LEAVING A COLLABORATION: STEPS[1]

INSTRUCTIONS: A partner may face circumstances where they are unable or don't want to continue to participate in a collaboration. For example, there might be a shift in organizational priorities or staff changes that necessitate an exit. If the collaboration has been using best practices for engagement and communication, then it won't be a surprise to other partners.

Use the following steps to ensure that your organization is leaving the collaboration in the most positive way.

A) Confirm that your organization wants to leave

Discuss with colleagues the reasons for leaving and the following issues:
- Is this about the match with your organization or is it the effectiveness of the collaboration?
- If it is about effectiveness, are there steps to be taken to strengthen the collaboration? Are they feasible, likely or worth your investment of time?

Identify the risks of leaving, determine if they are worth taking and if so, how to address them. Consider:
- Damage to your organization's brand
- Implications for future relationships
- Impacts on the collaboration outcomes and impacts
- Loss of influence
- Impacts on investment of time and resources to date

B) Plan to leave:

Set out clearly and in writing the rationale for leaving the collaboration and a plan and share it with the appropriate internal staff. The rationale and plan should include:
- The reasons for leaving and how they will be presented to partners
- The assessment of risks of leaving and the strategies for addressing them
- If appropriate, how to maintain some benefits of participation (e.g., information, influence)
- Who needs to be informed, when and by whom

[1] Adapted from: *The Improvement Service: Partnership Working, Rocket Science, 2006, page 103*

C) Review procedures:

If there is an exit strategy as part of the collaboration agreement, review it and consider the steps required and implications for your exit strategy

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D) Communicate the message to partners in the collaboration in an honest and transparent way:

Develop the key messages to be communicated which include:
- Clearly, simply and honestly laying out the reasons for leaving so they can't be misinterpreted
- Suggest how your organization might be able to continue involvement and support

Determine who should communicate the messages, to whom and how best to do it

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E) Follow up:

Ensure that the message has been received accurately by the right people and, if appropriate, carry out agreed upon follow-up actions effectively