



# CROSSWAYS

CAMPING MINISTRIES

*Following Christ's Call Forward*

## **What is a Collaborative Leadership Staffing Structure? Crossways Camping Ministries**

### **1. What is Collaborative Leadership?**

Collaborative leadership means that the process of decision-making is truly collaborative. Decisions are worked out among all of the participants. Collaborative leadership has much in common with both servant leadership and transformational leadership.

Collaborative leadership is built on the premise that “if you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic visions, strategies and solutions for addressing the shared concerns of the organization or community” (David Chrislip & Carl Larson).

Collaborative leadership has become common among business, educational and non-profit organizations today, replacing the traditional top-down leadership structure of the past, in which high-paid executives made decisions that trickled down to employees without offering opportunities for valued input and authentic investment in the outcomes.

### **2. Is there a difference between Collaborative Leadership and Shared Leadership?**

Shared leadership is collaborative and draws on each team members' strengths, ideas and expertise. For our purposes, Shared Leadership and Collaborative Leadership are synonymous and used as interchangeable terms. When we speak of collaborative leadership or shared leadership, we mean the same thing.

### **3. How does a Collaborative Leadership model serve the Crossways Community?**

When organizations successfully embody collaboration, they create an atmosphere of transparency across stakeholders. Crossways aims to foster transparency through an environment of openness, trust, and comfort. This, in turn, allows Crossways staff, board members and stakeholders to freely and respectfully share different perspectives, voices, opinions, and ideas, which is a necessary step in a healthy innovation process.

As important as transparency, trust and innovation, the adoption of this collaborative leadership and staffing model contributes to financial sustainability by realigning resources and bringing those resources to the ministry sites. Crossways no longer has need for a separate administrative office in Appleton.

### **4. Why did the Crossways Camping Ministry board of directors discern that a Collaborative Leadership model is needed at this time?**

Upon reviewing processes and outcomes over a number of years, it was clear that the Executive Director model had not been serving Crossways in a manner that supported our values of: Share decision-making, healthy communication, data-driven processes, employee wellness and financial sustainability.



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We decided to adopt the staffing and decision-making structure that has been implemented in higher education over many decades. Colleges and Universities operate under a rotational department Chairperson model, where experienced colleagues take turns every 2-3 years in leading aspects of the programming, staffing and operations. These additional responsibilities are paired with a temporary reduction of typical duties, as well as an additional financial stipend during the term as Chair. This collaborative leadership model is based on shared decision-making and shared investment from colleagues. This structure values the ideas and voices of all who are invested in the success of the organizational mission, relationships and outcomes.

Overall, organizations that use this shared leadership model are likely to develop more agile, innovative and high-functioning teams that can make a lasting missional impact across the organization. Innovation thrives in organizations where collaboration is valued and supported. Crossways is aiming to lean into a future where this camping ministry innovates and thrives.

## **5. What are the benefits of using a Collaborative Leadership model for Crossways Camping Ministries?**

Implementing a rotational Chairperson of Operations (CoO) model in place of an Executive Director allows Crossways to do the following:

- Bring the decision-making and operational processes to the staff and to the location where the ministry and mission takes place (i.e., Site-based leadership staff).
- Offer experienced Director-level staff an opportunity to develop leadership skills without needing to leave the organization.
- Offer an additional financial stipend (while assuming the Chairperson duties) that financially supports the Director-level staff to build personal savings since home-equity growth isn't achievable when required to live in camp-based housing.
- Reduce administrative costs for the organization, which contributes to long-term financial sustainability for Crossways.
- Build collaboration among the staff as they need to work together for the success of this multi-site ministry. This reduces the bias that sites are in competition with each other for the same resources. Decisions are made collaboratively for the good of all.
- Provide natural opportunities for mutual mentorship among a leadership staff that has different skills, gifts, and experiences.
- Offer opportunities for staff to meaningfully contribute to and mutually lead the ministry as a collaborative team. This empowers staff to be innovative & excited about their work, which reduces feelings of futility that often lead to staff burn-out.
- Model collaboration as an important value and skill that this ministry wishes to uphold.

Unlike the top-down executive director approach, collaborative leadership fosters a sense of unity among staff, allowing them to make effective decisions quickly and to strategically address issues as a cohesive and supportive team.