

# Are You In High Action and High Alignment?

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## Data Drives Leadership Efficacy

While an action commitment can be written to be powerful, this power is only realized when implemented. Developing a practice of accountability is essential. Leaders who hold themselves accountable for performance are more likely to complete action commitments.<sup>1,2</sup> Completion rates increase when action commitments are committed to in writing, shared publicly with the team or workgroup and then reviewed and discussed regularly to improve execution and efficacy.<sup>3</sup>

Action commitments are assessed along a continuum of action and alignment. Collaborative groups spend a great deal of time collecting information and planning, but often lose momentum and fail to execute at a scope and scale that will make a difference. The following assessment tool allows leaders to assess whether they are in high action and high alignment. By knowing where they stand individually and as a team, leaders can make decisions about the likelihood of effecting positive change and how to strengthen actions to accelerate results.

## Rating the Level of Action

No Action (0)	Assessing/Pre-Planning (1)	Planning/Preparing (2)	Execution (3)	Increasing Scope/Scale (4)
<p>No action commitment is made that focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcomes, benchmarks</li> <li>Actors (direct reports or peers, program recipients, superiors, or external partners)</li> <li>Personal leadership development</li> </ul>	<p>The action commitment focuses on the collection or sharing of information. It might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collecting baseline information and data</li> <li>Understanding underlying issues and factors</li> <li>Sharing general information to increase awareness of the problem, but without the expectation of influencing the outcomes/result</li> <li>Developing personal leadership skills</li> </ul>	<p>The action commitment focuses on the preparatory phase required for successful execution. This commitment might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing strategies or structured activities</li> <li>Preparing people, materials or products required for execution</li> <li>Meeting with others to leverage contributions to achieving results</li> <li>Joining strategic partners who will make a direct contribution</li> <li>Collecting information or data to assess the needs of a population or to strengthen strategies</li> </ul>	<p>The action commitment focuses on implementation of strategies/activities/tactics. This involves action that has a direct impact such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing activities to improve the well-being of a population</li> <li>Preparing strategic partners to make a direct contribution</li> <li>Using information to assess effectiveness of strategies</li> <li>Providing information to target populations for their use</li> </ul>	<p>The action commitment is focused on strengthening actions or taking actions to scale. These commitments might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restructuring strategies for better impact</li> <li>Expanding the scope or scale within the group, agency or community</li> <li>Expanding the scope or scale to broaden reach across agencies or communities</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Littlefield, J. & O'Brien, J. *Policymaking through Collaborative Networks: Issues of Accountability and Performance*. Poster presented at the annual conference for the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Boston, Massachusetts, November 4-6, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Pillsbury, J., Goddard-Truitt, V. & Littlefield, J. *Cross-Sector Performance Accountability: Making Aligned Contributions to Improve Community Well-Being*. Panel presentation at the American Society for Public Administration Conference, Miami, FL, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> O'Brien, J., Littlefield, J. & Goddard-Truitt (2013). *A Matter of Leadership: Connecting a Grantmaker's Investments in Collaborative Leadership Development to Community Results*. *Foundation Review*, V5: 1, 26-42.

## Rating the Level of Alignment

In collaborations, strategies and activities are lined up in such a way that they bridge, leverage and support each other for greater impact. Imagine a rowing team with each member rowing in a different direction—lots of action but no forward movement! When in high alignment, collaborative groups are linking goals and objectives to focus on a common result, with each leader making a contribution.

No Alignment (0)	Low Alignment (1)	Moderate Alignment (2)	High Alignment (3)	Alignment with Others Outside of Original Scope (4)
<p>Actions are not connected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results</li> <li>• Goals</li> <li>• Strategies</li> <li>• Interests of other leaders</li> <li>• Development needs of leaders</li> </ul>	<p>Actions aligned with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development needs of leaders</li> <li>• Supporting the structure of a team</li> <li>• Building basic understanding of agreed-upon results</li> <li>• Connecting with individuals to build familiarity</li> <li>• Joining new people without specifying role and contributions</li> <li>• Deeper understanding of other leaders' perspectives, values, resources and interests</li> </ul>	<p>Actions aligned with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad vision and strategic direction</li> <li>• Needs to build capacity in self and others</li> <li>• Agreed-upon preliminary actions</li> <li>• Strengthening relationships and resolving conflicts</li> <li>• Accepting the distribution of work to accomplish strategies based on common agreements</li> </ul>	<p>Actions aligned with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed-upon strategies and actions</li> <li>• Assessment of the impact of actions and performance to inform decisions and accelerate results</li> <li>• Leveraging relationships on behalf of results, strategy or performance</li> <li>• Leaders holding self and others accountable for commitments</li> <li>• Actions are based on holding a part/whole perspective</li> </ul>	<p>Actions taken to link and connect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions with positive outcomes for greater impact</li> <li>• Leaders trusting the resilience of relationships to take risks and make the changes necessary to execute effective strategies</li> </ul>

## Getting and Staying in High Alignment and High Action

Once leaders have used the above rating tools to self-assess their own level of action and alignment, and give feedback to other leaders, the information can be displayed to show progress over time and identify opportunities for moving to higher action and higher alignment. The visual display of ratings supports problem solving, accountability and increases collaborative leadership efficacy.