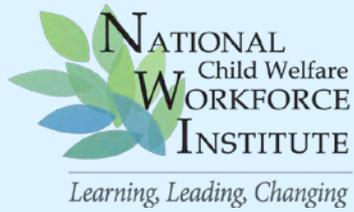


A Service of the Children's Bureau, a Member of the T/TA Network

National Evaluation Summit

August 29, 2011

Building and Sustaining Effective Cross University  
and Agency Partnerships



# Presenters

**Mary McCarthy, Co-PI**

University at Albany

**Nancy Dickinson, Director**

University of Maryland

**Cathryn Potter, Evaluation PI**

University of Denver

**Gary Anderson, Traineeship PI**

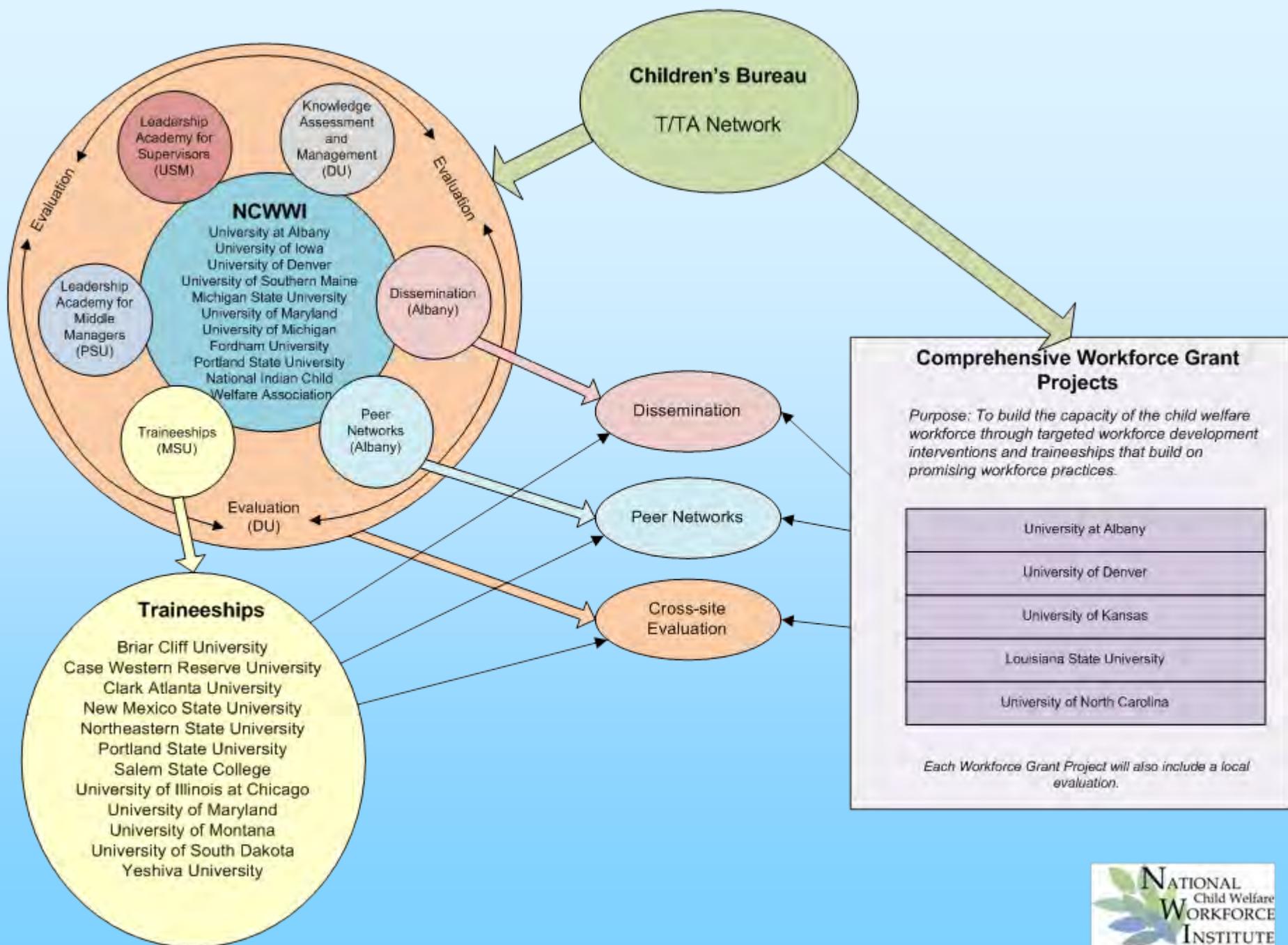
Michigan State University

# NCWWI Partners

- University at Albany
- University of Maryland
- University of Denver
- University of Southern Maine
- National Indian Child Welfare Association
- Fordham University
- Michigan State University
- University of Iowa
- University of Michigan
- Portland State University
- Children's Bureau/ ACF/DHHS

# NCWWI Purpose

- Build the capacity of the nation's child welfare workforce and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families through activities that support the development of child welfare leaders



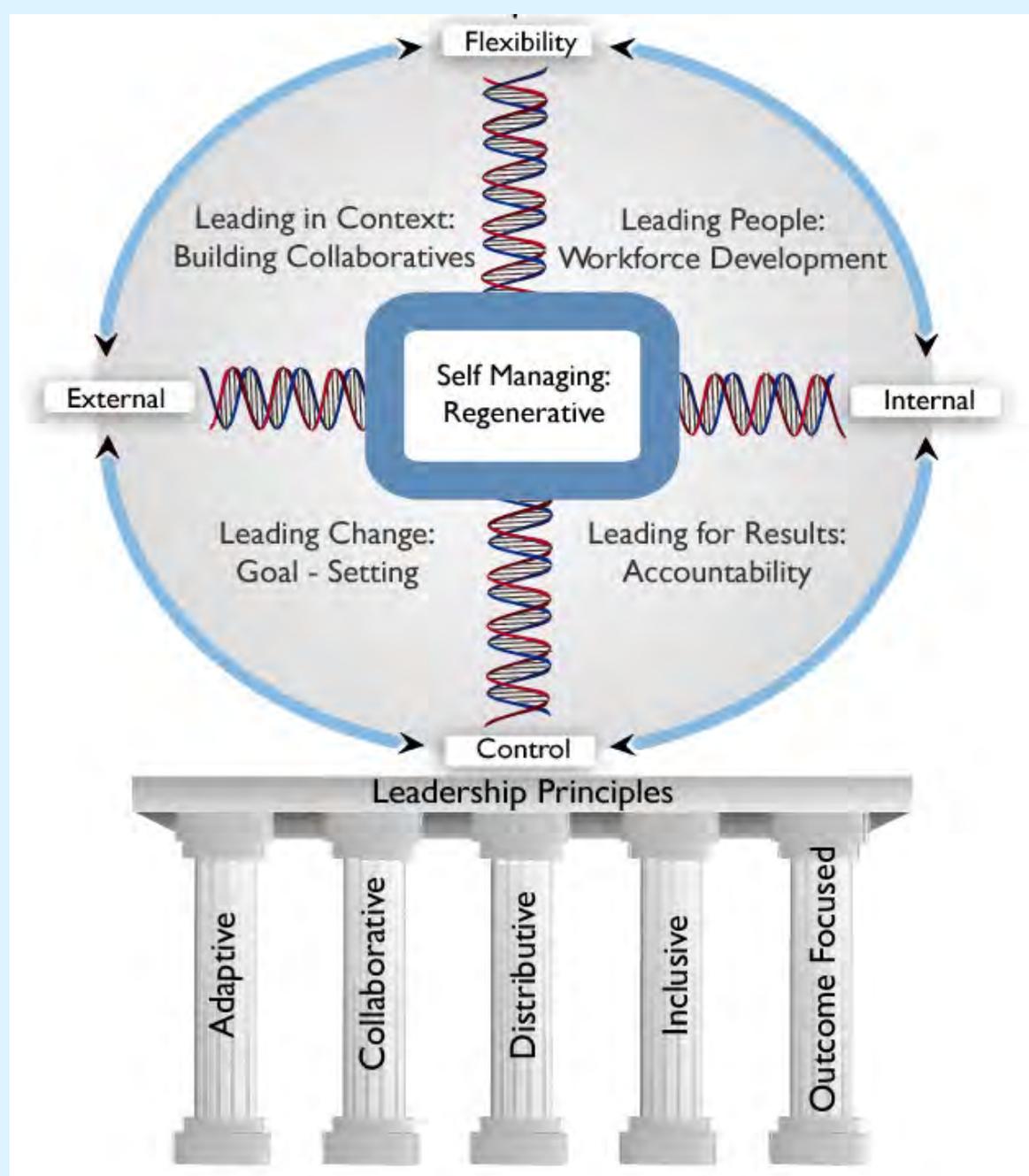
# NCWWI Goals

- Derive promising practices in workforce development
- Deliver child welfare leadership training for middle managers and supervisors
- Facilitate BSW and MSW traineeships
- Engage national peer networks
- Support strategic dissemination of effective and promising leadership and workforce practices
- Advance knowledge through collaboration and evaluation

# NCWWI Approach: Management & Advisory Structure

- Based on principles of collaboration and shared values derived from a Systems of Care philosophy
  - Nationally representative Advisory Committee
  - Collaborative executive management team
  - Broad and diverse array of partners
  - Cooperative work with the Children's Bureau

# NCWWI Leadership Model



# Partnership Strategies

- Shared vision
- Common identity
- Clear desired outcomes
- Collaboration norms
- Decision making protocol
- Open and frequent communication

# A Shared Vision Statement:

- Evokes universal values and principles that guide behavior
- Provides a sense of the future
- Appeals to the deepest desires of individuals
- Speaks the language of optimism and hope
- Inspires self and others

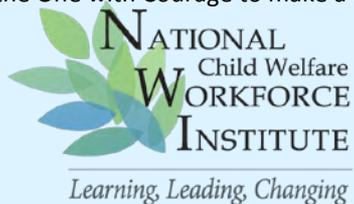
# A Vision Statement is NOT

- A policy manual
- Loaded with jargon and buzz words that only Child Welfare Professionals understand
- A stark contrast to the agency mission
- So complex that it takes four elevator rides up and down a large building to explain....

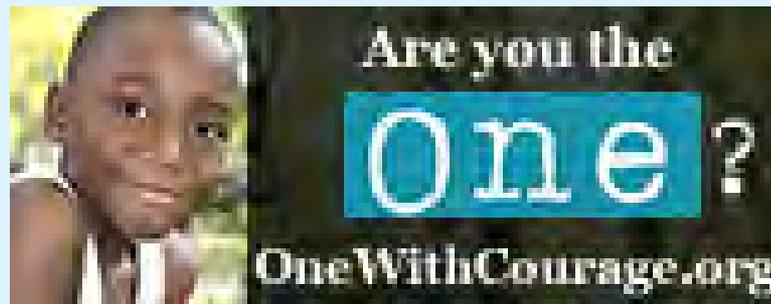
## **A committed, competent and high-performing child welfare workforce that is**

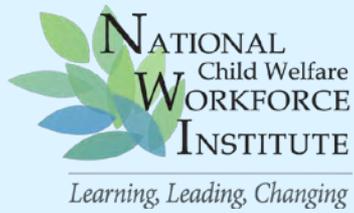
- strengthened by professional education
- sustained through leadership development
- supported by organizational practices that mirror Systems of Care principles
- skilled at delivering effective and promising practices that improve outcomes for children, youth, and families

Learn the signs, share this information, and  
be the One with Courage to make a difference.

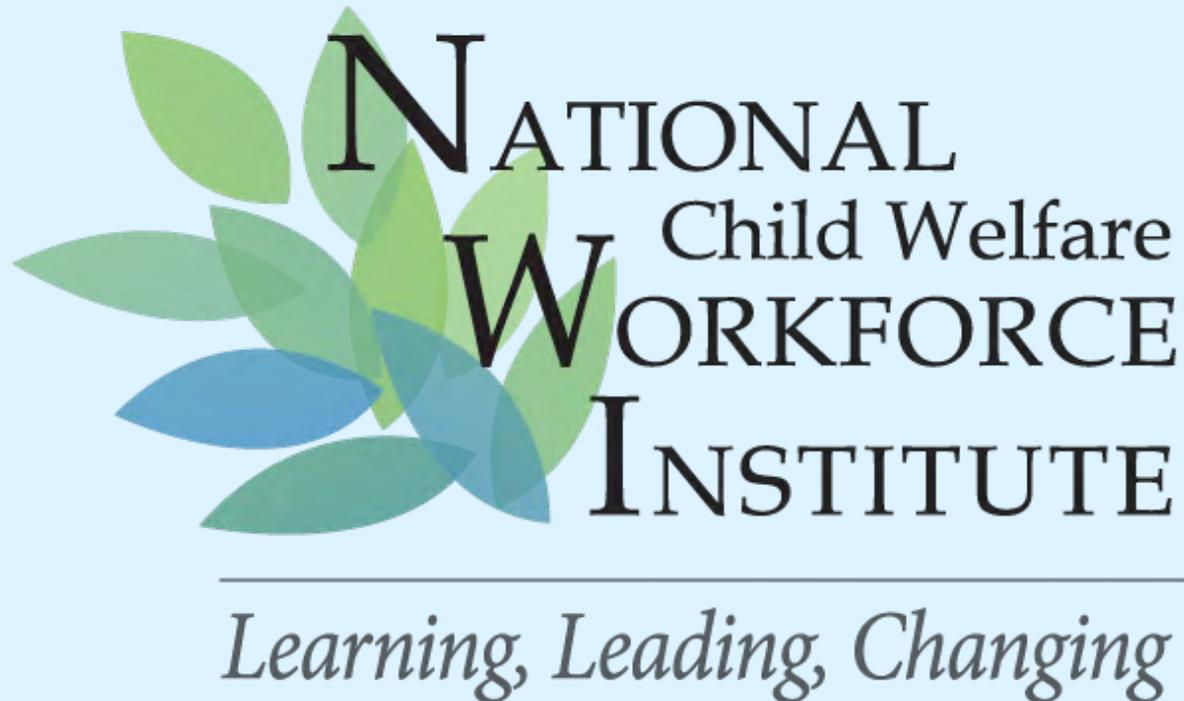


# One with Courage: Texas Children's Advocacy Center





# Common Identity



# Desired Outcomes

Build consensus regarding desired outcomes

Raise a unified voice to promote our common purpose

Collaboration is not a goal in itself; it is a means to achieve desired outcomes

# NCWWI Purpose

Build the capacity of the nation's child welfare workforce and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families through activities that support the development of child welfare leaders

# Collaboration Norms

- Describe the ideal partnership
- Provide a map for building productive, mutually beneficial relationships
- Stress the importance of the team

# NCWWI Collaboration Norms

- Honestly acknowledge and express own opinions
- Maintain a sense of humor
- Respond to each member with respect
- Share responsibility for the work
- Figure out how we will share power
- Exercise synergy, creativity and innovation
- Know when to go along
- Enjoy working together

# Decision Making Protocol

- Leadership and accountability: Reality of authority
- Distributive responsibility
- Decision making based on mutual agreement **AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE**

# Open and Frequent Communication

- Collective sharing of all relevant information
- Formal and informal communication strategies
- Reciprocity is key
- Address issues of personalities and politics

# NCWWI Structure

- Our collaboration models the practices that will be emphasized throughout all of our work
- Builds on the multiple talents of the partners

# Elements of Our Experience Together

- Crisis Theory: What are the normal challenges and the special difficulties that face our complex collaborative arrangement?
- Resiliency Theory: What special factors can fracture or cripple a multi-organization collaborative? What provides special strength?

# Normal Challenges for Complex Collaborative Arrangements

- The role of pre-history: cooperation and/or conflict;
- Imbalances between resources;
- Imbalances between the power given to or exercised by stakeholders;
- The role of ground rules and accountability and the impact on transparency and trust. (van Dijk and Pfisterer, 2009)

# Challenges and Keys to Resiliency and Nurturing Partnerships

- “Unless you’re prepared to treat your partner’s concerns as equal in importance to your own, you can’t forge a real or lasting partnership.”
- Partnerships require Creativity
- Partnerships require Compromise
- Partnerships require Commitment
- Partnerships require Flexibility
- Partnerships require Fairness (Tisch, 2004)

# Avoiding the “Six Steps of a Project”

- Enthusiasm
- Disillusionment
- Panic
- Search for the Guilty
- Punishment of the Innocent
- Praise and Glory for the Nonparticipants

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF EVALUATION

# Process Evaluation Questions

- 1) Is the project being conducted in accordance with its work plan and logic model?*
- 2) How is the collaboration functioning?*
- 3) What strengths, challenges and constraints do partners identify?*
- 4) How are results communicated and used to inform project development?*
- 5) How do community partners, participants and stakeholders experience NCWWI in terms of satisfaction, ideas for improvement and job utility?*

# Process Evaluation Methods

- Mixed Method Approach
  - Key Informant Interviews
  - Annual Surveys
    - Leadership Partners
    - Advisory Committee
    - Work-specific Teams
    - Recipients of NCWWI training
- IRB-Approved Consents and Measures/Protocols

# Key Informant Interviews

- Interviews with members of the Executive Steering Committee
- Twenty Questions – Approximately 1.5 hours
- Conducted and analyzed by Ph.D. student
  - Data not shared with other evaluation team members
  - A few thorny issues

# First Year Interview and Survey Findings

- Lack of clearly defined decision processes
- Not enough time for collaborative work
- Lack of an accountability system to ensure quality across work teams
- Communication difficulties
- Mutual respect, trust and understanding concerns
- Issues with Cooperative Agreement format

# Second Year Findings (Survey Only)

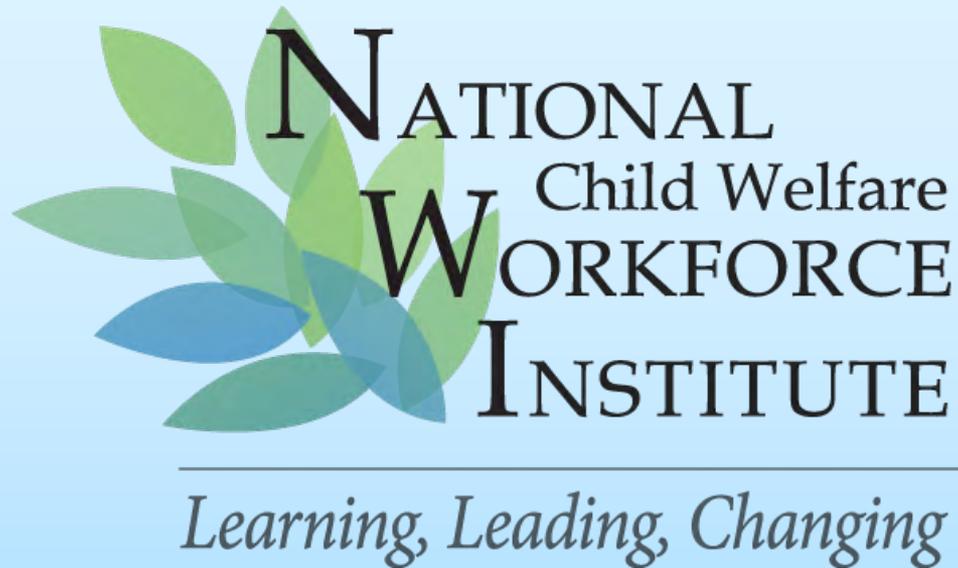
- **Increases on the Wilder Survey**
  - Member Characteristics: (Mutual Respect, Ability to Compromise)
  - Process and Structure: (All items)
  - Communication (All items)
  - Resources (Skilled leadership)
- **No change on**
  - Purpose and Adequate Resources items
- **Decrease in**
  - Environmental Factors items

# Second Year Findings

- Increases on Team Cohesion scale
  - Improvements in items related to coordination and willingness to take additional responsibility
  - Psychological Safety scale
  - Learning Behaviors scale
- Most see team control as collaborative
- Most see themselves as included in the process

# Some Evaluation Issues in Assessing Collaboration

- Role Clarity
- Relationships, Relationships, Relationships
- Kill the Messenger Syndrome
- Free Participation in Interview Process
- Strong Leaders Can Be:
  - Judgmental, Defensive, Resistant to Feedback, Grumpy...



Thank You