

Skills & Tools for Collective Impact

Component 4

Version 1

Guide

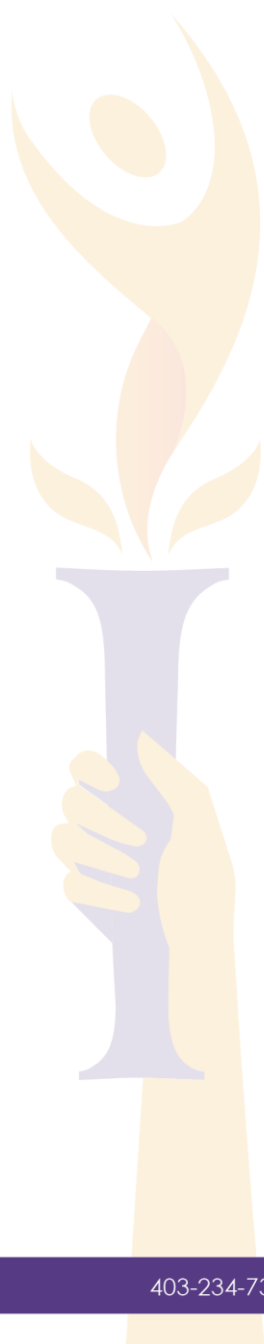


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COLLECTIVE IMPACT OVERVIEW

Collective impact (sometimes collaborative governance or collective governance) is an innovative model of governance that is solutions-oriented, with a focus on what is valuable for the community. The **collective impact model** believes that no single government entity, policy, or organization can deal with deeply entrenched social problems alone. The concept moves beyond the traditional ‘partnership’ or ‘collaboration’ in that it calls for long-lasting commitment between various organizations all working towards a common goal.

First defined by John Kania and Mark Kramer in 2011, the basic model consists of five conditions and three pre-conditions. When applied in a comprehensive way, this approach has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in addressing a broad range of issues. Collective impact has garnered rapid uptake. Collective impact is an evolving body of practice that is becoming more effective as practitioners share their learning, insights, and experiences.

To maintain a strong foundation and truly “move the needle” in your community, efforts should strive towards these **five adapted conditions of collective impact**:

- A common understanding of the purpose, problem, and a shared vision for change
- Individuals, organizations, systems, and communities reaching their full potential
- Shared outcomes, accountability and means of sharing data
- Effective coordination, communication, and credibility
- Supporting the vision, aligned activities, and operations

IN THIS COMPONENT

In this component, we will dive deeper into the skills and tools for collective impact. This guidebook and its accompanying webinar (titled Skills and Tools for Collective Impact) will explore these concepts:

- Understanding collective leadership
- Values and principles
- Principles of practice
- Theory of change
- Governance framework
- Strategic framework
- Communication plan

We acknowledge that each of you holds various levels of knowledge, years of experience, and understanding of collective impact, collaboration, and community engagement. The information within this guide is a wide-cast net. We ask you to take the opportunity to learn in and learn something new. Perhaps you’ll learn a new approach or explore ways that you can support those within your network who are stepping into the arena for the first time. If you are new to collective impact, we hope you take key learnings with you as you embark on your community work and use them to build a strong initiative.

UNDERSTANDING COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Leading a collective impact initiative requires a more inclusive style of leadership - one that prioritizes group impact over individual success and values shared ownership and responsibility. To offer collective leadership to your initiative and for your initiative to benefit from this leadership style, it is necessary to understand what collective leadership really encompasses.

Tom Klaus (2016) states that anyone who engages in collective leadership needs to do the following deliberately and intentionally:

- **Check ego:** To check your ego is to intentionally lay down your right to have the final word. This is an entirely internal process about changing your own attitude. Social change is about creating a greater good for our community and area of influence. If we cannot check our ego, we are not open to collective leadership.
- **Cross boundaries:** Simply means inviting others to collaborate, especially those who are different from yourself. We do this because we know we cannot solve this complex issue by ourselves. Crossing boundaries is the only way for us to connect and gather the diverse group members we will need to be innovative and energized.
- **Share power:** Once the group or team has been assembled, we need to work collaboratively to create space where everyone has important and meaningful roles in shared decision-making and collective leadership. Power sharing in collective leadership creates ownership.

Conditions of Collective Leadership

Collective leadership means sharing responsibility for decision-making, accountability, and authentic engagement. In a collective impact initiative, that would look like all members being involved in the creation of the vision and being committed to working together to achieve it. Each member would be accountable for their roles and responsibilities and for creating a culture of mutual trust and respect. To succeed requires **trust, shared power, transparent and effective communication, accountability, and shared learning.** (O'Neill & Brinkerhoff, 2018 para. 4)

The nature of a collective initiative means that leaders and members are equally valued and work closely together. This gives the opportunity for immediate feedback, praise, and constructive criticism. A collective environment is creative, innovative, and beneficial to any organization. Change can be difficult but by putting collective techniques in place you can provide lasting and sustainable change for your community.

Benefits of Collective Leadership

In the Five Elements of Collective Leadership, O'Neill and Brinkerhoff (2018) state:

Collective leadership has many benefits, most resulting from the fact that you get better results from considering multiple perspectives, sharing responsibility, building upon the strengths of those on your

team, and leveraging internal motivation. The following are some specific benefits you might expect to see when collective leadership is in action.

- **Better decisions and increased effectiveness.** A major benefit is that collective leadership and multiple perspectives result in more effective decisions than when people at the top make decisions because those who will be affected have a chance to provide feedback, ideas, and even direction.
- **Increased self-direction and motivation.** Common challenges faced by collective impact initiatives are related to people resisting change or a directive. Encourage your team to generate their own solutions and work toward their own growth and development. Those who respond to their own internal drives, interests, desires, and motivations are much more likely to work toward and sustain change than those who are externally motivated.
- **Removing Barriers to Internal Motivation is Needed for Growth and Development.** Imposing change onto someone else creates resistance. Spend time developing relationships and find out what others' goals and wishes are, it is possible to form a partnership to work together toward a shared goal.
- **Shared responsibility.** In a traditional model, people in leadership positions often feel burdened and alone. They often feel like everyone is turning to them for answers and the pressure is exhausting. When sharing the responsibility of the network, the work is easier and more fun for everyone involved (para. 8)

Understanding how to Work Together

In collaborative endeavours, you have access to the vast range of skills, abilities, and perspectives that are represented by the members of your initiative. When we bring them to the table and share them for a common purpose, it can provide the initiative with a critical advantage. (Murphy, 2016) Tapping into that critical advantage requires you to:

- Push yourself beyond your comfort zone
- Stretch your thinking and mindsets for your initiative to function and achieve success
- Have a clearly defined structure to identify the layers of accountability

Understanding how initiative members will work together requires creating alignment across the initiative. Figure 1 lays out keys to successful alignment.

FIGURE 1: *Keys to Successful Alignment*

Keys to Successful Alignment

GUIDELINE	WHY IT'S IMPORTANT
Start with a focus on the outcomes you want to achieve	Focusing on outcomes galvanizes people around goals that are harder or more complex than those they've tried to tackle alone, and it prevents getting stuck on existing strategies that might not be best for those outcomes.
Draw a picture big enough so that existing efforts see how they can connect and why	A big picture reinforces the idea that complex challenges need interconnected solutions and prevents the "edifice complex," which assumes that solutions revolve around certain institutions, such as schools.
Identify where there is more efficiency and power in working together than alone	Analysis of synergies creates energy for leaders to take on issues that are too big to handle alone and to scale up solutions they didn't know they were pursuing separately. It also prevents development of agendas that are too big or piecemeal to make a difference.
Clarify the lines of communication and accountability	Clarification focuses committed partners on the routinization of their relationships and prevents "task force syndrome," in which partners sign on to recommendations without assuming responsibility to implement them.

(Irby & Boyle 2014)

Other questions that are important to reflect on are:

- Who initiates the process?
- Who makes it happen?
- How much time does it take?
- How do you manage expectations?
- Is there a way to foresee what's needed and have supports ready?

DEVELOPING VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Shared values and principles are the foundation for how your collective impact initiative will work together. This will become instrumental over the life span of your collective impact effort, especially when you find obstacles and the "messiness" of the work arises. Developing values and principles help you:

- Gain a clearer perspective on your initiative and what you're wanting to achieve
- Strengthen your initiative's sustainability and ability to achieve your goals
- Provide a foundation when you encounter challenges and difficult situations

What are values?

Values are personal, arbitrary, fluid beliefs and judgments that people have about things or concepts. Values are crucial for expressing our unique ideas and perspectives. They can be strategically applied to achieve certain goals depending on the demands, requirements, and circumstances of the moment. The goals we have for our network and community may change and can be reflected or determined by our values.

What are principles?

Principles, for the most part, have been woven into the fabric of societies, traditions, and philosophies throughout history. They often relate to human behavior and are influential in governing interactions between people. “A principle is a natural law like gravity. If you drop something, gravity controls. If I don’t tell you the truth, you won’t trust me; that’s a natural law.” (Covey 1989).

There are certain principles that do not change over time. Principles determine the ultimate outcomes or consequences of behavior and actions.

Using Values and Principles to set your Common Agenda

Your beliefs and ambitions are ultimately guided by your principles, which serve as a point of reference if you have questions or are unsure. They lay out a path for you to follow when you need to decide or assess an opportunity, behavior, or circumstance.

Consider the distinctions between values and principles and how each might be helpful as you establish your shared objective. When your group collectively decides what you value most and what objectives you want for your project, use your principles as a point of reference. Using your principles as a foundation, you can construct your values and goals. Some questions to consider are:

- What are the unchanging overarching principles that you can clearly identify?
- What are the values that you now hold?
- Do your current practices or processes reflect the values you currently hold?

ACTIVITY: DISCOVER YOUR CORE VALUES

From the list below, choose 20 value words that resonate with you regarding your collective impact initiative. Write them down. The goal is to end up with your top 6 value words. To get there, spend time thinking through your words and cross out words (in increments of 4) until you are left with 6 words on your sheet. Next, list your 6 words and state what each value means to you as it relates to your initiative.

Acceptance	Elegance	Instruction	Responsiveness
Accomplishment	Emotional Well being	Integrity	Risk
Achievement	Empathy	Intelligence	Safety
Acquisition	Encourage	Inventiveness	Schooling
Adventure	Encouragement	Joy	Self-awareness
Alignment	Energy	Justice	Self-worth
Altruism	Enlightenment	Kindness	Sensations
Amusement	Entertainment	Knowledge	Sensuality
Assistance	Environment Equality	Laughter	Serenity
Attractiveness	Ethics/Ethical	Leadership	Service
Authenticity	Excellence	Learning	Simplicity
Awareness	Experience	Love	Spirituality
Beauty	Experiment	Loyalty	Stability
Being	Expertise	Magnificence	Stimulation
Bliss	Explain	Mastery	Strength
Calm	Exquisiteness	Merriment	Strengthen
Charity	Facilitation	Nobility	Success
Coach	Fairness	Nurturance	Superiority
Community	Faith	Observation	Support
Compassion	Fame	Order	Teaching
Comprehending	Family	Organization	Tenderness
Connection	Feeling Good	Originality	Touch
Consciousness	Fitness	Peace	Tranquility
Consideration	Freedom	Peacefulness	Trust
Constancy	Friendship	Perception	Truth
Contentment	Fun	Personal Development	Truthfulness
Contribution	Generosity	Play	Understanding
Cooperation	Grace	Pleasure	Victory
Courage	Gratitude	Positive Attitude	Vision
Create	Guidance	Power	Wealth
Creativity	Happiness	Preparation	Wholeness
Danger	Harmony	Presence	Winning
Dare	Health	Proficiency	Wisdom
Delight	Honesty	Provider	
Dependability	Honor	Quest	
Detection	Hope	Radiance	
Dignity	Humility	Recognition	
Direct	Imagination	Relatedness	
Discovery	Improvement	Relationships	
Discrimination	Independence	Relaxation	

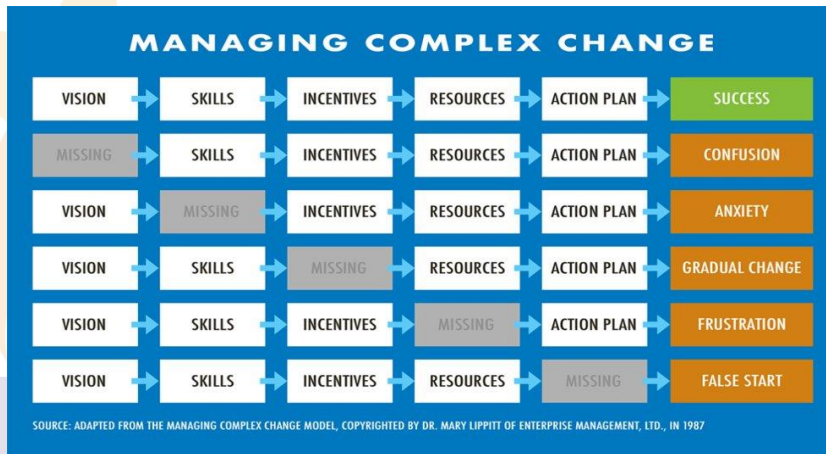
Distinguish	Influence	Reliability	
Diversity	Information	Religious/Religion	
Economic Security	Inner Space	Resourcefulness	
Education	Innovation	Respect	
Effectiveness	Inspiration	Responsibility	

For instructions on how to use this activity with your network to establish common values, refer to the “Defining Values and Creating Value Statements” exercise in the resource bank.

PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

It takes vision, skills, incentives, resources, and an action plan to get a coalition to produce a change in a community. If you have all five, you will likely end up with change. If you leave even one of the components out, you will likely end up with something different.

Figure 1: Managing Complex Change



(Adapted from Lippitt, 1987)

Figure 2 illustrates the components necessary to bring about complex change. It also illustrates what results when any one component is missing.

Without a **vision** to refer to during your process, you can wind up *confused*.

There will be *anxiety* among your coalition members if you have a vision, incentives, resources, and an action plan but the people don't have the right **skills**. It doesn't matter if the vision is wonderful if the team members are ill-equipped to carry it out.

Change may be more *gradual* if you lack the **incentives** that keep important community stakeholders engaged. These incentives include things like awards, recognition, and celebrations.

You will experience a lot of *frustration* if you have a strategy and know how to carry it out but lack the necessary **resources** like money, time, and equipment.

Without an **action plan**, you will have a lot of *false starts*. The group may begin making progress only to discover that a crucial step had been missed, requiring them to halt their progress and turn around to take care of it. (Lippitt 1987)

For additional information please reference Building the Architecture Resources.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The **theory of change** is your best guess at how your work will impact the issue you care about. It explains how your initiative will achieve its intended impact, what approaches you will undertake, and what other actors you will work with...

Through a theory of change you will be able to:

- Know what you want to change
- Know what you want your community to be like when you've succeeded
- Examine your assumptions about how that change can happen
- Work backwards from your vision of the future, what would need to be true for your preferred future to occur?

A theory of change is a statement that describes how your initiative will produce the outcomes you desire. It is also a framework for developing a cohesive strategy to achieve your long-term outcome. Starting with a theory of change statement helps to root the development of the rest of your theory and strategy. Theory of change statements are aspirational and often formatted as:

If we do _____, then _____ will happen because _____.

The theory of change approach to planning encourages very clearly defined outcomes at every step of the change process.

THE ROLE OF THEORY OF CHANGE

We have outlined below how the components of an initiative related to the role of a theory of change for your collective effort. (Centre for Theory of Change n.d.)

Components of an Initiative	Role of Theory of Change
Identify the problem	Before theory of change begins
Bring together key people to address the problem	Before theory of change begins
Conduct research through a community environmental scan	Can occur during the development of theory of change, review consistently to ensure you have it right

Set initial goals	Where theory of change begins in establishing consensus on long term goals
Community engagement (broader community)	Who else needs to be at the table?
Building and forging collaboration	Testing our own biases and assumptions. This allows the group to know where everyone stands and begins to build trust
Begin planning the initiative	The theory of change process includes steps to elicit a high level and detailed explanation for what changes need to occur and their relation to one another
Seek funding	Using your theory of change and narratives to demonstrate your well thought out initiative
Develop an action plan	During the initial planning phase interventions and strategies were identified. It also identified the change you are expecting.
Develop an evaluation plan	Your theory of change is your blueprint for evaluation. It identifies indicators of success and specifies the details of who is expected to change and by how much. This is the basis for developing the methodologies to measure the indicators.
Implementation	The theory of change is a dynamic, living set of ideas that should guide implementation and provide a framework for checking that the initiative stays on track
Revise and course correct plan	The theory of change is a living document you can make changes to it as you learn from your experiences. It helps guide decisions about how to adjust by clearly showing the relationship between outcomes.
Evaluation	Your theory of change is the framework against which the success and obstacles of your initiative will be evaluated.
Reporting	The theory of change provides the basis against which you can report your success, challenges, lessons learned and evaluation results.
Releasing results and reporting to the community	Theory of change is a powerful communication tool that allows you to capture the complexity of your initiative in a form that is understood by others.
Influence systems and policymakers	Policymakers need to know what made your initiative successful, and how much change or success can be expected by applying lessons from one initiative to another.

For additional information please reference Building the Architecture Resources.

GOVERNANCE

We define **governance capacity** as the potential to coordinate all participants and partners to deploy their resources in the pursuit of the collective issues they have identified. The paper “A Framework for Governance Capacity: A Broad Perspective on Steering Efforts in Society”, outlines the following five elements of governance capacity:

- 1. Collective Action:** Collective action is the cooperative behavior of individuals or organizations to perform and protect a common goal. Governance capacity is about the interrelated action between actors.

- 2. Coordination:** Coordination is about the capacity of actors in a governance setting to inform each other about goals and actions; opportunities and threats; issues and ambitions. Coordination will only arise if the information is shared among actors.
- 3. Resilience:** This is an ability to adjust to stress, realize opportunities and cope with consequences. In a governance setting, resilience is about recognizing and using opportunities. It is also about coping with threats and taking advantage of them.
- 4. Learning:** As governance capacity is related to performance, learning must be framed to include improvement. Learning involves both reflecting and improving. It is also about people's ability to learn and reflect as well as sharing those individual lessons and reflections.
- 5. Resource:** Each participant in a governance setting brings different resources to the table. These resources can include physical assets; employees and their capacities; financial resources; knowledge and expertise; legitimacy and reputation; and the ability to network within the community. Governance capacity is not just about having resources and deploying them. It is about the capacity to exchange, mobilize, and manage resources that contribute to performance and governance functions. (van Popering-Verkerk & Molenveld & Duijn & Van Leeuwen & Van Buuren, 2022)

A governance framework helps center a collective impact initiative's approach around common themes including who has a voice, who makes decisions, and who has accountability. The governance framework acts as an essential supporting structure. It is a framework of rules and practices that will guide your initiative. It will provide accountability to all stakeholders on how you will operate and communicate going forward.

Governance Framework Considerations

We are now aware that working on collective impact is frequently messy. By bringing both traditional and non-traditional partners to the table, these collaborative approaches aim to solve complicated issues. Within your community, there may not be a long history of collaboration between the partners and community groups. Within your community, you will have people who may not view the issue through the same lens. Some may significantly rely on an evidence-based strategy. Others may focus on how well services adapt to the needs of those with lived experience. Both strategies are crucial, but as the partners attempt to collaborate, conflicts may arise. How do we organize the competing priorities?

A **governance framework** is designed to guide your network in achieving accountability and grounded decision-making. It can aid groups to overcome the simple and complicated obstacles that collective impact initiatives frequently face. As you map out your governance framework, consider these **common dangers of collective impact**:

- **Clear strategy guides clear commitment:** When a collective impact initiative has a defined plan, everyone involved is aware of what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and what deadlines have been set. Clear strategies are the cornerstone of commitment, the executive

committee and action teams must develop clear work plans to plot the course for achieving them. To develop their goals, these plans must specify who must do what duties and by when. The backbone entity is then required to continuously monitor and oversee partners' commitments.

- **Form follows function:** The collective initiative should decide its structure based on its goals, the community in which it operates, and the people who are required to carry out the plans. Too many collective initiatives attempt to adapt the partners to the work rather than the other way around. A top-down executive committees' structure likely won't work for collective initiative. Rather, your structure should ensure the community agenda is placed ahead of the leaders' own agencies' agenda.
- **Build and foster your culture:** All partners will come into the collective with their own experiences, histories, and beliefs. This can contribute to dysfunctions in the group if this is not addressed. Clear agreements, values, and processes, which are created by the collective members, help to build a culture that supports collaborative leadership and action. Establishing explicit agreements on roles, duties, decision-making, and shared values is the first step in creating a culture that avoids these situations. Importantly, values should set precise expectations and behaviours that will hold backbone personnel and partners accountable instead of being just being inspirational words. Shared values should be constantly present, guiding decisions and establishing responsibility for collective behaviour. Ideally, the shared values should be listed on every meeting agenda. (Schmitz, 2021)

Develop a Governance Structure

With no one right way to structure your collective impact initiative, your governance structure should be shaped by the following:

- Local context
- Member attributes
- Magnitude and pace of change desired
- Style and spirit of the leadership
- Group's framework for change
- Preferences of the convener or fiscal sponsor
- Flexibility and adaptability your initiative requires

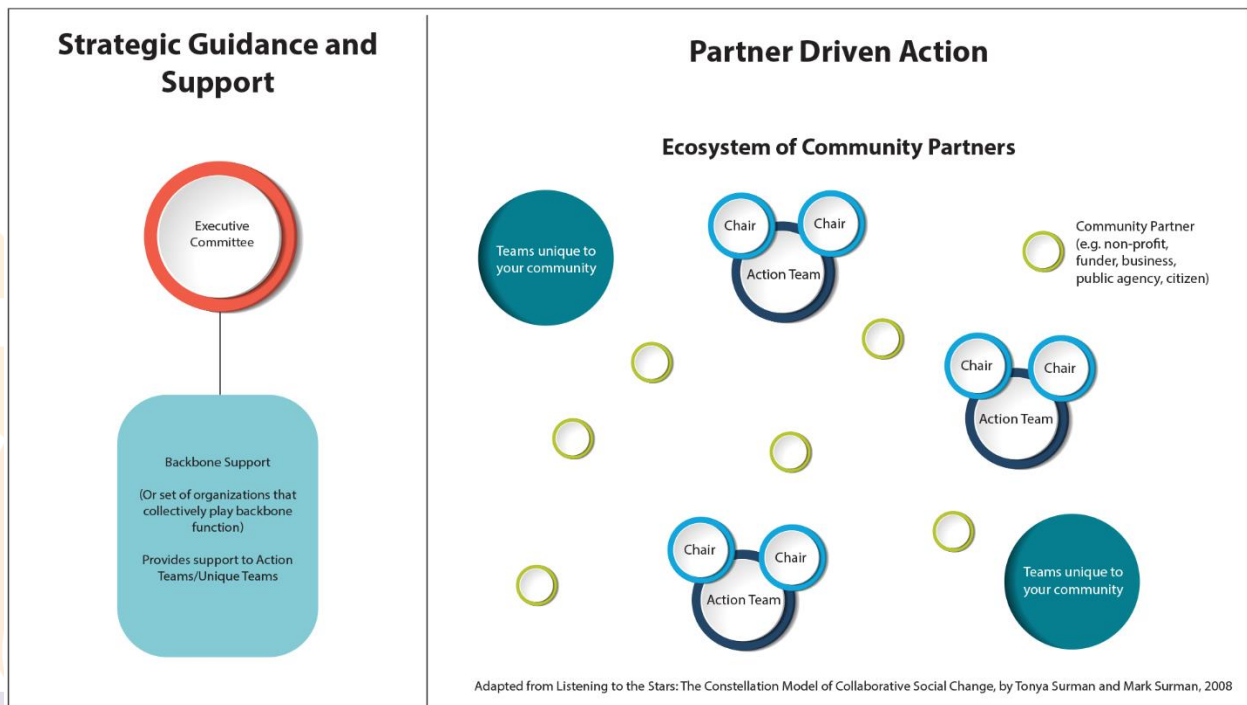
A good design for collaborative governance is one which we believe includes the following components:

- The group is making satisfactory progress
- The effort and conflict required to make progress are reasonable
- Members are achieving some personal or organizational objectives
- Everyone involved is learning much more about the complex issue
- The overall process is self-fulfilling, leading to greater ambition and capacity for the initiative

Sagesse and IMPACT use a Constellation Model of Collaborative Social Change to structure the governance of its collective impact initiative. (See component 3 “The Structure of Collective Impact” for a deeper dive into each of the elements of the constellation model) The constellation model:

- provides an innovative approach to collective efforts
- emphasizes self-organization & concrete action within a network of partners working together for the common agenda
- has “constellations”, which are self-organizing action teams that operate within the broader strategic vision of a partnership.

Figure 3: Strategic Guidance and Support/Partner Driven Action



(Adapted from T. Surman, 2016)

ACTIVITY: DEVELOP A GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Using the information and the constellation framework above, assess the strengths and gaps within your initiative’s governance structure. Then fill in the table below.

Collaborative Governance Framework Worksheet			
Role	Who Can Fill this Role?	Current Strengths/Weaknesses	Next Steps
Host & Convener			
Managing Overlapping Governance Roles			
A Leadership Group			
Backbone Infrastructure with staff			
Fiscal Agent			
Executive Committee			
Working Groups or Action Teams			
Citizen Engagement & Participation			

For additional information please reference the “Governance Framework Template” in the Building the Architecture Resources.

Accountability Structures

Within your framework, you need to define how each person or group will be accountable to the work, to each other, and to the community. This shared accountability will help you:

- Clarify roles and expectations of engagement
- Navigate through tough decisions
- Help community understand what is being achieved and how

An accountability structure may include:

- Memorandum of understanding
- Roles and responsibilities
- Terms of reference
- Decision making process

Each of the following pieces will become part of your governance framework.

Memorandum of Understanding

Collective impact efforts are often organized by a lead community agency, funder, or partner. Typically, the staff of the backbone infrastructure is hosted by this community agency. This can be a complicated process. A **memorandum of understanding** can be useful to define roles, responsibilities, reporting requirements, etc.

Roles and Responsibilities

Having clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and expectations can and will have a positive impact on your collective efforts. Having clear **roles and responsibilities** allows everyone to know what is expected of them and everyone around them. It provides clarity, alignment, and expectations for those doing the work. It also provides effective communication and facilitates full integration between each aspect of the initiative.

Terms of Reference

Terms of reference is a document that explains what will be done and by whom when implementing a plan. It is a roadmap for key players in the collect impact effort. Developing terms of reference is often not considered the most important task, but with so many moving parts in collective impact efforts, the terms of reference can be critical. They should be tied to the collaborative model and to the shared agreements.

Decision-Making Process

Collective decision-making also known as group decision-making or collaborative decision-making occurs when a group decision is no longer attributable to any single individual. Mark Wilson (2003) noted collective decision-making is most successful when a three-step decision-obtaining process is adopted:

1. Framing the decision: How you define a problem will define the available alternatives from which a selection can be made. The frame is the overall context for the decision. To effectively frame a decision, the executive committee should set out to critically examine the overall issue they face and seek to answer questions like:

- What is the ultimate objective of the decision?
- What is the root cause of the issue/problem?
- What are possible direct and indirect influences that will affect our decision-making process?
- What are the outcomes/consequences of various decisions?

“The 5 Whys Problem Solving technique is a simple process to follow when trying to solve any problem by repeatedly asking the question “Why” (five times is a good rule of thumb), to peel away the layers of symptoms that can lead to the root cause of a problem.” (Oakland University, n.d.)

2. Generating alternatives: Once the problem is framed and the context is understood, the executive committee should determine alternative solutions. The more options generated, the greater the likelihood the team will uncover an innovative solution. Involving everyone in the creation of these alternatives is a great way to gain perspectives on your problem. There are various methods to use when generating alternative collaboration.

3. Deciding the course of action: A good rule of thumb for deciding the course of action is to make the decision model as simple as possible, but no simpler. (Robinson, 2018) The less complex your decision model is, the more likely the group will understand the evaluation process and arrive at a consensus. When enough alternatives are created, the process of collective decision-making can begin. All members should feel accountable for the collective decision-making process and its outcome. This can balance the power in the group and create a more open exchange of ideas.

ACTIVITY: ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURE

Together with your collective impact group, review each of the above accountability structures. Discuss how your group wants to be accountable.

For additional information please reference Building the Architecture Resources.

Strategies for Group Decision Making

There are several strategies for better collective decision-making. Emmerling & Rooders (2020) noted the following strategies to guide collective decision making:

Providing a safe space for people to speak up:

- Ensure everyone can speak up without fear of reprisal
- Use well-formulated open-ended question to solicit feedback from the group
- Convey respect and interest in each other's thoughts and solutions
- Provide anonymous, safe spaces for members to share ideas and preferences to reduce the risk of groupthink and biased decision-making

Avoiding over-reliance on experts:

- Experts can help groups make more informed decisions. However, blind trust in expert opinions can make a group susceptible to biases and distort the outcome
- Research demonstrates that making experts part of the decision-making can sway the team to adapt their opinions to those of the expert or make overconfident judgments
- Invite experts to provide their opinion on a clearly defined topic, and position them as informed outsiders in relation to the group

Sharing collective responsibility for the outcome:

- All members should feel accountable for the collective decision-making process and its outcome
- This can balance the power in the group and create a more open exchange of ideas

ACTIVITY: DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Reflect on how your group could carry out these three decisions-making strategies. As a group, create your own decision-making process.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Your collective impact initiative will need both a governance framework and a strategic framework to move your initiative forward. It is your governance framework that will drive your strategic framework.

STRATEGIC PLAN VS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK?

There are 2 possible strategic structures that work best for community initiatives: a **strategic plan** and a **strategic framework**.

Strategic plan: Strategic planning is a methodical, systematic, and coordinated approach to creating a framework for accomplishing objectives. A strategic plan gives your initiative direction, clarity, and success by plotting a course for action. The strategic planning process helps prioritize your objectives and effectively make use of the available resources to move from the current state to the desired impact you want to achieve.

The benefits of a **strategic plan** are:

- Gives insight into what may happen in the future and prepare accordingly
- Helps define the direction the organization should take
- Helps derive useful information on market trends, target audience, competitors, etc.

Strategic framework: A strategic framework leans toward short-term, actionable tasks. It allows for flexibility to adapt to changing trends, new learnings, tested thinking, and community needs. Your initiative's strategic framework is a document that contains your vision, mission, values, frameworks, objectives, and activities.

According to Graden (2017), some benefits using a framework versus a plan are that a framework:

- Is more flexible in adapting to changes from the local level to the global level. Plans are often too rigid and precise to adapt quickly enough to meet emerging needs and shifts in policy
- Provides clear guidance without being too prescriptive. Plans can easily become too detailed to allow staff the autonomy to make their own decisions
- Provides an umbrella for all organizational activities. Plans become so specific in some areas that staff do not see a connection to the greater outcomes
- Is easily understood and communicated. Plans can become lengthy and cumbersome

WHY IS A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IMPORTANT?

Strategic frameworks are important to your initiative's collective efforts. Below are some benefits of developing a framework:

- **Helps ensure that all initiative members work toward a common goal:** At any point, initiative members can reference the purpose of their collective activities. This ultimately ensures that each member within the initiative and action teams completes their role for the common goal.
- **Encourages stakeholders to make donations:** Having a strategic framework can influence possible involvement and willingness to fund certain programs or initiatives. A good strategic framework can also help to attract new supporters and donors.
- **Minimize unnecessary spending:** A strategic framework provides a greater understanding of what is needed to achieve your goals. It prevents spending on things that do not directly support your end goals.
- **Motivates members:** A strategic framework can provide members with a reference to ground themselves in their work and understand the role they play in achieving the initiative's goals.
- **Increases the chances of completing the activities:** A strategic framework guides your initiative and ensures it stays on schedule, maintains stakeholder relationships, and ensures growth and success within the community.

A strategic framework assists your collective impact effort because it:

- Sets priorities
- Establishes agreement around intended results
- Focuses on sharing and integrating energy and resources
- Strengthens operations within your initiative
- Ensures members and other stakeholders work toward common goals
- Assesses and adjusts activities in response to the changing environment

The process of developing a strategic framework can be beneficial not just at the initiative's launch but also throughout its lifespan. You need to decide when and how often your initiative will create and review your strategic framework. This will be based on the work and activities you engage in. Some initiatives do this once every two years and, more frequently modify their objectives and activities as necessary. Other initiatives focus on a 3-to-5 year timeframe.

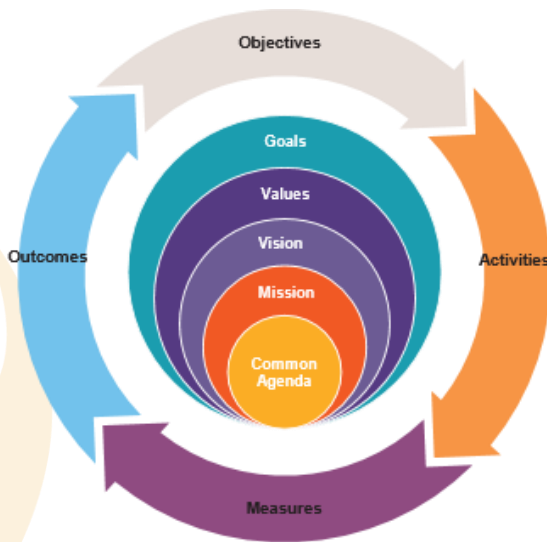
The importance of having a strategic framework as a road map will keep you on track in the following situations:

- Changing industry trends and economic market
- Changing political lens and focus

- Before you tackle new activities and efforts
- In working across multi-sectoral partners
- With changes in the people who sit at your executive table and hold decision-making authority within the collective

ELEMENTS OF A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Figure 4: *Elements of a Strategic Framework*



(Adapted by Sagesse n.d.)

The following elements need to be included in your framework and are important to your success.

CORE ELEMENTS

- **Common agenda:** It is a vision for change shared by all participants that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.
- **Mission:** A mission statement expresses your initiative’s core values and purpose.
- **Vision:** A vision statement is a short statement, about one sentence that describes the future-facing goals and ambitions of your initiative. A vision statement should serve as a guide or a mantra that inspires your employees to work toward the greater goal of your organization.
- **Values:** Beliefs and opinions that people have regarding specific issues or ideas. Values can change as the environment demands or needs change. They are fundamental beliefs that help us to prefer, appreciate and choose some things over others or one behavior over another.

- **Goals:** Often referred to as perspectives, pillars, critical success factors, or goals. It does not matter what name you use if everyone within your initiative has a common understanding of its purpose.

OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS

- **Objectives:** Broad statements of direction that express crucial activities that your initiative needs in facilitating its goals and objectives in a stipulated time. Strategic objectives often define actions and decisions that are key to fulfilling an initiative vision.
- **Activities:** These are clearly expressed methods of executing your strategy and moving toward your objectives. They should also be in harmony with your values, mission, and vision. Activities will guide frameworks and behaviours all over the initiative, so they should be chosen carefully.
- **Measures:** Are used to track your progress in achieving your objectives and goals.
- **Outcomes:** These are the desired results of the initiative and what we achieve.

For additional information please reference Building the Architecture Resources.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Once you have established the structures and frameworks for your initiative, you must communicate them to your members, community, and stakeholders. Communication planning entails explaining your work, the issues you address, and your accomplishments. To communicate effectively, it helps to think through the purpose and goal of your communication.

A **communication plan** outlines:

- How you're going to communicate
- Why you will communicate
- What you will communicate
- When you will communicate initiative information to all stakeholders

Communication can take many forms, including:

- Word of mouth
- News stories and social media
- Posters, brochures, and fliers
- Presentations
- Special events

The success of your communication plan depends on your initiative's ability to foster and maintain relationships in your community with key people and those with media influence. As a result, a key part of your communication plan is to continue using and revising the plan based on experience, results, new information, and feedback.

Developing a Communication Plan

In the early stages of your initiative's development, you should start planning your methods for communication. A communication plan will ensure you target your communication efforts accurately, giving you the structure to determine whom you need to reach and how. It will help you make a long-term map of how to raise your profile and refine your image in the community.

Think about these fundamental questions when creating a communication plan:

- Why do you want to communicate?
- Who is your audience?
- What is your message?
- What communications channels will you use?
- How will you distribute your message?

Successful communication is a marathon, not a sprint. You will find continuous communication useful and necessary at all points within your collective impact journey.

How to Develop a Plan for Communication

As you prepare to develop your communication plan, it will be helpful to follow these steps.

- **Identify the goal of your communication:** Knowing your audience makes it possible to plan your communication. Consider the differing messages for different groups and the various communication methods you will need to reach those groups. Of those you are trying to reach, consider the group demographics and where those groups reside. Are you interested in reaching people who are at risk for or facing a particular issue? Or are you interested in reaching people to change behaviors or attitudes?
- **Define your audience:** Outline all the characteristics of the people you want to reach (demographic info like age) and their behaviours (how they access information). Then analyze their current thoughts and actions and think about what actions your communication is attempting to change.
- **Plan and craft your message:** You need to consider the content, mood, language, and design of your message. Questions to ask yourself are:
 - **Content:** Craft your message with the audience in mind and plan the content to make it effective

- **Mood:** The emotions that you are trying to raise will determine how people will react. Take care to strike a balance, keep your tone positive and hopeful
- **Language:** Consider what language(s) that your intended audience speaks. Ensure you use plain, straightforward language that expresses what you want to say in a simple, clear manner
- **Communication mediums:** Consider what your intended audience reads, listens to, watches or engages in
- **Consider your resources:** Your plan should include the resources and the budget available. It is important to consider the return on your communication investment.
- **Prepare for emergencies and obstacles:** It is important to anticipate various problems or obstacles that may arise. Crisis planning should be part of your communication plan so you can be prepared when a problem occurs. Crisis plans should include who is responsible for what, who will determine if something must be addressed, who will deal with the media, who will correct any messaging errors, etc.
- **Strategize how you will interact with the media and those who will be spreading your message:** Relationships are critical in your collective impact initiative and equally important in your communication plan. You need to make those personal connections and follow through to sustain those relationships to keep communication channels open.
- **Develop an action plan:** At this point, you know what your purpose is and whom you need to reach to implement your plan. It is just a matter of putting the pieces together and beginning your communication effort. Your last step is to evaluate your plan and commit to continuous improvement.
- **Choose how you will assess your plan and modify it based on the outcomes of putting it into practice:** Ensure you have a way to evaluate your communication plan. This includes assessing how well you delivered the plan and how the plan can be improved.

For communication planning and continuous communication strategy tools, please reference Building the Architecture Resources.

Telling Your Story to the Community

It is up to your initiative to decide the best way to tell your story to the community. One effective and efficient way is through a **community report card**. A report card is a tool for reporting progress or lack of progress toward your initiative's goals. Report cards can prompt celebration and raise awareness. They can inform the community of the work being accomplished. They can help your initiative be transparent about its challenges. A community report card can be an effective tool for both taking stock and prompting action.

It is important to keep in the forefront that a report card is only the messenger. The people on both sides of the report card must be agents of change with a desire to see the needle move in your community.

It is hoped that all community members will respond constructively to both positive and negative content within the report. Some common reasons or occasions for creating a report card could be the following:

- To communicate the facts of your social issue (both within your community and a wider audience)
- To interpret the facts and data
- To raise awareness of an issue in the public or more specific target audiences
- To define goals
- To prompt action
- To influence policy
- To help make a case for new initiatives
- To be accountable to those you serve
- To hold others accountable

For additional information please reference the Report to the Community and Communication Plan Toolkit please reference Building the Architecture Resources.

ACTIVITY: TELLING YOUR STORY TO THE COMMUNITY

Before you explore a community report card in greater depth, you need to answer this question:

- What is the purpose of developing a community report card or a report on your initiative for your stakeholders?

SUMMARY

In this component, we reviewed some of the most essential skills and tools required for building a collective impact initiative.

We explored the inclusive, shared leadership style needed for collective impact. We laid out how establishing shared values and principles play an important role in determining how your initiative will work together. We also covered the frameworks your initiative needs to develop to plan for and carry out change - a theory of change, governance structure, accountability structure, strategic framework, and communications plan.

In the next, final component of the Building the Architecture series, Evaluating and Measuring Change, we will review how to evaluate a collective impact initiative to meaningfully track its progress and make sense of your efforts.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A Sector: is a group of organizational actors that are similar in society, e.g., philanthropy, business, government, non-profits, etc.

A System: is a group of interdependent actors and factors, both formal and informal, forming a complex social problem. No one person or organization can influence the entire system, but by working together, the group can move toward systems change.

Accountability: an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.

Action Teams: (also called working groups, task forces, community action networks, strategy teams, and a variety of other names) are the heartbeat of collective impact: where the action occurs, and goals are brought to life.

Alignment: when the participants of an initiative understand a set of shared objectives or goals and know what to do to achieve them.

Authentic Community: is the intentional process of co-creating solutions in partnership with people who know best through their own experiences the barriers to opportunity. Authentic community engagement is grounded in building relationships based on mutual respect that acknowledges each person's added value to developing solutions together.

Backbone: provide dedicated staff. Supports the work of partners by assisting with strategic guidance, supporting aligned activity, establishing shared measurement, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.

Backbone Entity: is a team of community leaders who work collaboratively to drive the collective impact effort forward. A backbone entity is a critical component of a collective impact effort. The backbone organization mobilizes, coordinates, and facilitates the process of collective impact.

Backbone Support: the backbone organization mobilizes, coordinates, and facilitates the process of collective impact. Key functions include Guiding vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement systems, building public will and mobilizing funding to support the initiative.

Care: is the assessment that you have the other person's interests in mind as well as your own when you make decisions and take actions.

Collective Governance (sometimes 'collaborative'): is an innovative model of governance that is solutions-oriented with a focus on public value, where diverse stakeholders can work in partnership to improve the management of public resources and delivery of services.

Collective Impact: describes an intentional way of working together and sharing information for the purpose of solving a complex problem. Proponents of collective impact believe that the approach is more

likely to solve complex problems than if a single non-profit were to approach the same problem(s) on its own.

Common Agenda: requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed-upon actions.

Community: is a group of people living in the same place. You can define communities at different geographic scales: neighbourhood, city, county, province, state, nation, or international.

Community Engagement: can be defined as a mutually beneficial interaction that results in participants feeling valued for their unique contributions. It is based on the democratic idea that everyone who is affected by an issue that impacts their community should have a say in the decision-making around it. It, moreover, holds the promise that public participation can influence decisions that affect the provision of services, future visions, and sustainability of our communities.

Community Involvement: is meaningful, consistent participation in activities that support and improve upon social well-being.

Community Partner: individual organizations and members of the community (e.g., non-profit, funder, business, public agency, student, parent,). Partners should have access to a variety of opportunities to learn about and engage in the initiative which will be key to implementing strategies. Ultimate “power” resides within the community at large.

Competence: is the assessment that you can do what you are doing or propose to do. In the workplace, this usually means the other person believes you have the requisite capacity, skill, knowledge, and resources to do a particular task or job.

Content Expert: are professionals, staff in an organization, service providers, and leaders with formal power who have knowledge, tools, and resources to address the issue.

Context Expert: are people with lived experience of the situation, including children and youth. They are the people who experientially know about the issue.

Diversity: the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.

Equity: is fairness and justice achieved through systematically assessing disparities in opportunities, outcomes, and representation and redressing [those] disparities through targeted actions.

Evaluation: is defined by the Canadian Evaluation Society as a systematic assessment of the design, implementation, or outcomes of an initiative for the purpose of learning or decision-making.

Executive Committee: is a group comprised of cross-sector community partners representative of the relevant ecosystem that provides strategic direction for the collective impact initiative and champions its work. Alternative terms for this group include Advisory Group, Advisory Council, and Leadership Table.

Indicator: is a *measure* used to evaluate or assess the result of an action. It allows you to assess qualitatively or quantitatively using data or information as benchmarks.

Linearly: in a way that progresses from one stage to another in a single series of steps.

Mindset: refers to an individual's deeply held beliefs and attitudes. Our mindset shapes our behaviors and practices.

Principles: are usually part of most traditions and philosophies. The concepts of integrity, honesty, and justice are principles that transcend people and cultures. The principles govern how people behave and interact in various situations, often with a firm and consistent stance.

Reliability: is the assessment that you meet the commitments you make, and that you keep your promises.

Sincerity: is the assessment that you are honest, that you say what you mean and mean what you say, and that you can be believed and taken seriously. It also means when you express an opinion, that it is valid, useful, and can be backed up by social thinking and evidence. Finally, it means that your actions will align with your words.

Stakeholders: are individuals or organizations with the ability to influence the social issue. They may represent the public, private, non-profit, or philanthropic sectors, or the population targeted for change.

Steering Committee: provides strategic direction for the initiative. Champions the work. Aligns own work to common agenda. Steering committee members can serve on working groups.

Strategic Planning: is the ongoing organizational process of using available knowledge to document a business's intended direction.

Strategic Thinking: is a mental or thinking process applied by an individual in the context of achieving a goal or set of goals. As a cognitive activity, it produces thought.

Terms of Reference: a document that explains what will be done and by whom when making or implementing a plan.

Trust: is a assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.

Values: are beliefs and opinions that people have regarding specific issues or ideas. Values can change as the environment, demands, or needs change. They are fundamental beliefs that help us to prefer, appreciate and choose some things over others or one behavior over another.

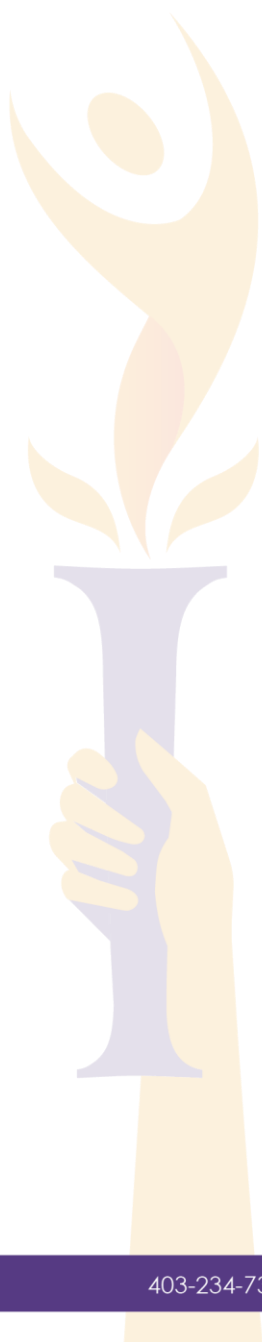
Working Groups: comprised of cross-sector community partners targeting elements of common agenda. Typically led by co-chairs, supported by the backbone. Designs and implements strategies, involving non-working group members as needed.

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