



A FIO PARTNERS PERSPECTIVE:

Thoughts on Funding Collaboration and Consolidation in the Nonprofit Sector

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The Calgary Community Foundation has asked me to address the issue of a foundation's role in the consolidation of the nonprofit sector. As the nonprofit sector consolidates as a result of the worldwide economic downturn, foundations will play two important roles in the process of supporting collaborative activity. First, they respond to requests from grantees to fund collaborative work. When in receipt of such a proposal, foundation staff and volunteers have to determine whether what is proposed is both useful and *feasible*. Second, foundation staff and volunteers encourage collaborative approaches, suggesting, even strongly suggesting at times, that a grantee find one or more partners to undertake what has been proposed. In this instance, it is important for foundation staff and volunteers to understand the *magnitude* of what they are suggesting, its impact on cost, timing, and level of effort for the grantee. This article seeks to offer some helpful information to begin to inform these roles.

In thinking about how to be helpful, it occurred to me that a set of frameworks or screens through which to "see" a collaborative opportunity might be helpful. I have tried to capture these frameworks as a decision tree, organized from general to specific. From my perspective, these frameworks are: (1) What kind of collaborative structure is proposed? (2) Does the proposed structure match with the proposed purpose? (3) What are the likely cost, time, and level of resistance that the proposed structure inherently involves? (4) From a process perspective, what are the process elements that we should see to create these structures?

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