



individual action plans for 46 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories. During the first day's keynote address, Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman stressed that:

New York is thrilled to host this premier event to raise awareness about the scale of human trafficking and the integral role that state courts can play to combat this modern-day form of slavery, where victims, beginning at the youngest of ages, are exploited by a vast and evil industry. Undoubtedly, the summit will serve as a catalyst, spurring more coordinated, effective court-community responses nationwide to help identify and aid victims and enable law enforcement to identify traffickers and hold them accountable. I want to express my enormous appreciation to the New York State court system's summit partners for their outstanding dedication and support.

The recent National Human Trafficking Summit is but one of many services and products associated with the State Justice Institute Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative (hereafter, "HT Collaborative"). All of the work of the HT Collaborative has focused on establishing an appropriate state court role in addressing the numerous and complicated forms of human trafficking, and the HT Collaborative will continue to challenge state courts and their justice partners in the coming decade.

In particular, the State Justice Institute (SJI) established the Human Trafficking and the State Courts Collaborative in early 2013 through its Strategic Initiatives Grants program. After making human trafficking a Priority Investment Area for grant funding, SJI released a call for proposals

on human trafficking and the state courts and received applications from some of the nation's most respected court-support organizations. When reviewing the applications, SJI recognized a unique opportunity to form a collaborative that combined the competencies, expertise, networks, and experience of all of the applicants into a single unified effort. As a result, the HT Collaborative was created. Initially, the HT Collaborative involved three organizations: the Center for Public Policy Studies (CPPS), the Center for Court Innovation (CCI), and the National Judicial College (NJC). Over the past two years, the HT Collaborative has expanded, inviting new members to augment its expertise, including the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ), Legal Momentum, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). These organizations are working closely to improve court responses to human trafficking.

The work of the HT Collaborative focuses on four strategic priorities:

- increasing understanding and awareness about the challenges faced by state courts in dealing with cases involving trafficking victims and their families and traffickers;
- developing and testing state and local approaches for assessing and addressing the impact of human-trafficking victims and defendants in the state courts;
- enhancing state and local court capacity to improve court services affected by human-trafficking-related case-processing demands; and
- building effective national, state, and local partnerships for addressing the impacts of processing human-trafficking cases in the state courts.

*"As SJI reviewed the responses to the request for proposals, it was clear that all of the applicants were interested in building state court capacity to address human trafficking. The HT Collaborative combines each organization's strengths to create a coordinated and effective response. This strategic partnership will not only enable SJI to maximize limited resources, but also ensure that there is one centralized source available to the state courts for technical assistance, research, and education on the critical issue of human trafficking."*

JONATHAN MATTIELLO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STATE JUSTICE INSTITUTE

## Building Strategic Partnerships for Effective Collaboration

Strategic partnerships are all about tackling important problems facing the state courts that cannot be addressed effectively by one organization on its own or even by a few organizations working in isolation or even loosely together. Strategic partnerships are about collectively marshaling creativity, skills, expertise, and resources into something that far exceeds the capacity of any single organization. Collaboration is the glue that holds strategic partnerships together. Collaboration provides incentives to each partner organization to merge their individual agendas, group identities and loyalties, and organizational and institutional boundaries in a way that promotes more effective movement toward common goals. For example, collaboration provides every strategic partner tremendous opportunities to enhance skills and capacity as they learn to collectively address difficult problems.

The dynamics and operations of the HT Collaborative over the past few years illustrate how strategic partnerships can tackle tough problems confronting state courts by both building on existing partner strengths and developing new collective capacity. For example, with regard to subject-matter expertise, CCI and Legal Momentum's extensive experience working in the domestic violence and specialty courts arenas has been critical. Critical too have been NCJFCJ's long-standing work with juveniles and their more recent efforts involving commercial, sexually exploited children and the intricacies of addressing the needs of children and families in the courts. CPPS's decades-long work in strategic planning, work-process improvement, and more recently, immigration, has also provided vital contributions. The NJC and NAWJ have strong records on providing education on human trafficking to state court judges.

With regard to process, program, and project expertise, all of the partners have extensive experience providing technical assistance in numerous state and local courts using a variety of approaches. Combined, the lessons they have learned about how to provide effective technical assistance far exceed the wisdom that could be achieved from any one of the strategic partner organizations operating alone.

With regard to education and training capacity, NJC, NCJFCJ, and the NAWJ have long been recognized as the leading judicial education organizations in the United States, in part because of their willingness to develop and experiment with new education curriculums and tackle emerging issues such as human trafficking. In addition, CCI, CPPS, and Legal Momentum have been active in knowledge development and education and training on

numerous topics that judges and court practitioners need to know when addressing human trafficking, and they have close ties with other leading outlets for education and professional development such as the National Association for Court Management (NACM).

In terms of networking and network building, all of the strategic partners that form the HT Collaborative have drawn upon and combined their extensive membership and client networks to get the message out and coordinate activity about human trafficking and the state courts on a broad scale. In particular, all of the partners contribute to the HT Collaborative website's contents and publications ([www.htcourts.org](http://www.htcourts.org)), such as NACM's *Guide to Human Trafficking for State Courts* (see <http://www.htcourts.org/guide-chapter1.htm>), and the partners use their individual networks to distribute information and create awareness and interest on the topic. In addition, the partners combine their efforts to enhance the state courts' voice in dealing with non-court organizations. For example, the HT Collaborative uses its collective networking to leverage a more forceful voice and create better partnerships with federal organizations, such as the White House; federal immigration agencies; and justice, health, and human service agencies at the local, state, and federal levels.

Finally, the HT Collaborative partners have extensive expertise in introducing innovations into the state courts. As one result, the HT Collaborative is able to mix and match across its partner organizations to assemble the best team to meet particular jurisdictional needs and always has a cadre of experts on call to support this technical assistance.

In less than two years, the HT Collaborative has achieved outcomes that would not have been attainable by a single organization. It has been enormously successful in raising awareness, testing new court-based responses to human trafficking, and building the capacity of the courts to identify and serve trafficking victims better. The HT Collaborative has also increased awareness and raised expectations among the state courts about the need for increased court capacity to address these challenges.

The next sections of this paper examine the important lessons the HT Collaborative has learned about how to work effectively and includes key challenges going forward.

*“When I make presentations to judicial and court-related audiences about intimate partner sexual abuse and explain how traffickers use intimate partner relationships and then intimate partner sexual assault to recruit and retain victims, I am grateful that I can then tell them about the HT Collaborative and that there are resources developed specifically to help courts deal with trafficking cases in their own communities.”*

LYNN HECHT SCHAFFRAN, DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS,  
LEGAL MOMENTUM

## Seven Key Ingredients to Cultivate Collaboration Among Strategic Partnerships

Successful collaboration depends on a number of critical factors that maximize the design, implementation,

performance, and products of the collaborative. Here are seven key ingredients for successful collaboration identified to date that help make the HT Collaborative effective and successful.

## 1. Establish a Shared Purpose

Collaboration is effective only if the goals are evident and the overarching purpose is clear. Once organizations have agreed to work together, they must decide on primary long-term goals and objectives, build consensus, and develop a shared vision on the part of all participants. The HT Collaborative achieved this through an initial strategic planning session in which all partner agencies met to answer key questions, such as:

- What do we want to accomplish in terms of addressing human trafficking in state courts?
- What do we want the Collaborative to do over the next three to five years?
- How are we going to make it happen?

*“All of the partners felt it was extremely important when forming the HT Collaborative to identify, as a group, strategic priorities that reflected the needs of the courts when faced with the challenges of human-trafficking-involved cases. Now we constantly refer back to those priorities as we establish goals, identify tasks, and allocate our time and resources.”*

JOHN MARTIN, DIRECTOR, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND THE STATE COURTS COLLABORATIVE, CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES

## 2. Build Trust

The best collaborative partnerships are built on trust. To build trust, partners must get to know one another personally, build relationships, and become willing to exchange information and knowledge and share resources.

They must also learn to understand one another's organizational culture and way of doing business and collectively develop a broader collaborative culture that maximizes the strengths of each partner's particular organizational culture.

To help build trust, members of the HT Collaborative often travel together to make conference presentations or provide technical assistance. While working successfully as a team on the job — especially in technical assistance with court clients — provides tremendous opportunities to build trust, often times it is the time spent outside of work, through shared car rides and dinners, in which a rich interpersonal connection forms. As a result, a foundation of understanding, respect, and trust has been built that helps enhance communication and cultural awareness and bridge any potential differences.

*“There is only so much you can learn about someone from a conference call or meeting. It is the time you spend over dinners or traveling together, sharing personal experiences, in which you really build a relationship with someone. Having ‘off hours’ together creates space to get to know more about everyone’s background, family, and to hear stories about everyone’s work in their respective fields. Once you get to know that person, it makes working together so much easier and enjoyable.”*

MIRIAM GOODMAN, COORDINATOR OF TRAFFICKING PROGRAMS, CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION

## 3. Maintain Frequent and Intensive Communication

Communication is an essential ingredient for building and sustaining trust. Continued contact keeps partners informed and able to discuss new opportunities or changes. Modes of communication can vary and may include formal meetings and conference calls among members, or informal briefing calls between two partners. The HT Collaborative engages in many forms of communication, from annual strategic planning sessions to regular check-in calls and emails among members. Most importantly, a culture has been created in which HT Collaborative members feel comfortable sharing ideas informally. This open and ongoing communication has strengthened partner relationships and generated new insights and ideas.

*“Regular phone calls and emails have allowed the various organizations in the Collaborative to enhance and strengthen each other’s work and reduce possible duplication of efforts.”*

ROBYN MAZUR, DIRECTOR OF GENDER AND JUSTICE INITIATIVES, CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION

## 4. Be Flexible

True collaborations cannot be managed with fixed terms that are defined in advance. Instead, there must be open-ended elements and room for flexibility as new information, priorities, and insights emerge. For example, during its first year of operation, the HT Collaborative initiated a partnership with NACM to prepare and distribute *A Guide to Human Trafficking for State Courts*. Working together, members of the HT Collaborative decided on chapter topics and key concepts and divided the writing assignments based

on expertise. Moreover, preparation of the *Guide's* chapters included writing not only by staff of the HT Collaborative partner organizations, but also by outside subject-matter experts identified by the partner organizations using their broader networks.

*“Although I have worked with courts since the 1970s, I have never been involved in a more challenging but important effort as what we are trying to do now when working with human trafficking. We are constantly learning, as individuals and as a Collaborative, new things about the complexity of human trafficking and what it all means for the state courts. This extensive learning also means that as we learn we have to be flexible and come up with targeted responses. There is no cookie-cutter approach for courts in addressing human trafficking.”*

STEVEN WELLER, SENIOR CONSULTANT,  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND THE STATE  
COURTS COLLABORATIVE, CENTER FOR  
PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES

Furthermore, although the provision of technical assistance was one of the HT Collaborative's identified priorities, *how* the technical assistance is implemented and by whom is flexible. This allows partner agencies to work jointly on individualized technical-assistance plans that best target the needs of particular courts.

## 5. Share Leadership and Responsibility

Collaboration works best when there is a coherent vision, strong leadership, and shared responsibility across partner agencies. In addition to providing funding, SJI has helped drive the HT Collaborative forward by building the strategic framework, promoting the HT

Collaborative's work, identifying new opportunities, and actively participating in planning meetings, conference calls, and the general work of the HT Collaborative.

A key component of collaboration is providing both task and process leadership, and the HT Collaborative has made a commitment to maximizing effectiveness by being very fluid in dividing up task and process leadership among individuals and partner organizations. Task leadership is directive and focused on tasks at hand. HT Collaborative partners divide up tasks and responsibilities and support each other in completing tasks. Process leadership is focused on how the group works together and makes decisions. All of the partner organizations exercise process leadership by deliberately working toward a common purpose, vision, and goals and preserving the integrity of the inclusive processes used to work effectively.

For example, when providing technical assistance to an extensive effort in California that included multilevels of court administration and multiple jurisdictions, CPPS and the CCI divided-up the specific tasks involved in preparing for site visits in particular jurisdictions, but elicited feedback from one another on agendas, materials, logistics, and desired outcomes and products. During the site visits to specific jurisdictions, CPPS and the CCI shared process-leadership responsibility by co-facilitating many of the activities and discussions. (Both organizations often co-present on their experiences during national conferences.)

In another example, NAWJ undertook a project to survey its members on their knowledge of human-trafficking issues as a way to inform conference content. CPPS staff worked with NAWJ to design, analyze,

and report the survey results. The information gleaned from the survey was also used by other collaborative members to shape national conference presentations beyond NAWJ and inform local trainings with jurisdictions. Routinely, all the HT Collaborative partners help prepare conference education programs sponsored by each other and often serve as faculty in sessions sponsored by each respective organization.

*“As a membership organization of over 800 judges and supporters, the NAWJ provides a massive network for raising awareness and educating committed judges about human trafficking and how it can be addressed. For over a decade NAWJ has been working on human-trafficking concerns but now we can work hand-in-hand and more efficiently with an established group of content experts to help us continue to move forward. For example, our members provide a vast pool of judge practitioners who can assist in the preparation and distribution of the Collaborative's products.”*

MARIE KOMISAR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
WOMEN JUDGES

It is important to note that while both task and process leadership are shared across all of the HT Collaborative partner agencies, it is still helpful to designate one agency to play a central, coordinating role. CPPS has played that role by managing the SJI grant requirements, monitoring the overall progress of the work, amassing materials from all agencies, maintaining the website, and coordinating planning meetings and calls among members.

## 6. Practice Deference and Encourage Conflict Transformation

Once collaboration is underway, tensions and conflict can naturally arise as operational and organizational cultural differences begin to emerge. Deference is required to overcome potential hurdles — organizations should take the time to learn and understand one another's differences and take them into account. With regard to deference, the documents authored by the HT Collaborative provide a good example. With different writing styles, vocabularies, and editing processes, it would be easy for members of the HT Collaborative to get stymied. Instead, the HT Collaborative has quickly produced dozens of model documents, articles, and reports thanks to the trust and understanding that exists among the partners and their willingness to work collectively to produce materials that represent the HT Collaborative first and individual members second.

In addition, understanding and using conflict transformation approaches has proven to be an important part of successfully establishing and maintaining the strategic partnership. The HT Collaborative has tried to embrace a transformational approach to conflict, stressing that conflict is a normal and continuous dynamic within human relationships and that conflict creates potential for both constructive individual growth and opportunities for organizational and multiorganizational improvement. Special emphasis has been placed by HT Collaborative members on increasing communication opportunities when conflict emerges and understanding the unique features and needs of each partner's organizational culture and how these needs can be addressed.

*“A successful collaboration is often difficult to form and even more difficult to sustain. The Human Trafficking Collaborative has benefited from a shared understanding of an immediate need and a champion to lead the effort. What has sustained the Collaborative over the last few years, however, is the ability of the partner organizations to share roles and responsibilities associated with the Collaborative's activities. The partners have adopted a comparative advantage approach to service delivery that ensures the project is making the best use of the partners' skills and resources.”*

DAVID PRICE, PRESIDENT, CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES

## 7. Maintain Momentum

Now that this cross-pollination is occurring, how do you keep members energized and sustain their involvement? Continued communication among partner agencies will help the group stay on task and inspire fresh ideas. It is also important to engage in self-reflection and assess how the HT Collaborative is functioning and to be honest about why things may not be working. If necessary, the HT Collaborative can rethink its goals and find something that reenergizes members. To sustain interest over the long haul, it will be crucial to give all members a voice, elicit their input, offer praise, and celebrate their successes. Most importantly, members need to listen to one another's concerns and respond to reasonable problems that have been identified.

Moreover, good strategic planning and having to prepare a well-thought-out proposal for funding each year helps the HT Collaborative maintain momentum. An annual planning

session allows all of the partners to examine where we want to be, where we are going, and the progress we are making in light of our long-term strategic priorities. Preparing an annual funding request, although time-consuming, forces us to translate our strategic priorities and expectations into a fundable and actionable annual work plan.

*“Since Collaborative members all work for individual organizations with different missions and priorities, it would be very easy for members to get distracted by their day-to-day responsibilities and in-house projects. Remarkably, this hasn't happened, and I believe it's because our regular work naturally overlaps and complements the Collaborative's priority areas. As a result, we're all deeply committed and have a vested interest in the success of this project.”*

DANIELLE MALANGONE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, HUMAN TRAFFICKING INITIATIVES, CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION

## Ongoing Challenges to Sustaining Strategic Partnerships and Encouraging Collaboration

Despite recent success, the sustainability of the HT Collaborative to continue its important work over the next few years remains a significant concern. In particular, four challenges need to be addressed to maintain the effort. All of the challenges are related to adequate, predictable, and flexible funding.

First, state court demand for HT Collaborative services exceeds our delivery capacity. As word about the work of the HT Collaborative has spread, demand for services has increased. Moreover, our service delivery has uncovered new, previously unanticipated, complicated aspects of human trafficking. Some of these new topics include 1) the complexities of gang involvement; 2) the challenges that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender victims of trafficking face; and 3) how the state courts can become trauma informed.

Second, the HT Collaborative's strategic partners need to have some predictable funding from the HT Collaborative's collective budget. The partners need to have a financial, as well as mission-driven interest in sustaining the work of the HT Collaborative. Although all of the partner organizations dedicate resources beyond what they receive from SJI grant funding, they still need at least some grant funding to justify participation to their boards and other governing bodies, as well as their staff. In particular, SJI's strategy of providing joint funding has removed the need for each organization to protect its competitive advantage, which, in turn, has removed each member organization's reluctance to share or even reveal their expertise or contacts. Future funding should continue to promote the organizations' willingness to share expertise.

Third, funding agencies that support anti-trafficking efforts need to work cooperatively. Currently, the key federal agencies and foundations that provide funding for justice improvement projects tend to operate in silos, with separate areas of focus

and favored providers. For example, some federal agencies silo their funding based on specific subject matters, such as domestic violence or specialty courts. Other agencies focus on specific populations, such as children in need of protective services, juvenile offenders, adults or victims of violence, and unaccompanied minors. More effective collaboration among federal funding agencies and private foundations could help identify and expand opportunities to sustain the HT Collaborative and support its growth.

Fourth, the HT Collaborative needs predictable funding at sufficient amounts over the next few years. During the first two years of operations, the HT Collaborative worked like a start-up business trying to broker relationships, build a brand, and add value to the field. Today, the HT Collaborative has established a national reputation and identified new human-trafficking concerns, which, as a result, have increased the demand for services. However, sustainable funding to support the HT Collaborative remains elusive, and SJI is limited in its ability to support these efforts financially in the long term. Now, more than ever, this successful start-up needs an investment from government, private funders, or both to ensure that the HT Collaborative can continue making an impact on the state courts, the communities the courts serve, and the victims of human trafficking.

## Summary

This paper has described seven factors that, in our experience, have contributed to the considerable success of the HT Collaborative. These factors emphasize an initial need to define a

shared mission and goals, develop an action agenda to achieve the goals, and establish an organizational structure to support that agenda. Implementing the agenda is more difficult because of the need to overcome natural challenges to working collaboratively. These include learning to 1) trust the other partners; 2) build on the skills and abilities of each partner; 3) communicate regularly; 4) appreciate each organization's operational and cultural differences; and 5) give everyone a voice and a stake in the HT Collaborative's outcomes. Through collaboration, the partner organizations have been able to provide technical assistance, deliver education and training, and create products that no one organization could have completed on its own. After two years of working cooperatively, we are looking to institutionalize the work of the HT Collaborative to continue being an effective resource to the nation's state courts.

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