

Building Partnership Toolkit

A guide to developing collaborative partnerships between CAC Chapters and VOCA Administrators

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The National
RESOURCE CENTER
for **REACHING VICTIMS**
Helping those who help others



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INTRODUCTION

Summary

The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (NRC) is a collaborative effort funded by the Office for Victims of Crime to bring healing services and justice to more survivors of crime in the United States. The National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC) spearheads the NRC's work around Children and Youth; leading the effort to improve quality and increase access to victim services for the nation's most vulnerable population. In 2019 NRC and NCAC engaged State Chapters of Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC), Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Administrators and other state level stakeholders in a project designed to improve partnership and collaboration among those at the state level working to serve child victims of crime. This toolkit shares some of what was learned throughout this project and offers a guide to help build and improve collaborative partnerships in order to better serve children and youth.

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BACKGROUND

Background

Child, youth and teen victimization continue to be pervasive problems in the United States that can negatively affect individuals, families, and communities. The need for effective and accessible services for child victims of crime is clear.

In many states, services for children and youth victims of crime are funded and delivered by multiple government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Often these entities operate independently of each other with little or no formal collaborative process. While collaboration is a mainstay of child victim services at the direct services level, partnerships at higher levels are often limited.

Conversations within the field reveal that this is frequently the case for CAC State Chapters and State Victim of Crime Act Administrators.

The *Building Partnerships Project* is an initiative undertaken by the NRC and NCAC to develop and disseminate strategies for building strong collaborative relationships between state Chapters of Children's Advocacy Centers, state VOCA Administrators and other state child victim services partners. We strongly believe that improved partnerships among stakeholders at a systems level offer enhanced opportunities for innovative and collaborative engagement strategies for reaching and effectively serving all child victims.

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Facilitator Tip (Slides 4-5):

Having a strong background in the CAC movement or deep knowledge about the inner workings of State VOCA Administrations are not required in order to effectively facilitate a partnership building process. However it will be helpful to familiarize yourself with the underpinnings of each organization and their histories. This will be of benefit as the process unfolds and the conversations turn to the details of the work.

For information about Children's Advocacy centers visit:

- The National Children's Advocacy Center: www.nationalcac.org
- The National Children's Alliance: www.ncaonline.org
- Regional Children's Advocacy Centers:
- www.srcac.org, www.mrcac.org, www.westernregionalcac.org,
- www.nrcac.org

For information about State VOCA Administrations visit:

- National Association of State VOCA Administrators: <https://navaa.org>
- Dept of Justice Office for Victims of Crime: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/about/crime-victims-fund>

The intent of the *Building Partnerships Toolkit* is to share strategies and tools for cultivating collaborative relationships between state Chapters of Children's Advocacy Centers, state Victim of Crime Act Administrators and other state-based child victim service providers. This toolkit offers resources to those seeking to develop or improve collaborative partnerships.

The following guide is designed to be used by CAC Chapters and VOCA Administrators when engaging in an intentional process of building collaboration. While it may be used as a step by step model, it can also serve as a resource to be consulted at any stage of the partnership building process.

Strategies and approaches to building collaboration are shared throughout this guide. They are offered in the order in which they were applied during two pilot projects designed to intentionally build partnership between a CAC Chapter and a State VOCA Administrator. Also included in the toolkit is an annotated Facilitator Guide containing reflections from the two pilot projects and facilitation notes. The intent is to share lessons learned from these pilots and facilitator tips that will enhance the partnership building experience.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

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WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to be used by CAC State Chapters and their State VOCA Administrator counterparts to support the development of collaborative relationships. The modules and activities offered in this guide may be self-directed or undertaken with the help of a facilitator.

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Facilitator Tip (Slides 6-7):

This guide is meant to serve as a template for facilitators; the process, format, timeframe etc. may need to differ depending on the specifics of the team and participants you are working with. Facilitators are encouraged to consider the

needs, strengths and dynamics involved in each engagement when designing a partnership building process.

What is Partnership and Why it Matters

Classic definitions of partnership usually describe “two or more entities coming together for a common goal.” While this gives us the basic idea, the partnerships depicted in this toolkit are much more involved, require high levels of investment, and can yield substantial rewards.

When discussing partnerships here we are specifically speaking about collaborative partnerships. These interagency, interdependent relationships are found when two or more components of a larger system (i.e. child victim services) come together with the expressed purpose of sharing resources and information in an order to create and cultivate new solutions.

Innovation, creativity, and efficiency are the hallmarks of collaborative partnerships. When focused on serving children and youth victim of crimes these outputs can result in significant benefits at a systems level, introducing the potential for lasting change and improved outcomes for children and youth.

ABOUT COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

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ABOUT COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration

The terms coordination, cooperation, and collaboration are regularly interchanged with one another, yet each has a distinct meaning and purpose. While both have value, coordination and cooperation work to achieve anticipated outcomes, whereas collaboration adds a creative element that can provide new and innovative solutions. It is these new ideas that we hope to achieve and promote through collaborative partnerships.

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Reflections from the Pilot (Slides 8-9):

Early in the process of both pilot projects the groups were engaged in a conversation about other partnerships they are involved in and what the

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experience has been like from their perspective and how they were found to be useful. Participants shared both positive and negative experiences. These conversations helped to set a frame for what collaborative partnership could look like and offered an opportunity for participants to share what they were hopeful for in a partnership.

Facilitator Notes:

During the partnership building process, take time to discuss the fact that the hallmark of true collaboration is the creation of something new and not just the execution of an intended task or anticipated outcome. Whether a new idea, project, or process, collaboration draws on the unique skills and talents of a group to develop something that might not have otherwise been created. This frame offers the group a better understanding of how they might benefit from collaboration and why their participation is essential.



ABOUT COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

Drawing on Existing Models of Collaboration

Not surprisingly, extensive research has been done on collaboration, partnership and teaming. Over the past 10 years there has been a marked increase in research specifically focused on interdisciplinary work. The driving force behind this research is a recognition that collaboration has immense value, particularly within fields that rely on knowledge and information sharing among interdependent systems. While this research has been primarily focused on teaming and collaboration within the business world, its applications are just as relevant to victim services and helping professions

Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) have been in existence for decades, capitalizing on their diversity of knowledge through collaborative partnerships aimed at serving victims of abuse. These teams routinely invest in building and strengthening their partnership in a variety of ways including team development, strategic planning, cross training, and intentional orientation processes, as well as a strong focus on building and maintaining relationships through effective communication. Much of what is contained in this toolkit is derived from work done with and by MDTs to strengthen collaboration.

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Facilitator Tip (Slide 10):

For more information on collaboration, partnership and effective teams consider the following resources:

- Amy Edmondson – Researcher and author of several books on teams and psychological safety.
<https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/profile.aspx?facId=6451>
- Francesca Gino – Researcher and author on sustained collaboration:
<https://hbr.org/2019/11/cracking-the-code-of-sustained-collaboration>



Getting Started

Initiating the process of building a collaborative partnership can be a daunting enterprise, leaving many to wonder where and how to start. This section offers guidance on how to go about getting started and what important steps need to be considered first.



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ASSESSING NEED

Any partnership building process should begin with an assessment of need. This doesn't have to be a painstaking task requiring in depth analysis and statewide surveying, but should consider a few key questions:

- What does partnership and collaboration currently look like between the State CAC Chapter and the VOCA Administering Agency?
- Are these entities in regular communication with each other? Do they share information or consult with each other before engaging in new or large-scale initiatives?
- Do they participate in any collaborative projects or facilitate shared programs?
- How likely are leaders or staff from each agency to reach out to each other for assistance or with questions?
- How might a collaborative partnership translate to improved services for children and youth victims of crime? What gaps in services, needs, or opportunities might be addressed?
- Are there challenges or obstacles that would present potential barriers to a collaborative partnership?

While not an exhaustive list, answers to these questions will offer a sense of whether an intentional partnership building processes might be necessary and how it might need to be structured to achieve the desired result.

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Reflections from the Pilot (Slide 11-12):

These questions were asked well in advance of the first meeting for each pilot. The leaders of each participating agency were contacted and asked to share their thoughts and insight. Not only did this provide useful information as to what type of partnership building process was needed, it helped to engage them in the project early on.

Facilitator Tip:

Consider engaging both the CAC Chapter Director and the Director of the VOCA Administering agency in separate conversations around the idea of a collaborative partnership process. Depending on where the idea to conduct such a project initiated, an introduction may be beneficial. These questions can help to guide the conversation.

In some instances, an intentional partnership building process may not be necessary. If strong relationships already exists and there is a clear and shared understanding about how the Chapter and the VOCA Administrator can work

collaboratively, then the group may be best served by a strategic vision setting process like the one described in the second session of this guide. This can serve to find further alignment and help to set shared goals.



FIRST STEPS

Initiating the Conversation

A conversation between the Director of the State VOCA Administration and the CAC Chapter Leader is a good way to start this process. The simple act of having a conversation about partnership is a big step in the right direction. Sharing the Building Partnership White Paper found in this Toolkit, may offer an easy way to introduce the subject and invite conversation about what a more intentional partnership might look like.

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FIRST STEPS

In order to engage in a partnership building process there needs to be a clear and shared understanding that this is something both entities are fully committed to. When thinking about initiating this conversation consider the following questions:

- Who do I need to have a conversation about partnership with first?
- What's my intention/purpose for having it?
- What are my most important requests?
- What are the benefits for children & families in our state?
- What are the benefits for the Chapter and the VOCA Administrator?
- What hurdles or challenges may be encountered?
- How do I want the idea of a collaborative partnership to be received and supported?
- Who else may need to be involved in a conversation about these changes?
- How do I best frame my messages to make is receivable?

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Reflections from the Pilot (Slides 13-14):

Prior to the second pilot an application was released asking interested VOCA Administrators and CAC Chapters to submit a letter of interest to be considered

for the project. This required that the two leaders have a conversation about their existing levels of collaboration and explore they might stand to gain from such a process. Several CAC Chapter directors reported that this conversation in and of itself yielded tremendous value, with some suggesting that it was a big step in what was otherwise a very minimal relationship.

The word facilitator itself is derived from the Latin term “facilis,” meaning easy. The role of a facilitator, in its simplest form, is to help make a process easier. A facilitator can assist a group in coming together and forming a strong and effective partnership.

While the process of building a partnership may be undertaken independently, CAC State Chapters and VOCA Administrators are strongly encouraged to engage a skilled facilitator. Facilitators serve to support engagement, create and maintain safe spaces, and at times offer a neutral perspective on the process. Additionally, facilitators can help with tasks associated with coordination and planning.

Considering a Facilitator

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Considering a Facilitator

When choosing a facilitator consider the following factors:

- Existing Relationships with participants
- Content Knowledge about children and youth victim services
- Cost, many facilitators are supported by training and technical assistance grants to do this type of work at little or no cost
- Ongoing support – consider what type of ongoing support a facilitator will be able to provide
- Experience – look for a facilitator who has experience working with groups at a systems level and is familiar with collaborative partnerships

Each of the four Regional Children’s Advocacy Centers, located throughout the US have trained facilitators on staff and may be able to assist with such collaborative partnership processes.

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Reflections from the Pilot (Slides 15-16):

Each of the four Regional Children’s Advocacy Centers, located throughout the US have trained facilitators on staff and may be able to assist with collaborative

partnership building processes. A representative from the Regional CAC was present at each of the pilot site sessions.

Regional Children's Advocacy Centers: www.srcac.org, www.mrcac.org,
www.westernregionalcac.org, www.nrcac.org

WHO TO INCLUDE

Who to include in a collaborative partnership process is an important question that should be explored early and carefully. While this toolkit is aimed at supporting improved partnerships between CAC State Chapters and VOCA Administrators the involvement of other state level stakeholders will likely be beneficial. Explore the possible participation of stakeholders engaged in the process of ensuring services for children and youth victims of crime.

When considering whether to include additional partners in the process of building a collaborative partnership take into account how their participation will engage with and support efforts to improve outcomes for children and youth victims of crime.

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WHO TO INCLUDE

Additional State Level Participants to Consider:

- Department of Children and Family Services
- Victim Compensation Program
- Office of Criminal Justice or other Law Enforcement
- Members of the Children's Justice Task Force
- Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Coalitions
- Regional Children's Advocacy Centers

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Reflections from the Pilot (Slides 17-18):

Considering who to include can be a challenge. The last thing you want to do is offend an existing partner or a potential future collaborator. A useful question to ask is "how would including this agency add or detract our primary goal" which

for this purpose is to build a collaborative partnership between the Chapter and the VOCA Administrator. There is nothing to say that this process couldn't be repeated in the future, perhaps in a more streamline way, with the addition of each new partner organization.

WHO TO INCLUDE

When selecting and inviting participants to take part in this process be sure to consider their role within the organization they represent. Ideal participants will be in a position to effectively represent their agency, speak to high level items like mission and vision, and engage in commitments with the other participating organizations. At a minimum, leadership from the CAC Chapter and the VOCA Administration should be included, setting a tone for who should participate from other agencies. Consider engaging individuals who work directly with programs that support services for children and youth victims and children's advocacy centers.

Sample Partnership Building Roster:

CAC Chapter Executive Director

CAC Program/Associate Director

VOCA Administration Director

VOCA Administration Grant/Contract Manager

Children and Family Services Director

Victims Compensation Director

Regional CAC Training Specialist

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Facilitator Tip (Slide 19):

It may be necessary to process and explore the question of who is best suited to participate in the partnership building process. This can, and should be done with leadership from both the Chapter and VOCA Administrator. While it may see best to have participation from many other agencies, you must consider how that might change the dynamic in light of the overall goals and objectives. A smaller group may be best suited to lay a foundation of partnership, from which you can then build from.

INVITING WITH INTENTION

Once those who will be participating in the process have been identified, it is important to extend a clear and welcoming invitation. This can either be done by a facilitator or jointly by leadership from the Chapter and the VOCA Administrator. In many ways this is the first tangible step in the partnership process and sets the tone for future engagement and collaboration. This invitation should clearly express the intent of the project, one or two desired outcomes and why the invited entity's participation is considered important to the success of the endeavor.

An effective invitation will also help to set expectations about the process of building a collaborative partnership. Be sure to share what type of commitment the project will require with regard to investment of time and resources. Also inquire as to what resources, skills, knowledge, and expertise the invited party believes they can contribute to the collaborative process. This inquiry not only expresses an expectation that partners be fully engaged, but also serves to honor the unique and valuable contributions each agency/organization has to offer.

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INVITING WITH INTENTION

The invitation process also offers an opportunity to explore perspectives on the existing state of partnership, or lack thereof, and identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Questions to consider exploring with additional participants include:

- Where do you see strengths? Opportunities for growth?
- What excites you about the possibilities of improved collaboration and partnership?
- What obstacles might make this process challenging?
- How might our success translate to better services for children and youth?

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Facilitator Tip (Slides 20-21):

It is best, if possible, to have invitations to other participating agencies and organizations come from leaders of the Chapter and VOCA Administration jointly. While as a facilitator you can extend an invitation to other agencies on behalf of the process, it will likely not have the same gravity and meaning. Consider having

the CAC Chapter Director or VOCA Administration Director send an introductory email explaining your role and that you have their full support in the facilitation of this engagement.



Planning and Preparation

Coming together to build a strong partnership can have many moving parts. This section offers guidance on the logistics and details behind the process.

TIMELINES

Coming together in an intentional way to develop what will hopefully become a strong and lasting partnership cannot be rushed. It is recommended that ample time be dedicated to this engagement, allowing for multiple interactions, in different ways, over the course of at least 3-4 months. This type of timeline offers opportunities for individuals to come together on multiple occasions with time in between for reflection and processing. The following timeline offers an idea of how building a collaborative partnership might be mapped out.

Sample Timeline

April	Introductory conference call with state partners
May	First in-person workgroup meeting
June	Video conference call
June	Second in-person workgroup meeting
July	Video conference call (if needed)
July	Third in-person workgroup meeting (if needed)

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TIMELINES

The primary goal when setting a timeframe is to create ample opportunity for group members to come together in order to build strong relationships, create a common understanding and develop a shared vision for collaborative work. Most groups will find that two in-person sessions, with an initial planning call, and a video conference call in between, allows sufficient time to lay a strong foundation for effective partnership. Groups with a large number of participants or those having historically strained relationships may benefit from a third in-person session and an additional conference call. Other groups with existing relationships may find that a single in-person gathering paired with a series of conference calls is enough to lay a framework for a collaborative partnership. Vary the timelines and agenda to meet your needs, however more time together is generally better than less for a strong collaborative partnership to be developed.

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Reflections from the Pilot (Slides 23-24):

Finding dates to meet that works for everyone may be one of the biggest challenges. It is important to remember when setting timelines and scheduling,

that representatives from participating organizations are busy at baseline, with certain periods of the year consumed by grant or program related activities. Consider engaging a representative from each agency in the scheduling process to help ensure full participation and effective coordination.

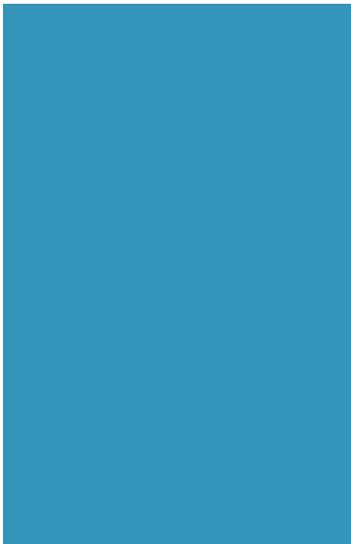


INITIAL PLANNING CALL

An initial planning call with all identified participants helps to introduce the project, discuss timeframes and set expectations.

A one-hour call is usually sufficient to address the items included in the agenda below. This call also provides an opportunity to begin setting dates and identifying a suitable location for the first in-person meeting. Though this call is relatively brief, keep in mind that it will serve as an introduction to the process and sets the stage for future work. It is helpful to express appreciation for everyone's commitment of time and share a positive outlook for the group's work together.

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Sample Planning Call Agenda

- Introductions
- Project Overview and Rationale
- Timeline and Expectations
- Consideration of additional Stakeholders
- Next Steps and Scheduling Process
- Questions

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Facilitator Tip (Slides 25-26):

If nothing else, setting a clear expectation is the goal of this initial call. Helping all participants to understand what it is they have signed up for will greatly increase

the chances of success. Be clear about what this process is all about and what, as a group, you hope to achieve.

Agenda Setting

Consideration of both time and process are important when setting the agenda for in person meetings. Cultivating a collaborative partnership requires sufficient time for individuals to come together in a safe and comfortable way. The structure and time set aside for meetings should be taken into account when building the project timeline. The process should not feel rushed, nor should it feel painfully drawn out. Offering the group an opportunity to gather for a 4-5 hour in person session generally provides enough time to engage in connection building without feeling overwhelming. The following sample agenda provides an insight into what a one day in-person gathering might look like.

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Agenda Setting

Building Partnership Sample Agenda

First In-Person Meeting

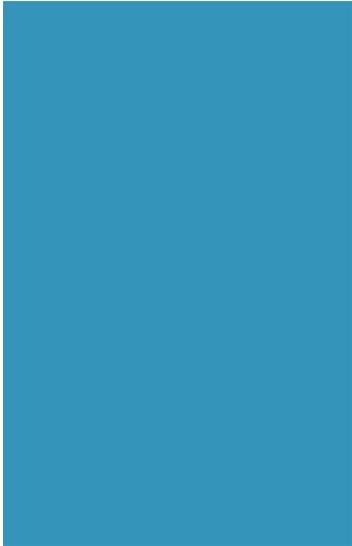
9:00am	Welcome, Introductions and Framing
10:00am	On Teaming and Partnerships
10:30am	Break
10:45am	Getting to Know our Partners
11:30am	Understanding Those We Serve
12:15pm	Lunch
1:00pm	Creating a Shared Perspective – How Might We?
2:30pm	Next Steps – Staying Connected
3:00pm	Adjourn

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Facilitator Tip (Slides 27-28):

Gathering over food is a very social act that most people connect to positive experiences and relationships. If possible, offer the group an opportunity to share in a meal together. Providing some light breakfast foods and /or lunch will help

cultivate a relaxed atmosphere, and keep the group connected and well fed throughout the day. Should restrictions on grant funds make it impossible to eat onsite, consider venturing out as a group for lunch or inviting everyone to bring their own from home. Don't attempt to shorten the day with a "working lunch," allowing the group a chance to get to know one another is all part of the work.



COMING TOGETHER

Crafting an experience that allows people to come together in a meaningful way is key to the development of a collaborative partnership. This section shares strategies and techniques to help facilitate that process.



CREATING A SPACE FOR COLLABORATION

Intentionally coming together to build or enhance a collaborative partnership requires care, forethought, and attention. A few considerations and areas of focus can help to create a positive climate for collaboration that supports the process and those engaged in it.

Psychological Safety exists when people feel comfortable being themselves. It relies on interpersonal trust and mutual respect. Helping all members of a partnership building process to feel safe is a paramount concern; without it the effort will likely not be productive. A psychologically safe environment will allow participants to comfortably share their thoughts, ask questions, and offer suggestions, all of which are important in such a process.

Ground Rules help to set expectations and offer participants an opportunity to ask for what they need from the group to feel safe. This should be done early in the process and invite participation from the entire group. Both the facilitator and group members are responsible for creating and holding each other accountable to these ground rules.

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CREATING A SPACE FOR COLLABORATION

Framing the Work is one more way we can add structure to the process. Engaging the group in a conversation about the goals and objectives of the process and soliciting input as to what they hope to get out of it, helps to create a frame that everyone can share.

Information on Partnership Building helps to add context to the process. Engaging in a brief discussion about collaborative partnerships and the opportunities they offer provides participants with a deeper understanding of what this process is trying to achieve and why.

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Facilitator Tip (Slides 30-31):

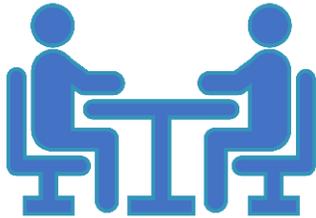
While each of these tenets play an important role in developing a collaborative partnership, Framing the Work is essential during the early stages of the process. As a facilitator you will want to be sure that all in the group have a clear

understanding of why we are coming together and what the process will entail. One approach is to ask participants to share what they are hopeful for in the process as part of their introduction. This provides you, as facilitator, with a chance to hear what the group is looking for, as well as a means of highlighting common hopes and shaping expectations.

Sharing some information about Partnerships does not have to be a lengthy task and can help to further frame the work. A few simple power point slides with the following statements help to add context to the process.

- Teams Work
- Teams Take Work
- Team Functioning Impacts Outcome

Asking the group to consider and join you in appreciating these basic principles about partnership generates buy-in in the process and frames the ideas that the group will explore throughout.



Getting to Know Our Partners

Personal Introductions

Starting with personal introductions is an ideal way to start the first in-person session. Invite each member of the group to introduce themselves, even if they already know each other.

Ask them to share their:

Name

Role

Agency or Organization

How long they've been with the agency/organization

Opener question

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Getting to Know Our Getting to Know Our Partners

An opener or ice breaker question, offers participants an opportunity to share something about themselves as an individual. This can help to build connections and strengthen relationship.

Examples include:

- Favorite Comfort Food
- Ideal vacation
- First Job or Worst job
- 1 thing others in the room may not know about you

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Facilitator Tip (Slides 32-33):

Even if everyone involved in this process is from the local community, take some time to talk about the area/state you are working in. This step is especially important however if you as the facilitator is not familiar with the state and

communities that comprise is. This will assist you in building a relationship with the participants and provide context that will help the group to cultivate a shared understanding of itself and how it will operate.

Consider questions like:

- What's important to know about this state?
- If one was to move here what might they be surprised by?
- What are some of the things that people from this state are proud of?
- What would one need to know or do to be accepted in this community?

Getting to Know Our Partners

Agency/Organization Introductions

While the participants may know a bit about the different agencies and organizations they partner with, there is likely much they don't know. Offer the group an opportunity to introduce their organization or agency. Ask them to share about:

- What their organization/agency does
- How their organization/agency provides or supports services for victims
- How many people are on their staff or work within their team
- How their organization/agency is funded
- What makes their organization/agency unique
- If applicable, how has their organization changed over time
- What are the primary areas of focus for their agency currently

As each person introduces their agency/organization, encourage the group to ask clarifying questions.

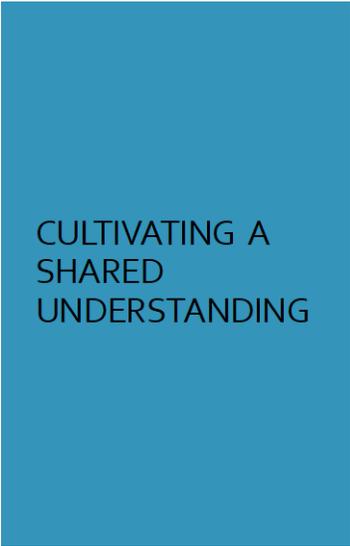
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Reflections from the Pilot (Slide 34):

Given the nature of this work, it is likely that relationships of some sort are already in place. Be sure to explore and lift up any organizational relationships that already exist within the group. Take time to discuss what is beneficial about the existing relationships and how it contributes to collaboration and partnership. Explore what has helped to foster and sustain any existing relationships.

Facilitator Tip

As a facilitator ask clarifying questions and listen for opportunities for connection and points of collaboration. The goal here is to ensure that all the participating organizations have a chance to understand their partners, what they do, and what motivates their work.



CULTIVATING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Cultivating a Shared Understanding

An early and critical step in teaming is to craft a shared understanding of the work we all do and why we do it. Collaboration begins with sharing about our roles, responsibilities, challenges, opportunities, hopes, and ideas. This allows us to create a new, shared perception of our partners and how a collaborative partnership might translate into meaningful effect.

This step requires time and attention as it establishes the foundation for the group and the work it will do together. The activity on the following page offers the CAC Chapter, the VOCA Administrator and the other participating agencies an opportunity to share what they are experiencing in the work they do. This helps to build a deeper understanding between the organizations and often builds connection around a shared experience.

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Reflections from the Pilot (Slide 35):

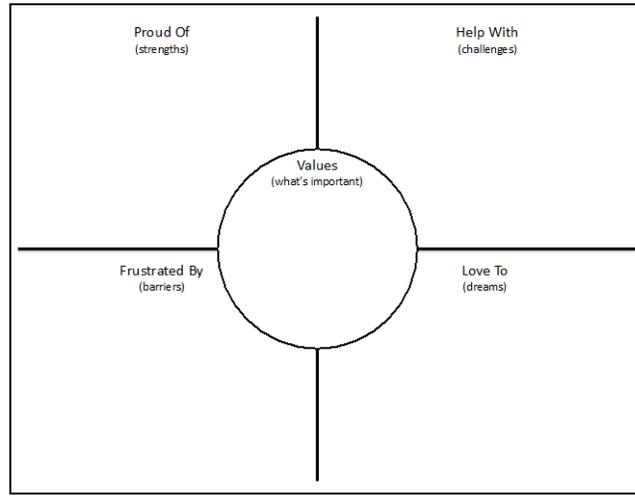
The benefits of creating a shared understanding were highlighted during one of the pilot sessions when members of both the CAC Chapter Staff and VOCA Administrator expressed frustration with a specific grant requirement. The Chapter staff shared that they received countless calls from their membership asking how to meet the requirement, while the VOCA Administrator shared that the requirement makes it challenging to distribute funds in a timely manner. The realization of this shared frustration helped to build connection and served as a catalyst for some impressive brainstorming on how to improve the grant making process.

UNDERSTANDING OUR PARTNERS

This activity provides participants with a frame with which they can share more detail about their own organization/agency; what's going well, where they may need help, what they value and what they are hopeful for.

Participants from the same organization should work together to complete a single grid. Once completed, ask participants to share their worksheet and respond to questions that the group might have.

Ask the group to look for similarities and common themes that may stand out.



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Facilitator Tip (Slide 36):

Having participants complete this activity on large sheets of flip chart paper attached to the wall offers the group an opportunity to move around a bit. It also provides each organization a chance to present what they've written once complete. Be sure to capture what is written on each sheet as you will want to reference back to them later in the process. This can be easily done by taking pictures of the sheets with a cell phone.

UNDERSTANDING THOSE WE SERVE



Creating a shared understanding helps to cultivate alignment within the group and broaden perspectives about the work. Another important aspect of this process involves a focus on those being served by the members of this collaborative partnership. Giving the group an opportunity to talk about the children and families they are effectively reaching through the work they do, as well as the children and families they feel they could do a better job of reaching, fosters a deeper understanding and further invites collaboration. The aim here is to develop a rich and open conversation about of the services that currently exists within the state.

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UNDERSTANDING THOSE WE SERVE

When you think of the services you and your agency/organization support, which children and youth do you feel you are effectively reaching?

Which children and youth do you feel you are not reaching?

Which specific groups, communities, or populations of children and youth are not accessing or receiving services?

What gaps in services and support do you see in the work being done throughout the state?

What might an outside observer notice about the work we do to support children and families in our state?

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Facilitator Tip (Slides 37-38):

Support the group in resisting the urge to immediately begin reaching for solutions here, instead encourage a thorough and shared exploration of each question. As facilitator you may need to ask clarifying questions to help the conversation get started, but attempt to let the dialogue take place between

group members. A primary hope for this activity is to identify, in a safe way without blame, where there is room for improvement with regard to serving children and youth victims of crime, particularly those who are currently underserved.



HOW MIGHT WE?

This simple question offers team members a way to explore two important considerations in any partnership process...

“How might we create collaborative processes to address the challenges we’ve identified?”

and

“How might we continue to strengthen and sustain this partnership?”

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HOW MIGHT WE?

One approach to exploring these questions is to divide the group in two and assign one of the questions to each small group. After 15-20 minutes of discussion bring everyone back together to share.

For the first question, remind the group that the intent of this question is not necessarily to develop specific solutions, but to share ideas that would support working together toward future solutions. An example might be “We could meet regularly to discuss challenges we see throughout the state and brainstorm ideas.”

For the second question, remind the group that the intent is to develop ideas and approaches that would continue to foster collaboration and deepen relationships. An example might be “We could hold a bi-annual retreat to share what we are working on and any new resources we have to offer the group.”

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Facilitator Tip (Slides 39-40):

These two questions can be powerful conversation starters and serve to help the group begin thinking both about their collaborative potentials and how they can

engage in further strengthening the partnership. As facilitator encourage the group to tackle these questions much the same way they would a brainstorming session, where quantity and a range of ideas is better than a single in-depth approach. Draw on what you've heard from the group so far to develop one or two possible answers to each question, have these ready in case the group needs examples or struggles with the concept.

STAYING CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

Building a collaborative partnership is by no means something that happens in a single day. In fact bringing a group together on multiple occasions and in different ways serves to support the process. Hosting two or three in person gatherings will provide ongoing points of connection and focus, however it is important to keep the group engaged in between those gatherings if momentum is to be maintained. Scheduling one or two conference calls or video meetings between in-person sessions can help to facilitate ongoing group engagement. These calls offer an opportunity for the group to stay connected, share information, provide updates and discuss additional opportunities for partnership.

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STAYING CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

Consider scheduling a group calls of this type every 3 to 4 weeks between in-person sessions. The following sample agenda helps to offer structure to these calls.

Sample Connecting Call Agenda

Introductions and Check-in

Review of Partnership Process and Focus of the Call

Organization/Agency updates

Points of Collaboration since previous session

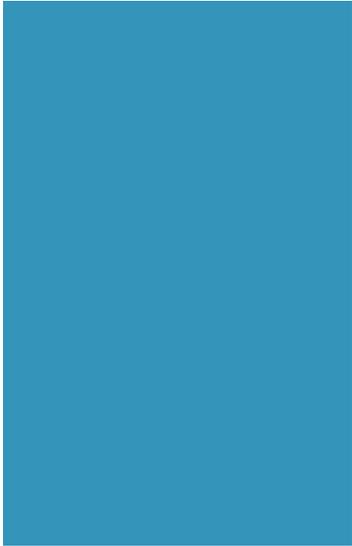
Announcements, Next Steps, Scheduling

42

Facilitator Tip (Slides 41-42):

Be sure to introduce the idea of these calls to the group during the first in person session, this can help set expectations and clarify their purpose. It may also be helpful to remind/encourage group members that they can also look for other

opportunities to stay connected via email, phone, and in person meetings. This furthers the effort to build collaborative relationships.



COMING TOGETHER AGAIN

While an initial gathering supports relationship building and helps to create a shared understanding, a second gathering allows the partners to think about how their partnership might take shape. This section will focus on designing a second gathering that looks forward to collaboration in action.

While the focus of the first in-person session was to build connections and create a shared understanding, the focus of the second session is placed on building pathways for collaborative work and strategic vision setting. Supporting the group in looking forward and helping them to see the potential benefits from such collaboration is a key objective.

Building Partnership Sample Agenda

Second In-Person Meeting

- 9:00am Welcome, Re-Introductions and Review
- 10:00am Revisiting Session One
- 10:45am Break
- 11:00am Collaborative Brainstorming
- 12:15pm Lunch
- 1:00pm Strategic Vision Setting
- 2:15pm Sustaining Partnership
- 3:00pm Adjourn

A SECOND MEETING

44

A SECOND MEETING

Reintroduce, Review, and Updates

Be sure to begin by offering participants the opportunity to reintroduce themselves, this is especially true if there are any new members of the group that were not present for the first session or the calls between gatherings.

A brief recap of the process to date and an overview of the agenda helps to frame the focus of the second session. If there are new members invite those in the existing group to provide an overview of what was discussed in the first session and any insights, they may want to share.

Provide ample opportunity for the group to reconnect. One way to do this is to ask for updates from each participating agency/organization. Ask them to include any new successes or challenges as well as any requests for support or assistance. Invite the group to share about any collaborative efforts or activities that may have taken place since the first session.

45

Facilitator Tip (Slides 44-45):

Depending on the success of the initial meeting, there may be a sentiment within the group that a second gathering is unnecessary. Remind the participants that

the second in person meeting has a different focus and objective. This meeting is about looking forward and developing a shared vision of what collaborative work might look like. This process includes a bit of strategic vision setting, as well as some thought about how to sustain the partnership moving forward. Make use of the connecting calls to frame this second gathering and invite participants to begin thinking about the future of the partnership.

REVISITING THE FIRST SESSION

Begin the work of the second session by revisiting the shared understanding that was created in session one. Sharing a collective summary of the group's identified values, strengths, challenges, barriers and hopes helps to bring potential goals and objectives into perspective. Add to this context, a review of the group's discussion about how services are currently being provided to children and youth. Highlight any gaps or areas of need the group surfaced. Lastly, offer the group the opportunity to revisit the conversation about how they might work together to find collaborative solutions.

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REVISITING THE FIRST SESSION

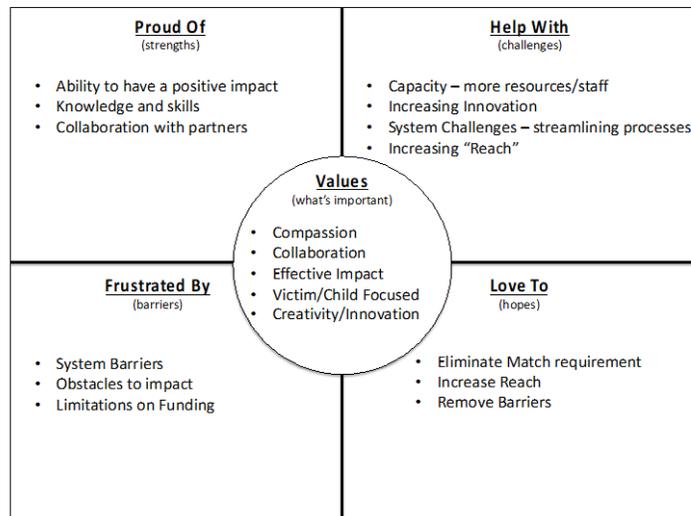
Proud of (Strengths)

Help With (Challenges)

Frustrated By (Barriers)

Love To (Hopes)

Values (What's important)



47

Facilitator Tip (Slides 46-47):

Offer participants an opportunity to reflect on what they shared during the first session while doing the grid activity. Invite them to add to any of the four quadrants or the values circle.

Invite the group to reflect on the equation that is developing...



AN EQUATION
FOR
COLLABORATION

48

Facilitator Tip (Slide 48):

Much like in the first session it is helpful to begin by framing the process and what the day will be about., With help from the group walk through each component of this equation, reflecting on where and how in the building collaboration process each item was identified by the group. This can help contextualize the process and serve as a quick but powerful reminder to the group about Why and How their collaborative efforts can yield positive outcomes for those they are seeking to better serve. Use this brief activity to segue into the brainstorming process.

COLLABORATIVE BRAINSTORMING

By engaging the group in a process of collaborative brainstorming you can offer a glimpse at how collaboration can result in innovative solutions. The primary objective here is to expose the developing partnership to what is possible together and how collaboration might look in action. Offering an opportunity to explore solutions through a structured model can help the group to see the potential benefits of effective partnering.

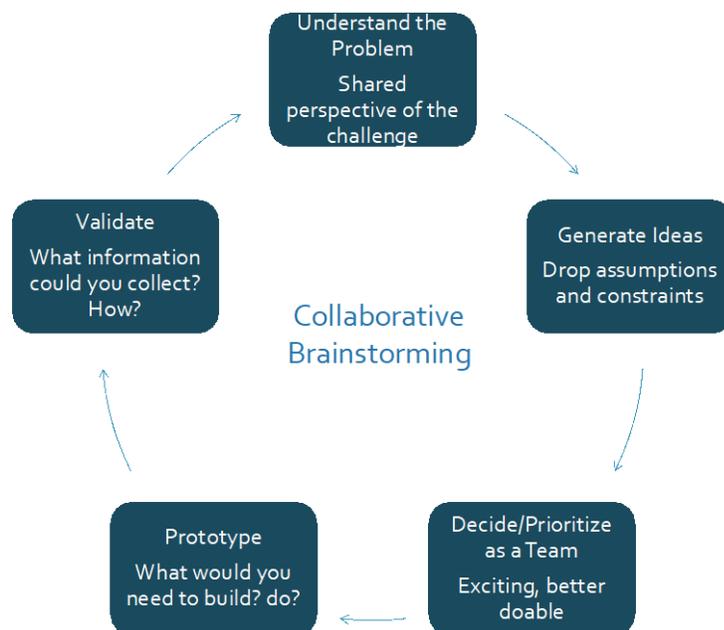
Break the participants into small groups and explain that Collaborative Brainstorming:

- Is a process for generating and identifying innovative ideas
- Brings a team together to find a shared solution
- Removes barriers to creativity and possibility

Ask them to focus on one of the challenges identified in the grid activity and use the following model to develop a list of ideas and possible solutions.

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COLLABORATIVE BRAINSTORMING



50

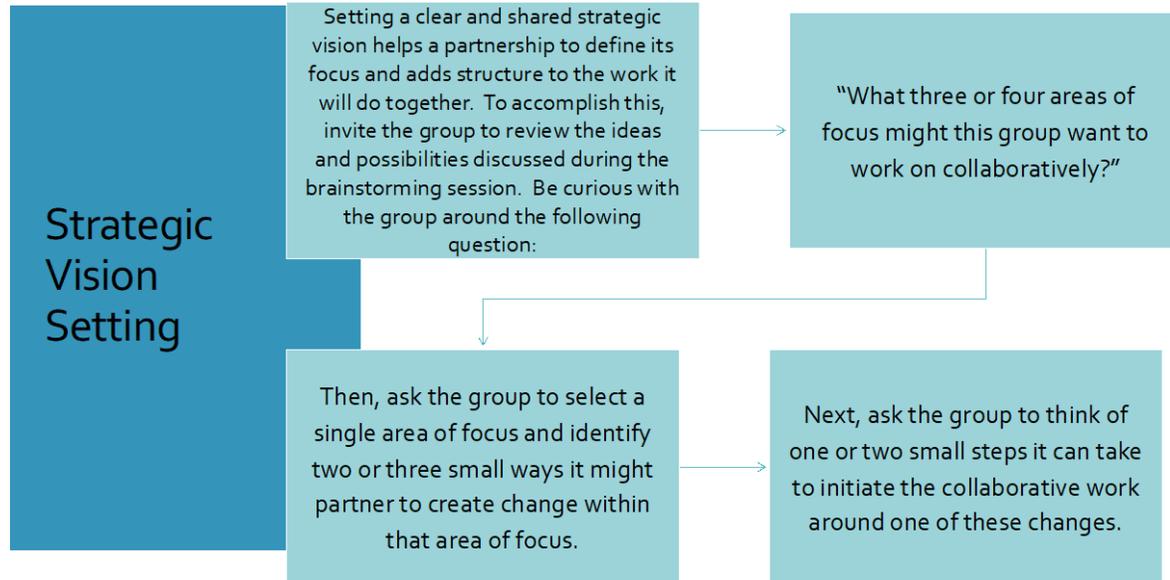
Facilitator Tip (Slides 49-50):

The primary goal of this task is to offer the group an opportunity to experience the process of collaborative thinking and collective problem solving. Exploring multiple ideas and possibilities is preferable to finding the perfect solution. This

step is less about finding answers than it is about sharing in a collaborative process that feels productive and creative.

Reflections from the Pilot:

While engaged in this activity during a pilot session, one group of participants focused on the challenge of providing grant related technical assistance to the many CAC's in the state who receive VOCA funds. Addressing each CAC's questions one by one was time consuming and repetitive. One creative approach that was surfaced involved CAC's sharing their questions during a quarterly regional call with the Chapter. The chapter would then collect and condense the questions and explore them in a conversation with a representative from the VOCA agency. Once answers to the most pressing questions were found, they were shared with the CAC's by the Chapter, streamlining the process for everyone.



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Facilitator Tip (Slide 51):

While intentionally similar to the brainstorming process, this activity serves the deeper purpose of helping the group to look forward toward collaborative partnership in action. As facilitator, encourage the group to consider larger system-level issues that impact the group as a whole. You may need to help the group here to see how collectively they can begin to address such large challenges together. For example, if the group surfaces the challenge of connecting services to a historically marginalized community, walk them through the questions listed here to move from the big picture challenge all the way down to small collaborative efforts that will have direct impact for that community. Be sure to capture all that the group surfaces on a flip chart or through careful notetaking. While you will only drill down to one or two solutions here and now, the other areas of focus can be revisited by the group in a quarterly partnership call or future gathering which has more dedicated time for strategic planning.

SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIP

Supporting teams to successfully come together to develop a collaborative partnership is just the beginning of what is hopefully a long-term relationship. Sustaining and continually strengthening this relationship is an ongoing task. In short, partnerships takes work if they are to continue to operate in a collaborative manner. Offering teams strategies on how they might continue to invest in their partnership will help their collaboration to continue to grow.

Many teams find it helpful to connect on a monthly or quarterly call to keep each other updated and share relevant news and information. Another approach is to host an annual partnership retreat, where members engage in strategic planning and discussions around further opportunities for collaborative work.

Regardless of the approach, the intent here is to find formal and informal ways to stay connected and engaged. These connections help to ensure that relationships continue to strengthen long after the initial partnership building process has ended.

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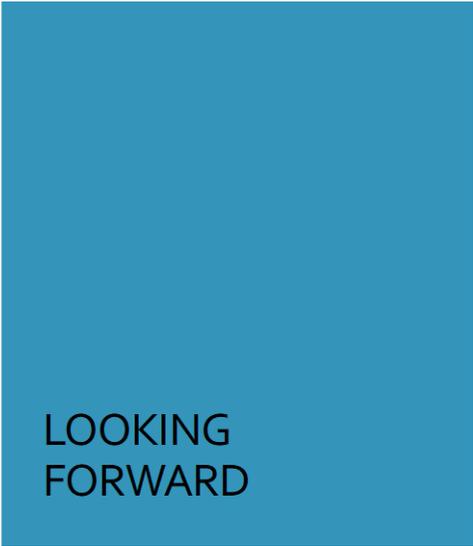
Facilitator Tip (Slide 52):

One closing activity that can help cement the idea of sustaining partnership is to ask each group member to set and share an intention that will continue to foster the collaborative partnership. It could be as simple as “I will connect with one partner in this group by phone each week.” Asking participants to write down their intention on a sticky note or index card, then placing it in a spot they will see it daily can help to ensure their intentions are carried out. It can also be helpful to have the group reflect on what will make it challenging to follow through on their intentions. This helps to acknowledge that partnership takes works and needs to be prioritized if competing demands and obligations are not to interfere.

Collaboration embodies the idea that together we can achieve more. By developing partnerships we can engage the full resources of a system toward finding solutions and creating lasting change.

CAC Chapters and VOCA Administrators, along with other important stakeholders, have an opportunity to enhance access and quality of victim services for children and youth in their states. This toolkit offers a guide to help drive that process.

As more and more VOCA Administrators and CAC Chapters come together to form collaborative partnerships we look forward to continued improvements in the field's ability to meet the full needs of all children and youth victims of crime.



LOOKING
FORWARD

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Reflections from Pilot (Slide 53):

In each of the pilot projects teams came together in impressive ways, building on existing relationships and forming new ones to develop a strong collaborative partnership. In both settings the teams found value in partnership that had not been previously recognized. The teams have setup ongoing calls at regular intervals to keep connected and continue to look for opportunities to build further collaboration. A dedicated opportunity to get to know their partners, learn about what they do, and find ways to work together was reported in both pilots as having tremendous value. There is every indication that these partnerships will continue and that their efforts will result in improved outcomes for children and youth victims of crime.