

OPPORTUNITY COLLABORATION

convene / connect / create

Collaborative Communication Tips

At the Opportunity Collaboration you are responsible for communicating your mission and assuring that other Delegates express theirs. That is how winning collaborations begin.

Themes, Topics, Issues & You

Don't hold back. The best sessions and the captivating private conversations will be about what is important to you and your work.

- As an agent of social change, what are your most significant institutional goals and challenges?
- What is your organization's theory of change and how do you measure results?
- What is your current strategy or business plan for financial sustainability and/or accountable impact?
- What emerging and promising opportunities to reduce poverty do you see in the marketplace?
- What types of partners or expertise do you require or seek to achieve your objectives(s)?
- How are you currently realizing new opportunities for global connections and new alliances?
- Do you have a collaborative or hybrid social change model that other Delegates can replicate or join in partnership?

Remember, the entire purpose of the Opportunity Collaboration is to connect you with new ideas, distribution channels, potential partners, investors and advisors. Come prepared to share best practices, illuminate partnership opportunities or reveal a current passion or innovative idea. Engage your fellow Delegates with your mission.

To continue productive conversations after the Opportunity Collaboration, all Delegates receive a complete Delegate Roster with full contact information. You don't need to exchange or carry business cards.

Ask the Big Question

The Opportunity Collaboration is about listenership as well as about speakership. Ask every Delegate: What is your mission? How can I help you advance it?

Be Yourself. Be Authentic. Be Evocative.

Speak your truth. Share your passion with personal stories – the highs and the lows – and engage fellow Delegates with tangible insights and with direct questions. Make it personal. Make it real.

Be tangible. Provide other Delegates with the information needed to consider collaborating with you. The Opportunity Collaboration is about building coalitions, partnerships, allies, etc., to move your mission forward; thus, sharing specific ideas and insights is critical. If you were considering partnering or backing your organization, what would you want to know about it?

Honor the opinions of other Delegates by respecting the Opportunity Collaboration's non-partisanship, confidentiality and informality.

Wear your name tag at all times. Name tags engage you in every conversation.

Raise the Bar. Aim High.

Every single Delegate shares your commitment to combating poverty. Every Delegate is a seasoned veteran – a distinguished leader -- in the anti-poverty movement. Delegates appreciate comments and presentations that are demanding, challenging and sophisticated.

- Avoid generalities. Employ concrete examples, explain business models and provide clear theories of social change.
- Keep it simple and straightforward. Avoid business or insider jargon.
- Don't talk about "me" and what you have achieved. You would not have been accepted at the Opportunity Collaboration unless you were a person of accomplishment.
- Moving to best practices presumes a few discarded worst practices. Everyone's credibility is enhanced by a little humility.

Talking about Money

Collaboration begins with a candid explication of organizational priorities and needs, including financial needs. Entrepreneurial leaders passionate about their work inevitably talk with equal passion about successes, failures and, yes, financial requirements.

Whether you have money or want money, a few tips about framing intelligent conversations about financial resources:

- Be candid upfront. Funders can't fund everything that is worthy and no anti-poverty program is the panacea. Save yourself and everyone else time by stating your agenda and focus.
- Failure never fails. The Opportunity Collaboration is a genuinely safe harbor because every Delegate is a realistic student of social change, organizational realities and budgeting. Put forth what is working, what has failed and what you have learned. Your candor will surprise some, stun others and impress everyone. As a result, you will win converts to you and your cause.
- See "Ask the Big Question", see above. Begin every conversation with the other Delegate's set of interests, attitudes and values. It will set the stage for an enduring partnership.
- Keep it short. Every Delegate has traveled a road similar to yours and will without difficulty grasp your mission and your organizational challenge. Be concise and get to the point. Don't preach.

Your fellow Delegates, especially funders, are thought leaders and much more than the sum of their bank accounts. Avoid performing wallet biopsies on other Delegates. It disrespects the spirit of the Opportunity Collaboration to monetize every conversation.

Suggestions for Sessions

All sessions are conversational discussions, not lectures, formal presentations or panels. Powerpoint and other electronic aids are not available.

- Even though you aren't giving a structured speech, you still need discussion points.
- At the beginning of each session, Delegates should be asked to introduce themselves.
- If you are leading or contributing to a session, don't start with your own presentation. Start with a provocative question or issue. It is very important to set the tone by asking questions from the very beginning.
- The more your own comments are practical and concrete, rather than theoretical, the better.
- The key to leading a discussion is to not force a particular, pre-determined conversation. In the end, if Delegates are conversing about what is important to them, good results will follow.
- Don't step on other speakers or take the energy from others. Every Delegate's quest is worth knowing.
- Avoid saying the same things that Delegates have heard before or that that can be learned online or at the local library.

Have fun!