

Accountability Standards and Collaborative Governance Principles for University Centers

Background and Rationale

UNCG members do a lot of different things. However one common thread is that our member organizations exist to create some public benefit. As such, we have a responsibility to hold ourselves accountable to those we serve, whether they are students, community members, policymakers, or other stakeholders. To be accountable means to take responsibility for one's actions in terms of both effectiveness (impact) and efficiency (use of resources). Typically the stakeholders we serve are not organized in a way that allows them to evaluate us, thus we must regulate ourselves and take responsibility for educating our constituents about what we do.

While we firmly believe that UNCG members operate in an accountable manner, self-regulation by individual organizations raises questions about selfish motives and subjective measures. Collective self-regulation offers some benefits in that collective standards tend to be more objective, and they create greater legitimacy for the organizations that adopt them (hence the proliferation of certifications and accreditations).

In an effort to support and promote the accountability of UNCG members, we have compiled a group of accountability standards for UNCG members to consider. These are listed below in two main categories. The first is a set of broad, general administrative principles that apply broadly to nonprofits, governmental organizations, and corporations. The second are standards more specifically applicable to the kinds of activities UNCG members engage in. Perhaps it is not surprising that there is considerable overlap between the principles of running an organization well and the principles that underlie collaborative governance processes.

Proposal

That UNCG consider adopting a set of principles and propose that members consider adopting relevant standards to govern their operations as well as their practice.

Definitions

Principles – statements of values

Standards - specific guidance about how to ensure that the values or principles are followed

Collaborative governance -

- PCI - Collaborative governance means leaders engaging with all sectors—public, private, non-profit, citizens, and others—to develop effective, lasting solutions to public problems that go beyond what any sector could achieve on its own.
- Ansell and Gash, UC Berkeley - Collaborative governance, as it has come to be known, brings public and private stakeholders together in collective forums with public agencies to engage in consensus-oriented decision making.
- Lisa Bingham, Open Government Dialogue, NAPA - Collaborative governance includes public involvement or civic engagement, collaboration with stakeholder groups, collaborative public management, and dispute resolution with citizens and stakeholders. It can occur upstream in policy-making, midstream in policy implementation, and downstream in policy enforcement.

Principle	Meaning	Examples of Standards
Transparency	<p>For the organization: The center openly communicates its philosophy, mission, activities and funding to the public. Changes are also communicated. Input and feedback is sought. Evaluations of the center’s effectiveness and efficiency are shared.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State sunshine or public disclosure laws • Open meeting laws • Annual reports
	<p>For collaborative governance practice: Centers act to ensure that decision making processes take place in the public eye and that processes are clear to participants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington’s policy on transparency and confidentiality (<i>example not provided</i>)
Impartiality / Neutrality	<p>For the organization: The center strives to remain unbiased and objective in all its dealings. The center does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest. Its relationships with individuals and other organizations are divulged (e.g. foundation or grant funding, names of board members and sponsors). Its independence (or lack thereof) from the university is communicated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict of interest policy
	<p>For collaborative governance practice: Centers act to ensure that processes conducted under its auspices are held in an unbiased environment and conducted in a manner that ensures fairness and balance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral ground rules
Confidentiality	<p>For the organization: The center holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The center’s legal obligations to make information public are communicated. Clarifies how records are managed, what information is routinely made public (e.g. clients) and how other information might be made public (e.g. when required by the discovery process in a lawsuit).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Sunshine laws • MODR Press Policy • NC State Confidentiality policy
	<p>For collaborative governance practice: Centers act to protect the confidentiality of private communications with any of the participants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington’s “applied research” clause
Appropriate Policies to Guide Practice	<p>For the organization: The center has established policies that guide its practice in vital areas such as managing finances, hiring and evaluating staff, and managing its programs. Standards for the conduct of processes, including collaborative governance, should be established to guide practice within the center.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MODR Press Policy • CSU Sacramento policy for teaming with outside providers
	<p>For collaborative governance practice: The center has policies guiding practice, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity and inclusiveness – diverse interests and all who are needed to work on the issue must be present or represented • Effectiveness and efficiency - processes are designed and conducted to produce outcomes that make practical sense • Responsiveness – all participants’ concerns are authentically addressed • Consensus-Based - where decision making is the objective, the process seeks consensus rather than majority rule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington’s Canons of Practice • MODR’s Rules on Dispute Resolution