

Collaboration Trust Scale for Shared Services Arrangements Between Local Health Departments and Health Centers



How to Use This Tool

This tool was prepared by the Center for Sharing Public Health Services (the Center) to help evaluate levels of trust between local health departments (LHDs) and health centers (HCs) that are considering or are already involved in collaborating through shared services arrangements. The tool has been adapted specifically to be applicable to resource sharing between local health departments (LHDs) and health centers (HCs) or federally qualified health center “look-alikes,” as defined by Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act. This document is part of a set of six tools produced by the Center in collaboration with the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

This document contains a series of questions organized under headings which represent areas that should be considered when assessing trust. Please keep in mind some assumptions and limitations while using this document.

1. This guide is primarily a tool to stimulate candid conversations among the parties involved, so it does not replace the need for more in-depth discussion. It is recommended that each individual or party involved in the sharing arrangement complete the survey and the results then be discussed by the entire team, paying particular attention to areas that scored relatively low or areas for which the scores differ substantially among team members or organizations. See “Instructions for Administration” (page 4) for more details.
2. The questions should be used as general guidance, not as a step-by-step guide.
3. Some questions may not be universally applicable, and the order in which items are arranged may need to be changed depending on local needs and circumstances.
4. Some sections may need to be modified depending on the specific characteristics of the programs or services to be shared.
5. Given that trust is such an important prerequisite for the success of sharing arrangements, it is recommended that the tool be used early on during the exploration and planning phases. The tools can also be used again any time the involved parties wish to re-assess their trust levels. The use of this tool should not be presented or perceived as a sign that trust may be lacking, but as a sign that the involved parties are willing to exercise their “due diligence” to make their sharing arrangement successful.
6. Once areas for improvement are identified, the parties should make a plan on how to address them. To do that they can use trust-building processes or tools available from a variety of sources, including some on the Center’s website (<https://phsharing.org>).
7. This document is only one component of a careful exploration and planning of a sharing arrangement that must take place. That process is described in the [*Roadmap to Develop Shared Services Arrangements Between Local Health Departments and Health Centers*](#).

1. **Trust in Partner Knowledge and Skills** — the extent to which the collaborating group members and organizations exhibit skills, competencies and characteristics that allow them to have influence in some domain.
2. **Trust in Partner Integrity** — the extent to which the people and organizations involved are seen as honorable and their words match their actions.
3. **Trust in Partner Investment in Community Well-Being** — the extent to which the people and organizations involved not only care about their own organizations, communities and target populations, but also are seen to be genuinely caring and concerned about partnering organizations, collaborative team members, governments and community well-being.
4. **Trust in Partner Behavior** — the extent to which the partner organizations (or organizational representatives) are seen as consistent.
5. **Trust in Communication** — the extent to which the people and organizations involved can communicate and coordinate about difficult issues productively.

What is Trust and Why Should You Assess It?

Trust can be characterized as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the outcomes of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.”¹ In simpler terms, trust is the belief that someone is reliable, good, honest and effective, and would do something to benefit the other. Developing trust can be thought of as “the work before the work,” meaning the mutual effort needed to build effective communication and relationships. Without it, other tasks get done less efficiently and effectively. Such trust is critical in situations where a program or organization is dependent on the behavior and reliability of others for its own outcomes. Trust helps

¹ Mayer, R., Davis, J., & Schoorman, F. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709–734.

to reduce perceived risk, vulnerability and uncertainty,² and ultimately facilitates efforts to improve population health, enhances patient experiences and outcomes, and reduces cost of care.³ Trust also can be a sensitive and emotional topic. It is often built slowly and can be eroded rapidly.

Using a tool, such as the one provided by this survey, can help make discussions about trust safer and more productive. The survey is a useful tool to help organizations explore together their differing expectations and experiences of one another.

Measuring Trust

Most instruments used to measure organizational trust have been developed to measure trust *within* individual organizations. This trust scale is aimed at measuring trust *among* partners from different organizations who come together with the intention of working together and sharing resources. Measuring interagency trust helps quantify needs to predict and understand behavior.⁴

² Costa, A. C., Roe, R. A., & Taillieu, T. (2001). Trust Within Teams: The relation with performance effectiveness. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 10(3): 225–244.

³ Allee, M. K., Botsko, C., & Huang, T.J. (2016). *NACCHO Research Brief: Partnerships Between Local Health Departments and Community Health Centers in Pursuit of the Triple Aim*. Washington, DC: National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

⁴ Adams, B. D., Bryant, D. J., & Webb, R. D. G. (2001). *Trust in Teams: Literature review. DRDC Toronto Report CR-2001-042*. Guelph, Ontario: Humansystems Incorporated.



Instructions for Administration

Surveys should be collected anonymously so that respondents feel more comfortable providing honest answers. If the number of participants from each partner organization is sufficiently large to ensure anonymity, it may be useful to collect organizational identifiable information to assess trust from the perspective of each partner organization. Each respondent should rate their level of agreement with each question on the survey using the Likert scale on the next page.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring

Subsection scores and total overall scores are determined by adding together the scores for items that make up each sub-scale and for the survey overall. This trust scale was adapted from Adams & Sartori *Trust in Teams* (2005) and *Trust in Leaders Scales* (2008). Because of the extensive modification to the original trust instrument, this tool should not be considered validated and normative scores are not yet available. However, the consistency of the construction of the questions from the original instrument should provide reasonable reliability. This tool should be used to look at areas of relative strength and weakness in inter-agency trust and provide a measurement for detecting change over time with repeated measurement. Scores for each subsection can range from 0–25 for each respondent.

Once data have been collected, ratings can be summed and averaged into a single index of trust. Means can be calculated based on all items in the scale, as well as separately for each dimension. This allows evaluators not only to determine the participants overall trust, but also to specify which areas of trust are contributing most to the overall trust perceptions.

Items that make up each subsection are listed below.

1. Trust in Partner Knowledge and Skills — 2, 6, 12, 19, 24
2. Trust in Partner Integrity — 4, 9, 14, 18, 22
3. Trust in Partner Investment in Community Well-Being — 5, 7, 11, 16, 21
4. Trust in Partner Behavior— 3, 8, 15, 20, 23
5. Trust in Communication — 1, 10, 13, 17, 25

A scoring sheet is provided at the end of this document.

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Date of Survey _____

Thank you for your cooperation in assessing the current status of the interagency trust level among the LHD-HC partnership. The following statements will assess several different dimensions of trust, reliability and communication among partners. This tool can offer a framework to help people think about the kind of partnership they want and what they need to do together to create it. Please take your time and respond to each sentence by circling the answer or number associated with the statement that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statements.

1. The collaboration partners share a common vision of the end goal of what working together should accomplish.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

2. I have faith in the abilities of my collaboration partners.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

3. I know what to expect from my collaboration partners.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

4. I can depend on the collaboration partners to be fair.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

5. I believe that our collaboration partners have the best interests in mind for our communities and shared issues or concerns.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

6. I have confidence in the abilities of the collaboration partners' leaders.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

7. I have confidence in the motivations of the collaboration partners.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

8. In times of uncertainty, the collaboration partners will stick together.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

9. The collaboration partners honor their word.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

10. The collaboration partners are reliable in terms of following through on commitments.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

11. The collaboration partners have a common goal to pursue and thus are motivated to protect our common interests.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

12. The collaboration partners are qualified to do their jobs.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

13. The collaboration partners are willing to engage in frank, open and civil discussion (especially when disagreement exists).

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

14. The collaboration partners keep their promises.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

15. I usually know how members of the collaboration initiative are going to react.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

16. The leaders in this collaboration are genuinely concerned about team members' well-being, both in their own and in other partners' organizations.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

17. The collaboration partners are willing to consider a variety of viewpoints and talk together, rather than at each other.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

18. The collaboration partners are honest people.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

19. The collaboration members and partners communicate well.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

20. The collaboration partners behave in a consistent manner.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

21. The collaboration partners are motivated to protect me as an individual.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

22. The collaboration leaders put their words into action.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

23. The collaboration partners are reliable.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

24. The collaboration partners are capable at their jobs.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

25. We can communicate with other collaboration partners in an open, trusting manner.

Don't Have Enough Information to Respond	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

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Scoring Sheet

Subsections scores and total overall scores are determined by adding together the scores for items that make up each sub-scale and for the survey overall. Scores for each subsection can range from 0–25 for each respondent. Once data have been collected, ratings can be summed and averaged into a single index of trust. Means can be calculated based on all items in the scale, as well as separately for each dimension. Count the number of questions scored as “0.” A higher number of “0”s indicates the need to become more familiar with the collaborative partners. Low scores in any subsection, as well as discrepancies between organizations for scores, should be discussed by the collaboration partners to improve areas in need.

Trust in Partner Knowledge and Skills

#2	#6	#12	#19	#24	Subsection Score

Trust in Partner Integrity

#4	#9	#14	#18	#22	Subsection Score

Trust in Partner Investment in Community Well-Being

#5	#7	#11	#16	#21	Subsection Score

Trust in Partner Behavior

#3	#8	#15	#20	#23	Subsection Score

Trust in Communication

#1	#10	#13	#17	#25	Subsection Score

Total Trust Instrument Score (add all subsection scores) = _____

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