

TOOL | ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX

BUILDING AN ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX TO GUIDE YOUR COLLABORATION

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OUTCOMES ACHIEVED BY USING THIS TOOL

- DEFINE THE DIFFERENT COLLABORATION ROLES
- IDENTIFY THE RELATIONSHIPS AND ACCOUNTABILITIES BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT ROLES
- DESCRIBE THE DECISION-MAKING APPROACH FOR EACH ROLE

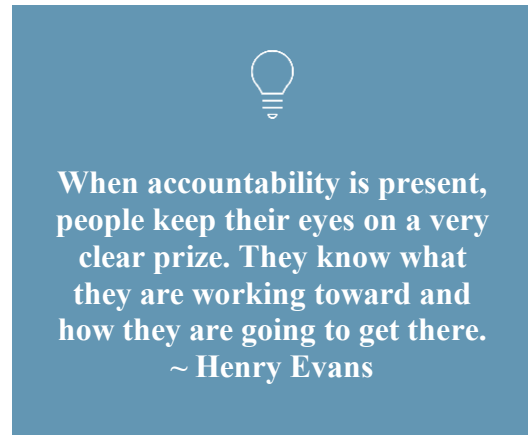
A NOTE ABOUT EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The Tamarack Institute is committed to supporting collaborations which are committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, justice and reconciliation. In exploring the Accountability Matrix, collaborations should consider how its use and application have the potential to have adverse impacts on equity-deserving partners including individuals and organizations who bring their lived and living experience to the collaboration. We encourage users of this tool to begin with a conversation to develop an understanding of how the process of building an accountability matrix can impact all members of the collaboration while factoring in power dynamics. Through this conversation, the collaboration partners should consider how the adverse impacts to members of the collaboration can be mitigated or how they might revise the tool and approach to better fit their partners' needs and collaboration outcomes.



BUILDING AN ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX TO GUIDE YOUR COLLABORATION

There is increased pressure on organizations to build collaborative approaches to deliver shared services or move the needle on complex issues. Collaborations often benefit from a more defined approach to their governance and leadership processes. This tool will help collaborations and the leaders engaged around collaborative tables to clearly define roles and to identify the decision and reporting relationships between different roles. The goal of this tool is to provide a **framing for collaborations** to consider and to support them in understanding and deploying their governance structure more effectively.



The tool will focus on three elements: clarifying the governance roles of the collaboration, identifying the relationships and accountabilities between each of the roles and then confirming the decision-making approach for each role.

Clearly defining roles, relationships, expectations and decision-making at the launch of a collaboration enables the collaborative partners to work effectively together. As a collaboration evolves over time, and leaders shift and change, the collaboration table may want to revisit the Accountability Matrix. This will ensure that collaboration partners reaffirm their roles, responsibilities and commitments.

Taking a co-development or co-design approach will lead to increased commitment of the partners in the collaboration. The partners will contribute to the development of the accountability matrix and will have a deeper connection to its implementation and impact.

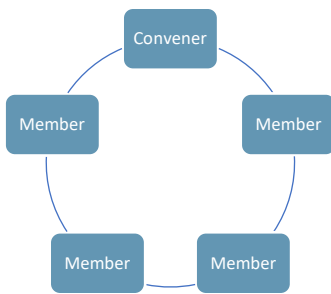
THE COLLABORATION STRUCTURE AND MEMBERS

Tamarack has previously developed a tool to [develop values and principles for working together](#). This tool can be a useful first step for the collaboration before developing the accountability matrix. The values and principles for working together may describe the expectations and commitments that the collaboration partners have to each other and to the shared work.

As you consider the structure of your collaboration, also consider who is invited to join the collaboration table. Tamarack recommends including the engagement and voice of individuals who are currently being **directly impacted by the challenge, problem or opportunity** the collaboration is addressing. Inviting this perspective and experience as a member of the collaboration enables the partners to understand what is and is not working for people in your community or collaboration.

Tamarack has developed many resources about community engagement. One very useful resource is [10: Including People with Lived/Living Experience](#). This guide provides excellent advice to collaborations to ensure that diverse perspectives are invited and welcomed.

The Accountability Matrix can be used by many different types of collaborations. At the end of this resource, we have provided three Accountability Matrix tools. You can select the best format to fit your collaboration structure. As noted earlier, it is important to engage your partners in a conversation about collaboration commitments and accountability. Below are three examples of collaboration structures.

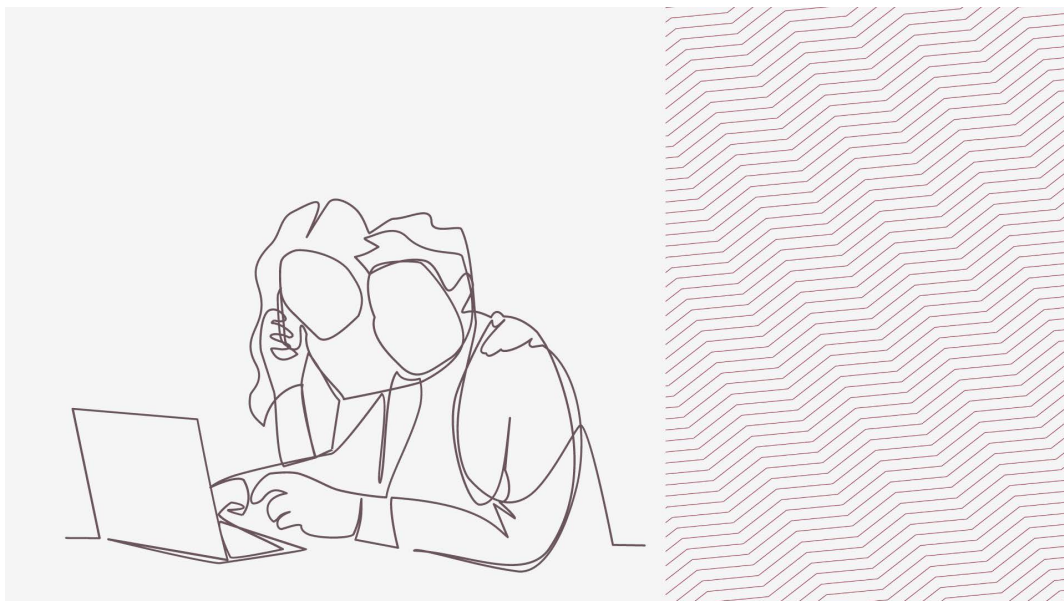


Smaller, community-based and all-volunteer collaborations

These types of collaborations may have fewer moving parts. They may only have one or two people who have convened or called the group together and then members of the collaboration. In this case, the accountability matrix can help define the relationship and commitments between the two groups (convener and members) and describe how decisions are made.

Medium-sized collaborations

Medium-sized collaborations may have more moving parts including a convening organization, members who have joined a steering committee, and other community members who have joined one or two smaller working groups. Again, defining the roles, relationships and commitments between different parts of this type of collaboration can be helpful in building commitment and connection.





Large-scale collaborations and/or collective impact efforts

Large-scale collaborations such as collective impact efforts often have many moving parts including a convener, a leadership table or steering committee, three to four active working groups and backbone resources. Defining roles and responsibilities across a multi-level collaboration helps all the different volunteers and partners to understand where they fit and how their part of the collaboration is accountable to other parts of the collaboration.

ACCOUNTABILITY DEFINED

Accountability is defined as the relationship between the different partners involved in the collaboration. There is the personal accountability that an individual brings the collaboration, that they will live up to their commitments. There is also the collective accountability between the partners to ensure that the collaboration is moving forward successfully and achieves its defined goals.

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY:

- Set measurable goals
- Hold yourself and others accountable
- Give and get feedback

- Accountability is directly connected to the shared agenda and strategies that the collaboration has identified
- Accountability describes the reporting relationship between one part of the governance structure to another part of the governance structure
- Accountability identifies who is accountable to who, for what

DEFINING THE ROLES AND STRUCTURE OF THE COLLABORATION

There are several different roles in a collaboration structure. Short-term and program-focused collaborations might have fewer roles than longer-term collective impact initiatives. In all cases, it is important to define the basic roles and structure of the collaboration. Doing so will help members of the collaboration know what role they are expected to play and the contributions they might make. Clarity about collaboration roles and structures is useful both at the initial stages of a collaboration but also at pivot points when members leave, and new members join. Below is a list and description of the most common roles.

Convener: The convener of the collaboration is the organization or organizations that bring the table together, invite others to the collaboration, and function as initial host for the collaboration. Conveners for longer-term collaborations may shift and change during the course of the collaboration.

Fiscal Sponsor: A fiscal sponsor is an organization that holds the funding on behalf of the collaboration. This role is more common for longer-term collective impact efforts.

Collaboration members/partners: Most collaborations invite a number of organizational and community members to join an official table. Collaboration members should be recruited for the skills and contributions they can make to advancing the shared work. When forming a collaboration, the convener should embed equity as a key principle and ensure that diverse voices and perspectives are represented around the table(s).

Leadership Table: The Leadership Table, commonly found in collective impact efforts, is a group of community champions or leaders providing strategic advice to the overall direction of the collaboration.

Steering Committee: Some collaborations do not have a leadership table but rather form a steering committee to guide the work of the collaboration forward.

Working Groups/Action Teams: In larger scale and longer-term collaborations, the steering committee might form working groups or action teams to move forward a special initiative or project. Working groups or action teams are often shorter, more focused efforts with defined deliverables.

Backbone/Collaboration Staff: Collective impact collaborations often have access to staff who assist with moving the collaboration work forward. The staff members are often connected to one of the partner organizations, usually the fiscal sponsor or convener, but their role is to contribute to advancing the work of the collaboration and its partners.

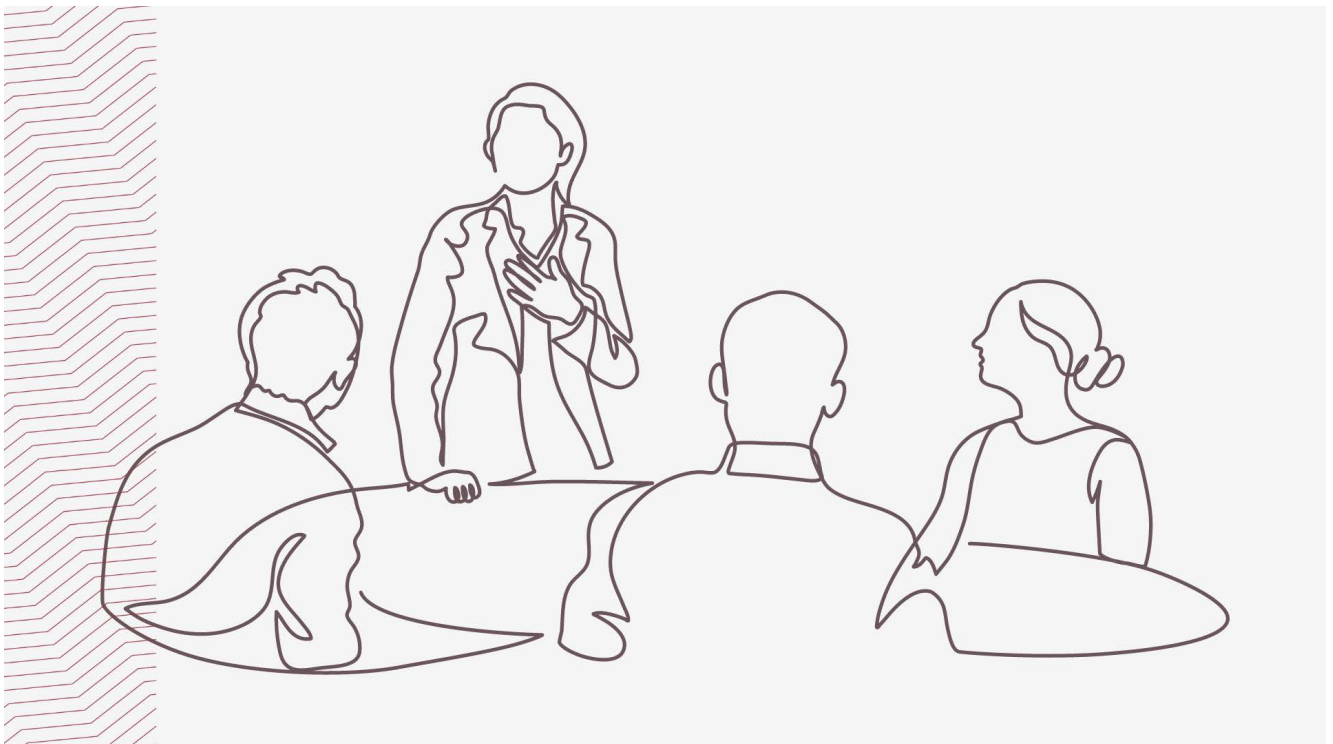
AN ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX

An accountability matrix describes the primary focus and contributions of each of the collaboration roles. In the sample accountability matrix below, there are three columns which name the role, describe the primary focus and expectations and describe the accountability factors. Some collaborations may wish to include a fourth column which describes the type and scope of decisions each of the collaboration roles might lead.

The sample accountability matrix describes a variety of roles and accountabilities. Not all collaborations will have this mix of roles and accountabilities. The scope and scale of the collaboration may require fewer or more roles and accountabilities to be added to the accountability matrix.

We suggest that the accountability matrix be co-created with members of the collaboration. Getting their engagement and ownership early on will increase their commitment and connection to each other.

Samples can be found on the following pages.



Sample Accountability Matrix – Small-Scale Collaboration

| Role | Primary Focus & Contributions | Accountability |
|---|--|--|
| Convener/ Fiscal Sponsor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local charitable organization, funder or government convenes the collaborative • If local organization, they have received funding to convene the collaboration • Often acts as host and organizes meetings, takes minutes and manages budget (if there is one) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for funding and reporting • Accountable to the collaboration partners • Accountable to the host organization, funder and community for results |
| Collaboration Table | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of local leaders determined by the collaboration host • Shapes and agrees to the collaboration goals and strategy • Aligns work of organizations to the collaboration goals and strategies • Engage other partners • Mobilize resources & knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for setting the collaboration goals and core strategies • Accountable for progress • Accountable to their own organization • Accountable to the community for results |

A sample for a large-scale collaboration can be found on the next page.



Sample Accountability Matrix – Large-Scale Collaboration

| Role | Primary Focus & Contributions | Accountability |
|--|---|---|
| Convener/ Fiscal Sponsor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local charitable organization that receives the funding to convene the collaborative • Is a member of an accountable to the Leadership Table(s) • May be the location for the backbone staff team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for funding and reporting • Accountable to the Partners or Leadership Table for how funding is spent • Accountable to the community for results |
| Leadership Table | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 – 15 local leaders • Shapes and leads the strategy overall • Aligns work of various action teams • Hold commitment to common agenda & Theory of Change • Engage other partners • Mobilize resources & knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for setting the common agenda and core strategies • Accountable for progress • Accountable to the community for results |
| Staff Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes the Leadership & core staff of the backbone infrastructure • Support the work of the Steering Committee & Initiative overall – • Design & facilitate engagement across the initiative and meetings of various groups • Ensures progress is being made | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable to the Fiscal Sponsor for funding allocations and following the Fiscal Sponsor policies • Accountable and working with the Leadership Table • Accountable for reporting • Accountable to the community for results |
| Working Groups or Action Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale-up on-the-ground solutions around key areas of focus/priorities • Co-design & refine solutions around key shifts/strategic priorities • Number of size of work groups to be determined • Each work group includes youth leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable to the Leadership Table and Backbone team for progress on common agenda • Accountable to the community for results |
| Community Network or Community Eco-System | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides insights and ideas on key shifts & ideas • Offers feedback on priorities to maximize impact of the initiative • Contributes knowledge, resources & connections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable to the collaborative effort for direction, engagement and support |

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT COLLABORATIVE DECISION-MAKING

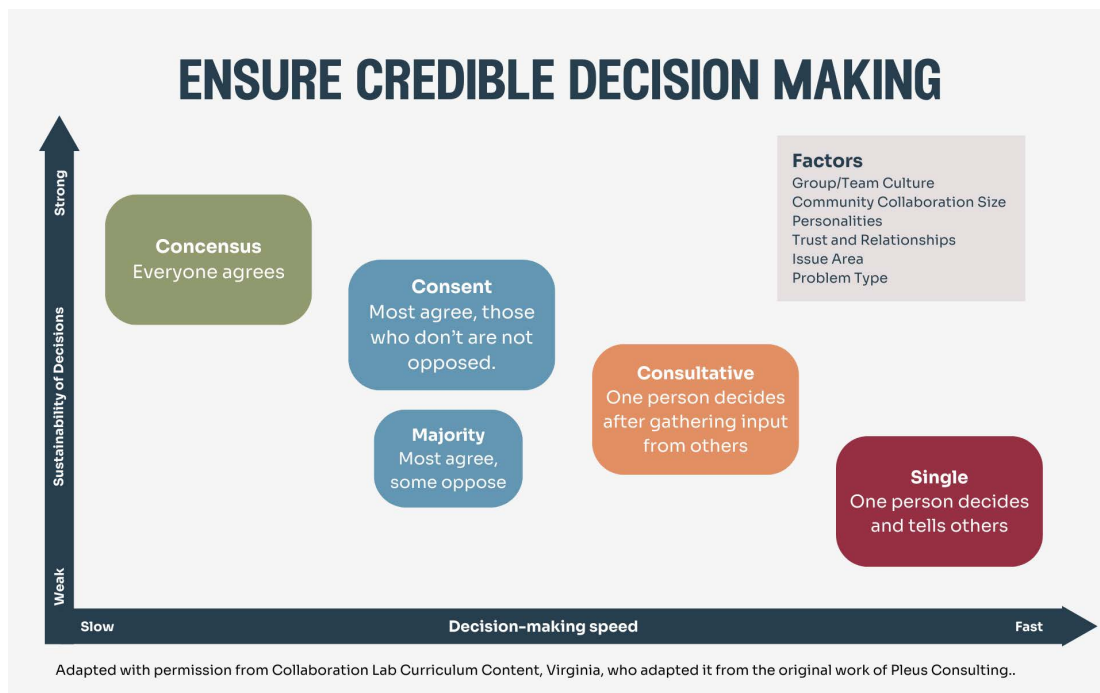
Defining what type of decisions collaboration partners need to make can be helpful at the beginning of a process. Smaller scale collaborations may not have the same challenges of larger scale collaborations but there will still be decisions that the partners around the collaboration table will make through the course of working together.

There are several types of decision areas a collaboration will navigate:

- **Strategic decisions:** decisions which include the identification of goals and strategies for the collaboration, evaluating progress and results, communications and recognition
- **Policy decisions:** taking a collective and shared stance on an issue which may include advocacy
- **Operational decisions:** decisions which include seeking funding or other resources to support the collaboration, hiring staff, memorandums of understanding, terms of reference for the different collaboration roles
- **Programmed decisions or non-programmed decisions:** decisions which are normally repetitive in nature and taken as routine or tactical
- **Group decisions:** include decisions such as a shared workplan or identifying values for working collaboratively
- **Personal decisions:** decisions which each individual makes about their role and commitment to the collaboration

While each collaboration will be different, it may be useful to allocate the type of decision to each role within the accountability matrix. This will further clarify the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

Another way to consider decision-making is to identify **how** the collaboration wants to make the decision. This visual provided by [Pleus Consulting](#) clearly illustrates different decision-making processes and the speed that it takes to make the decision. Strategic and policy decisions will require either a consensus, consent or majority approach. Programmatic decisions might be more consultative whereas personal decisions may require a single person to consider the impact. There is no right or wrong approach.



FINAL THOUGHTS: THE ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX

As noted earlier, this tool can be used by all types and sizes of collaborations. For smaller sized collaborations, you may have a simpler structure and fewer roles. It is still useful to clarify the parts of the structure you have in place and the expectations around roles and accountabilities.

For medium-sized to large scale collaborations, there are likely more parts to the structure and that these parts evolve over time. Again, the principle of clarity of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities can be foundational to your work.

Defining accountability for the collaboration and its partners enhances how individuals work together and clarify the core roles and responsibilities that each partner plays. It invites a conversation about commitments that members of the collaboration are making to each other. It also enables clarity of roles, responsibilities and decision-making processes.

It may take a few meetings at the beginning of the collaboration to work through the accountability matrix. The outcome of a well-defined structure, clear decision-making processes and defining accountabilities are game changers for collaborations. Investing the time to describe the structure and process will result in more effective collaboration experiences.

Remember to revisit the accountability matrix at least annually as it is likely that there are shifts and changes.

At Tamarack, we welcome your thoughts, ideas and reflections as you use this tool. Please share your learning with us. Was the tool easy to navigate? What did you like? What might you change? Your experiences with the accountability matrix will help us refine the tool and make it even more user-friendly.

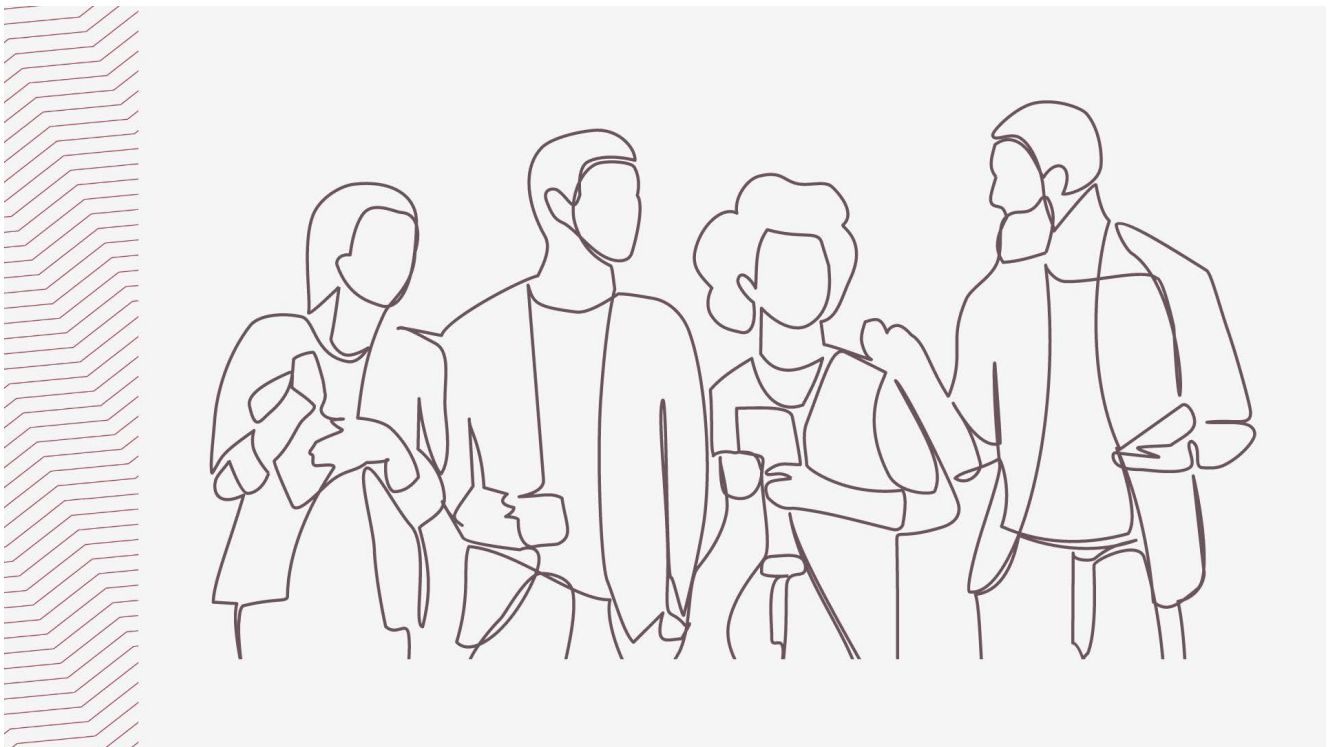
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: THE ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX

- Tamarack Institute | [Collaborative Governance and Leadership Series](#)
- Tamarack Institute | [The Collaboration Spectrum](#)
- Tamarack Institute | [The Collaboration Spectrum Revisited](#)
- Tamarack Institute Paper | [Achieving Collective Impact with Accountability](#) by Deitre Epps
- Collective Impact Forum | [Strategies to Support Centering Equity in Collective Impact](#)
- Tamarack Institute | [Establishing Values and Principles for Working Together](#)

Acknowledgement

The Accountability Matrix is regularly presented during the Collaborative Governance and Leadership workshop. Most recently, this tool was presented to the Communities Ending Poverty – Western Canada Leads cohort. The participants in this workshop were invited to use a version of this tool to advance their collaborations. Tamarack thanks the many workshop participants for your encouragement to further develop this resource.

On the following pages, you will find various matrix templates.



STEPS TO BUILDING AN ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX

These steps will guide your collaboration in building an accountability matrix for your shared work.

1. Consider the equity and inclusion implications when building an accountability matrix for the collaboration.
2. Determine whose perspectives should be invited and included to join the collaboration including individuals who are directly impacted by the problem, challenge or opportunity.
3. Confirm the structure and size of the collaboration.
4. Confirm the shared agreements, common agenda and core strategies of the collaboration.
5. Identify and confirm the collaboration's [values and principles for working together](#).
6. Identify the different parts of the collaboration – Leadership team, steering committee, working groups, staff (other groups as required)
7. Briefly describe their core roles and responsibilities
8. Identify what accountabilities each group has to other parts of the structure
9. Add a Column about decision making if appropriate

There are three worksheets for each size of collaboration – small, medium and large-scale or collective impact collaboration. Please feel free to add or delete the columns and rows that do not work for your collaboration. We recognize that each community and collaboration context is unique. Have fun and experiment with this basic design.

Table 1: Designed For a Small-Sized or Community-Based Collaboration

Our Shared Goal and Strategies:

Our Accountability Matrix:

| Parts of the Collaboration (Examples below -change as required) | Primary Focus & Contributions (Describe the focus and contributions of each group – core roles and responsibilities) | Decision Making (What decisions are the responsibility of this group?) | Accountability (Who is this group accountable and for what?) |
|---|--|--|--|
| Convener | | | |
| Partners or Members | | | |
| Community | | | |
| Other (add here) | | | |

Another template can be found on the following page for medium-sized collaborations.

Table 2: Designed For a Medium-Sized Collaboration

Our Shared Goal and Strategies:

Our Accountability Matrix:

| Parts of the Collaboration Examples below; change as required | Primary Focus & Contributions Describe the focus and contributions of each group – core roles and responsibilities | Decision Making What decisions are the responsibility of this group? | Accountability Who is this group accountable and for what? |
|---|--|--|---|
| Convener | | | |
| Steering Committee | | | |
| Working Groups or Action Teams | | | |
| Community Network or Community Eco-System | | | |
| Other (add here) | | | |
| Other (add here) | | | |

Another template can be found on the following page for large-scale collaborations.

Table 3: Designed for a Large-Scale or Collective Impact Collaboration

Our Shared Goal and Strategies:

Our Accountability Matrix:

| Parts of the Collaboration Examples below; change as required | Primary Focus & Contributions Describe the focus and contributions of each group – core roles and responsibilities | Decision Making What decisions are the responsibility of this group? | Accountability Who is this group accountable and for what? |
|---|---|---|--|
| Convener | | | |
| Leadership Table | | | |
| Steering Committee | | | |
| Staff/Staff Team | | | |
| Working Groups or Action Teams | | | |
| Community Network / Community Eco-System | | | |
| Other (add here) | | | |
| Other (add here) | | | |