



Establishing and maintaining collaborations with other researchers and community partners


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Who we are




- Susan
- Erik
- Heidi
- Current collaborations with each other: Access Assistant and Smart Select projects
- Collaborations over the years
 - Usually multi-disciplinary
 - Often remote, but not always
 - Often across institutions, but not always



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Why this matters – everything is collaborative


- Collaborations can be:
 - Enjoyable and synergistic
 - Frustrating and unproductive
 - Or all 4!
- Our goal is to give you a better chance at the enjoyable kind
- (It usually doesn't happen automatically)

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Structure of this talk

- Developing mutually beneficial relationships with partners
- Collaboration involving technical and clinical partners
- Tools and methods to facilitate collaboration



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Developing Relationships with Partners




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Developing Relationships with Partners

- David R. Beukelman
 - UNL
 - UNMC
 - Munroe-Meyer Institute
 - Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital
 - Lincoln Public Schools
 - Multiple clinical partnerships
 - Multiple community partnerships





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"Just make sure you don't turn us into a data farm"

– Sister Phyllis Hunhoff, CEO, Madonna


- Understanding the mission, values, priorities of your potential community partners
- What can you do for them? (this may not directly relate to your research endeavors immediately)
 - Learn about what they do, acknowledge clinical/educational expertise
 - Help your potential partners build capacity in AAC, demonstrate their expertise to a larger audience, and support their AAC efforts
 - Examples: developing AAC labs, supporting services/consultations, providing educational opportunities for staff, involving staff in clinical/academic learning rounds, asking clinical staff to support student learning, guest lectures by clinical staff



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How to engage clinical and community partners in research

- First- is this a priority for your potential partner? If not, seek to understand why.
 - Poor previous experiences in research collaborations
 - Clinical productivity guidelines over-ride time to dedicate to other professional endeavors
 - Not a true feeling of collaboration (e.g. "data farm")
 - True lack of interest (clock in and clock out- don't add more to my plate)
 - Avoid thinking of yourself as the "expert" in their setting
 - You are there to learn, observe, find where you can help (if ok with your partners!), look for natural connections



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How to address challenges identified

- Find out what it means to be a collaborator (different meanings for some versus others)
 - Have clinical questions of their own- can you help them answer them?
 - Recognition
 - What does recognition look like to them with regards to engagement in research?
- Time
 - Grant funding to offset time can greatly increase availability for meaningful engagement in research
- Consistent presence
 - Regular meetings, agendas/goals for meetings, time you are available for consults/help with clinical program, regular updates to research activities, STAY CONNECTED to your partners



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Remember.....

- Your timeline may be different than your potential partners
- Taking time to develop and foster the relationship will help you meet your goals (and help build, support and grow AAC in your local communities)
- Uphold values of potential partner organizations
 - Build trust/respect
 - Center your goals around patients, clients, children who use AAC and their families- make this clear to your potential partners



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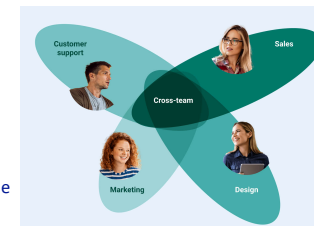
Clinical-technical Teams



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Clinical-technical Teams

- Projects involving the development of software or devices require both clinical and technical partners.
 - Technical: Engineer, programmer, etc.
 - Clinical: SLP, OT
 - Research
- All the RERC on AAC projects are examples of these types of projects.
 - Video VSD and Transition to Literacy involve Janice and David (and students) for the clinical side and Erik on the technical side.
 - Access Assistant has Susan on the clinical side, Erik on the technical side and Heidi has the skill set to be part of both sides of the team.



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What to look for in a collaborator

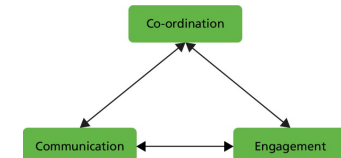
- Shared Goals
- Demonstrated ability to turn a good idea into a productive project
- Interest in true collaboration rather than "hand-off" for testing
- Available time and commitment for the project
- "Date before you get married"
 - Test a partnership with a smaller project
 - This may be a technical team that needs help testing their product, but are receptive of feedback.
 - May be a clinical team that needs a one-off prototype
 - If successful, put a bigger project together.



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Tips for successful collaboration

- Establishing goals and expectations early
- Clarify roles
 - Identify clinical team's role in the technical development
 - Identify technical team's role in the clinical evaluation
- Defining a structure and roadmap for the project
- Regular communication
 - Regular, whole team meetings
 - Project management tools described later by Heidi
 - Email and phone calls when questions arise



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Our model

- We are a team on both the clinical and technical portions of the project.
- As a technical person, I may have a lot of technical knowledge, but I need the clinical team to know how to weigh different feature requirements/difficulty and to check that features match, not only the requirement, but the project goal.
- As a clinical person, I know a lot about clinical work, so I need to teach the technical team why features are required and the purpose of the goal but allow for creativity in the solution if it still accomplishes the project goal.
- Weekly meetings where both technical and clinical teams are present and discuss successes and failures from the past week. A clinical person may be able to offer more information get past a technical roadblock. A technical person may know a modification that can be made to simplify the evaluation.



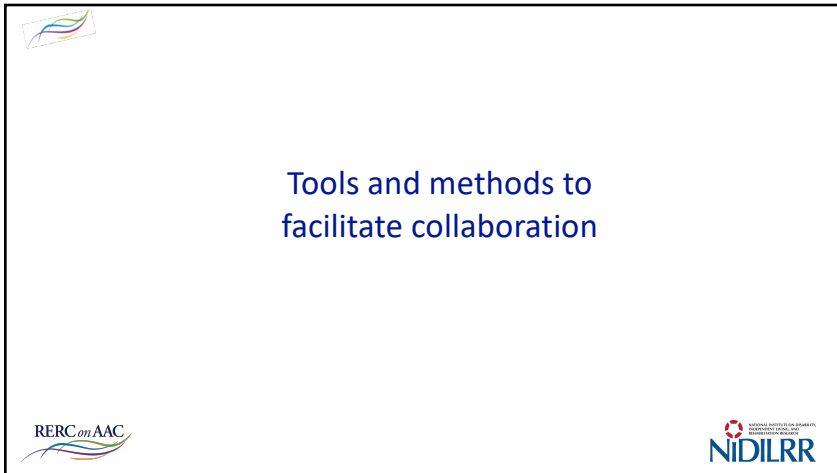
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Clinical-technical Project

- All work begins with a clinical question in mind, not a technical feature looking for a use.
- We work together to determine a list of required/preferred features and how the prototype should work to get a shared image of the project goal.
- Meetings held with all work demoed for the clinical team and reactions are documented.
- Once all are happy with the prototype, the clinical team begins evaluation.
- Meetings held with the clinical team describing any difficulties, and the technical team addresses anything they can fix.



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Tools and methods to facilitate collaboration


RERC on AAC

NIDILRR

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Overview

- Present some management and collaboration tools and methods that we find helpful
 - Whether in remote or in-person context
- Not a panacea, but useful as a way of turning good intentions into effective practice




The comic strip shows three characters in a meeting. The first character says, "WE SPENT \$500K ON SHAREPOINT AND PEOPLE STILL AREN'T COLLABORATING". The second character replies, "I COLLABORATED FIVE TIMES THIS WEEK, TWICE BEFORE COMING TO THIS MEETING". The third character asks, "WHAT ARE THE ODDS THAT HE EVEN UNDERSTANDS WHAT COLLABORATION MEANS?". The first character responds, "ROUGHLY EQUAL TO THE POSSIBILITY YOU KNOW WHAT SHAREPOINT IS...".

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Pivotal Tracker for project management

To help with questions like:

- What needs to be done?
- Who's going to do it?
- Are they working on it?
- Is it completed yet?
- Is this project on time?



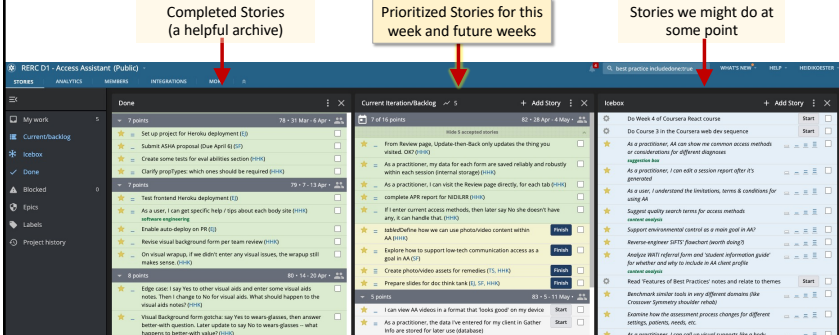
PivotalTracker

- What assignments do I have?
- What should I work on now?

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Pivotal Tracker overview

- Break the project into *stories* for the Pivotal board

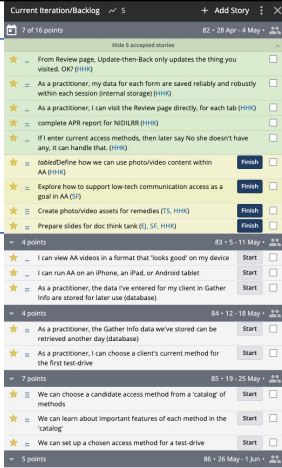


The screenshot shows a Pivotal Tracker board with three columns: "Completed Stories (a helpful archive)", "Prioritized Stories for this week and future weeks", and "Stories we might do at some point". The board contains various user stories, such as "Set up project for Hensley deployment (E)", "Submit ASHA proposal (Due April 6) (P)", and "Create some text for visual display action (P)(H)".

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Pivotal Tracker - current iteration / backlog

- What needs to be done?
 - This week: the stories in the current iteration
 - Future weeks: Order the stories by time priority
- Who's going to do it?
 - Each story has an owner
- Is it completed yet? What's been done?
 - Each story has a status and comments
- What should I work on now?
 - Check your stories in this week's iteration



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Pivotal Tracker demo




- Examples of a "story"
- Flow of a story through the board
- Shared understanding of what's happening now
- Archive of what's happened before
- Forecasting of what's coming up and how long it might take

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Team meeting practices

- We usually meet weekly
- Normally include:
 - Review of the Pivotal board – do we need to discuss any ongoing stories?
 - Some sort of work as a team
 - Software demo with feedback and specific questions
 - Collaborative data analysis (e.g., thematic analysis)
 - Individual work then reconvene with questions/discussion
 - Tee up next week's work in the Pivotal board
- We want them to be working meetings, not just simple updates
- Meeting leader should prepare for these



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Communication between meetings

- Decide as a team how you want to do this
- Clearly there can be flexibility but it's worth discussing:
 - Best method
 - Frequency
 - Reasons for
 - Variations between team members
- But don't skip on this!



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Remote vs In-person considerations

- Remote is wonderful, but it has some limitations



- In-person can have some advantages:
 - Relationship building
 - Solving tricky technical issues
 - Setting big picture objectives
- Create opportunities to work together in-person
 - Especially if you are in close proximity!
 - Conferences can be a way to do this, too



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Key Takeaways

- Good collaboration doesn't just happen
- Center your goals around people who use AAC and their families
- Seek mutual benefit for all partners
- Establish goals, roles, structure, roadmap as a team
- Use a team-wide tool like Pivotal Tracker to manage the project
- Ask for help from mentors and team members



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Questions?
Tips / stories to share?



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