyst for moving forward with the merger as neither board wanted to go back to square one and hire a new Executive Director.

2 board members from each board and the Executive Director were the Board Development Committee for the new corporate board. These 5 people worked together to create a board development plan that would attract, train and retain board members with access, affluence and influence.

The Regional Service Director provided assistance creating the new structure of a corporate board with local advisory councils. Both organizations sent the Executive Director and the Director of Operations to Boys & Girls Clubs of America's Advanced Leadership Program- School of Executive Leadership training in Schaumburg, IL. The Board Development Plan and corporate structure was the major project.

**Challenges**

**Challenges to Making the Collaboration Work:**

- Lack of trust among partners
- Coordinating / merging / integrating operations
- Raising funds or integrating fund development to support the collaboration
- Creating a shared culture

Corporate culture was a big challenge right from the beginning. The Executive Director worked hard to identify problems and keep each board informed. The Tomah Board was very supportive of changes. The Baraboo Board was open to suggestions. There was a point where the Regional Service Director intervened to get the Baraboo board back on track and of a mindset to collaborate. A nearby tourist city was wanting to open a Club. The problem was that Baraboo technically did not have a full-time Executive Director, even though they were closest. Tomah employed and paid the Executive Director, however if the merger did not go through the Baraboo Board wanted to retain this new Club due to the fundraising potential. The Regional Service Director came back to the table and re-focused everybody's energy.

After an independent CPA and attorney reviewed audits, financials, human resource policies, and legal documents both board sat back down at the table and tackled a few of the issues that were overturned. This was truly the turning point when both boards said "Let's merge." They truly saw that the organizations were stronger together than they ever could be apart.

**Impact**
Internal Efficiencies and Effectiveness:

- Financial savings - Consolidation of management / administration
- Financial savings - Bundled insurance policies
- Human resources - Stronger / more effective board of directors

Community Impact:

- Retained programs / services in the community
- Collaboration has served as a model for others

Within 2 months of re-opening, the Baraboo Club saw a 30% increase in membership and increased average daily attendance from 92 to 135 youth.

The program plan was created and followed by all staff ensuring that national programs in the areas of Character & Leadership, the Arts, Sports Fitness & Recreation, Education & Career, and Service were being offered according to national standards.

All donors were tracked through a donor tracking program.

A dynamic Board of Directors was recruited. All people of influence, affluence and access to others or resources.

The organization has started utilizing pre- and post tests for national programs to measure outcomes and share our successes with funders and the community.

Model

This collaboration is a model for a short-term management agreement as well as the long-term commitment of a merger. The organization's Board President and Executive Director have spoken with one Club to share the successes and challenges and will be speaking with another Club later this month.

The Board of Directors is open and willing to share the merger documents, assignment task lists, successes and challenges and final paperwork with any organization interested. Merging is not an easy decision to make, but it doesn't have to be done blindly.