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Herding Cats & Getting to Yes: Lessons Learned from University of California Libraries' New Cost Share Model Implementation

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Herding Cats & Getting to Yes: Lessons Learned from University of California Libraries' New Cost Share Model Implementation

Cover Page Footnote

The author worked at the California Digital Library (CDL), University of California until September 2019.

Peer Reviewed Article

Herding Cats & Getting to Yes: Lessons Learned from University of California Libraries' New Cost Share Model Implementation

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Abstract

Systemwide or multi-campus licenses provide many benefits such as favorable pricing, access to an expanded array of resources for all participants, and streamlined licensing. They also usually involve cost sharing among participating campuses. The licensing process can be labor-intensive and time-consuming. Successful collaboration among participants is essential in reaching consensus. In the past, the University of California (UC) Libraries employed many cost models, and the California Digital Library (CDL) applied them for CDL-licensed subscriptions, both new licenses and renewals. After several years of discussion, the UC Libraries decided to implement an FTE-based model as the default cost share model, except in cases 1) in which a vendor quotes pricing for each campus; and 2) with fewer than all ten participants, or nine without UC San Francisco. Adjustments are made to co-investment shares to meet the principle that no campus should be asked to contribute more for a shared license than it would have to pay on its own. Additionally, CDL funds are occasionally used to support shared access to resources. The new default FTE-based model was implemented starting with the fiscal year 2018/2019, and is being phased in over a three-year period. To alleviate the impact of the FTE model implementation, CDL negotiated renewal fees for numerous resources and led a large-scale cancellation project for UC campuses. This article is a case study to inform libraries and consortia that might be interested in building shared collections and learning from UC's experience in facilitating discussions, encouraging collaboration, and coming up with a cost share model that works for their system and creates shared value in the end.

Keywords: cost sharing, negotiation, CDL, systemwide, collective collections

Introduction

Collaborative purchasing, if managed effectively, decreases overall costs and expands collections for all participants. Economies of scale can be achieved when libraries identify common needs, share costs, and maximize efficiency through shared processes including vendor negotiation, licensing, acquisition, cataloging, and electronic resource management. Collaborative purchasing also benefits smaller libraries or campuses in a system by providing access to resources that they might not otherwise be able to purchase alone. It also strengthens the position



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of participants who can act as a single large library in the marketplace for certain common materials while maintaining distinctive and special collections locally.

Collaborative purchasing usually requires cost sharing and other agreements among participants and the process can be time-consuming and difficult. While information on cost share arrangements among consortia members or university system participants can sometimes be obtained, it is often difficult to see how those arrangements were made, what motivated those organizations to pick certain cost share models and partners, and what processes were used by the facilitator to gain participants' support and consensus so that their shared collections grow while costs are contained.

This article explores the essential elements of collaborative purchasing through a recent case involving the California Digital Library (CDL) and University of California (UC) campuses. CDL provides shared services to libraries in the UC system and recently successfully moderated discussions among UC libraries so that they agree on a default cost share model that will be used for UC's shared collections. The insight presented in this article may be helpful for libraries that are interested in developing shared or collective collections.

University of California Environment

The University of California (UC) is a ten-campus system with seven Association of Research Libraries (ARL) members, two doctoral degreegranting campuses, and one health sciences campus. CDL is a "co-library" of the UC system, and has employed many co-investment models for sharing costs among UC campuses since the 1990s.¹ UC Libraries' systemwide purchase decisions involve multiple committees and rigorous reviews, and follow various policies and procedures established by the UC Libraries as documented on the CDL website.² CDL is in a neutral position and often facilitates discussions among the UC campuses. "Herding cats" is one of the roles that CDL plays, just like many consortia do.³

In her 2003 article, Beverlee French describes funding issues related to shared digital collections at UC and explains that the primary goals of cost-sharing models are to allow as many UC users as possible to benefit from centrally licensed digital resources and to divide costs fairly, taking into account 1) the current spend, 2) campus size as measured by FTE or budgets, and 3) potential use of those resources.⁴

Usage as a factor in UC campus co-investment shares was discussed as early as 2012 for a potential role, in response to the growing dissatisfaction with historical spend as a basis for campus shares. In the end, usage as a factor was not approved due to concerns related to future unpredictability and unreliability of past data available at the time. In early 2016, the Council of University Librarians (CoUL) approved a 3factor model which includes aggregated systemwide journal usage, student FTE, and academic staff FTE for a major journal package coinvestment. This model was meant to be used for this particular package only. At the same time, CoUL charged the Shared Content Leadership Group (SCLG), an Associate University Librarian (AUL) level committee within the UC system, to explore cost modeling options for general application at a later date.

In August 2016, SCLG asked the Joint Steering Committee for Shared Collections (JSC), which advises the CDL on budget and co-investment models, to propose a default model and provided the following guiding principles:

- Campus co-investments are integral to building UC shared content collections.
- Cost share models should be transparent and provide a rational basis for allocating costs.



- CDL uses its funds strategically to leverage campus co-investments.
- CDL uses its funds to promote sustainability of Tier 1 (UC systemwide) agreements.
- No one campus pays more than the amount it would pay via independent negotiations with a provider.

Systemwide vs. Consortia

Systemwide agreements and consortia agreements are different in some ways. In a consortial or a buying club model, only interested campuses or members participate; others are not required to participate. In a systemwide model, like the one at UC, the publisher provides all-in pricing for the system. In some cases, publishers agree to a multi-campus deal that is less than systemwide pricing. These systemwide or multicampus agreements tend to provide more favorable pricing for participants, although they often require extra time for internal discussion.

Cost sharing can be arranged among libraries on the same campus or within the same university system, or among collaborators within the same university. For example, at the University of Colorado (CU) System, a consortium comprised of four separately administered libraries, participation in CU consortium for shared purchasing is voluntary and each library's contribution is based on its ability to pay.⁵ This flexibility contributes to the successful collaboration within the Colorado system.⁶

Consortia typically charge membership fees to their members based on tiers or service levels. For example, the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN), a partnership of Canadian universities, uses a banding system. The data variables used in the CRKN banding system are: sponsored research, student full-time equivalents, and full-time faculty.⁷ NERL, a nonprofit program operating under the auspices of the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), acts primarily as a buying club and offers two service tiers for its members, i.e., core membership and affiliate membership.⁸ CDL differs from these models in that it seeks to acquire resources for the entire UC system as much as possible and cost sharing among participants is usually necessary.

Regardless of the organizational format of the shared or collective collection, the role of an independent central office is significant in facilitating discussions among participants, even if cost sharing is not involved. Lorcan Dempsey and others offered recommendations to advance the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) libraries toward a more purposeful coordination of their print collections and described the need to strengthen the executive function of the central office.⁹

Cost Share Problems at UC

There were several problems regarding existing cost share models at UC. First, there were too many models in use, which created confusion and delay. Second, there was a widespread perception that some cost shares were inequitable, especially for a particular journal package. Third, some cost share models were considered outdated or unjustifiable. For example, 'historical spend' did not reflect current campus academic programs or level of usage. Fourth, there was no agreed-upon model for ebook cost sharing. Finally, some models were time-consuming to compile, and/or not operationally scalable. It was not sustainable for CDL to constantly re-calculate shares at every renewal, given the high volume of invoices and charges that it handles with limited staffing.

At the same time, identifying a single default model was a challenging task, given that different campuses get impacted financially depending on the model chosen. Figure 1 demonstrates these challenges. For FY 2015/2016, UC Berkeley paid the largest share. Budget-wise, Berkeley's



share is the largest as well. Usage as a factor would increase UCLA and UC San Diego's shares significantly. An FTE share would also increase UCLA's share while reducing some other campuses' shares.

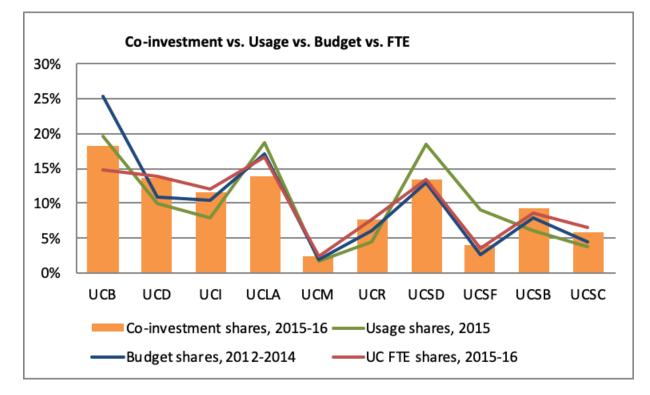


Figure 1. Different Financial Impact for Different Models

Guiding Principles for Cost Sharing Among UC Campuses

It was clear that it would not help for UC campuses to discuss what they wanted based purely on financial implications. Instead, the participants needed to come up with objective criteria. CDL's task was to skillfully facilitate discussions. Based on the analysis of the existing problems and guiding principles, JSC members understood that future cost models should have five characteristics (see figure 2).

Cost Modeling Exercise

JSC members examined various cost models based on the agreed principles. After each member evaluated models individually, a master sheet was populated. If four out of the six members indicated that the model met the principle, the cell was marked "Yes" on the master sheet as shown in figure 3.



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Principles	Descriptions			
Transparent	Readily available, no extended fact-checking is needed			
Easily Understood	Little explanation is needed			
Predictable	We know what to expect over time			
Efficient	Requires little time			
Justifiable	Easy to explain and be endorsed			

Principles	Historical Spend	Equal Shares	Budget	FTE	Usage	UC/Vendor Tiers	Multi Factored
Transparent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Easily Un- derstood	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Predictable, Renewal	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Predictable, New Re- source	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Efficient, Renewal	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Efficient, New Re- source	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Justifiable	No	Maybe	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Total	3	6	5	7	2	7	1



The FTE model and vendor tier models met all seven criteria, both for new resources and ongoing renewals. They were found to be transparent, easily understood, reasonably predictable, efficient, and justifiable. However, vendor-devised tiers may not reflect how UC campuses view themselves, and changes to a given tier classification can cause major disruptions in cost shares. For these reasons, the FTE model received the most support from JSC members.

The other cost models - historical spend, budget, usage, or hybrid models - fell short in many of the principles. Historical spend is not well-understood, inefficient to update, and considered unjustifiable once a significant amount of time has elapsed because it reflects only the historical value of a resource. A budget-based model rewards campuses that are underfunded and does not create an incentive for them to remedy their lack of financial support. It also penalizes other campuses for their fundraising success. Additionally, library budgets are not a true reflection of the ability of each campus to pay for shared resources, due to the inclusion of restricted funds such as endowments and special collections in the data.

While usage is presumed to be an indicator of demand, its inherent unpredictability and volatility make it a questionable cost factor at best. Usage data is prone to errors, anomalies, and data breaches, and can be influenced by largescale text and data mining projects. In many cases, the actual causes of these anomalies may be unknown and impossible to correct retroactively. Additionally, usage-based cost models are labor intensive. Routinely re-calculating shares would not be sustainable. Therefore, while aggregated systemwide usage was included in the three-factor model for a major journal package in 2016, campus-level usage was ruled out as a factor for the default cost share model.

Rationale for an FTE-Based Cost Model

CDL's data analysis found that FTE generally aligns with usage. Although this alignment is not perfect, it is a reasonable indicator of campus demand. FTE also maps to state funding principles and is readily understood by university administrators. Therefore, it is a defensible proxy for both library budgeting principles and for demand indicators such as usage and can be seen as an equitable approach to co-investment. FTE-based collection cost models can serve as evidence to improve state funding and to use in budget discussions with campus administration.

Furthermore, FTE data is readily available and tracked independently and centrally by the University Budget Office. It is reported annually by the UC Office of the President and posted on a public website.¹⁰ All data is transparent and easily understood. Campus enrollment data is forecasted for future years so the campus cost share is predictable for long-range library budgeting of systemwide resources.

Variation and Exception to the Model

Although FTE was proposed as a single default model for greater simplicity and efficiency in coinvestment at UC, there are a number of situations in which alternative co-investment shares or adjustments to shares will continue to be warranted. For example, if UC campuses license resources that are focused on health sciences, they might consider using the health science FTE. Similarly, for resources with fewer than all ten participants, or nine without UC San Francisco (health science campus), cost shares are usually discussed among subject specialists instead of using the FTE model, so that a model reflecting subject strengths of collections can be established.

Additionally, vendor pricing is used if it is provided, instead of the FTE cost model, because a vendor-based model is often the only feasible way to achieve a co-investment outcome that



provides a systemwide benefit to all campuses. This approach supports the principle that no one campus will be asked to pay more than the amount it would pay via independent negotiations with a vendor. Otherwise, cost shares will be adjusted if any campuses are affected by either spreading the excess costs among the remaining campuses, using CDL funds, or both.

CDL contributes to resources in a variety of ways with JSC input and guidance. For example, CDL uses its funds to achieve lower ongoing costs for UC campuses and ensure systemwide access across the UC community that benefits all campuses. CDL funds are often used for expensive one-time purchases of journal or ebook archives or other products such as complete digital newspaper runs or archival resources. For efficiency purposes, CDL also pays for ongoing maintenance or access fees in many cases. FTE campus cost sharing is not applicable in these cases.

Herding Cats: The Art of Nudging and Facilitating

The discussions about cost shares were lengthy and difficult. In the multi-campus systemwide committees where cost modeling was discussed, CDL's role involved providing background data such as FTE figures and variations, scheduling and facilitating meeting discussions, and drafting meeting minutes and reports. It might sound like administrative duties. In reality, however, CDL staff occasionally needed to 'nudge' so that the committee members stayed focused on creating and increasing collective value for the UC system.

Occasionally some campus representatives understandably promoted ideas that would benefit their campuses, rather than considering systemwide values. CDL gently brought their attention back to the agreed-upon principles. Setting up deadlines for tasks was useful in avoiding overanalyzing data and ensuring small but steady progress. Sometimes CDL reached out to less vocal members and campuses who might potentially be impacted to seek their opinions. This approach helped surface issues and different opinions earlier rather than later in the process.

Additionally, CDL presented data and options in a simple format to avoid over-analysis of available data. By providing a small number of options in a logical order, discussions among committee members were streamlined. For example, although it was tempting to get into the details of the FTE data, the CDL facilitator initially encouraged committee members to stay focused on primary concepts. CDL's intention was to help UC campuses reach consensus and remain focused on their goals.

Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein described how nudging helps in decision making in their book, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*.¹¹ Figure 4 shows some of these helpful concepts:

Figure 4. Herding Cats - Nudging for Better Decision Making

Why Nudging is Necessary?

- To increase collective value
- To avoid inertia / status quo bias
- To avoid following the herd / peer pressure



Nudging / Choice Architect

- Small number of options
- Priorities & the way choices are presented
- Presence of a default



In addition to 'nudging' gently, CDL remained neutral and courteous even when discussions became heated. It was helpful to ask questions rather than judging people and expand ideas by saying "yes, and" instead of "yes, but." Logic alone could not convince people to say yes. Instead, it appeared that they wanted to be heard and self-commit emotionally as well as logically.

Getting to Yes

Implementation of the new FTE-based model meant that some UC campuses would be impacted negatively financially, while some others would reduce spend on systemwide resources. Given the sensitivity of the topic, particularly for the negatively impacted campuses, the CDL facilitator reached out to those campuses before the official meetings to give a heads-up and to see if they had any other ideas for cost shares that observed the agreed-on principles.

At the JSC decision-making meeting in late 2016, a member from one of the impacted campuses stated that while FTE cost model implementation would negatively impact their campus financially, no other models met the agreed-on principles and that the member would support the model in principle. This was an admirable act. CDL and other members of JSC expressed appreciation for this member's professionalism, which demonstrated commitment to increase systemwide values even in difficult circumstances.

Following the JSC endorsement, the matter was brought to SCLG for their discussion. CDL again reached out in advance to the impacted campuses, listened to their concerns, and requested their input in case there were other matters that should be considered. As a result, there were no surprises at the SCLG meeting, although the conversation was difficult due to challenging outcomes for some campuses. When discussions threatened to go off track, CDL staff calmly and firmly reminded the committee members of the end goal and the shared principles and helped diffuse the threat. In the end, SCLG approved the FTE cost share model as the default model almost unanimously, with one member abstaining from voting due to the challenging outcome for that member's campus. Finally, the matter was brought to CoUL where it was approved in principle in May 2017.

The process of identifying a cost model that is supported by all UC campuses resembled business negotiations in that the facilitator needed to stay calm, connect with relevant parties before stating logic, and focus on everyone's interests. Stakes were high and committee members tended to focus on their positions. CDL remained neutral and open-minded, and attempted to create options for systemwide gain.

It was essential that CDL insisted on using objective criteria or the agreed-on principles (transparent, easily-understood, predictable, efficient, justifiable) to identify the acceptable best model for the UC system. CDL also suggested that UC campuses try the model and phase it in to reduce the impact. This allowed participants to avoid inertia and move on. Figure 5 shows key characteristics of principled discussion from a classic business book titled *Getting to Yes* that guided CDL.¹²

Figure 5. Principled Discussions

- People Connect before logic
 - Focus on interests (benefits to your counterparts), not positions
- Insist on using objective criteria
- Invent options for mutual gain



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Another business book titled *Never Split the Difference* provides helpful guidance in facilitating high-stakes negotiations. Like the book *Getting to Yes*, it emphasizes self-control and emotional regulation. Additionally, it suggests not to insist to be 'right.' This advice was helpful, especially when emotions were elevated. Furthermore, questions starting with "what" and "how" were more effective in that they allowed committee members to broaden options and take a joint problem-solving approach. Asking for help, acknowledging others' ideas openly, and apologizing when appropriate were also helpful in giving a sense of control and respect to the participants. Figure 6 shows selected negotiation tips from the book.¹³

Figure 6. Principled Negotiation

- Self-control and emotional regulation
- Don't try to force others to admit that you are right
- Use "what" and "how" questions
- Joint problem solving, rather than showdowns
- Provide a sense of control:
 - o Ask for help
 - Acknowledge or repeat others' ideas openly
 - o Offer an apology
- Guarantee execution or follow-through
- 7-38-55 % rule (7% based on words, 38% the tone of voice, and 55% from the body language and facial expression)
- Anchor (numbers, deadlines, etc.)
- Loss aversion

FTE Model Implementation

It was a great relief when the FTE-based cost share model was approved in principle in May 2017. However, there was still much to be discussed, such as what FTE should be included, when the model is implemented, for which systemwide resources the model will be used, how the model will be implemented, who will administer the model, how often the model is updated, and how we can ensure that the impact is affordable by all campuses. After some careful deliberation, total campus academic FTE, including undergraduate and graduate students, residents at medical schools as well as academic staff, was chosen as the default model. Academic staff includes academic administrators, faculty, researchers, librarians, cooperative extension researchers and faculty, and other academic personnel. Models in which undergraduate FTE was weighted differently from graduate student and researcher FTE did not yield more compelling results from a total campus academic FTE model, while adding complexity in the model generation process. Additionally, UC campuses favored the idea of using a recent three-year average instead of using the



most recent FTE data so that they can avoid sudden changes. CDL agreed to post the FTE shares on a password-protected website and update them annually.¹⁴

The approved proposal excluded the following cases from FTE implementation: 1) when a vendor quotes pricing for each campus; and 2) resources with fewer than all ten participants, or nine without UC San Francisco, because cost shares are usually discussed among subject specialists in those cases, reflecting subject strengths of collections. Otherwise, all ongoing CDL-managed subscriptions, e.g., e-journals, eBooks, and databases worth approximately \$30 million are to be included in the FTE transition so that the agreed cost shares are applied as broadly as possible.

CDL prepared for and executed a three-year phase-in plan that seemed to produce the least impact for the negatively-affected campuses. The implementation started in FY 2018/2019 and the new FTE model was applied as each shared subscription renewed. The first year was most challenging because there were numerous annual renewals in addition to some multi-year renewals, totaling over \$20 million.

To reduce the negative impact of the new cost share model implementation, CDL identified opportunities for cancellations and negotiated renewal pricing. Although one of the goals of systemwide licenses is to allow as many UC users as possible to benefit from centrally licensed digital resources, the cancellation project produced numerous licenses with less than ten participants. This in turn created many licenses where the FTE model could not be applied because the model is used only when there are ten or nine participants without UCSF. Fortunately, CDL was able to save the UC campuses approximately two percent (\$821,405) of the UC systemwide collection spend through its negotiation and cancellation efforts as of February 2019. Thanks to these systemwide savings as well as

local campus efforts, the new FTE model was successfully implemented.

Assessment: One Year After Implementation

One year went by smoothly in general, although the new cost share model implementation required numerous cancellations and serious negotiation with many vendors. CDL sent regular reminders on the model implementation to UC campuses so that campus acquisitions staff would see why their shares changed suddenly from the previous year in some cases.

There has been occasional confusion, especially with new resources. There seems to be a desire and expectation to use the default FTE model for as many resources as possible among some UC campuses. However, many products come with vendor-tier pricing where the FTE model is not applicable, and CDL has sometimes needed to remind campuses of the FTE model exclusion criteria.

Unfortunately, budgetary challenges and different priorities among campuses will likely lead to more licenses with less than all ten participants. CDL and UC campuses might need to consider a buying club approach as a practical solution in some cases.

Future Consideration

Cost of collaboration cannot be overlooked when an organization tries to increase shared values. For the FTE model implementation project, participants spent many hours in meetings and over email and phone. A recent study indicates that the average employee spends about eighty percent of his/her time engaging in collaborative work and that there is little time left for all the critical work they must complete on their own, thus leading to burnout (see figure 7). Some functions, especially coordinating roles like the ones at CDL, involve a lot more communication. We must manage collaboration by redistributing work.¹⁵



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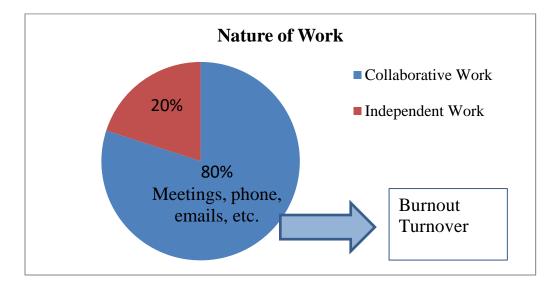


Figure 7. Collaborative Overload

The process involved in the UC systemwide agreement on cost sharing was complex and time-consuming. A return on investment (ROI) analysis of UC systemwide cost sharing activities, as other consortia have performed for their organizations, will inform the future direction of collaboration within the UC system.¹⁶

Additionally, some costs, such as Open Access (OA) related spends, e.g., article processing charges (APCs), might not work well with the FTE cost share model because publication patterns of UC campuses differ significantly and might not map well with the FTE model.¹⁷ APCs could be considered as vendor-priced costs, in which case the FTE model would be irrelevant. Either way, CDL and UC Libraries will need to continue discussing different ways to collaborate and create systemwide values.

Conclusion

UC campuses successfully implemented the new cost share model. CDL served as the facilitator, paid attention to participants' emotion as well as their logic, tried to understand their interests, insisted on using objective criteria, and invented options for the participants to reach a consensus. The approved model is viewed as transparent, easily understood, predictable, efficient, and justifiable by all UC campuses. The attributes of success might include the participants' desire to create shared value through collaborative purchasing, principled discussion, and expert facilitation.

Shared value is created only when benefits outweigh costs. Consortia or collective collection participants will need to reduce costs involved in collaborative activities such as meeting time and committee work, while expanding their collective collections by taking advantage of favorable pricing and streamlined operation.

The best cost share model that works is likely to vary depending on the system or the consortium. UC campuses are all relatively large research libraries and are under the same UC umbrella. Some consortia participants might find that multi-factored models work better for them, considering different financial capabilities and usage patterns among participants, although multi-factored models are more complex as noted earlier. Each system or consortium will need to come up with objective criteria which



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will guide their discussion and decision making to find a model that works for them.

Regardless of the cost share model used, participants need a common agenda, shared policies, mutually reinforcing activities, constant communication, and dedicated and robust "backbone" support from an independent unit like CDL to create shared value, as Kramer and Pfitzer argue.¹⁸ As UC campuses' needs change, the UC system will need to be flexible in approaching co-investment and consider alternative models as needed, while being mindful of collaborative overload.

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