Core Questions

* What are the scientific issues, goals, and anticipated outcomes or products of the collaboration?
* When is the project over?
* Are all members of the research team on the same wavelength regarding these issues?
* What are the expected contributions of each participant?
* Who will write any progress reports and final reports?
* How will you decide about redirecting the research agenda as discoveries are made?
* What will be your mechanism for routine communications among members of the research team (to ensure that all appropriate members of the team are kept fully informed of relevant issues)?
* How will you negotiate the development of new collaborations and spin-off projects, if any?
* How, and by whom, will personnel decisions be made? How and by whom will personnel be supervised?
* What will be the criteria and the process for assigning authorship and credit?
* How will credit be attributed to each collaborator's institution for public presentations, abstracts, and written articles?
* How and by whom will public presentations be made?
* How and by whom will media inquiries be handled?
* When and how will you handle intellectual property and patent applications?
* How and by whom will data be managed? How will access to data be managed? How will you handle long-term storage and access to data after the project is complete?
* Should one of the principals of the research team move to another institution or leave the project, how will you handle, data, specimens, lab books, and authorship and credit? It is easy to imagine that for any particular research project there might be additional specific questions that should be added to this list. Many potential collaborators can answer these questions simply by getting together and talking things out. For some people a neutral third party, with no involvement in the project, can help facilitate such discussions and maximize their effectiveness.