

Identifying Shared Interests to Increase & Improve Collaborative Action

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(Available to download from <http://CollaboratingAgainstTrafficking.info/partnership-building-exercises>)

Basic concepts¹

- Everyone tends to frame problems and conflicts in the language of our own positions/stances or preferred solutions, but underlying our positions & preferred solutions are usually multiple interests/motivations.
- Interests are “the silent movers behind the hubbub of positions. Your position is something you have decided upon. Your interests are what caused you to decide.”² Interests can often be identified by ascertaining why a particular position exists (or why it doesn’t).
- Position-based framings of problems or conflicts prematurely limit a fuller understanding of the problem/conflict, thus limiting options for resolution. Interest-based framing enables broader thinking about a problem and more options for solutions.
- Most of us have interests and motivations we have not identified, articulated, or reflected on ourselves, much less expressed to collaboration partners. Some of these interests and motivations may not be socially acceptable or constructive to express to others.
- The ability to discover the interests that motivate our own and other people’s positions is essential to collaboration, and requires listening for what is unsaid as well as what is said.
- Identifying shared interests enables collaborators to increase mutual understanding, develop and implement plans for joint actions.

Position-based versus interest-based framings³

Position

Interest

A position is often just a <i>preferred</i> solution to a problem: “We need to increase lighting and place emergency phones along walkways.”	Interests shape our concept or definition of the problem and possible solutions: “We need to decrease sexual assault.”
Positions are decided, and typically engaged via debate, forcing people to take and defend a stance one way or another.	Interests motivate decisions, both our own and other people’s. Interests can be identified and explored through intentional dialogue.
Competing/conflicting positions are usually not reconcilable.	Different interests do not have to be competing/conflictual; partial alignments and reconciliations are possible.
Positions unnecessarily narrow the problem and possible solutions.	For every interest, several possible positions and solutions exist.

¹ Drawn from Guarriello Heath, R., and Isbell, M.G., *Interorganizational Collaboration: Complexity, Ethics, and Communication* (Waveland Press, 2017).

² Fisher, R. Ury, W.L., and Patton, B.M., *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, 2nd Ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1992), p. 41.

³ Adapted from Guarriello and Isbell (2017), p. 204.

Shared Interests Regarding Victim-Centered Counter-HT Efforts Exercise instructions:

Working alone (5 min): a) In column 1 note the type of organization/agency and sector via which you work against HT; b) In column 2 note the typical positions and preferred solutions that you (or and/or your organization/agency) tend to take or pursue regarding victim-centered counter-HT efforts; and c) In column 3 identify and write as many of your own interests/motivations underlying your positions as you feel you comfortable sharing.

Working in groups of 3-4 (20 min), preferably with people you do not know well yet: a) Share your responses with each other to fill in columns 2 and 3; b) circle partially or fully-shared interests/motivations in column 3; then c) note some potential joint actions that would reflect interests shared by at least two members of your group.

Finally, consider the types of organizations/sectors not represented in your subgroup and reflect together on the interests that might concern/motivate people from those orgs/sectors regarding victim-centered counter-HT efforts. *Subgroups will not be asked to share their entire table with the whole group, but will be asked to report a couple insights gained from the exercise.*

Org/Agency & Sector	Positions	Interests	Possible Joint Actions

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