

# Assessing structure and process of collaboratives using Collective Impact Framework<sup>1</sup>

## What is collaboration?

Two or more entities (organizations, organizational systems, programs, community groups, or individuals) working together for a common purpose.

Collaborations form the bedrock of public health work to address community needs.

## Why collaborate?

To address complex issues, we need stakeholders from multiple sectors and levels of operation to work together toward a common vision and goal<sup>1</sup>.

**The Role:** Engage with and build consensus among diverse organizations and individuals in a community to address a community-level issue or problem<sup>2</sup>.

**The Format:** Collaborative partnerships vary by level of commitment, activities undertaken, membership composition, and intensity (e.g., meeting frequency).

## ? WHAT IS IT?

Collective Impact is a framework to tackle deeply entrenched and complex social problems. It is an innovative and structured approach to fostering collaboration across government, business, philanthropy, non-profit organizations and citizens to achieve significant and lasting social change.

The Collective Impact approach is premised on the belief that no single policy, government department, organization, or program can tackle or solve the increasingly complex social problems we face as a society. The approach calls for multiple organizations or entities from different sectors to embrace a common agenda, shared measurement, and alignment of effort. John Kania and Mark Kramer first wrote about Collective Impact in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* in 2011 and identified five key elements:

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### COMMON AGENDA

All participants have a common agenda for change including a shared understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.



2

### COMMON PROGRESS MEASURES

Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all the participants ensures shared measurement for alignment and accountability.



3

### MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

A plan of action that outlines and coordinates mutually reinforcing activities for each participant is essential.



4

### COMMUNICATIONS

Open and continuous communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.



5

### BACKBONE ORGANIZATION

A backbone organization(s) with staff and specific set of skills to serve the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/>

Effective partnerships are also supported by collaborative and transformational leadership. A key component of the Collective Impact Framework is the backbone organization, which provides leadership including guiding the overall vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing funding. Leadership within partnering community organizations supports buy-in and facilitates participation and implementation. Leadership across multiagency partnerships supports many functions of collaborative work.



### THINK ABOUT

- ★ What measures would you use to assess how well your collaborative is utilizing the Collective Impact Framework?
- ★ Consider assessing the participants' beliefs about the collaborative's purpose and agenda.
- ★ Consider measuring the frequency of and approach to problem solving. If common progress measures are in place, the backbone organization can assess whether each participant in the coalition is sharing timely data on each measure. Where lags occur, consider capturing qualitative information about challenges in data collection and sharing the information with the group for joint problem solving.
- ★ Consider having members of the collaborative check in periodically on their progress adhering to the mutually reinforcing action plan; six-month check-ins can help the collaborative gauge whether any partners have changed direction as well as affirm whether the action plan is still relevant for the common agenda.
- ★ Consider assessing the frequency of communication using process measures. Consider using a survey instrument such as interviews for collaborative members to assess whether the communication methods are fostering trust and driving motivation.

