Collaborative Partnerships
A Toolkit for State and Local Dental Societies
Introduction

Local societies serve as a connection between state societies and members. They connect with members on a deeper level, strengthening the entire organization for the future. They fulfill members’ needs to connect with others personally and satisfy networking needs professionally. These local societies can be the very reason dentists renew their membership year after year. As an invaluable resource, it’s important to ensure that local societies are working smoothly to help the overall organization succeed.

Working together, state and local dental societies can identify their current level of collaboration and work toward a fully collaborative partnership.

This toolkit provides you with:

- Techniques to enhance existing state and local society partnerships and how to foster strong new ones
- Steps to develop and maintain open, aligned communication to achieve common goals
- Tools for defining service levels and role clarification for state and local societies in an effort to work more collaboratively
- A guide to the development of a Collaborative Plan between state and local societies
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Three Keys to Successful Relationships

Typically represented by geographic location, local dental societies are structured differently state by state and society by society. Some have staff, which are sometimes employed by state dental societies or association management companies, while others are volunteer led and administered. Regardless of how they are configured, the relationship between a state and local society needs to be one that fosters partnership, communication, and defines the level of services each will provide.

Collaborative Open Partnerships

Successful relationships are those that foster collaborative and open partnerships amongst stakeholders at the state and local levels. Partnerships between state and local societies have sometimes been more of a top-down or parent-child relationship. Collaborative open partnerships, however, provide state and local societies with the ability to utilize individual strengths to serve members effectively, grow membership and provide more member value. They include a high level of trust and have mutual support and awareness in common. There’s a willingness to work toward an agreed upon purpose and the ability to recognize the expertise of all team members. Transparency in all aspects of work and communication is a big factor in these partnerships and there must be a willingness to share ideas and responsibilities.

FIVE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

1. **Accomplishment** – Collaboration among societies yields much better results as opposed to each society working in a silo.
2. **Resource Sharing** – No need to reinvent the wheel. State and local societies have differing strengths so capitalize on them in the development of resources and share them with the other societies.
3. **Overcoming Barriers** – Societies face barriers that hinder it from achieving success. Collaboration between societies can help to break down these barriers and improve membership, increase member engagement and provide greater member value. Partnerships are more powerful than societies that operate on their own.
4. **Increased Member Awareness** – Strengthen messaging to members and increase society visibility by joining forces.
5. **Access to Funding** – When it comes to funding projects, events, activities, and CE, societies can team up and pool assets in order to successfully execute. Partnering with other societies can increase exposure to both members and nonmembers, and lessen the financial burden.
Strong Communication

If a partnership is going to succeed, there must be effective two-way (rather than top-down) communication between state and local societies.

Collaborative partners share information required to make the relationship work and assist with making any joint project successful. Collaborative societies interact often, update each other regularly, share information freely and promptly, and openly discuss needs, issues and concerns.

Open, transparent and frequent communication will:

- Build a culture of trust and allow state and local societies to focus on the issues that really matter – serving members and not individual needs
- Minimize misunderstandings and help to work through them quickly
- Reduce the risk of assumptions and encourage state and local societies to stay focused on the shared vision

What should state and local societies communicate?

- Overall/Membership goals, objectives, strategies
- Membership and market share data, opportunities and challenges
- Leadership and governance changes, opportunities or challenges
- Roles of each society (see 'Defining Levels of Service')
- Shared resources
- Consistent message from each society
- Ideas for new programs and services

Defining Levels of Service

It’s important for state and local societies to define their individual roles and types of services each is better positioned to provide. Role clarification assists societies with understanding their individual differences, enhances their working relationship and increases cooperation and effectiveness in working with one another. Societies often times offer differentiated but complementary services that give value to members at both levels. For example, topics local societies might address can be paired up with a related resource the state society (or the ADA) may have available.
SEVEN STEPS TO ROLE CLARIFICATION

Role clarification is not only good for the society leaders, but also for shared members. Members know what to expect from each level of the association as it lessens confusion. For the societies, it provides greater efficiency, effective use of resources and reduces internal competition. All of this must be accomplished with clear and strong communication between societies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>Each society is to identify its purpose (review mission statement) and overarching goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROLE STATEMENT</td>
<td>Each society to develop a statement/list that describes its view of the overall/specific roles of its society</td>
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<tr>
<td>REVIEW / DISCUSS</td>
<td>As a group, review the outlined roles of each society and gain full understanding of roles and why each believes it is best positioned for the role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEEDBACK</td>
<td>Each society offers feedback to each other. The goal is to provide specific and candid information about what each society believes the other should be doing (more of, less of) in a respectful way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALIDATION</td>
<td>Before moving on to negotiation, each society should summarize what the other society requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGOTIATION</td>
<td>The society clarifying their role may choose between three kinds of responses to role requests:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong> – society is willing and able to make the requested change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>No</strong> – society articulates that the change will not help the partnership meet its goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Negotiate</strong> – ask team members for the help each society needs to make the change: “Our society will do X if your society will do Y”…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOCUMENTATION</td>
<td>Document what has been agreed upon. A timeline is then established for updating agreed-upon commitments</td>
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NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The purpose of a member needs assessment is to determine new services or changes to current services that will provide the most value to members.

The purpose of a society assessment is to understand what level a society may be at in fulfilling its established role. It can evaluate organizational structure, governance, operations, financials, society performance and identify any gaps.

CONDUCT A SURVEY

• Sent electronically, this offers the ability to identify where assistance and resources are needed
• Establishes benchmarks

FACILITATE LIVE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

• Face-to-face discussions use relationship building tactics to help reach consensus early on
• Can be conducted with multiple local societies at the same time

ENGAGE LEADERS VIA PHONE INTERVIEWS

• Great alternative when it becomes difficult to get busy leadership in the same room
• Provides more scheduling flexibility

See Appendix for a sample society needs assessment and contact your ADA Outreach Manager for assistance with customization.
SERVICE IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Once society and member needs are identified and prioritized, current services can be evaluated to see if they address these needs. New services can be developed to fill in any gaps.

Consider these questions in the evaluation/development of services:

1. What services are needed (based on needs assessment outlined above)?
2. Do current services exist? Will new services need to be developed?
3. Will the state or local society develop the new service?
4. Based on the overall goals of the society, which will provide the best opportunity for success?
5. Which society is best suited to provide the service?
6. Realistically, where does it fall within the defined roles of the two levels?
7. Which society has the resources to execute the service well?
SERVICES PROVIDED TO LOCAL SOCIETIES

Resources for ongoing activities within a society can often be tight. With low organizational capacity levels, lack of financial resources and reduced staffs (where they exist), local societies are requesting additional support to serve its members. There's a need to develop and provide fewer resources in a more demanding environment.

Services provided by state societies to local societies will vary across the states. Some charge a fee for certain services. The appropriate mix of services is an individual society’s decision and the same benefits should be offered across all societies. Examples of services include:

- Administrative assistance including database support, newsletters, educational programming assistance, blast emails, etc.
- Access to membership database and mailing labels
- Templates for organizational documents, such as bylaws and articles of incorporation, marketing and membership materials, component orientation manuals, etc.
- Incorporation under the state society’s umbrella
- Joint purchasing arrangements; for example, general liability insurance coverage
- Website support
- Field staff to provide consultation and advice to local society leadership
- Speakers for CE and events
- Sponsorship of events
- Exhibits at local meetings
- Government affairs updates and education
- Formal leadership training
- Updates and bulletins to local society leadership
- Networking opportunities among local society members through leadership meetings
- Assistance in leadership functions, such as elections and advice on governance issues
- Social media guidance
- Connection/programming with other local societies
- Marketing resources for brand consistency
- Special member discounts to state society products and services
Stages of Collaboration

The relationship and level of collaboration between a state and local society varies with each society. There is no right or wrong formula, only what works best for each society. The purpose of the following model is to help societies understand what stage of collaboration their partnership is in today and to identify where they hope to be in the future. Each rung of the ladder represents heightened alignment that will get the state and local relationship one step closer to a joint goal. This model helps to establish a baseline of collaboration and should be reviewed on a continuous basis to evaluate the impact of working together.
Reflection is extremely important when working within partnerships. State and local societies should address and discuss the following questions. Different views are healthy and feedback from all stakeholders is important. Use the insight gained to help streamline decisions and guide the direction of a collaborative work plan.

1. Consider what rung of the ladder the relationship falls on. Were there any surprises?

2. What factors determined the choices that were made when selecting the rung of the ladder? Be honest and specific.

3. Was it hard to choose one particular ring over another? What made the choice difficult?

4. How can more enhanced collaboration between state and local societies increase member value and/or decrease cost?

5. Has conflict between the state and local society hurt member value or created missed opportunities to serve members better or more economically?

6. What current services could be enhanced or what new services could be delivered through better collaboration?

7. Would members agree that no matter how well or poorly the state and local society are currently working together, there is always room for improvement for the sake of members?
Developing a Collaborative Work Plan

The goal in partnerships is to achieve more than what one society can achieve on their own. In other words, the whole of the partnership is greater than the sum of the individual parts. While state and local societies have specific purposes in serving shared members, members benefit when they work together in a collaborative open partnership with open and transparent communication. Clarifying roles, defining levels of service and an understanding of the current level of collaboration between state and local societies are the initial steps to a collaborative work plan.

Work Plan Characteristics

A collaborative work plan outlines the structure of work for the partnership or a specific initiative within the partnership. Good work plans have the following characteristics:

| BUY-IN | Having a plan alone cannot motivate people to action. Too often we hear a plan gets put on a shelf following development. Increase the success of plan implementation by first establishing buy-in from both your leadership and the local society. |
| REALISTIC | It’s important to be realistic when developing a plan. Consider an agreed upon and achievable timeline while staying within the scope of the plan. Continuously share progress no matter how incremental and good or bad. |
| ACTIONABLE | Consider developing immediate, short-term and long-term outcomes for your collaborative work plan. Identify how you will determine the success of your activities and efforts and who will own different strategies. Develop a dashboard to keep track of success and regularly review progress. |
| ACCOUNTABILITY | Communicate group accountability and interdependence of activities. Show how specific tasks impact the completion of the overall task. Having an effective structure for open, honest communication can support conversations about accountability as issues arise. |
| SHARED RESPONSIBILITY | It can be tempting for the state society to always serve as the center for collaborative work and in some cases necessary. However, both state and local societies should consider shared responsibility. This increases feelings of ownership and long-term commitment to the partnership. |
# Client Services Collaborative Planning Process

ADA Client Services offers a full service process to state and local societies in the development of a Collaborative Work Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCOPE CLARIFICATION</th>
<th>Discovery meeting to assess opportunity for collaborative plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Intake &amp; Discovery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Overview of Collaborative Planning Approach</td>
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<td>• Timeline Development</td>
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<td>• Next Steps</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA COLLECTION</th>
<th>Gathering of information to evaluate society and member needs and outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Society Needs Assessment Survey</td>
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<td>• Member Needs Assessment Survey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• ADA/State/Local Membership Trends</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Organizational Capacity Assessment</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA EVALUATION</th>
<th>Results of the completed society and/or member needs assessments are reviewed to identify both trends and gaps and summarized for presentation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Synthesis of Data Results</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development of Data Charts</td>
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<tr>
<th>ONSITE FACILITATION</th>
<th>ADA Outreach Manager facilitates a full-day collaborative session</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SWOT Analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative Priorities (Goals, Objectives, Strategies)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understanding Implementation and Accountability</td>
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<tr>
<th>PLAN DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>Results of the on-site meeting are gathered and synthesized into a Collaboration Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Draft Collaborative Plan</td>
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<td>• Presentation of Plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Team Agreement of Plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Plan Finalization</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PLAN EXECUTION</strong></td>
<td>An action plan is developed in coordination with societies outlining owners and timeline for completion</td>
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| **PLAN MONITORING AND EVALUATION** | Monitor and evaluate progress to encourage ongoing improvement and to provide evidence of the impact  
  • Metrics Dashboard Template |
Appendix

Sample Local Society Needs Assessment Survey

Part 1: Administration/Governance

[Answer “Yes”, “No”, or “Don’t Know” to the following statements.]

- Has up-to-date bylaws
- Mission, values and bylaws align with those of state society
- Board annually reviews the bylaws and makes changes as appropriate
- Board ensures that all component operations reflect the processes documented in the bylaws
- Maintains written position descriptions for elected officials
- Members participate in the nominations and election of Board
- Follows procedures on election of officers as outlined in the bylaws
- Uses a nominating committee to identify and recruit volunteer leaders
- Submits a current Board roster to the state society with term expiration dates as changes occur
- Creates an annual operating plan
- Maintains a current roster of its membership
- Board meets at least four times a year
- Follows anti-trust compliance policies
- Keeps minutes of Board meetings, committee meetings and membership meetings
- Board maintains general liability insurance
- Board maintains directors and officers insurance
- Is incorporated and maintains annual state incorporation reporting requirements
- Leaders participate in leadership development opportunities
- Board regularly communicates with Board members from other local components

Part 2: Financial

[Answer “Yes”, “No”, or “Don’t Know” to the following statements.]

- Obtains and maintains a 501(c)(6) tax exempt classification
- Has a unique Federal Identification Number
- Completed Federal Form 990 by the fifth month of the close of the fiscal year
- Board develops and approves an annual operating budget and reviews periodically
- Prepares regular financial statements
- Ensures that an annual internal or external financial review is completed by an individual or group not directly responsible for management of the society’s finances
- Implements at least one fundraising event per year
- Develops non-dues revenue programs to generate income
Part 3: Membership

[Answer “Yes”, “No”, or “Don’t Know” to the following statements.]

- Board assesses its members’ needs and satisfaction levels annually
- Achieves/maintains minimum membership levels
- Develops an annual membership recruitment and retention plan
- Conducts an annual membership drive
- Has a plan in place to welcome/orient new members
- Holds a program on the value of membership
- Holds at least one member networking event per year

What services (other than education programs and events) do you offer your members?

Part 4: Education/Programs/Events

[Answer “Yes”, “No”, or “Don’t Know” to the following statements.]

- Provides at least two education programs per years for its members
- Evaluates member needs for education programs annually
- Holds an awards program for its members
- Maintains an annual event/education program calendar

How many programs do you hold in a typical year?

Part 5: Communication/Marketing/Advocacy/Outreach

[Answer “Yes”, “No”, or “Don’t Know” to the following statements.]

- Maintains a current website with up-to-date information
- Disseminates a communication piece (newsletter, email, etc.) to members on a regular basis and includes local and state programs and activities
- Liaises with other societies/communities
- Promotes its programs and services to members and non-members
- Utilizes social media tools (i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)
- Monitors state and local issues affecting dentistry and keeps members informed
- Participates in community service events

Part 6: Other

How would you define a successful society?

In what ways could communication between [state society] and the local societies be improved?

What are your society’s strengths?

What are your society’s weaknesses and challenges?

List any ideas/actions/support [state society] can take to help your society.
References


Association Options


Pagel, Margaret. Collaborative Partnerships. Retrieved from 8thLight.com


Pawlucy, William. Association Options