

Collaborative Innovator Attributes

To advance the work quickly and powerfully, we seek out high-leverage stakeholders who are well-positioned to drive innovation and influence others in the system. These Collaborative Innovators have the following characteristics, each of which represents a key tension between two seemingly opposing values.

As Individuals, Collaborative Innovators have these attributes:

Characteristic	Tension	Supports...
Authentic Leaders	Passion & Competence	...influence through authentic leadership. The group has far greater leverage when it's comprised of high influence stakeholders who are admired for their passion for the mission and their proven track records as effective leaders.
Inquisitive Experts	Knowing & Unknowing	...fresh perspectives on challenges and opportunities, with rapid validation of analysis and possible system interventions. Beginner's mind is inherent in innovation networks since no one understands the complexity of whole systems.
Strong Collaborators	Self-interest & Common good	...dynamic creation of shared value. If you've ever been on a team or committee with someone who simply couldn't collaborate effectively, this may be self-evident. Collaborative Innovators are able to creatively and continually integrate their personal and organizational interests with the large societal benefits being pursued by the group, creating new forms of shared value.
Reflective Action-takers	Analytical & Action-oriented	...smart, rapid innovations. Avoid designing networks that are full of thinkers who don't act quickly, or vice versa. Collaborative Innovators are able to do analysis and take action in rapid iterative cycles, helping us develop and test strategies within months rather than years.
Dynamic Negotiators	Individual interests & Institutional interests	...system-wide alignment and momentum. Each participant is a whole person with his or her personal motivations for participating in the network, yet they often represent an organization with its own interests, priorities, and concerns. Leaders who can align their own organizations behind the goal and activities of the network will advance the work most effectively.
Servant Leaders	Humility & Courage	...deep inquiry and self-reflection, accompanied by a healthy relationship with fear. Humility helps us let go of power and support the power of others while courage enables us to risk ourselves and our reputations in the work in the face of complexity and uncertainty.

And as a group, they have these key attributes:

Characteristic	Tension	Supports...
90% of participants are 100% committed to the goal; 10% are skeptics open to learning	Commitment & Skepticism	...informed momentum. This mix allows us to create strong momentum in the belief that the goal is possible while also forcing the group to test its basic assumptions along the way.
Represents the whole system	The Parts & The Whole	...whole system solutions that work for individual actors in the system. Any effective solution set needs to work for both the system as a whole and for the people in that system, otherwise it's not sustainable. By designing with the whole system in the room, we get better, more resilient solutions, greater alignment, and greater resources and support over time. That's why we have representatives from impacted communities, business, civil society, government, and other key folks in the system.
Has a mix of working and thinking styles	Alignment & Diversity	...people who think in different ways bring more perspective and more options to the group, driving more effective innovation.
Has a few "unusual suspects"	Insider knowledge & Outside perspective	...subject matter expertise complemented with fresh thinking, ideas and wisdom from others. These "unusual suspect" participants can be people and organizations from other supply chains or systems that may have dealt with similar issues or may be creative thinkers who are interested in solving the challenge.