

## UNCG: Standards and Principles

October 13, 2009

### **Participants:**

Jill Purdy  
Steve Greenwood  
Roslyn Owen  
Tim Hicks  
Paul Alexander  
Frank Dukes  
Susan Schultz  
Anat Cabili  
Elaine Hallmark  
Greg Wolf  
Tim McCabe  
Chris Carlson  
Cat McGinnis  
Sarah Giles

### **Objectives**

Project taken on by a small group of UNCG members to begin developing a set of standards for centers and principles for collaborative governance that the Network could continue working on as a larger group, with the aim of adopting them.

Jill Purdy (Univ of Washington, affiliated with Ruckelshaus Center) provided background on her work in examining accountability / standards for centers themselves as organizations:

- Centers behave in a certain way, are guided by a set of ethical principles, usually attached to general university structure, which can be remote / distant.
- Aim is to make sure we are credible and legitimate in our centers.
- Clients aren't in a position to evaluate centers' standards
- Issues of perception and trust – a set of standards means we're more likely to do the right thing and be perceived as doing the right thing
- A set of standards provide something to fall back on in gray areas / overwhelmed

### **PART 1: Accountability Principles – Jill gave a brief over view of four common standards**

1. Transparency – Is this simply an obligation to let people see info / data? Or be more assertive in pushing info out? What info should we routinely share to continue to reaffirm trust relationship?
2. Conflicts of Interest - easier to see others than your own! Challenge if your funding comes from a govt. agency or univ. budget founded by a govt that has a stake in issue / project.

### 3. Confidentiality - ethical components more than legal

Questions / Responses around confidentiality:

- What has the public policy sector of ACR done in terms of confidentiality?
  - ACR deals with the practice, here we're talking about what the center as an org would do
- What do universities have about confidentiality? What provisions do centers have w/ employees
  - As a public agency, our records can be requested - then hard to maintain confidentiality
  - whatever standard we have to subject to Sunshine laws, if you're a public entity

4. Appropriate Policies - apply to policies regarding collaborative governance work - circumstances under which info might be disclosed, for example. A common challenge is mission drift / creep. When opportunities become available, it's easy to get diverted from original mission, and you don't want to drift without thought.

### **General Discussion:**

Participants discussed how creating a set of standards for members would be beneficial:

- Teaching: a set of standards would be useful to guide students working on a project, to understand the field better
- Service: sharing standards with partners in the public realm would help the public get to know a center as a center / organization and show how organized you are to address issues. It would also serve as a means to introducing an organization as a whole to the community.
- Network level: In the absence of regulatory mechanisms, a UNCG set of standards would be a collective set and allow the Network to monitor its members in adhering to standards; help assure people that you're not just answering to yourself but to others; and ultimately, UNCG promotes c-gov approaches to a wide range of issues that the standards could be applied to.
- Funding: Raises credibility with funders.
- Contribution to the field: Can help a lot of the community collaborative discussions and would be a real contribution on the part of UNCG

The issue of how the Network would hold its members accountable or how to self-regulate to demonstrate that members / potential members are operating under the agreed-upon standards arose:

- Network might adopt the principles and might ask its members to agree to adopt some accountability statement that meets these principles - would have to do something more specific to each university. Policing might just be to make sure that a center has a statement
- Create some mechanisms that would create a structure of accountability to determine what we can currently commit to. Could be an evaluation implement at the end of a project for a stakeholder to fill out and document that certain standards were shown / followed
- Possible levels of accountability:
  - Level 1 (base): creating / documenting a statement - even w/ no enforcement, just having a statement creates some kind of internal commitment
  - Level 2: use more of a discourse approach to keep statement alive in people's minds, could review annually what the principles are and initiate discussion on them
  - Level 3: Simple report on one example / case where people have had to access / apply these standards
  - Level 4: more formal written report of how people have worked with the principles within the past year
  - Other levels? How deep do we want to go?

**Next steps:**

Participants determined that there are two levels at which these standards could be carried forward – the Network level and the institutional level. Someone suggested it would be helpful to tee-up the conversation by asking, “What would your center have to do differently to conform with these standards?”

As to continuing this discussion in the future: each principle could be discussed (what does it mean, how would you do it, examples) and second, we could discuss what level of accountability / enforcement the Network would want to have. One way to proceed would be to make these accountability principles a subject for annual discussion at UNCG annual meetings.

- Provide a way for members to give feedback on both levels prior to UNCG 2010 conference, offer opportunity for comment and discuss on-line
- Use conference as opportunity to put something in front of the members and gauge interest in Network-wide adoption
- Create a preamble to help members understand rationale / benefits
- Ask members to think about what they would have to do differently to be in conformance with the standards

- Share examples of what centers are already doing to comply with whatever existing standards they have / follow

A question was raised about UNCG 's decision-making provisions and how we would go about adopting these principles, whether it would be a consensus-decision making process? The Network Charter reads: "At any regular or special meeting, if a majority so requires, any question may be voted upon in the manner and style appropriate to the decision. Consensus will be sought on issues of program priorities and Network direction; other decisions can be made by simple majority."

## **PART 2: Principles of Collaborative Governance**

### **Background**

Jill shared examples from a variety of other organizations in the field on the principles for collaborative governance that they've put together and pointed out commonalities, shared characteristics, and fundamental assumptions across organizations. Different expectations are often linked to an organization's disciplinary focus, specific audience or particular work / project.

The goal in this part of the discussion is to begin thinking about whether the Network wants such a set of principles?

### **General Discussion**

Participants felt that even if the Network didn't end up adopting a set of principles for collaborative governance, the discussion itself would be useful for members in highlighting similarities, differences, sources of tension, and, most importantly, articulating what we have in common in our work. Adopting a set of agreed upon standards could be a tremendous power and advantage to us as a network, particularly in dealing with federal initiatives in this area. Some members expressed concern that standardization might lead to a lack of innovation for the Network.

The group also agreed that further discussions with the larger Network ought to address adopting standards for individual practitioners within centers (which already exist and don't necessarily need to be reinvented) vs. adopting standards on the Network level (which may be a broader set and valuable in talking about the common ground the different members do share). Since many members of the Network are also members of other groups (ACR, NCDD) that consider standards for individual practice, those discussions will go on in other places and members are a part of those discussions.

Participants then engaged in a discussion about what member centers have in common that makes something collaborative governance and what different centers may mean when they use the term "collaborative governance."

Participants agreed that it would be helpful to then have three levels of conversation in moving forward: 1. a discussion of the definition of collaborative governance; 2. a discussion of the kinds of principles that need to underlie collaborative practices; 3. a

discussion about a common ground or core across the centers in their views of those principles.

**Next steps:**

- Send out a query about definitions of collaborative governance w/ options for reaction
- Make all principles accessible to wider membership and ask which are the most important and if there are any missing
- Formulate sets of primary principles and secondary principles (Chris, Elaine, Jill)
- Ask centers what they think would be the benefit of enunciating a set of principles to guide the practice of collaborative governance
- Between now and Spring 2010 meeting – host an on-line discussion of those sets (Sarah)