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Collaboration vs. Competition in the Third Sector

Chapter 7 from
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Abstract

This article delineates a framework for judging the usefulness of collaborative strategy in the nonprofit/nongovernmental sector. Popular among academicians as well as grant makers, collaboration among nonprofit organizations is often proposed as the dominant strategy for curing many of the sector's resource problems. However, competition is also prevalent in the nonprofit sector, as free entry encourages the nonprofit entrepreneur to form a new nonprofit to meet a perceived community need. Ignoring the influence of competitive forces while promoting preferred collaborative strategies can lead to recommendations for the third sector that are ambitious and well-intentioned, yet impractical. Primarily theoretical in scope, this article is intended to inform grant makers and those at the policy making level how to determine the best situations to encourage collaboration in the sector, and when, surprisingly, to favor single-organization grant making.

Introduction

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↓ The scholarly literature calls for greater collaboration among nonprofit organizations to achieve outcomes that would not be attainable if each organization works in isolation.

Foundations, too, see duplicative effort in the nonprofit sector and often encourage grant seekers to collaborate with other organizations in their community (Golden 2001).

Unfortunately, nonprofit organizations themselves seem reluctant to engage in collaborative efforts, unless motivated to do so with external funding from grant makers (Knickmeyer, Hopkins and Meyer 2003, National Council on Aging 2005, Foster and Meinhard 2002, Schambra 2004).

To illustrate, the following is a community situation that seems quite dysfunctional.

Knickmeyer, Hopkins and Meyer (2003) describe a study of ten urban neighborhood associations in close proximity to one another:

“...all ten associations are struggling to address the same community issues with a small number of active members. There is no evidence of joining forces with each other to resolve their common problems...even when members of community associations recognize the value of collaboration and express interest in collaborating with others, they have difficulty translating that desire into actual collaborative projects.”

Why are they not collaborating? Do the stakeholders in the ten neighborhood associations not see the potential benefits in joining forces? We will return later to the puzzle with two solutions depending upon the reader's point of view. We will see that there is little reason for the ten associations to collaborate, yet we will also point out one potential arena where joint efforts could indeed yield returns for all associations -- returns that could exceed the costs of collaborating. Before returning to the neighborhood associations case, however, we outline the theory behind decisions whether or not to collaborate -- a task that requires first exploring the nature of competition in the nonprofit sector.

Government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit businesses are all involved in providing solutions to vexing societal problems. In many situations, collaboration within and across sectors can result in solutions that are unattainable from each entity working alone (Irvin 2007). Even though most nonprofit executive directors will point to their organization's unique ability to serve a societal need, some nonprofits may duplicate each other's missions, which suggests keen competition in the marketplace. However, even if organizations do not have duplicative missions, they still face competition in the fund raising, human resources, and media arenas.

Although this chapter will focus on collaboration and competition within the nonprofit sector, note that literature such as Austin (2000), Smith and Lipsky (1993), Smith and Grønberg (2006), Galaskiewicz and Colman (2006), and Boris and Steuerle (1999) are excellent resources for studying relationships between nonprofits, governments, and businesses.

Collaboration and Competition with Government Entities. Governments rely heavily on nonprofit organizations to carry out programs that benefit the public, from services for disadvantaged populations to civic beautification projects. Although subcontracting can be considered mere “quasi-collaboration”, as it involves formal structures such as contracts, grants, monitoring and reporting of nonprofit outcomes, the transfer of funds from the government to the nonprofit does not entirely negate the collaborative nature of the project. A more obscure topic is nonprofit-government competition. This may occur when a government agency is required to submit a bid in order to obtain tax-supported funding to produce services. In the education field, government schools compete directly with private nonprofit schools for funds if tax revenue for education follows the student. For the most part, however, nonprofit organizations provide complementary services to government services, with nonprofits frequently on the receiving end of collaborative agreements to carry out government initiatives.

Collaboration and Competition with For-Profit Firms. Presumably, the nonprofit and for-profit sectors do not intertwine, as their motivations for formation – profit vs. provision of a public good – differ radically. In practice, however, collaboration across the two sectors is commonplace. Businesses benefit from participating in community betterment, whether for marketing purposes, for improving the skills or availability of future employees, or for benefitting and retaining their current employees (Cordes and Steuerle 2009). Thus, businesses are eager partners with nonprofit organizations. Businesses also volunteer their facilities, products or services (or provide discounts) for

nonprofits, for a wide variety of tasks where professional products and services are needed.

Competition, on the other hand, is also prevalent if the nonprofit organizations and for-profit firms produce similar services. Nonprofit and for-profit health care facilities of all types and fitness-oriented organizations (such as YMCA) come to mind. In these arenas, the for-profit firms protest the granting of tax exemption to nonprofits, while the nonprofits counter by measuring and reporting their uncompensated benefits provided to the community (see Brown's chapter in this volume for a discussion of for-profit and nonprofit coexistence). Note that in past decades, the public policy debate focused on how for-profits compete with nonprofits, but the debate has shifted to a focus on partnerships between the two sectors (Steinberg 1987; Marmor, Schlesinger and Smithey 1987; Austin 2000; Cordes and Steuerle 2009).

~~Measures of industry concentration exist, such as the Hirschman-Herfindahl index, to determine how much market share competing nonprofit organizations and for-profit firms hold in each market. Collaboration may be harder to measure, but researchers of social networks have suggested that measuring social network ties (see Wasserman and Faust 1994) might approximate a measure for collaboration. Comparing the extent of competition and collaboration in a community or market is impossible, as the units of analysis differ. On a purely conjectural basis, therefore, I would hypothesize that nonprofit - government and nonprofit - business relationships are more often collaborative than competitive, with a few sub-sectoral exceptions. I leave it up to the~~

reader, however, to surmise which is the dominant nonprofit - nonprofit activity. Do nonprofits compete with each other more often, or collaborate?

Competition in the Nonprofit Sector

Here, we examine the classical model of profit maximization under conditions of perfect competition and find it to be of limited use - on the surface - yet extraordinarily powerful if we stretch the definitional boundaries of the model. Profit maximization is a defining feature of the for-profit sector. Yet, the first and obvious corollary for the nonprofit sector is when organizations are selling a product for which they can charge a price, such as admission, fees for services, or prices for a tangible product. In addition to the arena of products and services, there are several additional ways in which nonprofits compete - for donated revenues, inputs such as labor, grants, and even for media coverage.

Competition for Clients When Revenue is Generated from Prices

Three large nonprofit subsectors - health, human services, and private education - usually derive the majority of their revenues from sales of a service to clients. Other organizations, such as performing and visual arts organizations, serve audience members who pay for the right to enter a museum or enjoy a performance. In these cases, the quest for operating revenue closely follows the profit maximization model.

Because the product or service can be priced and the price can be charged to a client who is willing to pay, there is no reason to expect that for-profit firms won't also enter the market and produce this product. Accordingly, we see plenty of for-profit health care providers, day cares and human services providers. In the broad context of entertainment we see for-profit entities supplying the market with music concerts and movies, both of which compete for audience members with nonprofits. Nonprofit and for-profit cultural institutions, however, tend to self-sort according to the artistic genre of the entertainment.

Oster (chapter 13) notes that even donative nonprofits – those primarily dependent upon donated and not fee-based revenues – also participate in a competitive fee-based product market as a way of cross-subsidizing the core mission product, for which a price may be difficult to charge. Indeed, the complicated revenue mix in the nonprofit sector from donations, grants, endowment income and fee-based products requires a strategic and precarious balance of mission-related goals, crowding-out effects from one revenue source to another, and overall financial viability. Oster's chapter explores product diversification in more depth, but briefly stated, the existence of for-profit competitors suggests that the predicted long run market equilibrium for commercial nonprofit organizations or at least organizations with fee-based products is likely to follow the perfect competition model: Organizations will compete for clients, innovating and reducing costs wherever possible, arriving at a long run state where profits are zero (covering only their opportunity costs) and resources are provided at a quantity level that minimizes average costs of production. Furthermore, consumers (clients) enjoy the maximum benefits that this market can possibly offer.

Evidence suggests that the perfect competition model does indeed hold some explanatory power for behavior of nonprofit organizations. The well-developed health care literature indicates that increased competition in health care markets is a causal factor in lower prices for health services (Melnick and Zwanziger 1988). Certainly, we see evidence of nonprofits existing on a razor-thin profit margin over time, but this is not a condition limited necessarily to nonprofits with fee-based revenues – organizations more reliant on donor funding also exhibit this zero-profit condition in the long run, but for reasons other than direct competition (such as expanding services whenever profit is above normal).

Expanding services whenever a modicum of profit exists implies not profit maximization, but *service* maximization. Thus, a nonprofit may use competitive strategies such as entrepreneurial sorting to maximize outcomes, not profits (Steinberg's objective function article or Luksetich). A mix of objectives can be utilized to suit the overall mission with a multi-product organization. For example, profits from one service (competition model) might be used to cross-subsidize the production of other services that are not financially viable on their own (service maximization model). Surely Luksetich talks about this?

Competition may come in the form of innovating in order to produce the product or service with lower costs, or differentiating the product in a tangible (changing service attributes) or intangible (advertising) way. Differentiating the product can result in a crowded market, each nonprofit with its own very small market niche or identity.

Fortunately, the nonprofit with the unique identity has market demand all to itself – yet a very weak and small market demand. Each organization sees itself as a unique organization with a unique mission. Nonprofits do not only vary the features of their product or service to establish their public benefit role, but they can also distinguish themselves by varying the methods by which they accomplish their missions...in essence, the mission itself, the outcomes they produce, and even the production methods they use can be differentiated in order to carve out a unique identity that appeals to funders (Brown and Slivinski 2006).

Can the demand for nonprofit services be segmented that much and the market still be “efficient?” Theories of monopolistic competition suggest otherwise. Figure 1 illustrates the long run results of a segmented market – each nonprofit with its own very small market demand and profits, once again, at zero. The difference between price competition and product differentiation in long run competition, however, is that *product (or mission) differentiation* leads to a long run equilibrium at output level Q^* , an inefficiently high-cost level of production. *Price competition* without product differentiation, on the other hand, would have led to an equilibrium output level of Q^E , where average costs per item are at their minimum possible level.

Figure 1: Monopolistic Competition Equilibrium

(insert Figure 1 here)

Competition for Donations

For many nonprofit organizations, it may be impossible to charge a price for the services rendered. The recipient of charity may be unable to pay. Or, the nonprofit may be unable to charge a price for the service, no matter how much people are willing to pay (advocacy organizations come to mind). Donations comprise a vital source of revenue for these types of nonprofits, and competition for donations has grown fiercely over the past few decades. The sharp growth of nonprofit organizations has resulted in an environment of year-round fund raising by trained professionals. One good fund raising idea is copied widely by other nonprofits, as illustrated by the “what will they think of next” worlds of direct mail and special events.

Borrowing theory from the perfectly competitive fee-based model, and using the assumption that nonprofits will compete by increasing their fund raising efforts, we end up at equilibrium where net revenues from fund raising are competed away for all, with all nonprofits making zero profit in the end. Fund raising costs can be thought of as similar to marketing costs – they add to a nonprofit’s fixed costs, yet carry the risk of not resulting in a higher demand for the charitable activity. Figure 2 shows average costs before and after a marketing or fund raising campaign (see Seaman 2004, Brown and Slivinski 2006). The nonprofit engaging in this costly effort hopes to end up with substantially more donated funds which will offset the increase in costs at each level of output.

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demand (which results in more donations),

Figure 2: Increased Average Costs of Fund Raising

(insert Figure 2 here)

Competition for Paid Staff and Volunteers

The nonprofit sector is a service industry, so labor comprises a large portion of its required inputs, from teachers to nature hike leaders, musicians and counselors, to name a few. A volunteer workforce augments the nonprofit labor pool for lower-skilled work. Nonprofit executive salaries, though nowhere as stratospheric as U.S. salaries for upper-level executives in large firms, have increased sharply over the last decade in the nonprofit sector (Barton, Di Mento and Sanoff 2006), suggesting some upward bidding for leadership talent as a generation of long-time leaders pass the administrative reins to succeeding executive directors. If an organization is constrained to keep salaries modest (to signal frugality and dedication to the mission), the competition to hire executive talent is that much more fierce, and may play out by compensation via non-monetary perquisites.

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Competition for volunteers cannot be salary-based, however, by definition. The mobilizer of human endeavor – the underappreciated volunteer administrator – attracts a dedicated volunteer pool using superior leadership and organizational skills (not to mention an attractive mission). Good volunteers who come regularly, stay with the organization over time and perform valuable services are important and scarce assets for nonprofits. Nonprofits, facing a decline in the number of long-term volunteers, have begun to accommodate “episodic” volunteers with short-term projects (Macduff 2005). Thus, competition for volunteer labor rests not on salary, but on managerial strategies for luring and retaining valuable volunteers. Hager and Brudney (2004) provide an

interesting review of retention strategies used by nonprofits, finding that the strategies most effective in retaining volunteers (volunteer recognition, professional development and training for volunteers, etc.) benefit the volunteers themselves (not necessarily the nonprofits), suggesting managerial tradeoffs between pleasing the volunteer and benefitting the organization.

Competition for Grants and Contracts

The struggle to obtain government contracts and grants from foundations is a fascinating researcher's laboratory, yet little theoretical and empirical attention has focused on this revenue strategy. Effort is poured into grant applications for very little return. In the U.S., we still see grants for as low as \$500, in seeming disregard of the time required to prepare the grant application. We also see nonprofits applying for government contracts that pay only partial costs – perhaps the nonprofit is just grateful for the subsidy of their services, which they would endeavor to provide even without the government contract. Smith and Lipsky (1993, p. 161) note, "Many contracts, especially in today's strained budgetary climate, allocate insufficient money for administrative expenses....In the worst-case scenario, an agency will obtain a new but substantially underfunded contract...and the agency loses money from the day it assumes the contract." Toepler (chapter 23) notes that inadequate coverage of costs from government grants suggests a private sector subsidy of government objectives.

With insufficient funds to actually complete the project, nonprofits may be treating the underfunded yet successful grant as a first step to obtaining more remunerative funding

in the next grant cycle. Some empirical attention by researchers might help the sector achieve somewhat more efficient outcomes with grants and contracts. Nonprofits, competing against many other worthy nonprofits, appear to be in a bidding war, promising much and pricing their services low in an effort to win the grant or contract.

Competition for Media Coverage

For the nonprofit organizations whose mission involves educating the public on any topic, media coverage of their efforts is critical to their success. Even nonprofits without advocacy-based missions clamor for media coverage to gain legitimacy in the public's mind for their mission and to attract new supporters, donors, and volunteers. "Free" media coverage – such as a laudatory report in the morning newspaper – is not necessarily free, but involves labor costs such as being available for media inquiries, contacting media representatives on a regular basis with press releases, and devising media-friendly angles in special events. Two reasons for nonprofit competition for "free" media coverage are: The relative lack of spendable income in organizations dependent on donations and grants, and expectations by the public that nonprofits refrain from "slick" paid advertising (Pallotta 2009), presumably to appear efficient and frugal stewards of the donated dollar.

Collaboration in the Nonprofit Sector

Although it is easy to talk about the importance of collaboration, it is difficult to define exactly what characterizes a “somewhat” or “very” collaborative project. Yankey and Willen (2005) provide several examples of collaboration matrices. Confounding the discussion, of course, is the differing nature of collaboration across the nonprofit, business, and government sectors. Figure 3 shows a simple collaboration matrix with common sector participants. Placement of particular arrangements on the continuum may be uncertain. For example, is “contracting” a simple exchange of funding for services, or is it more like a collaboration?

Figure 3: A Sample Continuum of Collaboration

| Degree of Partnership | Partners | Description |
|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| Minimal | NP, F-P, Govt. | Contracting, grants for services produced by nonprofits |
| | NP, F-P | Cause marketing |
| ↓ | NP | Non-monetized trading (bartering of services) |
| | F-P | Sponsorship of nonprofit events |
| Moderate | NP, Govt. | Jointly produced events |
| | NP | Joint purchasing and cost-sharing |
| | NP | Associations of professionals; information and training networks |
| ↓ | NP, F-P, Govt. | Community dialogue, information sharing, advocacy |
| | NP, F-P, Govt. | Community initiatives, designing and implementing solutions |
| Extensive | NP | Integration of operations, merger |

Where is the Value in Collaboration?

Funders may assume that more collaboration in the nonprofit sector automatically implies mutual benefits, plus benefits for external publics as well. However, parsing the value of collaboration into broad categories helps to illuminate the truly important contributions from collaboration that should be pursued by nonprofits and encouraged by funders. Pivotal to this discussion is the relationships among participating nonprofit organizations. Do they compete in the same local market? Or are they peers, producing the same service but in different markets? Do they produce services that are entirely unrelated?

Benefits to Sharing Information

For peer organizations – nonprofits producing the same good, but for different groups of people or in different geographical locations – mutual benefit can come from associational membership and their concomitant learning opportunities. In fact, these types of associations spring up voluntarily in every field, from museums to health care providers. Gaining knowledge in an association is attractive to the neophytes in the field, but less so for seasoned professionals from well-established organizations. Thus, conferences of associated organizations often end up paying or hosting the leaders of the field to serve as instructors for the newcomers.

In addition, certain functional areas common to most nonprofits – such as fund raising or volunteer management – can benefit from associational collaboration. Across local,

national, and international boundaries, fellow practitioners of fund raising, for example, meet to learn best practices in their field, regardless of their nonprofit sub-sector. Both of these information sharing initiatives - among peers in separate geographic markets or among professional peers in unrelated agencies - require little or no stimulus from external funders for collaborative efforts to arise.

Another way to enhance revenue streams is to coordinate with agencies that perform different services, but are in the position to refer clients to each other - such as in social services organizations. A substance abuse counseling agency might benefit from a collegial relationship with a homeless and transitional housing organization. Note that sharing information about client needs and trading best practices tips is easily accomplished among organizations that are not direct competitors for clients, audience members, or grants. If the benefits to sharing information are obvious, nonprofits will quickly form associations or networks to do so.

Cost Minimization

Nonprofit organizations have ample opportunity to review their use of resources and locate lower-cost solutions by sharing *fixed costs* with other organizations. Sharing facilities via scheduling differences (one organization uses the facility by day, another at night, for example) can lower facilities costs. Organizations can also share equipment, or personnel such as a front desk receptionist, payroll clerk, or security guard. *Variable costs* can also be reduced through alliances. Group bulk purchases of supplies and services can reduce the per-unit cost. Fund raising events sometimes involve multiple players, if the organizations bring complementary talents to the process, or if the

donating public is expected to respond to a joint effort with increased generosity. Group workshops or seminars are key ways to reduce costs of training for employees in new roles (Under One Roof Project 2004, McLaughlin 1998).

The question in the back of any nonprofit manager's mind is, does the potential reduction in costs exceed the transactions costs of collaborating? It makes no sense to collaborate if the costs of meeting, working out the details, and implementing the project overwhelm the eventual returns to the organization. Collaboration takes time; the nonprofit manager's most precious commodity.

Bartering

Nonprofit enterprise is unique in many ways, but the prevalence of bartering is one of its most distinctive ^{collaborative} features (Ben-Ner 1993, Reisman 1991). Note that the for-profit sector rarely engages in non-monetized trade. Why does this curious practice occur so often in the nonprofit sector? Scarcity of cash is one reason. When a business runs out of cash (that is, income), the owner shuts it down after a few lean years. When a nonprofit runs out of cash, people pitch in to accomplish the mission anyway, with volunteer labor, homemade tri-fold brochures, and jury-rigged equipment. This practice of *production without cash expenditure* extends to partnerships with other organizations. No exchange of income is necessary if the two organizations have a mutually beneficial project in mind. Regarding cost minimization described above, you can envision several ways in which organizations reduce fixed and variable costs can occur via bartering. Each organization produces the product or service for which they have comparative advantage, creating mutual benefits to specialization and trade.

party may be unable to see *direct* benefits to their own organization, relative to the costs of collaborating.

Compare three collaborative projects:

I. Sharing a security guard with a nonprofit next door. Each organization receives "security" for half price by splitting the cost with the partner (note the minimal transactions costs). Hiring a security guard has easily measured benefits accruing to both parties. The decision to hire the security guard is expected to be accomplished readily, if both perceive that a half-price guard is a bargain.

II. Community-wide push to combat crime associated with methamphetamine abuse. Organizations such as the State Patrol, substance abuse counseling centers, and high school health education instructors are brought together to devise solutions to meth addiction. This collaborative project is more difficult to accomplish. What organization has the spare time to send its executive director or other staff member to meetings? Benefits to the individual organizations are unclear, yet benefits to the broader public are potentially large, if the community effort is successful. Even though the organizations' *missions* suggest that they should be willing participants, *direct benefits* to the organizations are not apparent, and participation in the collaboration may depend on whether or not each organization receives funding to participate.

→ III. Three local organizations providing shelter for the homeless are urged to collaborate to share information on "revolving door" clients, streamline costs of operation, and

work together on expanding the number of beds in neighborhoods where they are most needed. This case is a hopeful dream for grant makers. If only these organizations would work together! Alas, they are natural competitors, and have strong incentives to protect their territory and gain funding for their own organizations. Each organization is likely to believe it has the better model for providing homeless services. Not only do we expect high transactions for bringing these participants into an alliance, but if grant funding is obtained to do so, much energy may be spent on carefully defining the activities and required contributions from each player.

The three scenarios illustrate when collaboration will be somewhat or very difficult to achieve. Much of the academic and trade literature on collaboration focuses on the processes undertaken in collaborative efforts, without noticing that it is the nature of the players that can make the process easy or difficult. Essentially, if the potential collaborators are not direct competitors and the gains to collaboration are obvious and do not involve high transactions costs, then we expect collaboration to occur readily. Conversely, if the potential collaborators are direct competitors (which implies they have similar missions!), we expect spontaneous collaboration to occur only rarely, when benefits to each organization are direct and easily measured. Even with grant funding to stimulate a cooperative project, collaboration among competitors may involve awkward maneuvering over turf and authority.

What about the ten uncooperative neighborhood associations described at the beginning of the chapter? It is no surprise that they lack the desire to cooperate – their identical missions suggest that they are competitors for the same pool of grant funding from the

city or from foundations. Unfortunately, it is not very realistic to expect the neighborhood associations to collaborate, even though they address the same community issues.

Could we do better? Assume we have a foundation funder that is very committed to collaboration. Considering the problems the neighborhood associations face – drug dealing, trash, and vacant housing – we see that some of their most pressing issues could be tackled with better law enforcement practices, more frequent trash collection, strict enforcement of housing code violations, and so on. More effective external advocacy is needed – the kind of advocacy that requires a multitude of constituents voicing a common concern and pressing for the same solution. Shaping the external environment, therefore, is the outcome we should target for a grant-funded collaborative effort in this case. That is, strategic grant making in this case should not be broadly defined as any collaborative undertaking, but instead focus on helping the neighborhood organizations advocate as one organization for changes in local housing, trash collection, and law enforcement.

Grant Making Policy and Practice Recommendations

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Where benefits to collaboration are obvious, nonprofits will pursue collaborative projects readily. Where collaboration's benefits to the organization are unclear or indirect, nonprofits may avoid the partnership, as the collaboration is seen as too costly to devote scarce organizational resources to. Foundations, however, provide the

external impetus for many collaborative efforts, despite the conflicting incentives or nebulous benefits for the nonprofits themselves. Although Schambra (2004) laments that inducing coordination among separate agencies is costly and futile, perhaps with an awareness of competitive incentives within the nonprofit sectors, grant makers can achieve some headway. This chapter ends, therefore, with a focus on grant maker decision making, and a call for more precise evaluation of collaborative projects in a competitive nonprofit environment.

Grant makers must seek out the projects that are most likely to align organizational incentives with intended outcomes. In theory, collaborative grant making to non-competing organizations will have the best chance of success, as the partners are more willing to trade services and combine efforts when they identify as community allies. Grants to groups of competing organizations are far more difficult to design successfully. Grant makers view the burgeoning number of nonprofits with some dismay, citing the rapid sector growth as evidence of duplication, and hoping that the nonprofits in similar fields can learn to work together for the common good. As Golden (2001, 672) notes "...many grantmakers currently prefer to support collaborative efforts rather than single-organization projects. These funders maintain that collaboration is generally more efficient and more cost effective than single-organization efforts, because costly duplication of effort is avoided." Unfortunately, precisely where there is "duplication of effort", we expect collaboration to be least likely to occur, even with financial inducement from funders.

Providing grant funding for competing organizations may still yield successful outcomes if the collaborative project is sharply targeted toward activities that benefit the nonprofit participants directly. A good example is the advocacy training grant to the neighborhood associations. The gains to the organizations could be significant if they unite their voices and expertly pressure the city to adapt new practices in combating crime or targeting housing vacancy. Pinpointing these rare but advantageous opportunities to bring competitors together is likewise extraordinarily time-consuming, requiring keen analytical skills on the part of the grant maker. Conversely, a grant with hopeful but vague collaborative ^{goals} outcomes such as "improve capacity by building networks across neighborhood associations" is not likely to yield much more than minutes from meetings.

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