

# TOOLS & PRACTICES

## TEAM WORK

### Collaborate: 5 ideas to consider

by Paul Born

**When organizations attempt to develop large-scale collaborations in an effort to impact systemic change, two issues typically arise early in the discussions. The first is a desire to reach out to organizations that are alike. Non-profits mainly want to talk to other non-profits, businesses want to talk to businesses and public sector organizations and governments seek the same. The second issue is that organizational leaders want to move to action quickly**

without taking the time to engage broadly.

We seek to work first with those we know best because it is easier and because we want to get our “own house” in order, ensuring everyone is on the same page before we reach out.

When we work in single-sector engagement for large-scale change we often get stuck on technicalities or worse, we fine-tune what we already have in common.

My advice to those holding large-scale conversations is to reach out to diverse groups – all at the same time. The synergy of ideas creates an excitement and builds a momentum when diverse groups are engaged. Here are five ideas to consider for collaboration:

# 1

**Diversity encourages creativity.** Diversity builds new relationships. Diversity opens doors to new possibilities. Allow for emergence in planning processes. Once members of your diverse team get to know each other they will become engaged and their contribution value increases.

# 4

**Communication is critical** in all engagement strategies. Build a database of names from day one. Grow it as you engage your team and their networks. Create a communication piece, such as a newsletter with updates and stories, that is shared regularly to capture the excitement.

# 2

**Multi-sector teams are more open to discovery** than single-sector teams. Once a team is formed, give members time to tell their stories before moving into planning. Then wait for the miracle of engagement.

# 5

When you build a multi-sector team you can **worry less about formal consultative processes.** Once people know each other's stories they draw from them to offer ideas.

# 3

**Start by engaging the agencies already working on the issue you want to address.** In many cases, these agencies will be able to identify business and government leaders willing to help.

*Paul Born is the co-founder and president of the Tamarack Institute. See his feature article, "When we learn and change together," on page 24.*