The applied research collaborative remains an attractive approach to matching the information needs of education practitioners with educational researchers’ information production skills. While the match appears sound, why it is no easy feat to productively accomplish the establishment of a relevant and vital applied research collaborative. This symposium brings together several researchers who lead an established or emerging applied research collaborative to discuss their experience. They will share their thoughts about why a research collaborative makes sense, what design principles to keep in mind when building an applied research collaborative, and the mistakes they made (or narrowly avoided) as they built and operated their collaborative. The session will offer short, story-rich, presentations that should offer guidance for those who might build or participate within an applied research collaborative.