

Collaborative Network Analysis *Cooperative and Coordinated Engagement*



Committed Partnerships Are Essential to Your Community

Engaged partners are the lifeblood of any Georgia Family Connection Collaborative. Research shows that partnerships with higher levels of engagement tend to be more task focused, goal directed, and cohesive. They also tend to show more community support, community improvement, and organizational capacity.

Any thriving Collaborative requires highly engaged members to contribute resources, skills, energy, and leadership. Partners who are well connected in the community also can bring new members to the table and serve as bridges to other networks. However, even less engaged members can bring clear-cut skills, contacts, and valuable resources to your Collaborative table.

Beyond the level of engagement, it is essential that we discern the type of engagement between partners. The Georgia Family Connection Partnership Outcomes Team has been investigating how diverse levels and types of engagement affect your Collaborative's productivity. This is critical work since little research has clearly identified these patterns.

A meaningful way to consider how your Collaborative members with various levels and types of engagement contribute to your work is

to sort out those partners connected through the Collaborative from those that interact in more complex cooperative and coordinated ways.

Cooperative Engagement

Your partners engage in activities that involve working together toward a common goal or objective, such as:

- exchanging information about a community need,
- attending meetings to plan a strategy to address that need, and
- offering related resources and funding opportunities to each other.

Coordinated Engagement

Your partners engage in activities that take cooperation a step further by intentionally organizing tasks and partners to make activities more efficient. For instance, two or more partners might work together to write a grant that would benefit each other's activities and in turn children, families, and communities.

Social Network Analysis Helps You Understand Partners' Level of Engagement

The Self-Assessment tracks level of engagement by organization types and yields the Partner Engagement Matrix, which depicts whether each community organization type is extensively, moderately, slightly, or not at all engaged in your Collaborative. However, it does not produce any detailed information about specific Collaborative member organizations or individuals and the type of their interactions.

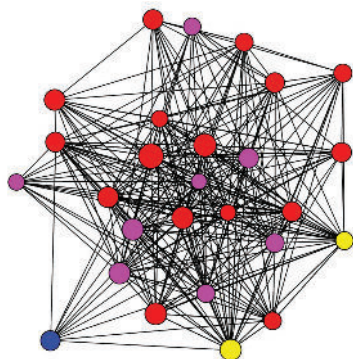
Social network data goes beyond the Self-Assessment to provide rich details about how specific members are connected and engaged in coordinated or cooperative

relationships. Understanding who is involved and in what ways will help us understand and act on these critical dynamics. For example, identifying highly involved members sharing abundant resources clarifies a Collaborative strength on which to build. On the other hand, identifying a need for more resources among the most involved members clarifies a challenge your Collaborative needs to address. Social network data can also uncover opportunities such as identifying less engaged partners with abundant resources that could be applied to future activities and sub-networks that are highly engaged with each other, but not with other Collaborative members.

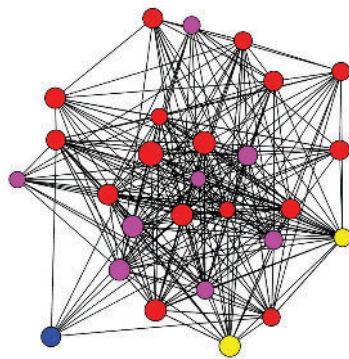
This example of resource contribution across different types of engagement within the Family Connection & Communities in Schools of Washington County Collaborative network shows three levels and types of engagement.

Resource Contribution Across Different Types of Engagement in Washington County

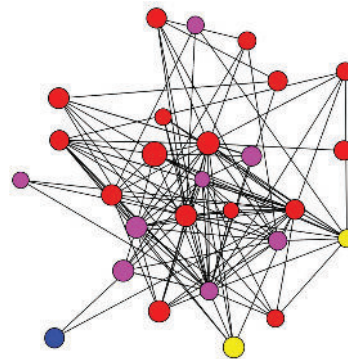
Those that work on issues relating to Collaborative goals



Those involved in cooperative activities



Those involved in coordinated activities



The chart on the left shows **interactions** among all organizations or individuals (circles) simply connected through Collaborative membership. Each line shows other Collaborative members with whom each member interacts. Larger circles represent a member the other Collaborative members perceive as more valued because that partner contributes more resources than the others.

- Local Government
- Nonprofit/Private
- Public Agency
- Business

The middle chart shows the same information but includes only those engaged in **cooperative** activities.

The chart on the right includes only those engaged in **coordinated** activities.

What We Can Learn From the Resource Contribution Across Types of Participation in the Washington County Collaborative

- 1 Most members are from public agencies or the nonprofit and private sectors. Members appear to be connected within and between sectors.
- 2 Among those participating in cooperative and coordinated activities, there are fewer connections among members, indicating that there is a smaller sub-network of more highly engaged—but less connected—members. A sub-network of certain members of the public agencies, nonprofit, private, and local government sectors are highly connected and engaged with one another on coordinated activities.
- 3 Two local government members are involved in the Collaborative. Their peripheral location shows that they are less connected than other members, but given the size of the yellow dots at the bottom of the chart are perceived by other members as contributing resources.
- 4 The business sector is represented by only one Collaborative member, who has fewer connections to other members at the coordinated activity level compared to the cooperative level. The business sector is depicted on the periphery of the chart, indicating fewer connections to other members and a less central role in overall Collaborative activity. Though less engaged, the business sector appears to provide valuable resources to the Collaborative.



Engagement Across the Statewide Network Is as Varied as the Collaboratives Themselves

In rural Rabun County, the Lake Rabun Association (LRA) routinely attends Rabun County Family Connection's Collaborative meetings. Because of this high level of engagement, LRA realized the critical need for providing a Collaborative COVID-19 relief grant match (for a North Georgia Community Foundation grant) that helped families with rent, mortgage assistance, food, gasoline, and utilities.

In suburban Columbia County, the County Commission is not involved in Columbia County Community Connections' annual planning process, but does provide critical mission support in the form of a building, IT support, pest control service, grass cutting, and building and grounds maintenance.

In metropolitan Atlanta, representatives from the Fulton County School System are an integral part of Atlanta Fulton Family Connection and serve on both the governance board and the health and early learning strategy team.



Cooperative and Coordinated Engagement Are Not Always Better

Essential Collaborative members, such as the business sector, are not always as connected as other members, but contribute key resources that they may be uniquely positioned to offer. The Bleckley County Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Development Authority, for example, provide public relations and volunteer support for the Cochran/Bleckley Family Connection's activities.

Other members from the public agency and nonprofit and private sectors may be engaged in more coordinated activities, without necessarily having monetary resources to contribute. For example, the Toombs County Department of Juvenile Justice and a faith community partner volunteer and support the Toombs County Family Connection's programs and activities, but are unable to provide financial support.

Social network data can help to identify Collaborative strengths in terms of resource-rich members, members engaged in cooperative and coordinated activities, and closely interconnected sectors. Future investigations will include another level beyond cooperative and coordinated interactions: Collaborative interactions, where members actually pool staff, funding, and other resources to support activities directly beneficial to all involved members and their constituents.

How You Can Boost Partner Engagement

Network analysis of your Collaborative may demonstrate only slight to moderate engagement across sectors. In discussing these findings among Collaborative members, you may uncover other concerns about implications of limited engagement on child, family, and community outcomes. Further discussion could help identify barriers to deeper member engagement—such as long meetings and the need for efficiency and more planning—and lead to efforts to boost engagement and increase task delegation among players across your Collaborative.



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Get Acquainted With Your Collaborative Structure

The network of relationships among Collaborative members varies by county. This edition of *Evaluation Snapshot* has demonstrated ways to explore partnerships to expand or deepen those relationships and extend the Collaborative's work. If you plan to implement similar strategies, get to know the structure of your Collaborative. Find out what sectors and unique relationships are strengths for your Collaborative and learn to identify areas for improvement.

Read part one of this three-part series:
[Collaborative Network Analysis: Tapping into Untapped Relationships](#)

Part three will explore strategy-focused engagement.

What we at Georgia Family Connection do is vital, because everything we do is aimed at improving conditions and prospects of families in every community across the state. We work toward measurably better outcomes for all Georgians. *Evaluation Snapshot* examines how collaboration among our partners affects indicators of child, family, and community well-being. Snapshots are taken from reports by the Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) Outcomes Team, a group of researchers from EMSTAR Research, Metis Associates, Georgia State University, and GaFCP.

GaFCP is a public-private nonprofit created and funded by the state of Georgia and investors from the private sector. We support Georgia Family Connection, a statewide network of collaborative organizations in all 159 counties committed to improving the quality of life for children and families—the only one of its kind in the nation.

Please send questions or comments to Steve Erickson at eval@gafcp.org.

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