

Framework for Starting Industry, University, Government Discussions On Major Collaborations¹

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Universities and private corporations are challenged to address the complex issues of bioenergy development and expansion. They and society stand to benefit from collaborative arrangements that harness their joint creativities.

Set forth below is a generic framework for successful collaborations. This framework is expected to serve as a guide to a series of specific BioEnergy collaborations among industry, university and government entities. The resulting collaborations are expected to create value across the bioenergy value chain.

The Framework components include: **What the Collaboration Is Trying to Accomplish; Best Implementation Practices; and Best Rules of Engagement.**

What the Collaboration Is Trying to Accomplish

- 1. Initial collaborators should work together to “identify the joint work products” they hope to create. This is a co-discovery process and fundamental to determining if there is a need for a potential collaboration to exist.**
- 2. Also fundamental to development of collaboration is “clarifying the interests of all collaborating individuals and entities”—those initially involved and those subsequently invited to join.** The clarified interests help in creating a mutually supported set of objectives for the collaborating members, help ensure that no member of the collaboration will be slighted or otherwise disadvantaged, and provide a basis for identifying and inviting other collaborators to join in the venture.
- 3. “Clarification of responsibilities” for products should follow the identification of joint work products as should “clarification of expectations for mutual and individual accountability” by collaborating members.** Both are vital for the success of each collaborating group. Mutual and individual responsibility and accountability can be determined for goals, objectives, timelines, and results, as well as for leadership actions set forth by the group.
- 4. To the extent possible, the “treatment of intellectual property” should be spelled out and agreed to up front.** Procedures can be developed for clarifying the ownership of the intellectual property. For collaborations that require it, procedures can be developed for taking the intellectual property ideas “through the

¹ This document was developed by Arlen Leholm and Ray Vlasin, co-authors of *Increasing the Odds for High Performance Teams—Lessons Learned*, Michigan State University Press, 2006; and with input from Steve Pueppke and Joe Colletti, MI and IA Experiment Station Directors; and with input from six major agricultural corporations.

valley of death” and for taking them “through necessary testing and piloting” and subsequent “commercialization”. Treatment of risk also should be addressed.

5. Collaborations could involve private industry, universities, governmental entities, and possibly financial institutions and foundations, **A “point university” should be identified for each collaborating group, as appropriate. The university would be asked to “manage relations involving other universities” that may become involved.**

Best Implementation Practices

6. **A “master agreement” should be developed for adaptation and use by collaborating members.** The initial “master agreement” could draw upon other agreements that have been successfully used, such as by Iowa State University and the Poet Corporation.
7. **To the extent possible, “policies and procedures should be prepared and set forth clearly before the collaboration is undertaken”.** Such advanced preparation will help potential collaborators determine whether they wish to be engaged or not.
8. **A process should be developed for determining, at any point, who else from the value chain should be invited to join the collaboration.** Included could be how the initial group members are to be sought and treated, and how subsequent members are to be sought and treated.
9. **The “concept of flexibility and adaptability to accommodate change” also can help guide policy selection and principles of operation.** Shaped by the concept could be accommodations for changes in technology or markets, in persons representing a collaboration entity, and in collaborating entities—those added and those that leave should be treated both ethically as well as fairly.
10. **Communication Protocols must be established e.g., face to face and other frequent communications are a must among key principles of the collaboration.**
11. **A “set of operating procedures” should be developed for the collaboration.** Included could be:
 - Confidentially arrangements,
 - News and information releases,
 - Coordination and management structure and processes,
 - Membership in the collaboration—and possible variations in membership such as core members, affiliate members, subgroup members, project members, etc.,
 - Any mutually established boundary conditions for member’ actions.

Best Rules of Engagement

12. **The concept of “treating people fairly” should help guide policy selection as well as the design of operating procedures.** This concept would apply to those who are initially involved as well as those who are invited to join and enter the collaboration later. It would apply to those who leave the collaboration after it is underway and functioning. The criteria developed and used in these instances also should meet the test of fairness.
13. **A “code of ethics” should be developed by/for collaborating members. It can encompass the initial set of “core values and professional behaviors” expected of collaborators.** The code of ethics, core value and professional behaviors expected can help potential collaborators determine if they wish to engage in the proposed collaboration with others. .
14. **“Trust enhancing actions should be fostered”, including the “active soliciting of divergent views” and “deliberate efforts to reach convergence with support” by all members of the collaboration.** These actions can minimize conflicts that might otherwise arise later because of incompletely shared divergent perspectives.
15. **The collaboration should be “proactive in designing procedures to deal with conflicts” that may arise.** Negotiating procedures can be set forth to help resolve conflicts amicably.
16. **Among the collaborating members, “openness and transparency of actions, within confidentiality guidelines”, should be fostered.** The openness could be reinforced by the code of ethics and the core values and professional behaviors set forth.