

Creative vs. Transactional Collaboration

28 Jun 2018 by Daniel Dow

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Summary

The nonprofit sector uses the word “collaboration” often, and in worshipful tones, but what happens in practice is usually more transactional than transformational.

It often goes like this: If you give us something that benefits our program, we would be happy to return the favor for your program. Backs are mutually scratched. But each organization essentially continues on its own path, largely unaffected by the partnership.

Collaboration that builds organizational capacity, moves people to take part, and propels the sector forward, by contrast, involves true co-creation and uses the unique strengths of each partner as building blocks. This kind of collaboration has the potential to be transformational on both an individual and an organizational level.

A similar set of terms we often use in the world of networks is “Cooperative vs. Collaborative”. The description this article gives of a “transactional” partnership is similar to what we call a cooperative network. Many networks find this level of engagement to be useful and choose to stay a cooperative network.

A creative or transformational network — what we call a collaborative network or partnership — is one that shares a common vision, goals, builds on each others differences, and accomplishes more together than any individual partner organization can achieve by themselves. These networks often have the greatest investment, but also the greatest impact.

Understanding the differences between a transactional or cooperative network and a transformational/creative or collaborative network is important. This article helps clarify these differences.

Source:

Asha Curran. Article: Creative vs. Transactional Collaboration. Stanford Social Innovation Review. June 7, 2017.

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