

COLLABORATION:

A process worth pursuing for sport scientists, coaches and athletes in South Africa

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Globally, the past decade has seen an explosion of activities in research and practice regarding collaboration and collaborative initiatives between sport scientists, coaches, athletes, and family members to answer a variety of performance-based questions in sport. Collaboration through the work of multidisciplinary Performance Enhancement Teams (PETs) comprised of sport scientists, coaches, athletes and family members can elevate the process of performance excellence to what is needed for additional South African sporting success internationally.

The collaborative process provides a forum for PETs to share ideas and expertise to develop answers to questions and strategies which are on the cutting edge of design, construction, and management innovations so that athlete and team performance can excel.

Coaching and athlete research are essential components for athlete, coach and team development. South African athletes need coaches who can apply theoretical models and important findings of research to the practical reality of day-to-day coaching. Through the development of a formal research programme and the creation of stronger links between university-based researchers and hpc programmes and services, sporting excellence can be developed more effectively and efficiently.

Research studies are intended to advance the coaching knowledge of South Africa's coaches and national sport organization technical experts. The studies will also inform the broader coaching and sport communities of coaching issues and solutions, promote coaching as a field of research, and stimulate interactions between field-based professionals and academics.

When coaches, athletes and/or teams are approached to form collaborative teams, the following steps should be taken to ensure success:

Step 1



- a. Should we participate in a collaborative initiative?
- b. What costs and benefits are involved in this decision?
- c. How well prepared are we to be a quality partner in a collaborative effort, e.g., can we allocate the time and other resources necessary for us to fully participate?

Step 2



- a. What motivates us to be involved in this collaborative?
- b. What do we most want to accomplish through our involvement?

Step 3



- a. Who is presently involved in this collaborative effort?
- b. Are those who will be most affected by our collaborative effort involved at this time?
- c. Who else should be involved?
- d. How will we involve them?
- e. How could community and sport community organizing become a central method of ensuring the participation of those traditionally excluded from decision making?

Step 4



- a. What expectations should we have for each other?
- b. What are some basic ground rules we have, or want to have, for participating partners?

Step 5



What is the mission statement of the collaborative? A mission statement can be defined as a simple, clear statement of purpose that is also a call to action.

Step 6



- a. What are the goals and objectives of the collaborative?

Prepare goals related to the mission statement and objectives related to the goals. A goal can be defined as a long-term activity to implement a mission statement and as a measure of progress on achieving a mission statement. An objective can be defined as a short-term activity to implement a goal and as a measure of progress on achieving a goal.

20 steps

Step 7



- a. Who will get the work done?
- b. How can we link specific individuals and groups to the specific objectives we have identified to ensure that the objectives will be carried out in a timely manner?

Step 8



- a. What do we know about other collaboratives that have worked on a similar mission and goals?
- b. What are some key lessons our collaborative can learn from these previous efforts?

Step 9



What can each partner contribute to the effort? This inventory can include a wide variety of financial and non-financial contributions. For example, a partner who brings credibility with and access to community groups adds something as valuable as any financial contribution.

Step 10



- a. How do the collaborative identify and encourage new members to participate?
- b. How well are new members informed about the roles, responsibilities, and rewards of participation?
- c. How well do new members reflect diversity of communities that the collaborative effort serves?

Step 11



What are some incentives and rewards that can be used to recognize and sustain partners' contributions to the collaborative and changes they make in their own groups' policies and practices that are consistent with the collaborative's vision, mission and goals?



Step 12



- How is the collaborative governed? Who makes decisions and what legitimate authority do they have to make them?
- How will governing responsibilities be rotated over time?
- How will governance reflect and respect the collaborative's diversity?

Step 13



- How effective is our leadership?
- Who is providing leadership for the collaborative?
- What might be done to improve it or better support it?
- How is new leadership identified and rotated into key positions if the project is lengthy?
- What expectations do we have for the collaborative's leadership?

Step 14



- How is the collaborative administered and managed?
- Are the arrangements adequate?
- If not, what could we do to improve the administration and management of the collaborative?

Step 15



- How is staff provided for the collaborative?
- How is the staff accountable to the collaborative?
- If staff is being donated by a partner or partners, what, if any, challenges does the arrangement present?

Step 16



- What barriers or conflicts make progress difficult?
- How can such barriers and conflicts be resolved or overcome?

Step 17



- How does the collaborative offer training for its members in areas such as group process, conflict resolution, and cultural diversity and inclusiveness?
- How can this training be most helpful in addressing and resolving important issues?

Step 18



- How will people find out about our activities?
- How will we publicize the activities and provide effective community education and information about the work of the collaborative?
- How well can we inform and engage people, organizations, and communities that represent diverse cultural and ethnic interests?
- Do we communicate well and regularly with grassroots groups and organizations?

Step 19



- How much money do we need and how will we secure it in a timely manner?
- What kinds of funding sources will be necessary if we are to be successful?
- Is there a written financial plan and a clear strategy with identified responsibilities for implementing it?

Step 20



- How will we monitor progress and evaluate the overall success of our collaborative?
- How can we monitor and evaluate both the results and the processes of the collaborative?
- How can our evaluations be used to make changes in the collaborative's process based on the findings of such evaluations and research?

Excellence in sport science is no longer a one-dimensional effort. It requires multidimensional and multifaceted input guided by a systematic and collaborative process. Performance Enhancement Teams (PETs) seem to be a very viable option to enhance performance in South African contemporary sport. By utilizing the 20 steps presented in this article, those who wish to pursue a collaborative process will find the way to performance success much easier 🏆