



# BENEFITS and BARRIERS to WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

Considering working collectively or collaboratively on an important societal issue? Here are the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach.

## Benefits

- 😊 **Quality.** Comprehensive analysis of the problem improves the quality of solutions.
- 😊 **Diversification.** Multiple views of the problem.
- 😊 **Reduced impasse.** The risk of impasse is minimized because differences are explicitly addressed and decisions are made collectively.
- 😊 **Stakeholder's interests.** The process ensures that each stakeholder's interests are considered in any agreement.
- 😊 **Ownership.** Parties retain ownership of the solution.
- 😊 **Expertise.** Parties most familiar with the problem, not their agents, invent the solutions.
- 😊 **Acceptability.** Participation enhances acceptance of solution and willingness to implement it.
- 😊 **Innovation.** The potential to discover novel, innovative solutions is enhanced.
- 😊 **Relationships.** Relations between the stakeholders improve.
- 😊 **Cost.** Costs associated with other methods are avoided.
- 😊 **Continuity.** Mechanisms for coordinating future actions among the stakeholders can be established.

## Barriers

- 😞 **Mission/visibility.** Organisational commitments create disincentives due to a perception that collaboration will dilute their mission and their visibility.
- 😞 **Adversity.** Long-standing adversarial relationships stemming from deep ideological differences and historical usage of the judiciary process to resolve conflict.
- 😞 **Power.** Concern about preserving one's own power base if their interest becomes secondary to a more powerful one.
- 😞 **Resource management.** Fiscal policies that concern that allocation of scarce resources.
- 😞 **Risk management.** Perception of risk can cause one to focus on some problems and ignore others.
- 😞 **Organisational culture.** Administrative policies impede collaboration with budget restraints and budget cycles. Also an established reward system is based on individual performance rather than collaboration.
- 😞 **Self-interest.** Willingness and capacity of the individuals and organizations to undertake the shifts in thinking necessary (i.e., shifting from personal and organizational self-interest to meaningful collective interest.).
- 😞 **Leadership.** The absence of leadership and a facilitating infrastructure to support the development of collaboration.

Building strong environmental organizations and catalyzing their work together in crafting broadly-supported, durable, creative environmental solutions.

**Charlotte Young, Ph.D.; [charlotte@envision-synergy.net](mailto:charlotte@envision-synergy.net)**

[www.envision-synergy.net](http://www.envision-synergy.net); 416-778-4713

Toronto ON M4J 3J6

Source: Gray, B. 1991. *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.