

# PRACTICAL REALITIES

## How to manage collaborative partnerships so you can do great work



### Speakers

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### Session Page

<https://ona17.journalists.org/sessions/careeradvice/>

### Collaborative Doc

[bit.ly/ona17collaborate](http://bit.ly/ona17collaborate)

## Resources

### Comparing Models of Collaborative Journalism Report

[www.collaborativejournalism.org/models](http://www.collaborativejournalism.org/models)

### Melody Kramer's list of 56 collaborations you should know about

“Journalists around the world are working together more than ever. Here are 56 examples.”

<https://www.poynter.org/news/journalists-around-world-are-working-together-more-ever-here-are-56-examples>

### Collaborative Journalism Summit post-conference roundup

[www.collaborativejournalism.org](http://www.collaborativejournalism.org)

[www.centerforcooperativemedia.org/collaborativej-wrap-up-links-and-resources-from-the-collaborative-journalism-summit/](http://www.centerforcooperativemedia.org/collaborativej-wrap-up-links-and-resources-from-the-collaborative-journalism-summit/)

### Collaborative Journalism Slack

[bit.ly/collaborativeslack](http://bit.ly/collaborativeslack)

### Project Facet

[www.projectfacet.org](http://www.projectfacet.org)

[www.medium.com/facet](http://www.medium.com/facet)

### ICIJ

[www.icij.org](http://www.icij.org)

## 10 questions before you start collaborating



### 5 Questions to Answer Internally

Within an organization, there are things to check in with your teams to make sure you're starting on strong footing.

What are the goals of the partnership?

What values are important to you or your organization that need to be important to your partners?

What do you need to get out of the partnership?

How will you define success and how will you measure it?

Is everyone involved fully committed to the work that's necessary for success?

### 5 Questions to Answer with Your Partner(s)

Here are the minimum questions to answer with partner(s).

Who is responsible for managing the partnership?

What will the editorial process look like?

What is the communication plan?

What is each partner committing to doing and how will the timelines and deadlines be managed?

Does there need to be a written agreement on any aspect of the partnership?

**It's impossible for us to fit everything collaboration into one session. Here are some of the management questions we discussed while considering which pieces to focus on during our ONA17 session. Feel free to use this as a jumping off point for questions during the session or to help you organize your own collaborative projects.**

## **Design**

Why collaborate? What are the benefits to a collaborative approach and does it make sense for your project?

What are the common kinds of collaborations?

Which model would work best for you?

How will you approach establishing expectations and agree upon deliverables?

How will you approach picking the right evaluation model and metrics for your collaboration type?

How are you going to find the right organisations to partner with?

How will you establish a lead editor or project manager?

How will you potentially collaborate beyond content creation with marketing and engagement?

## **Partnership**

How will you approach aligning publishing workflows and timing?

How will you deal with turnover in assigned teams at either partner?

How will you ensure partners use agreed-upon shared language when referring to the project and give proper credit to other partners?

How will you ensure people in your own organization know you are collaborating (left hand vs. right hand)?

How will you handle when a partner goes rogue?

## **Communication**

What are the factors in picking the platform for shared communication and documentation?

How will you establish shared quality standards and "two-factor publishing"?

How will you plan for busy schedules and maintaining communication?

## **Review**

How will your organization reflect and assess the collaboration afterward.

- Did a collaborative approach help you achieve the impact you set out to make?

- Consider this: would you collaborate with those partners again, and why or not?

How will you document the collaboration?



How will you take what you learned and incorporate it for next time?

# COMPARING MODELS

OF

# COLLABORATIVE JOURNALISM

ARE YOU CONTEMPLATING A COLLABORATIVE REPORTING PROJECT OR PARTNERSHIP? HERE ARE DIFFERENT MODELS OF PARTNERSHIP TO CONSIDER.

	 <p><b>ONE-TIME OR FINITE COLLABORATIVE REPORTING PROJECT</b></p>	 <p><b>ONGOING OR OPEN-ENDED COLLABORATIVE REPORTING PROJECT</b></p>
Partners create content separately	<p><b>TEMPORARY &amp; SEPARATE</b></p> <p><b>GOOD FOR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First-time collaborators</li> <li>• Small outlets looking to expand reach or recognition</li> <li>• High-interest or passion topics</li> </ul>	<p><b>ONGOING &amp; SEPARATE</b></p> <p><b>GOOD FOR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orgs that want greater reach</li> <li>• Topics that require the expertise of multiple orgs</li> <li>• Orgs that need more content than they produce on their own</li> </ul>
Partners work together to create content	<p><b>TEMPORARY &amp; CO-CREATING</b></p> <p><b>GOOD FOR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigative and/or accountability reporting</li> <li>• Time-sensitive projects requiring lots of resources</li> <li>• Leveraging unique newsroom skills in return for something you lack</li> </ul>	<p><b>ONGOING &amp; CO-CREATING</b></p> <p><b>GOOD FOR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orgs in the same region with similar audiences</li> <li>• Orgs that want to supplement resources</li> <li>• Partnerships with resources to hire a collaboration manager</li> </ul>
Partners share content, data, resources at org level	<p><b>TEMPORARY &amp; INTEGRATED</b></p> <p><b>GOOD FOR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects handling large amounts of data</li> <li>• Orgs with experience collaborating</li> <li>• Orgs with buy-in from all levels</li> </ul>	<p><b>ONGOING &amp; INTEGRATED</b></p> <p><b>GOOD FOR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orgs that need back-office support</li> <li>• Orgs that need more access to content</li> <li>• Orgs willing to give away some control over operations</li> </ul>

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# TIP SHEET

FOR

## TEMPORARY & SEPARATE COLLABORATIONS

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Collaborative journalism projects falling into this model are one-time or finite projects where participants create content separately. The content may be aggregated for presentation in one place or presented in several different places (on partners' platforms or across media).

Some projects in this model use a decentralized approach to coordination and content creation, which allows them to dodge the problem of competing organizational cultures and priorities. Others have specific guidelines for what should be produced by participating organizations.

Projects where decisions are not made in advance about who will produce what content tend to run into trouble. Quality control can be an issue, especially when there is not a dedicated project manager or editor.

A common benefit of these types of projects, especially when organizations of different sizes partner together, is that smaller news organizations or contributors gain much greater visibility than they would have otherwise.

Also, when collaborations of this variety are around specific issues – such as a local river or homelessness – they are able to leverage contributor and community passions around such issues.

Examples:

- One River, Many Stories
- SF Homeless Project
- The Chesapeake Bay Initiative

### THIS MODEL PROVIDES FLEXIBILITY IN:



The level of editorial direction



The involvement of the project manager



When, how, and where to distribute stories

### CAST A WIDE NET FOR COLLABORATORS BY ENGAGING:



Local universities and/or high schools



Theater companies and local artists



Local activist groups and civic organizations

### THIS COLLABORATIVE MODEL IS ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR:



First-time collaborators



Small outlets looking to increase name recognition



Topics that generate high interest or passion

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# TIP SHEET

FOR

## TEMPORARY & CO-CREATING COLLABORATIONS

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Collaborative journalism projects falling into this model are one-time or finite projects, where participants work together to create content.

These are necessarily closer and more coordinated projects than those in which participants produce content separately and require more resources, at least during some stages.

When partners work together to create content, there is potential for conflicting priorities at different newsrooms to affect the collaboration. This tension can be mitigated by general excitement about the topic and intense coordination, or by a pre-existing level of trust and high level of rapport between the partners.

Creating content together for a finite project allows partners to create a product greater than what could be created alone, without the need to coordinate long-term.

Examples of this model tend to be investigative or accountability reporting pieces.

Examples:

- Electionland
- Voting Block: NJ
- American Dream Mall

### WORKING CLOSELY WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS CAN LEAD TO:



Conflicting newsroom priorities



Tensions over editorial styles



Communication issues and misunderstandings

### SOLUTIONS FOR ALLEVIATING THOSE TENSIONS INCLUDE:



Generating excitement around the topic



Building trust and rapport among partners



Establishing clear project guidelines and expectations

### THIS COLLABORATIVE MODEL IS ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR:



Investigative and accountability stories



Time-sensitive projects requiring multiple resources



Leveraging unique newsroom skills for others you lack

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# TIP SHEET

FOR

## TEMPORARY & INTEGRATED COLLABORATIONS

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In this type of finite collaboration, partners share data or other resources at the level of the organization. This means they must coordinate closely and have regular contact for the duration of the project.

Perhaps the best example of this type of collaboration to date is the Panama Papers, where participating organizations all had access to the same data and proprietary software and worked together to sort through it, but wrote different stories unique to the outlet that produced them and published on many different sites.

This is the least common type of collaboration, perhaps because it requires an intimate relationship among outlets that are normally competitors. In addition, when organizations are highly integrated for a collaboration, it generally requires buy-in from all levels.

But the payoff for such collaborations is great. Working together in this way allows journalists to do work that would be difficult or impossible for any single newsroom to tackle.

Examples:

- Panama Papers
- The Magnetar Trade
- CrossCheck

### INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIPS TYPICALLY INVOLVE:



Shared data  
and/or proprietary  
software



Regular contact  
between partners



Close coordination  
at the organizational  
level

### COLLABORATIONS AT THIS LEVEL:



Were the least  
common model of  
those studied



Require intimate  
relationships with  
competitive orgs



Need strong project  
management skills

### THIS COLLABORATIVE MODEL IS ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR:



Projects  
handling large  
amounts of data



Organizations  
with experience  
collaborating



Organizations with  
buy-in at all levels

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# TIP SHEET

FOR

## ONGOING & SEPARATE COLLABORATIONS

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Ongoing collaborations in which partners create content separately and share it is one of the oldest and most common methods of journalistic collaboration.

Early arrangements set up by wire services fall into this category, for example. It's also the model that best characterizes contemporary sharing arrangements by big news corporations such as Gannett's USA Today Network, and Cable News Network (CNN).

But smaller news organizations – down to hyperlocal online outlets – are also using this collaborative model.

The common thread between these projects, and others like them, is that the organizations involved reap the benefits of content sharing, while maintaining a high level of autonomy and editorial independence. Perhaps surprisingly, many such arrangements begin informally; some are codified as they mature.

One caution: when the partners are of unequal size or power, the arrangement must be mutually beneficial.

Examples:

- The Marshall Project's Next to Die
- CALmatters
- Charlottesville Tomorrow/Daily Progress

### COMMON THEMES BETWEEN THESE COLLABORATIONS INCLUDE:



Valuable content-sharing benefits



High levels of organizational autonomy



Editorial independence among partners

### SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS TYPICALLY:



Address power imbalances among partners



Formalize project structure as it evolves



Form mutually-beneficial partnerships

### THIS COLLABORATIVE MODEL IS ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR:



Outlets that want greater reach



Topics that require the expertise of multiple orgs



Orgs that need more content than they produce alone



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# TIP SHEET

FOR

## ONGOING & TOGETHER COLLABORATIONS

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In this model, partners are involved in an ongoing collaboration where they work together to create content.

This kind of collaboration often involves regular editorial meetings or calls, and there is typically a single person in an oversight role who regularly communicates with the group.

Collaborations using this model see benefits such as efficiencies created by letting one reporter cover an event and having them share notes with other partners. Some may also have the collaboration manager edit a shared document that each individual station may have otherwise edited individually.

This type of project also allows reporters to gain insights from other geographical locations or topic areas that they would not have had access to working alone.

Cautionary note: these collaborations require a high level of trust among partners, and usually evolve over time, requiring flexibility.

Examples:

- Detroit Journalism Cooperative
- Alaska's Energy Desk
- Upstate Insight

### THESE COLLABORATIONS OFTEN INVOLVE:



High levels of trust among partners



Regular editorial meetings or calls



A designated collaboration manager

### BENEFITS OF THESE COLLABORATIONS INCLUDE:



More efficient reporting efforts



A more streamlined editing process



Better access to other reporting areas and topics

### THIS COLLABORATIVE MODEL IS ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR:



Orgs in same region with similar audiences



Orgs that want to supplement their resources



Those who can afford to hire a project manager

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### COMMON THEMES BETWEEN THESE COLLABORATIONS INCLUDE:



Valuable content-sharing benefits



High levels of organizational autonomy



Editorial independence among partners

### SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS TYPICALLY:



Address power imbalances among partners



Formalize project structure as it evolves



Form mutually-beneficial partnerships

### THIS COLLABORATIVE MODEL IS ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR:



Outlets that want greater reach



Topics that require the expertise of multiple orgs



Orgs that need more content than they produce alone