**The Collaboration Priority**

**Goals for this Priority**

Help promote working with others as a viable, even vital, part of doing international student ministry in this fast-changing age. This may include working together with different ISI ministries or with other organizations in the US and overseas.

Define different types of “working together with others” (i.e., collaborating)

Provide guidelines and things to look at when collaborating

Provide a community platform that allows us to share examples of and best practices for collaboration so we can learn from them.

**Working Definition of Words Related to Collaboration**

The word “collaboration”—working together with others—is used in so many ways.

Collaboration—“the act of working with another person or group of people to create or produce something” (Oxford Dictionary)

**ISI Collaboration Team’s definitions of types of “working together”** (from less intrusive to more intrusive)

1. **Cooperation** – interacting with perhaps *different purposes, values, and operational vision* but *helping each other* (i.e., lending a hand) (e.g., helping police by answering questions)
2. **Co-laboring** – similar purposes for the task *but different values and operational vision* while working but side by side to benefit both (e.g., working with the international office or international student clubs through providing an independent airport ride service to “help students” to start well)
3. **Collaboration** – *synchronized values and operational vision* in areas relating to this alliance to move toward a similar goal/mission/purpose so all benefit at some level. Clear rules of interaction. (e.g., Christ-following ministries working together in August to welcome students and help them to experience Jesus’ love)
4. **Partnership** – *More formal* agreement of two or more groups in an area forming an essentially new entity with a clear purpose/mission to complete a task with completely agreed-upon values, rules of interaction, merging of resources, etc. (e.g., two organizations essentially acting as one team for international student ministry with agreed upon goals, common accountability, etc.)
5. **Acquisition** – One entity *bringing another entity into their organization* with the acquired organization taking on the mission/vision/values of the acquiring organization usually for mutual benefit of combined resources and reputation, etc. (e.g., asking existing ISM workers to join staff)

**Our attempts at collaboration should be positively symbiotic.**

It is a best-practice to inasmuch as possible pursue primarily “win-win” opportunities where each party benefits even as there may be some cost to each.

Six broad types of symbiosis are recognized in nature (Three are somewhat positive):

* Commensalism – where one entity benefits while the other is unaffected
* Mutualism – both entities benefit
* Parasitism – one entity benefits while one is harmed
* Competition – neither entity benefits
* Predation – one entity benefits while the other dies, and
* Neutralism – both entities unaffected.

**The Spirit of “Working Together”**

The overarching idea must be: “We will operate with mutual grace and submission. We will not be seeking to take over or take advantage of each other, but we will be truly cooperating with one another.”

**Difference Between Partnerships and Collaborations**

*Partnership*

For the whole combined team, accountability is united and merged

Together accountable to certain standards as listed out in the terms of partnership in an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) or something contractual. Values and Purposes are merged.

Usually, project specific and so it has a limited lifetime.

Should be more formal

The main idea the partnership strives for is “For this event we are coming together. We will do this together as an integrated team and make this thing work. And at the end, the partnership ends because the contract has been fulfilled. All will return to their ministry responsibilities.

*Collaboration*

* Should be working together towards a larger goal that positively impacts each of the ministries in terms of what they're trying to do
* Recognition that each team member is accountable to their ministry organization’s priorities, goals, and responsibilities primarily, but deciding to collaborate around shared purposes.

The values as related to what is seen as the collaboration’s goal should align but not necessarily all the ministry values of each ministry. There should be clear guidelines, formal or informal, in how to interact in areas of differences of values.

Collaboration is more informal and relational and less legal and official than a partnership.

They can work in the collaboration in very different ways, but they must synchronize those ways to help each other succeed.

**The Scope of Collaboration**

The scope of working together should include:

* **Internal Collaboration** – Working together with different ISI ministry teams and individuals
* **External collaboration** – Working together with other organizations outside of ISI
  + It includes working with organizations focused on working **within the US.**
  + It also includes organizations focused on working **overseas,** like missions agencies.

**Some Milestones for the Priority**

* Establish a clear definition of “working together” and how ISI team members can be involved.
* Create opportunities for ISI team members to be exposed to good examples of ISI teams working together with others.
* Create a community platform where people can share experiences in collaboration, coach each other, share “templates” and “best practices,” share resources, have online discussions, etc. This will be done in cooperation with the team promoting innovation, “church” collaboration, training, and other functions as a safe “one-stop shop” to learn from each other all on the same platform, walled off for only staff and volunteers.
* Have a clear plan to envision, empower, and enable ISI staff to use “working together” as a powerful tool to “reach every international student with the love of Christ” and to commission those students to have a powerful effect wherever they go to build God’s Kingdom and implement it. This includes a clear plan on how to help people really take advantage of the community platform mentioned above.