

Joint Action – A Word by Any Other Name

Joint efforts go by many names. If all members agree on a higher level of intensity of work, many of these efforts can be collaborations whatever they're called. At the same time, the group, however it is named, can be very successful, even though working less intensely. Two elements are crucial to successful joint efforts: everyone must agree on the level of intensity and the level of intensity must be appropriate to the desired results. Here are some names for joint efforts:

- **Advisory committee:** provides suggestions and assistance at the request of an organization.
- **Alliance:** a union or connection of interests that have similar character, structure, or outlook; functions as a semiofficial organization of organizations.
- **Coalition:** a temporary alliance of factions, parties, and so on for some specific purpose; mobilizes individuals and groups to influence outcomes.
- **Collaboration:** a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve results they are more likely to achieve together than alone.
- **Commission:** a body authorized to perform certain duties or steps to take on certain powers; generally appointed by an official body.
- **Competition:** the act of seeking to gain that for which another is also striving; rivalry; a contest; nonetheless a form of joint effort.
- **Confederation:** being united in an alliance or league; joining for a special purpose.
- **Consolidation:** combining of several into one; usually implies major structural changes that bring operations together.
- **Consortium:** association; same as alliance.
- **Cooperation:** the act of working together to produce some effect.
- **Coordination:** working to the same end with harmonious adjustment or functioning.
- **Federation:** the act of uniting by agreement of each member to subordinate its power to that of the central authority in common affairs.

- **Joint Powers:** the act by legally constituted organizations (such as governmental agencies or corporations) of assigning particular powers each has to a mutually defined purpose; a written document, called a joint powers agreement, spells out the relationship between the groups.
- **League:** a compact for promoting common interests; an alliance.
- **Merger:** the legal combining of two or more organizations; the absorption of one interest by another.
- **Network:** individuals or organizations formed in a loose-knit group.
- **Partnership:** an association of two or more organizations who contribute money or other resources to carry on a joint operation and who share profits and losses; a term loosely used for individuals and groups working together.
- **Task force:** a self-contained unit for a specific purpose, often at the request of an overseeing body, that is not ongoing.

From Michael Winer and Karen Ray, *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*. Amherst Wilder Foundation: St. Paul, Minnesota 1994.