

Collaborative Initiative Types

Funder Collaboratives

A group of funders who come together to fund entities to achieve specific, shared goals.

Discussion example:

National Teen Initiative

A group of funders make grants to local organizations across the country that have a cross-community evaluation mandate.

Systems Change Initiatives

A foundation's funding portfolio grants money to many different types of organizations in an effort to affect systems-wide change.

Discussion example:

Big Bet Foundation

Large national foundations making "big bets" to address issues that have proven particularly challenging, like climate change and nuclear security.

Implementing Collaboratives

Organizations receive funding to collaborate with one another.

Discussion example:

Collaborative Change Initiative

Funding for collaboration itself brought together multi-sector stakeholder groups to address persistent inequities in health and education systems.

Hybrid Initiatives

Initiatives that combine elements from two or more different types

Discussion example:

Climate Change Foundation

Operating foundation that does not make grants but works through collaboration with other groups.

Educational Attainment Project

Dual-purpose foundation that funds and implements collaborative efforts

Challenges with Evaluating Collaboratives

Unique Baselines

Different players are at different places in progress toward goals.

Question: Stay true to initial evaluation design and/or shift?

Discussion examples:

National Teen Initiative

Educational Attainment Project

Differentiated Timelines and Needs

Funders need high-level learning; program staff need feedback on individual impact first, then the collaboration's impact.

Question: Whose needs do you prioritize? What can you do on a shoestring budget?

Discussion example:

Educational Attainment Project

Incompatible data systems across stakeholder groups

Using and tracking shared measures across a collaborative can require heavy investment that yields either a rigid product or an adaptive one that has steep learning curve.

Question: How to accurately prepare for tech investment while not overestimating what that investment can do?

Discussion example:

Foundation Big Bet

Lack of Shared Vocabulary

Different stakeholders may understand the goals and strategies of the collaborative effort—let alone its evaluation—on different levels.

Question: How to resource and facilitate activities to ensure shared understanding?

Discussion example:

National Teen Initiative

Collaborative Change Initiative