**The Seven C’s: Questions for Partners**

James Austin’s *The Collaboration Challenge* presents the seven C’s of strategic collaboration. The following, reproduced with permission from *The Collaboration Challenge,* are questions you can use to asses an alliance against the seven C’s.

*Connection with Purpose and People*

* To what extent are individuals personally and emotionally connected to the social purpose of the collaboration?
* Have individuals been able to touch, feel, and see the social value of the collaboration?
* What level and what quality of interaction exist among senior leaders?
* To what extent do personal connections and interaction occur at other levels across the partnering organizations?
* How strong are interpersonal bonds?

*Clarity of Purpose*

* What is the purpose of the collaboration?
* Where does the relationship fall on the Collaboration Continuum (is it philanthropic, transactional, or integrative), and where does each partner want it to be?
* Have the partners escaped the gratefulness and charity syndrome?
* Do both partners have written collaboration purpose statements?
* Has each partner determined the different functions and relative importance of the partnerships already existing in its collaboration portfolio?

*Congruency of mission, strategy, and values*

* How well does each partner understand the other’s business?
* What are the missions, strategies, and value of each partner?
* What are the areas of current and potential overlap?
* How can each partner help the other accomplish its mission?
* To what extent is the collaboration a strategic tool for each partner?
* Have the partners engaged in shared visioning about the future?

*Creation of Value*

* What resources of each partner are of value to the other?
* What specific benefits will accrue to each partner from the collaboration?
* What social value can be generated by the alliance?
* What new resources, capabilities, and benefits can be created by the collaboration?
* Are resource and capability transfer two-way?
* Has the value exchanged and creation depreciated? If so, to what extent?
* Is it time to end the collaboration?

*Communication between Partners*

* What level of respect and trust exists between the partners?
* Is communication open and frank, and is critical communication constructive?
* How is communication between the partners managed?
* Does each partner have a partner relationship manager?
* What channels and vehicles are used to communicate internally?
* Are there potential dissenters, and can they be converted?
* How does the alliance communicate externally?
* Do the partners have a coordinated external communication strategy and program?
* Is the partnership under publicized?

*Continual Learning*

* What has each partner learned from the collaboration about how to work with another organization more effectively and create partner and social value?
* How was this learning been incorporated into the collaboration?
* Is there a process for routinely assessing learning from the collaboration?
* Is complacency stifling innovation?

*Commitment to the Partnership*

* What is the trend in investments (personal, financial, institutional) in the partnership?
* Are the partners’ expectations of one another high?
* What is the composition of each partner’s collaboration portfolio, and where does this alliance fit within those portfolios?
* Are the portfolios consistent with the partners’ collaboration capacities?