



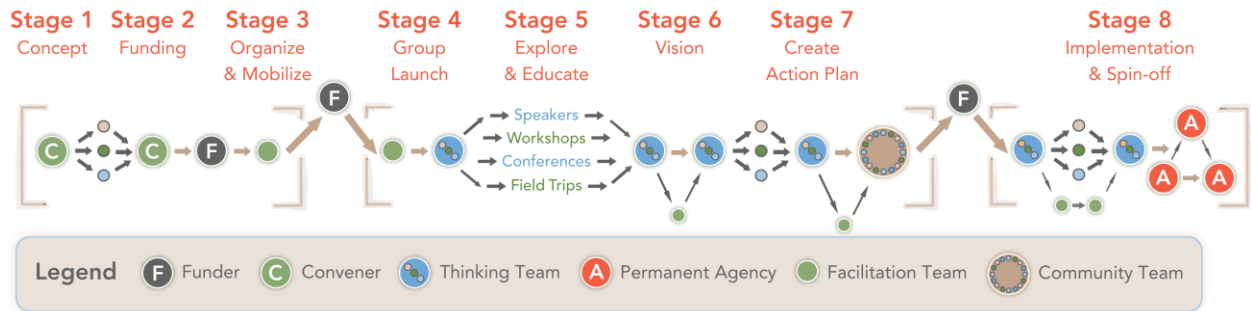
# Collaborative Leaders Network

## A Collaboration Incubator

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# A Collaboration Incubator



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The intention of this strategy is to successfully launch collaborative initiatives that will help Kauai resolve some of its challenges and find a permanent home for each of the projects that is incubated.

## Overview

Kauai Planning & Action Alliance (KPAA) is a nonprofit organization that serves as a neutral convener and facilitator, bringing together diverse groups to achieve targeted community goals that are drawn from the *Kauai General Plan*.

KPAA identifies those issues that could benefit from collaborative processes and that have the potential of yielding new ideas and solutions to challenges the island faces. As a collaboration incubator, KPAA launches two or three new multi-stakeholder initiatives each year, and has the organizational flexibility to be involved to different degrees, depending on a project’s need: conceiver, convener, or interim manager.

Key community leaders, business people, agency leaders, and citizens with a stake in the outcome are brought together to engage in a collaborative process that can vary in length from months to years and result in a shared vision and viable action plan.

*In a collaboration incubator, the focus is on finding a permanent home for each project once it has been incubated.*

## Critical Success Factors

- Track the key issues and important challenges in the community.
- Maintain ties to many facets of the community by participating on task forces and boards, attending community meetings, etc.



- Create a large network of people who can be encouraged to participate in initiatives and who can provide support when needed.
- Build trust in the integrity and results of the collaboration process on the part of key leaders and the community at large.
- Establish strong, ongoing relationships with funders, elected officials, and key community leaders.
- Demonstrate commitment to implementation by finding a permanent home for the activities and, at least initially, monitoring and reporting on the progress of activities implemented.

### **Dilemmas (strategy-wide)**

#### **The collaboration process is not driven by subject matter experts.**

Subject matter experts may be much more knowledgeable about the topic but, for whatever reason, are not at the forefront of addressing the problem. There may have been previous attempts to take action, but with limited success. The task of the collaboration incubator becomes one of bringing these people to the table, giving credit and appreciation for the efforts already undertaken, and adding others who can advance the discussion through their perspectives and information.

#### **It's a challenge to maintain commitment beyond planning.**

A number of people enjoy the creativity of the discussion and planning phase and seem to be too busy to participate when action is needed. There is a need to talk about expectations upfront and identify participants who will remain committed to the effort beyond planning and well into the action plan. Creating ongoing opportunities for decision making is one way to help participants feel that their continued attendance is making a difference.



## Stage 1: Concept

Identify an issue in the community that has the potential to benefit from a collaborative process, and which is likely to engage participants and garner long-term support for implementing solutions.

### Overview

Drawing on the community's vision, problem areas on Kauai are individually evaluated for: their appropriateness as a strategic point of intervention; their potential for benefitting from a collaborative effort; their alignment with KPAA's mission and values; as well as the likelihood of attracting funding and producing tangible results and positive action.

The issues need to be compelling enough to interest those who can contribute to solutions as well as those who might be involved in implementing the solutions long-term. As many issues are interrelated, tackling one can spark action toward resolving others, and should be considered for this domino effect.

Once an issue has been identified, an initial, pre-budget case statement is developed to help build support for the collaboration. The planning should include individuals from those organizations or agencies that might consider taking on long-term responsibilities likely to result from the collaborative process.

This stage differs from initial stages in many strategies, in that an organization that is not tied to the subject matter takes the lead in formulating the strategic issue and garnering support for the process from partners. This level of involvement exceeds that of most conveners.

*The viability of a collaboration is always contingent  
on the availability of project leadership to participate in and sustain it.*

### Stage 1: Key Tasks

- **Conduct an initial (pre-funded) problem assessment/analysis to confirm viability.**
  - Draw on the expertise and viewpoints of individual key leaders of valuable groups to consider the goal and determine one or more related issues or problems that could be a viable.
- **Generate ideas for issues and screen each to determine its viability for collaboration.**

A viable issue for collaboration meets these criteria:

  - Advances community vision and addresses organizational goals
  - Avoids duplication of existing efforts
  - Offers potential for partnering with other organizations and agencies
  - Has the chance of being funded
  - Is likely to attract interest in participating among issue stakeholders



- Is likely to result in specific actions that can be undertaken within the next two to three years
- Attracts individuals/organizations that may be willing to implement actions
- Has the potential to generate additional projects related to the community vision

- **Select the strategic issue and develop initial strategies.**
  - KPAA develops a preliminary plan that: outlines the overall purpose of the collaboration; identifies the participants who should be involved; suggests the individuals or organizations that might implement the action plan created; and proposes a draft of the collaborative process design. The plan also identifies likely champions for the process as measured by their credibility and/or knowledge to attract funding and participants to the collaboration. Modifications can be made based on feedback of stakeholders.
- **Begin to build support for a process to tackle the issue.**
  - A pre-budget case statement includes a definition of the problem and outlines the benefits of collaboration in a way that is easily communicated and compelling to others. Conversations with the KPAA board of directors, elected officials, funders, and other key stakeholders are designed to generate support for and inform the case statement.

### Stage 1: Dilemmas

- **There are vague or excessively general project purposes or outcomes in the case statement.**  
The more specific the case statement, the greater likelihood of generating support. Where feedback suggests something could be made even clearer, it should be reworked.
- **There is lack of agreement at this stage among key stakeholders about process purpose or intended process outputs.**  
It's risky to move forward until stakeholders important to the process are on board. Look for areas of agreement; consider possible project modifications if necessary.
- **There is an unwillingness to let go of a project that doesn't generate required interested and support from stakeholders.**  
If the timing isn't right, it's better to let go of the project for the time being.
- **There is a change in political administration before the collaboration work is completed, yet political support is needed to move forward on the outcomes.**  
It's important to work with the new administration as soon as possible to build support for the effort. Try to avoid the perception that the project was directly tied to the previous administration. Find a way to let the new administration take some credit for the project.



- **While there is value to having a community organization convene a collaborative process, the process may have no legal authority or mandate.**  
Securing key stakeholder support helps mitigate the importance of this. The collaborative leadership group needs to understand the limits of its authority up front and can be encouraged to think about how to gain authority, for example, through advocacy.
- **Some collaborative processes attempt to take on too much.**  
The clearer and more specific the issue to be tackled, the greater the likelihood for success. That doesn't mean big issues shouldn't be tackled. Big issues – like “reform public education” or “reduce substance abuse” – could benefit from collaborative processes, but they need sufficient time and resources.

### Stage 1: Tips

- Before getting started, conduct an assessment of past, current, or planned processes that could impact or conflict with the planned collaboration. If there were past processes, what worked? What didn't? Did the process result in action? What was the outcome? Who was involved?
- Formalize commitments of potential champions. Try to secure written endorsements that could be used with funders or to attract collaboration participants.
- If the basic concept has already been endorsed by the board as part of the annual program of work, then the task is simply to keep the board informed. If, however, the concept under consideration was not previously endorsed by the board, then a more extended process might be required to obtain board support.

### Stage 1: Vignettes

People on Kauai began to be concerned about what was seen as uncontrolled growth: growth was not keeping pace with the island's infrastructure, landscapes were being changed forever, traffic problems developed. There was growing interest among several key leaders to begin using principles of sustainability as a basis for planning. At the same time, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) requested proposals from communities wishing to utilize the services of a volunteer Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) to address planning issues. With the County of Kauai Planning Department, County Council, and Lihue Business Association, it was agreed that KPAA would serve as the coordinating agency and submit a proposal to develop a new strategy for sustainable community planning, using Lihue as the focus.

An initial case statement was created to garner support for the project, especially with regard to funds to meet the matching grant requirement and a commitment that county personnel would participate in the project. The case statement proved valuable in communicating the concept to the county administration and departments.



Once support was secured, the proposal was developed. It included: formation of a steering committee to oversee the one-year project; an initial site visit and scoping session by the AIA; a two-day charrette with stakeholders conducted by the AIA Sustainable Design Assessment Team; two public town hall meetings to secure additional input for the team's recommendations; and preparation of a report by the team. The proposal was approved by the AIA and the effort was launched.



## Stage 2: Funding

Secure sufficient funding to ensure that a thoughtful and comprehensive collaborative process will be adequately resourced.

### Overview

An adequate level of funding positions an initiative to succeed. Sometimes that means securing the entire financial commitment at the front end; other times it means staging the project and returning at a later time for a “next phase” of funding.

Funders are sometimes hesitant to support planning projects where the execution of the plan is not a part of the process. If one or more organizations that might serve as a permanent home for implementing the initiative can be identified at the concept stage, this can offer greater assurance to potential funders that the project is likely to be successful and have long-term impact.

An initial process design framework is also developed in this stage as part of the funding proposal.

*Funders often look for projects that demonstrate solid partnerships and that have a likelihood of sustainability once the funded project ends.*

### Stage 2: Key Tasks

- **Create a proposal and identify funders for the collaboration.**
  - Fully conceptualize the project, including project goals, activities, timelines, and budget.
  - Identify funding sources whose interests align with and are a likely match for the collaboration concept, including individuals, foundations, and businesses or government agencies supporting related issues.
  - Develop a detailed proposal tailored to the funder’s requirements.
  - Seek feedback on the proposal from trusted colleagues: Is the problem clear? Is the need for action compelling? Will the process outlined achieve desired results? Is the budget realistic?
- **Develop support for the proposal.**
  - Seek assistance from those with links to the funders – such as board members or community leaders – to advocate for the collaboration in person, by phone, or through testimonials that can be sent.
  - Secure letters of support from those impacted by the issue or those who might participate in the process, if appropriate.





- **Finalize funding.**

- Be prepared to respond if funders ask what you will do if only a portion of the funding request is approved: Scale back the process? Pursue other sources?
- It may be necessary to negotiate the terms of the contract with the funder during the contract development phase.
- If funding is secured for fewer than all phases of the project, alert the funder that requests for additional funding may be forthcoming based on the outcome of the initial phases.
- If only partial funding is secured, determine whether the project can be phased, with the funded phase as a stand-alone project; then pursue additional funding for subsequent phases.

## **Stage 2: Checklists**

### **Funding Checklist**

Can a strong case be made to demonstrate the need for the collaborative leadership project?

Has support from key leaders been secured?

Have public and private funding sources been researched?

Does the project meet the funder's priorities and criteria?

Have testimonials, quotes, and/or letters of endorsement from key leaders been secured?

Has a phased approach been considered if the funder offers only partial support?

Is negotiation needed on other issues (i.e., timeline)?

Have the grant reporting requirements been clarified?

Once funding is secured, has the donor been thanked?

If the funder is willing to be recognized publicly, has publicity about the grant been distributed to media and other distribution outlets? In what other ways will the funder be recognized?

Is it appropriate to have the funder at the Group Launch (Stage 4)?

Has the funder been informed when special milestones have been achieved?



\_\_\_ Is it appropriate to have the funder at the concluding celebration?

## Stage 2: Dilemmas

- **Key stakeholder support for the project is lackluster.**  
At this stage, it's important to be clear about the original vision but also stay open-minded and flexible. If support isn't forthcoming, explore whether the idea isn't being communicated effectively, or if another approach would be better, or if the timing isn't right. Be ready to walk away from the concept – or at least table it – if there is insufficient support.
- **Finding the right funders for a collaborative process can be a challenge.**  
Consider: What is their motivation to provide support? What do the funders need to get out of the collaboration? Can they allow the outcome to unfold without trying to influence it? Funders often look for projects that demonstrate solid partnerships and that have a likelihood of sustainability once the funded project ends.
- **Cost of proposed collaboration can't be determined with certainty until the final design (Stage 3), so it's difficult for the convener to determine if the budget accurately reflects the resources needed.**  
From the start, let the funder(s) know that there may have to be some adjustments in the process once the project gets underway. Negotiate for a contingency fund in the event additional assistance or meetings are needed.
- **Expectations about time or other necessary resource commitments are unrealistic.**  
The time needed to organize and mobilize is often underestimated. Building a base of support and recruiting participants takes time. It's important to be realistic and to recognize that complex processes take time if they are to be transformative. Get advice from others who have developed budgets for collaborative processes.
- **Funding for the entire project cannot be secured.**  
If complete funding cannot be secured, consider approaching the project in a phased way. For example, ask for funding for planning and then ask for funds to create the action plan. Use the completed action plan to help secure funding for the next phase. If multiple funders are involved, keep them updated on funding that's been secured and on efforts being made to raise the remainder. Alternatively, consider whether the project can be scaled back without jeopardizing the likelihood for a successful outcome.



## Stage 3: Organize and Mobilize

Develop a resource infrastructure; conduct additional research; design a comprehensive process; and secure commitments to participate.

### Overview

Once key leaders have endorsed the project and funding is in place, efforts begin to organize the collaboration process and build a broader base of support. Broadening support often involves talking one-on-one with those who will be participating in or securing participation for the process. It may also call for additional exploration and assessment of the issue.

There are four primary goals for this stage:

- Develop resource infrastructure (including advisers, information providers, technical support, and an outside facilitator, if needed).
- Conduct additional research needed.
- Design a comprehensive process.
- Secure commitments to participate.

Generally, the best processes are designed with considerable detail, along with some built-in flexibility to respond to changing circumstances.

*Key stakeholder input is a valuable element of this stage. Their support is often needed for the collaboration to be successful, even if they are not involved as participants.*

### Stage 3: Key Tasks

- **Build support for the collaboration among those who will be involved in or impacted by the issue.**
  - Determine who might be involved in the collaboration in some way: technical and cultural advisers; major stakeholders at the policy, program and issue level; and potential implementers of actions that may result.
  - Identify and meet with key stakeholders at the government agency, nonprofit, and community level to more fully explore the issue and discuss possible participants from a variety of perspectives. Who should be involved in the collaboration process? Are there any roadblocks or conflicts they can foresee?
  - Request support and assistance from those who will be called on to provide or receive information over the life of the process, and ensure they understand the purpose of the collaboration. Determine if a more formal commitment, such as a Memorandum of Agreement, will be needed.
- **Conduct or contract for additional research on the issue, if needed.**
  - Follow-up on any additional research that may be needed (as gleaned from insights



gained during the support-building phase).

- **Create a detailed project plan.**
  - Consider the process that should be used by the group to enable them to: understand and probe the issue; consider causes, effects, and possible options; determine a plan for action based on the group's best thinking; and create specific strategies to execute the plans developed. The framework for the plan is created before the content is added.
  - Create a project plan that includes group structure, anticipated meeting frequency, process activities, possible outcomes, timelines, stakeholders, and logistical needs.
- **Determine if an outside facilitator is needed and, if so, finalize contract for professional services.**
  - For reasons that may have to do with neutrality, time, particular qualifications, it is sometimes necessary to retain the services of an outside facilitator.
- **Finalize core group participant list.**
  - Include in the group of participants some representatives of organizations that may be involved in executing the plans that are developed.
- **Develop list of outside advisers.**
  - Identify resource people with technical, professional, community or cultural expertise who could be called upon to participate as needed to assist during the process and determine how their involvement should be structured. Secure their services as needed.
- **Mobilize collaboration participants and the support needed for the process.**
  - Extend invitations to those who will be part of the collaboration process; provide background materials that support the need for the collaboration, express the value of their involvement, and outline the extent of their commitment during the process. Use supportive community leaders as advocates for those who may be resistant or need additional encouragement.
  - Secure commitment to participate from those invited to be members of the collaboration leadership group.
- **Create a draft charter.**
  - Charter should include project purpose, goals, scope, authority and decision making, roles and responsibilities, process design, project logistics, and ground rules. This draft document is created in advance for the group to discuss, revise, and endorse at the launch.
- **Create a draft communications and public relations plan.**
  - Plan should outline how information about meetings will be distributed, how and with whom notes will be shared, who will speak to the media, how community meetings will



be handled, and all issues relevant to communicating with the larger community in regard to the collaboration process.

### Stage 3: Challenges

- **Finding a meeting site that accommodates everyone's need can be difficult.**  
Ideally, the site should provide an environment that fosters good communication and provides: wall space to post easel paper and charts; good natural light (along with the ability to be darkened for computer presentations); tables and seating that can be moved for working in smaller work groups; and space for food and drink. Even better is a location with expansive, stunning surroundings ... making it difficult to think small.
- **There is an increasing expectation for "green" meetings.**  
While it takes more effort to organize, consideration should be given to making a meeting as green as possible – especially if working on sustainability issues! See the Tools section for some easy tips on BlueGreen meetings.
- **In inviting participants, who carries the message is often important.**  
Key leaders can be great allies in securing the involvement of collaboration participants, especially if they are peers. The key leader can champion the project and convey the value of participation.
- **Decisions are needed about how cultural issues will be incorporated into the meetings.**  
*A pule* is often a good way to honor the host culture and meeting location. Calling upon a *kupuna* from the area where the meeting is held may mitigate sensitivities about who offers the *pule*.
- **Communication procedures for meetings need to be developed.**  
How will agendas and meeting materials be distributed? If by email, confirm that this is convenient for everyone who has accepted the invitation to participate. Will hard copies also be available?
- **Legal implications of open meetings law may need to be considered.**  
If the collaboration is government funded, regulations of the Sunshine Law may apply. Procedures may need to be established for posting the meeting notices publicly well in advance of the meetings and for making meeting minutes available to the public.

### Stage 3: Tools

#### Sample Charter

[CAC Charter](#)

#### Letter of Commitment

[CAC Charter Commitment Form](#)

#### BlueGreen Meetings



While the following list refers to larger conferences and meetings where a hotel stay may be involved, the tips provide ideas that could be applied to smaller meetings such as collaborative leadership sessions.

**Source:** Oceans Blue Foundation,  
<http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org/HostsAndPlanners/10EasyTips.htm>

### Stage 3: Vignette

After assessing the viability of Kauai's community indicators project and securing key leaders and the financial support needed, Kauai Planning & Action Alliance (KPAA) created a case statement that outlined the proposed process with these elements:

- *Project scope and purpose.* The scope and purpose of the project was clearly defined, and the project was given a name. The purpose was expanded beyond simply reporting on progress to include indicator measures on important public issues.
- *Formation of a Community Indicators Advisory Committee.* A committee composed of nonprofits, community groups, and state and county agencies from different island locations and sectors was formed to develop and guide the process. The committee was given the authority to define the indicators to be measured and many of the groups and agencies invited would also provide the data for the resulting report. A draft charter was developed with the intention that it would be ratified by the advisory committee.
- *Criteria for indicator selection.* Based on the research done during the assessment phase, criteria for selecting indicators were drafted and subsequently confirmed with the advisory committee. The selection criteria were for indicators that:
  - Would matter to the community
  - Would be relevant to public policy-making
  - Would motivate the public to action and engage the media
  - Would make use of information that is obtainable
  - Would be measurable, understandable, reliable, timely, and capable of showing change over time
- *Community input on draft indicators.* Once the initial set of draft indicators was established by the advisory committee, feedback sessions were planned for three geographic areas of the island to solicit feedback on the indicators to determine if these reflected the issues that mattered most to Kauaians.
- *A call to action.* The report included recommendations for the island's decision makers that focused on activities they could undertake to ensure that trends moved in a desired direction.
- *Frequency of publication.* The indicators report would be updated and published biennially.
- *Meeting schedule and decision making.* A schedule of proposed meeting dates and the decision-making process for the advisory group was established.



- *Getting the word out.* A draft promotion plan for the published report was created to be ratified by the advisory committee.

This case statement, detailing the process to be used, was included with the subsequent invitation to participate in the advisory committee and led to its mobilization.



## Stage 4: Group Launch

Make everyone feel welcomed and valued, focus the group on the purpose and task of the group, and get their agreement on the group charter and communications plan.

### Overview

The initial meetings of the collaboration group should lay a strong foundation for the work ahead and build participant commitment to the project purpose, goals, and scope. Depending on the complexity of the issue and the anticipated length of the collaboration, this stage might take from one to three meetings, possibly even more for complex, contentious issues, or where there are widely divergent perspectives.

Finding the right mix of people with influence, knowledge, commitment, passion, compassion, leadership, and vision to participate in a collaboration is one of the most important tasks in the process. Blending these individuals into a group that can work together effectively, with a strong commitment to the group's purpose and sufficient trust in each other to challenge and question the easy solutions, is another.

The primary goals of the initial sessions are to make everyone feel welcomed and valued, focus the group on the purpose and task of the group, and get their agreement on the group charter and communications plan.

*If possible early in the process, help the group members discuss and make a decision in an area where they have authority. This builds commitment to the process and reinforces the value of their participation.*

### Stage 4: Key Tasks

- **Convene collaboration participants and orient them to the upcoming process.**
  - Provide a preliminary overview of the issue/opportunity that led to convening the collaboration and review the process to be undertaken. Discuss the interest of the convener(s) and funders in this issue.
  - Provide time and activities for participants to get to know one another and begin to build trust within the group.
  - Present and discuss the proposed meeting schedule.
- **Review and ratify a group charter.**
  - Review the draft charter with the group including: project purpose, goals, scope, authority and decision making, roles and responsibilities, process design, project logistics, and ground rules.
  - Discuss the draft charter and any revisions or additions that may be needed.
  - Prepare a final charter for acceptance by the group.
- **Review and ratify a communications plan.**
  - Review the draft communications plan, including internal as well as external





communications procedures.

- Discuss the draft communications plan, making revisions and additions as needed.
- Prepare a final communications plan for acceptance by the group.
- **Begin to explore the issue to be addressed by the collaboration.**
  - Present and discuss any initial research done by the convener. This can serve as the starting point to identify individual needs, interests, positions, views and relationships to the issue.
  - Identify areas where views and interests are similar (“common ground”) or divergent and where additional clarification and information will be needed. This will serve as the basis for the next phase of exploration and education.
- **Determine if additional participants are needed in the collaboration group.**
  - Ask the group if there are critical points of view or expertise missing from the group. If yes, ask for recommendations of people to add.
  - Discuss recommendations with convener and secure decision about adding participants.
  - If needed, invite new members to the group and provide background materials.
  - Provide an orientation to any new group member so they are able to join the group and be already informed of the work done to date and any agreements reached.

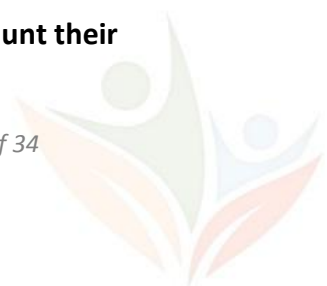
#### Stage 4: Challenges

- **People meeting in unfamiliar surroundings and with others they don’t know can make them feel uncomfortable.**

As soon as most people are present and as close to the starting time as possible, set them at ease by having food available. This is also a good place to have a *pule*, especially at the first meeting that launches the collaboration. If there will be no *pule*, people can help themselves to food and drink when they arrive. Food offers a good chance for informal conversation and initial bonding.
- **Some participants may have been on opposing sides of the issue prior to the collaborative and may harbor ill will toward others in the group.**

Confront this possibility head on. Let the group know this is a new beginning and their willingness to participate gives a chance to find some common ground and new solutions that everyone can agree to. Ask them to leave any previous grudges at the door.
- **Some participants are required to participate but lack the interest or will to authentically participate.**

Disinterested group members can affect others. It may be necessary to talk with them outside the meeting to determine why they are involved (i.e., they may have been appointed by a superior and not specifically invited by the convener). If their participation is important, discuss ways the topic might be of value to them. Alternatively, determine if someone else from their organization would be a better fit or if they can be called upon as a resource on an as-needed basis.
- **Participants may have different levels of knowledge and some may either flaunt their knowledge or disrespect those with different levels of knowledge.**



In launching the group, the different types of expertise that were sought for the group can be discussed, showing value for a variety of perspectives and levels and types of knowledge. While some may be knowledgeable in a certain area, no doubt they will need to rely on the expertise of their fellow group members in other areas. The facilitator can plan activities and discussions that specifically highlight the expertise of those with less formal training and more real-life experience.

- **Some people are unwilling to add anyone else to the group, despite the need for additional perspectives or expertise.**

Sometimes there is a fear that the balance and trust that has been established will be negatively impacted by adding members. If the executive authority believes one or more additional people are needed, share with the group the process to be used to bring the new person(s) into the group and let them know that anyone new will be thoroughly briefed so they are up to speed with the proceedings to date.

#### **Stage 4: Tools**

##### [Stage 4 Meeting Checklist](#)

#### **Stage 4: Vignettes**

The Kauai Planning & Action Alliance (KPAA) received a grant to restore the first two miles of the Kalalau Trail on Kauai's North Shore. To keep the community informed and try to allay some of the concerns being expressed, KPAA decided to form the Kalalau Trail Citizen's Advisory Committee. Invitations included a draft charter that carefully detailed the purpose of the project, the standards for the trail restoration to be undertaken, an outline of the responsibilities of the advisory committee, an anticipated meeting schedule, a description of how decisions would be made, and the length of the members' commitment.

The advisory committee was composed of 11 members, most of whom lived on the North Shore, and who represented hikers, environmentalists, hunters, biologists, the visitor industry, and youth. Each signed a commitment to participate, which was an element of the group charter.

At the first meeting, time was allotted for each member to talk about his/her connection to the Kalalau Trail, as nearly everyone felt a deep personal connection to it. The background of the project and the draft charter were reviewed and discussed by the group and, with minor changes, the charter was finalized and ratified.

The contractor hired to do the work on the trail discussed how he would approach the project and had a chance to answer questions. Issues were identified for discussion and resolution at later meetings.



Subsequent to that first meeting, the charter was a valuable reference document when members of the advisory group attempted to expand their responsibilities beyond what was specified in the charter.



## Stage 5: Explore and Educate

Ensure that the group develops a well-informed understanding of the issue and knows about available assets related to the issue.

### Overview

The goal of this stage is to ensure that there is comprehensive understanding among participants about the issue and available assets related to the issue, so they can:

- Clearly view the causes, parameters, and impacts of the issue
- Expand the common ground, in hopes of finding mutually acceptable solutions
- Gain insight into the relationship between this and other community issues, so that solutions arrived at might also advance other community goals
- Build motivation to stay involved during implementation

To fully understand the challenge the group has been tasked with, members review:

- A summary of recommendations from previous planning on the issue
- A list of existing assets related to the issue, such as programs, experts, resources, incentives, etc.

Once the group has a well-informed understanding of the issue and knows about available assets related to it, participants subsequently create a written problem definition and description.

*Based upon the work of the group, a written summary is prepared;  
it serves as the foundation for visioning and action planning.*

### Stage 5: Key Tasks

- **Clarify and define the issue.**
  - Lead discussions and activities to address questions such as those below and begin to develop a written “map” or documentation of the problem that reflects how various aspects are related.
    - What is the problem?
    - What created the problem?
    - What are the impacts of the problem?
    - What regulations, if any, govern the problem?
    - Who is involved with the problem?
    - Who is responsible for addressing the problem?



- What are the related social, economic, and environmental issues that could be helpful to consider when crafting solutions?
- Secure group agreement of the problem definition. If consensus cannot be reached, use a polling tool, such as contained in the Sample Charter.
- Determine whether additional input from the group members' constituencies could add value or clarity to the discussion. Group members may be asked to accept an assignment to solicit input between meetings from their constituency or other stakeholders, and report findings at a subsequent meeting.
- **Identify the relevant assets to resolve the problem that are currently available.**
  - Assess the policies, organizations, programs, and funding in place that could be applied to the issue to create an asset inventory.
  - Begin to identify the challenges faced by existing assets and gaps in needed assets.
- **Build capacity in collaboration participants.**
  - Assess what additional information (technical, cultural, economic, etc.) the group needs and consider how it might be provided (speakers, site visits, studies). A self-evaluation, either verbal or written, could be conducted to ascertain from group members whether they feel they have the information they need to move to the next stages.
  - Ask participants to do additional research for presentation at an upcoming meeting. For example, have any best practices been established for the issue? In any previous planning on this issue, what recommendations resulted? What solutions were tried? What was the outcome?
  - Encourage participants to attend relevant workshops or conferences that would increase their understanding of the topic. Ask them to share highlights and insights with the group.
- **Confirm the problem definition.**
  - Before moving to the next stage, confirm that the problem definition is still accurately stated: Is the problem definition created at the beginning of this stage still accurate?
  - Based on feedback from the group, there may be a need to modify the problem definition.
- **Confirm the process.**
  - Ask the group: Do you have the information you need to move on to the next stage? Does the meeting format, activities, and facilitation provide what you need to do your work as a group member?
  - Based on feedback from the group or the broader group of stakeholders, there may be a need to modify or redesign the process. Additional meetings may be needed.
  - Feedback from the group or broader group of stakeholders may necessitate changes that have budget impacts. The funders and any project sponsors should be informed of design changes; the need for additional support needs to be discussed. Other funding sources may need to be secured.



## Stage 5: Dilemmas

- **While work may be needed between meetings, participants may be unwilling to do it or may accept an assignment and not follow through.**  
Be strategic about assignments; do it only when necessary and ask for volunteers rather than requiring it. One of the most helpful things can be asking participants to solicit feedback from their constituents on issues or ideas. Provide a summary of assignments people have accepted and be clear about deadlines. A phone call in advance of when someone is supposed to present findings may be helpful as a follow-up and encouragement to get the task done.
- **Adding new participants after a certain point can be problematic.**  
The group charter could include a rule about this. It can be disruptive to a group that has met several times for new people to be added; the group dynamics change. However, in the group launch stage it may become clear that one or more additional stakeholders are needed in the group. Secure the agreement of the group to add new members and meet with the new members outside the group to orient them. At the first meeting they attend, plan activities that introduce them to the other members and start the process of building trust.
- **It's not always clear when you've explored and educated enough and it's time to move on to the next stage.**  
There's no easy answer to this; it may be dictated by the number of meetings allotted in the process design. It's helpful at each meeting to check in to review what has been learned and what more is needed. This would also be covered in meeting notes. For some people, the exploration is never enough – they want to go in great depth. Offer a reminder that additional research can be a part of the action plan to be created by the group.
- **Consider when to introduce people to the action plan template to be used in the next stage.**  
While for some people this may not be an issue, the action plan template can look intimidating to others at the beginning of the exploration stage. By waiting until the end of this stage to share the action plan template, people are likely to be invested in the issue and want to find a way to generate solutions.

## Stage 5: Tips

- Field trips are a great way to help collaboration participants understand the issue more fully; they can demonstrate things such as the impact of the issue and possible solutions being tried.
- Hold meetings in locations that will help connect people to the issue; bring in a speaker who helps reinforce the relevance. For example, in exploring the concept of the *ahupuaa* system, a meeting was held in a canoe *hale* and a cultural practitioner served as the speaker. This was followed by canoe rides so people could look *mauka* at the *ahupuaa*.



## Stage 5: Tools

### Problem definition

#### [Defining the Drug Problem on Kauai](#)

### Stage 5: Vignette

Kauai Planning & Action Alliance (KPAA) and the County of Kauai partnered to create a three-year drug plan to combat the problem of crystal methamphetamine. The effort was carried out by four committees – drug prevention, drug treatment, law enforcement, and community integration – and a coordinating committee, the “Drug Action Team.” All groups were composed of government and nonprofit representatives and citizens and met monthly.

In defining the problem, the facilitator drew upon the experiences and knowledge of the committee members, most of whom worked in some way on the drug problem, but found that additional information was needed to clearly understand the scope of the problem. Personal interviews augmented input from committee members. Where data was available, it was incorporated into the problem statement and where there were gaps in data, this often led to the creation of an action step, so that systems could be established to collect data to measure success in implementing the drug plan.

At key points in the problem identification phase, resource people were interviewed or invited to a committee meeting so they could provide their perspectives on the problem. Special attention was given to seeking culturally-relevant solutions because, at that time, few programs had been established as best practices for Hawaii.

KPAA’s commitment was that the resulting plan would include goals and action plans for each of the four committees as well as for the Drug Action Team.



## Stage 6: Envision

Create a collective vision statement that describes a successful outcome for the issue and establish core values that will guide action planning.

### Overview

Developing a vision for the future is often an effective way to help groups recognize the common ground they share or wish for future generations. Visions typically look ahead 20 to 50 years. Taking such a long-term perspective helps people avoid what may be perceived as current, self-serving interests and instead look forward to what will benefit everyone.

The vision statement describes what future success related to the issue would look like in ideal terms. A vision is written in the present tense, as if describing what is real at the moment; it includes results that are being achieved and identifies programs or characteristics that are helping to accomplish those results. The strategic vision statement provides direction and inspiration for goal setting and action planning in the next stage.

The common values identified by the collaboration group members form the foundation of their thinking on the issue. These can be community values if the problem being addressed relates to the community, or internal values that drive an organization. While there is an entire universe of values, participants are asked to identify the ones that the group can agree to abide by in spite of their differences. These values underlie the group's work together and determine how they will interact with each other and what approach they will take to action planning in the next stage.

*A collective vision often helps defuse differences of opinion, and can serve to ground the discussion and keep people focused on resolving the issue rather than complaining or placing blame.*

### Stage 6: Key Tasks

- **Create a vision statement on the issue.**
  - Use a vision development process where the group is asked to imagine a time a number of years ahead where the issue has been successfully addressed; they can then brainstorm ideas about what that future looks like. This can be done either in small groups or with the entire group if it is not too large (e.g., more than 15). (See Tool: Sample Vision Format.)
  - Group similar suggestions and areas of shared agreement, and then create a draft vision. This can be done in various ways. One or two volunteers from each work group could be asked to draft a narrative vision based on the small group's input and those could be collected into one written vision statement. Alternatively, the facilitator could brainstorm with the entire group, ask for volunteers to help group similar ideas, and then create a draft for review and revision with the entire group.





- Continue to discuss the draft vision and refine and revise it until there is group consensus on the vision statement. The final version should be stated in aspirational and inspirational terms that can be easily understood by everyone.
- **Create a list of community values to guide the collaboration group.**
  - Ask group members to describe what they believe are shared community values and beliefs that will help guide them in their work on this issue. (Or create organizational values, if the issue is internal to an organization.) What basic values help form the foundation of the community's beliefs and thinking on the issue? Brainstorm issues as a large group or break into smaller work groups.
  - Review the list(s) created to look for commonalities and areas of shared agreement, and then create a single draft list of community values.
  - Discuss the list and refine and revise it until group consensus is secured.

### Stage 6: Dilemmas

- **Some people resist visioning.**  
The facilitator can remind participants that this is an exercise to look at what everyone wants for the future in a way that takes it beyond the people in this room and plans for future generations. It helps provide a shared foundation to decide on actions to be taken.

### Stage 6: Tips

- To minimize conflict and difference of opinion about solutions, keep group members focused on the future and on what success will look like. Encourage them to think big enough for the actions to be challenging but achievable.
- Be sure people understand that the vision is not their personal vision, but needs to reflect a shared vision for the entire community (or the organization, if that is the focus). It is meant to be bigger than any one individual and benefit everyone. By looking ahead 20 years or more, it rises above any current conflict or problems and enables group members to think of what could be.
- Similarly, community values are shared and are meant to reflect common thinking and beliefs. The values help ground the group to what is really important and may help to prevent petty bickering. It helps them see the "high road."
- Determine if the vision provides the inspiration to guide goal setting and action planning in the next stage. Is it good enough? Would the vision be clearly understood by others? Would the vision inspire others?
- Consider innovative ways to attract people to public meetings that are part of the exploration phase. For example, in a project that was looking at future planning for a town, a baby *luau* theme was used. A video of mother and her one-year old was shown; she talked about the future she wanted for her baby. Attendees were asked to think about all the one-year olds in the town, and then asked to think ahead 20 years. What future would they want for those babies, now adults? What would the town look like? What opportunities would exist?



- If volunteer participants are involved in writing the vision, the facilitator should review and revise the draft and discuss any changes with the volunteers before presenting it to the larger group.
- If some time has passed since the last meeting, take time to restate the problem and talk about what has been learned about the issue before starting the visioning process.
- In groups where a good deal of common ground has been established, it may feel more comfortable to develop values and then the vision. Where there continues to be a diversity of opinions, what may work best is setting the vision first, followed by looking for the values that exemplify that vision.

## **Stage 6: Tools**

### **Sample Vision Format**

[Sample Visioning Format](#)

### **Community Values**

[Kauai Community Values](#)



## Stage 7: Action Planning

Agree on actions plans—consisting of goals, strategies, activities, a timeline, and set of responsibilities—to provide basic guidelines for how desired outcomes will be achieved.

### Overview

The vision and community values of the previous stage form the foundation for work done in this stage. The action planning process involves laying out a roadmap for how and when goals will be achieved and, significantly, who will be responsible for carrying out the actions and ensuring that the responsibility has been accepted. Creating a timeline helps to prioritize the strategies and activities; including measures of success provides a mechanism to assess progress.

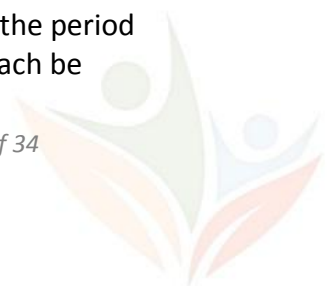
By the end of this stage, the group will deliver:

- Goals and short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies for achieving them
- A completed plan, with associated action plans and documents
- Memoranda of Agreement with agencies/entities responsible for Stage 8-Execution
- A list of group members who will help monitor execution

*This type of collaboration uses planning as a valuable means to an end – taking action to implement the plan.*

### Stage 7: Key Tasks

- **Establish one or more broad goals to address the issue.**
  - Review with the group any parameters that will impact goal setting (e.g., to be accomplished within five years, or to work within a specific geographic area).
  - Based on the parameters, vision, and community values, brainstorm broad goal statements of what should be achieved within the next few years (for example, 3-5 years).
  - Consider each suggested goal and determine if it falls within stated parameters, comports with community values, and helps to achieve the vision.
- **Develop criteria to guide the selection of strategies.**
  - Determine what criteria should be used to screen the strategies. These could be related to availability of funding, timing, political support and viability, cultural appropriateness, opportunity to gain community support, etc.
  - Determine if all criteria should have equal weight. The criteria and the weight given to each become the “screen” for each strategy.
- **For each goal, create one or more strategies.**
  - Brainstorm possible strategies to achieve each goal. Strategies can be short-term (within 1 year, for example), mid-term (e.g., 1-2 years), or longer term (within the period of the plan). This can be done in the large group, or smaller work groups can each be



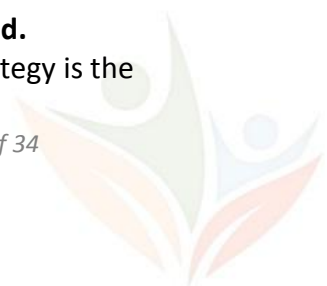
asked to develop strategies related to one goal.

- Review the suggested strategies. Determine if any should be grouped together to avoid redundancy or be reworded for clarity.
- Consider each strategy in relation to the criteria and screen out those that don't meet the criteria.
- Prioritize the list to narrow it down to those that are the most viable and achievable despite being challenging, and create a final list of goals and strategies.
- If appropriate, seek input from a few key leaders (such as possible plan implementers or funders) on the goals and strategies selected. Consider their input to determine whether any revision to the goals and strategies is needed.
- **Create an action plan for each strategy based on the vision and community values established in Stage 6 and the goals created in this stage.**
  - Work with the group to develop action plans that offer detailed guidance for how the strategy will be addressed, including: the specific activities and the timeline to accomplish each activity, the agency or position responsible for the activity, overall resources needed for the strategy, other people or groups to involve, and measures of success.
  - Create a format to periodically assess and report progress. Is the strategy working? What are the results? What challenges have emerged? (See Reporting Template in Stage 8-Execution.) If appropriate, seek input on the draft action plans from key agencies or entities that may have a role in execution. Revise the action plans as needed.
  - Encourage the creation of Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) to formalize the acceptance of responsibility for implementing components of the action plan. Determine if formal approval (e.g., by agency directors or nonprofit boards of directors) is needed to accept implementation responsibilities.
- **Prepare a final document summarizing the process and outcomes.**
  - Develop a written summary for the convener and funders regarding what has been accomplished, what was learned, and what the process for execution will be.
  - Disseminate copies of the final plan to the collaboration group, funders, implementing agencies and organizations, and relevant elected officials and community leaders.
  - In accordance with the communications plan, there might be public and constituent presentations (with comment periods), media releases, website posting, email notices to distributions lists, adoption by a legislative body by resolution or ordinance, etc.
  - Plan a group celebration that might include a debriefing of the planning and collaboration process.
  - Determine who should be involved in Stage 8-Execution. Invite the members selected to be part of the group assigned to monitoring execution.
  - Solicit funders for additional support for execution, if needed.

## Stage 7: Dilemmas

- **The difference between a goal and a strategy is not always clearly understood.**

A goal is a broad statement of what should be achieved during the plan. A strategy is the



approach that will be used to achieve the goal; there may be either one or multiple strategies per goal and be either short term (e.g., within one year) or longer term (within three years). Before getting into action planning, define terms like these to make sure all participants are clear.

- **Those who are likely to be involved in the execution stage do not always participate in the action planning and may disagree with the product developed.**

The involvement of those who will execute the plan is vital – those groups cannot be obligated to carry out activities they have not agreed to undertake. They should be asked to take a leadership role in creating the plan or at least the portions of the plan they will implement.

- **In an effort to avoid serious disagreement, the goals and strategies end up being vague.**

The more specific the actions can be, the greater clarity they will give to those who will be involved with implementation.

- **Measurements of success can be difficult to identify.**

Try to look for measures that already exist and can help show success. Be careful that the action plan doesn't propose massive research to gather success data – unless that is its intended purpose.

- **Action plans require linear thinking – moving from step to step. Some people have trouble thinking in this way and resist structure.**

This can be a tough one and at times relies on the expertise of the facilitator to package the information presented by the group into the action plan format. There are multiple formats that might work better for a particular group. It is not the format that's important; it's the completeness and clarity of the information.

- **Too many strategies can be overwhelming.**

Avoid having too many strategies; you will need an action plan for each and every one. Encourage the group to be strategic in their selection. Which strategies will help lead to change or “move the needle” the most?

- **Action planning can be hard work and not as fun as the exploration and education.**

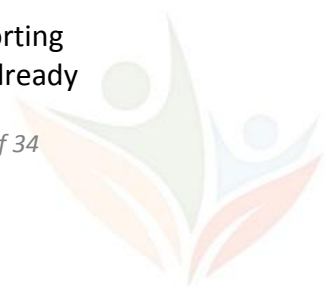
Find ways to keep people engaged during the action planning so they don't lose interest. This may include soliciting feedback from constituencies on the plans being developed or working in small groups on specific plans.

- **The action plan is completed but no one steps forward to execute it.**

Well before the plan is complete, work should begin on confirming commitments from groups or agencies to execute all or portions of the plan. It is often helpful to develop a Memorandum of Agreement to formalize the commitments.

## Stage 7: Tips

- It may be helpful to review draft goals and strategies with leaders of implementing agencies or other key leaders for feedback and to secure early buy-in for the action plan being developed.
- A completed action plan with measurements of success and a process for reporting progress is often helpful in securing funding for implementation, if it has not already



been secured. It also helps to ensure accountability and reduce confusion about who will be doing what.

- If the timing is not yet right for those agencies to take on the responsibility of the plan, it may be necessary for the collaboration incubator to take on the execution of specific tasks until an agency is identified or the activities have been completed.
- A celebration at the conclusion of the plan can be used to thank those involved, solidify support for and involvement in the collaboration group during execution, and transition to a revamped collaboration group if there are to be changes in group membership.

## **Stage 7: Tools**

### **Action Plan Template**

[Stage 7-Action Plan Template](#)

### **Stage 7: Vignettes**

Kauai Planning & Action Alliance (KPAA) and the County of Kauai partnered to create a drug plan to combat the problem of crystal methamphetamine. The effort was carried out by four committees – drug prevention, drug treatment, law enforcement, and community integration – and a coordinating committee (the “Drug Action Team”).

Based on the problems identified and the vision created, goals, objectives, and very specific action plans for each committee were developed for a three-year period. Goals and objectives were prioritized based upon what could be accomplished or at least reasonably started in a three-year period.

For each objective there was an action plan. Committee members provided input for the action plan, including: specific activities to be accomplished over the course of the plan; the timeline for each activity; designation of a lead group or individual (by position not by name) for each activity; resources needed; determination of other groups needed to support the objective; and measures of success to determine progress toward meeting the objective.

As the consultant completed the drafts of each section, they were shared with the relevant committee for feedback and for acceptance at the next meeting.

The plan that was created had to be accepted by the county administration. The participation of the county’s Anti-Drug Coordinator during the planning process helped ensure the plan’s acceptance. If the Anti-Drug Coordinator questioned a recommendation during the process, he would raise the objection at the meeting and another solution was found. Fortunately, this seldom occurred.



## Stage 8: Implementation and Spin-Off

Ensure that action plans are implemented, and that the activities become integrated into the long-term fabric of the community.

### Overview

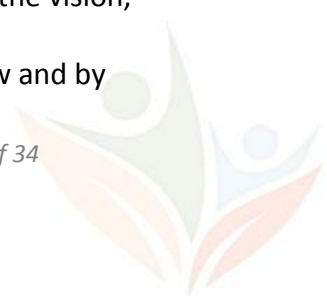
Building the execution into the collaboration process avoids – or at least mitigates – the risk that plans will “sit on the shelf” waiting for needed support or resources (and demoralize the participants who worked so hard to create the plans). Specifying who is responsible for execution—often through a formalized Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)—promotes follow-through. It helps when those who will be responsible for implementation have been part of the planning process, as they are likely to have developed more “buy-in” for the plan. In addition, when accountability and progress reports are part of the plan, there is a greater likelihood that the action steps will get done.

Providing periodic progress updates to the community and other agencies helps instill confidence in the planning process and an understanding of how the issue is being addressed. A final report is delivered and a set of recommendations is offered for future collaborative processes.

*A successful collaborative process will contribute to a willingness to participate in future collaborations.*

### Stage 8: Key Tasks

- **Confirm the management structure for the execution stage.**
  - Determine if a new management structure is needed in light of the involvement of the implementing agencies. For example, should the MOA agencies be part of a steering committee that meets more frequently than the collaboration group that will be monitoring progress? Should the MOA agencies have more authority than the group itself?
  - Determine if there are needed changes in the facilitation of the collaboration group and any related committees.
- **Convene the group to monitor the execution stage.**
  - Secure the commitment of continuing members.
  - If new members will be added to the group, help them get to know continuing group members and understand the process used to create the action plan.
  - Review the group charter and protocols; determine if any updates or revisions are needed at this stage, including any changes to the management/authority structure and the meeting schedule.
  - Review the plan to be executed. Ensure that all group members understand the vision, values, goals, strategies, action plans, activities, and measures of success.
  - Confirm the progress assessment and reporting schedule and determine how and by



whom information will be gathered and reported.

- Ascertain when the monitoring work of the execution group ends.
- Review the communications plan and make any needed updates.
- **Prepare periodic reports that demonstrate the progress of the strategies being implemented.**
  - Each lead agency and implementer will prepare periodic progress reports that include achievements and challenges encountered, as well as measures of success.
  - Review and discuss results reported. Discuss possible ways to address challenges and further progress.
  - If challenges continue over a period of time and progress is limited or lacking, determine if strategy changes are needed. Develop new action plans if called for.
- **Report progress in accordance with the communications plan.**
  - Inform funders, elected officials, other agencies and the public about progress, using available information and “success measure” data.
- **Formalize the ending of the group’s monitoring process and the collaboration.**
  - Develop a final report for the collaboration project with input from the group. Include a debriefing of the process and recommendations for future processes.
  - Secure agreement that the ongoing monitoring will be conducted by the implementing agencies.
  - At the conclusion of the group’s commitment and when activities have a permanent “home,” honor and celebrate the dedication and hard work of the collaboration group.

## Stage 8: Dilemmas

- **The creative process of developing the plan is more exciting, and generally far easier, than implementing it. Collaboration group members lose interest or become discouraged, especially when implementation is a long-term endeavor.**

New participants may need to be added to the collaboration group to bring in new energy for the execution phase. It will have to be decided who will make the decision regarding adding new members and how those people will be invited, oriented, and made to feel a part of the collaboration group. To sustain the interest of existing members, involve them in real work and communicate the value of their participation.
- **The initial charter doesn’t fit the needs of the execution stage.**

Review the charter, make changes as needed, and secure the ratification of the group overseeing execution. Changes in the management and authority structure are common at this stage. Ensure the monitoring group understands the new structure and authority.
- **Defining the end of the execution stage can be a challenge.**

Many plans are three to five years. Will the collaboration group continue to monitor the plan through its entire execution? This needs to be discussed and included as part of the action plan so that members are clear about the length of their commitment.
- **Sufficient funding is not available to support implementation or funding is withdrawn before implementation is completed.**





Be clear with groups upfront about the financial situation and communicate that persistent efforts are being made to fund the good work they are doing.

- **Some of those responsible for implementation understand the intention of the agreement, but have different views on how best to carry out some of its aspects.**

The specificity of the action plan may be helpful to mitigate this problem. However, the implementing organization may find it necessary to make some adjustments to the plan, whether it is to the timing or to specific steps involved. The facilitator needs to help the group understand that flexibility is needed, so long as the agreed-upon goal remains in place.

- **People tasked with implementing are not as well informed as the primary representative who was involved in the collaboration sessions.**

Presentations on the action plan with constituent groups are needed to increase understanding and buy-in. This is particularly true for agencies that will be implementers of the plan. Presentations can begin at the end of the action plan stage and continue into the execution stage.

- **Once the plan is completed, there is a lack of information about its progress or whether the plan is even being implemented.**

There is often a concern about whether progress in implementing the plan will continue after the collaboration incubator involvement has concluded. To mitigate this, informal reports and checkups throughout the period of the plan can be arranged and copies of progress reports can be requested. A communication strategy should be included as a part of the action plan and specifies whether periodic progress reports/annual reports/press releases will be issued to constituent groups. Whatever methods will be used, there needs to be clear agreement about who is responsible for carrying out these tasks.

### Stage 8: Tips

- It may be helpful for the implementing agencies to have an expanded role in determining the new management structure and in decision making.
- If the execution will fall to a different facilitator, the new person must be oriented to the process that took place, to the resulting plan, and to the collaboration group. If a steering committee or management team is in place, it should be involved in the selection of a new facilitator.
- There may be a change in political administration before the collaboration work is completed and political support may be needed to move forward on the outcomes. The facilitator and implementers need to build bridges from one administration to the next.

### Stage 8: Tools

#### Sample Progress Reporting Form

[Stage 8-Progress Report Template](#)



## Stage 8: Vignettes

The Hawaii Tourism Authority awarded SMS Consulting a contract to assist each county in developing a tourism strategic plan. On Kauai, they worked closely with the County of Kauai Office of Economic Development. A 27-member advisory committee composed of representatives of government, business, the visitor industry and the community was formed to provide input into the plan. When completed, the Kauai Tourism Strategic Plan 2006-2015 consisted of an overview of the tourism sector and defined problem areas, seven priority objectives, 28 strategies, and a scorecard to measure progress. An accompanying document included a three-year action plan for each of the 28 strategies, with a total of 125 specific action steps detailing tasks to be accomplished. Upon completion of the plan, the County of Kauai awarded a one-year contract to Kauai Planning & Action Alliance to kick-start and coordinate the plan's implementation.

At the start of the plan's implementation, there were no funds available to support the plan's activities. Advisory committee members were invited to serve as members of the Tourism Strategic Plan Implementation Team, and 12 agreed to serve. A lead individual was identified for each of the seven priority objectives. The action steps were reviewed and prioritized, with consideration given to what could be done in a three-year period, especially given the lack of additional funding. From this, a timeline was developed. The remaining steps were seen as future projects to be addressed after the three-year period. The Tourism Strategic Plan Implementation Team agreed to meet quarterly, working outside the meetings with other groups and agencies to carry out the action steps.

The leadership role to oversee the priority objectives was assumed by representatives of the County Office of Economic Development, Kauai Chamber of Commerce and Kauai Visitors Bureau. It was the lead person's task to work with others involved in carrying out the action steps, and to monitor and communicate progress and challenges back to the Implementation Team. KPAA developed a quarterly progress reporting format to document outcomes.

At the end of the contract period, a year-one progress report was created describing outcomes. The report included a scorecard for each objective, showing the target and actual score. With the ending of KPAA's one-year contract, the County Office of Economic Development assumed responsibility for coordination of the Implementation Team.

