

Eight Key Principles to Effective Kingdom Collaboration

By [Phill Butler](#)

1. Effective collaboration (EC) is about a powerful, commonly-owned vision.



The vision must be articulated in outcomes that are specific and, at least at some level, objectively measurable. Warm "fuzzies" and good fellowship are not enough.

It is the ability to articulate the vision and the measurable outcomes that provides the basis for planning, strategy, and tactics as well as for the sense of fulfillment and success.

This means EC focuses first on the "what" (vision and outcomes) rather than the "how" (structure). Structure should never be greater than is absolutely necessary to achieve the specific goal.

2. Effective collaboration has limited, achievable objectives.

In the beginning, partnerships have little or no experience of "success" or understanding of what steps are required to achieve that success.

Establishing initial objectives that have high value as well as reasonably high potential for accomplishment is critical in the early stages.

These objectives must have clear

- **Kingdom significance** that captures the imagination and provides motivation for the group;
- **Relevance** to each church or partner ministry's vision and objective.
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3. Effective collaboration (EC) is built on trusting relationships.

EC not a function of "mechanics" but, first of all, of people and relationships of openness and mutual concern.

The heart of the Gospel is restored relationships. EC, therefore, is addressing the outworking of the very essence and is the evidence of salvation.

Leadership (facilitators, steering committees, etc.) must be very intentional about processes that will facilitate the building of these trusting relationships.

4. Effective collaboration needs a facilitator.

This person must have a burning commitment to both the vision and outcomes as well as to collaboration as essential to realizing the vision.

This person must be a neutral person who can demonstrate to all participants a genuine commitment to both his or her individual ministry and common success.

This person alternatively (often simultaneously!) plays both prophetic and servant roles.

This person must be specifically selected, trained, coached, and encouraged in this critical role.

EC needs to have a "champion" in each participating ministry: a person who casts the vision, communicates the potential, and facilitates the engagement of his or her own ministry.

5. Effective collaboration is a process, not an event.

Building consensus and trusting relationships is time intensive. Calling a meeting too early may mean failure.

This process is much like the building of a significant building where the preparation, planning, and foundation building stages may take a long time with little visible evidence of progress. People from Western cultures, particularly, often find this aspect of partnership life very difficult to prioritize, justify, and sustain.

The bigger the challenge the longer the process may be—as is true in the building of buildings. Small ones with limited capacity go up quickly while large ones with high capacity take great investment of resources over a much longer period of time.

6. Effective collaboration is made up of partners with clear identities and vision.

The clearer a ministry's vision and identity, the more assured it will be in its potential role and ability to effectively contribute.

This clarity of identity and vision will also have a powerful impact on the participating ministry's ability to assess the impact or value of the partnership to its own organization and purpose.

This clarity of identity and vision greatly facilitates relationships with other ministries in that it reduces ambiguity, helps define more specifically the contribution that a ministry can play, and helps reduce overlap and duplication.

7. Effective collaboration acknowledges and meets expectations of key constituencies.

All collaborative initiatives have at least four constituencies:

- The audience or group we are seeking to serve and/or reach.
- The active participants in the initiative.
- The administrative leadership of each participating agency or ministry.
- The funding and praying group that stands behind the participating individual ministry.

It is vital that participants are aware of and have respect for each others' constituencies.

It is vital that the partner ministries be able to effectively communicate the outcomes of the collaborative initiative in terms their constituency understands and values.

8. Effective collaboration focuses on what the participants have in common.

It is first the vision and purpose that draws ministries together. The "end" (what are we doing) is critical. A primary focus on "means" (how are we doing it), particularly at the early stages, can lead to division.

EC openly acknowledges differences in histories, traditions, etc.—even to the point of celebrating these differences. This allows acknowledgement that "ears" are not "eyes" and that Jews, Greeks, Romans, and Samaritans (or their modern-day equivalents) with their enormous cultural/traditional differences are all welcome around the common Kingdom vision.

The diversity of EC is made possible because

- All participants feed from the common "vine," Christ;
- All participants are drawn around the common vision;
- Trusting, open relationships allow for others to be "different" in nonessentials.

Is your partnership sustainable? Does it provide a "level playing field" for all partners?

Does it encourage self-sufficiency for all parties and empower all partners to reproduce the vision of the partnership on their own?