



# THE COLLABORATION LAB

*Increasing the Capacity of Individuals  
and Groups to Collaborate*



Collaborative initiatives are on the rise. Our work is more complex and the resources are decreasing. The problem is that people are not often taught *how* to collaborate.

Groups start with the best of intentions. As they are pressed for time, groups opt to focus on the tasks and miss opportunities to build and maintain shared understanding. As a result, conflict can emerge.

Unchecked, that conflict can take on a life of its own. The impact on groups is broken relationships, low morale, and work that is not done.

To lead and participate in collaborative groups including engaging conflict, individuals must build their knowledge, consciously do things differently and ultimately change who they choose to be in service of their group and the work.

For groups to successfully collaborate, it is imperative that people learn how to set up an infrastructure, identify conflict and engage it effectively as an opportunity.

## The Team

Having just formed, the members were excited to get to work. They decided who would do what and went their individual ways. As they each worked on their assigned activities, expectations were not met. People became disappointed in each other. As they talked with one another, alliances formed. The early excitement decreased and progress slowed.

The team came to the LAB. With the help of LAB partners, they engaged in dialogue to develop mutual understanding and a more structured way of collaborating in the future.

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## LAB WORK

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### Building

When groups are forming or in transition they have an opportunity to create norms and expectations for their collaboration. The LAB offers on-site, interactive training and facilitation to help groups build their knowledge and skills as well as create a structure for group collaboration.

### Repairing

Many groups experience conflict to a degree that they are unable to address it effectively themselves. In the LAB, partners provide an environment and mediate a dialogue to support groups engaged in conversations to address challenges and find new ways of working together.

### Maintaining

Beyond training and mediation, there is often a need for maintenance as collaboration progresses. The LAB offers a variety of services such as coaching, follow-up visits, and tailored training to ensure that new skills and collaborative practices are integrated and sustained.