

Why this module is important

- Decisions about **membership and structure** determine the horsepower of the engine that will drive the Collective Impact effort. It is important to be transparent and deliberative about these decisions. Moving too quickly can send signals that commitments to find and connect to the diverse leaders needed are not serious. Moving too slowly (e.g. letting the temporary design team stay in place past its prime) can send the same signal.
- Not taking the time to learn about **existing efforts** whose leaders have already been toiling away at the issue not only leads to missed opportunities to tap into existing momentum and resources. It can also build resentment, even if it not publicly expressed.
- Collective impact is the result of collective action. **Membership and role distinctions** between the leadership group, the backbone and the work teams are critical. Members who come on board but are “assigned” to the wrong team or not given clear enough roles either won’t stay or won’t contribute.

What trade-offs to anticipate

- Getting membership and structure right takes time and takes iterations. Everyone can’t be engaged at once. Everyone can’t be on the steering committee or leadership council. Being clear may mean making hard choices.
- A high capacity, well-resourced backbone is the linchpin of successful collective impact efforts. While it can be challenging to find all of these capacities in one organization, a core group of organizations with expertise in different functions can work together as an effective backbone if their relationships are strong and their roles are clearly defined.
- Figuring out how to acknowledge, leverage and connect existing efforts to the initiative takes time and inevitably broadens the focus as new perspectives are brought in.
- Engaging the community’s CEOs is critical, but CEOs are decision-makers. Getting them too involved in process decisions about structure and membership or in deep dives of data analysis may be frustrating for some.

Key takeaways for Leaders

- Make “good enough, good until” decisions
 - ✓ Start with the willing while you plan for the long-term
 - ✓ Assign key backbone functions to capable volunteers, but don’t rush to lock in
 - ✓ Create work groups to tackle the tasks at hand, knowing that these may change
 - ✓ Set a clear timeline and process for learning, outreach and final structure decisions
- Acknowledge and link the layers
 - ✓ Intentionally structure connections to multiple levels of leadership – from the top-level to the frontline and community members.
 - ✓ Build on, don’t pave over existing efforts. Map the full set of stakeholders that are invested in the issue and focus population. Identify specific individuals that can represent multiple perspectives, including the diverse populations in your community
 - ✓ Remember that those who feel forgotten will be reluctant to reengage. Don’t do more outreach than you can sustain.
- Remember that change only occurs when those affected are connected and engaged
 - Direct inclusion of the focus population in the partnership’s structure is one of the most instrumental ways to make a community change effort “people-centered.” Include people that are involved in the communities, systems and institutions under discussion. Support them in strategies for bringing the perspectives of a broader group into the process.



Why this module is important

- **Defining common outcomes that resonate** with the range of individuals who represent multiple perspectives, including the diverse populations in your community, is critical for sustaining and achieving collective impact.
- Taking the time up front to **naming not only the systems but the communities**– communities of interest, experience and place– that have a stake in the issue being addressed creates public accountability for who should be engaged in the work from beginning to end, and ensures that key stakeholders are not overlooked.
- The commitment to include community members and focus populations in not just problem identification, but in problem-solving and solutions design requires **developing explicit engagement strategies** that may have an impact on how the work is staffed and structured.
- **Articulating the “bigger picture”** helps these diverse groups get to agreement on common outcomes because they can see how their concerns and their work fits into the larger picture and communication across traditional silos, cultures and neighborhoods.
- **Distinguishing between population-level outcomes and the community contexts and supports** needed to produce them helps tell a compelling story and build realistic timeframes for change. It also helps underscore how multiple systems play important roles and helps steer the group toward useful research about what works.¹

What tradeoffs to anticipate

- Smaller groups can move more nimbly, but they can come to conclusions that don’t resonate with all. Broader engagement of a diverse set of individuals will lay the groundwork for long-term, large scale change.
- Oftentimes, groups want to start with the solutions, believing that they “know the problem.” Starting off with a clear picture of the desired outcomes and a focus on why they are not currently being achieved, helps dissipate the tendency to name the same solutions, creating room to move beyond “business as usual.”
- Starting with the best available data on an issue can lead to a narrow and negatively oriented set of solutions. Compelling outcome statements help address the challenge that the preponderance of available data focuses on problems to be reduced rather than more aspirational goals.

Key takeaways for Leaders

- Community engagement isn’t a onetime thing that happens at the beginning of a Collective Impact effort and then is done.
 - Think up front about how you are going to structure for engagement in each aspect of the work – from goal setting to issue identification to problem solving – is critically important.
 - Recognize that engagement strategies may need to be different for different communities.
- Frame the issue in “big picture” ways so that key actors can see themselves as part of the picture and part of solution.
 - Common statements help break down barriers and build bridges, giving actors focused on different outcomes and representing different institutions (e.g., schools, health) a reason to work together.
- Distinguishing between population-level outcomes and community context and supports is important:
 - It helps tell a compelling story and build realistic timeframes for change.
 - It underscores how multiple systems play important roles and helps steer the group toward useful research about what works.
- Learn to focus in two ways –
 - zoom in to tackle specific areas of common concern
 - zoom out to keep the overall picture in focus.
 - By keeping the larger picture in focus, you will be able to more nimbly respond to emerging realities without inadvertently suggesting that existing efforts are being abandoned.



Why this module is important

- Often community planning processes move directly from goal-setting to action, skipping over a community-specific diagnosis of the issues. Taking the time to understand the local community's reality helps ensure the right solutions are identified and avoids the well-intentioned but often misguided implementation of off-the-shelf, evidence-based solutions that have no connection to local needs and resources.
- Community leaders often feel like they are drowning in data or playing a game of “whoever has the most data wins.” Using a big picture framework to organize and scan existing data helps paint a backdrop for more targeted work. Identifying key questions to be answered focuses what data you need to inform the problem-solving and decision-making process.

What tradeoffs to anticipate

- The power of a group analysis of shared goals is that it can elicit the knowledge of all participants. The danger of the brainstorming process is that the results can reflect the prejudices and assumptions of the participants. Results of community brainstorming should be validated to assure that the ideas are backed by local data, resonate with known science, and reflect the best wisdom of the community. Many of the ideas generated will fail to meet these important validation tests.
- Getting to a “balanced set” of population-focused indicators measure changes in skills, behaviors and attitudes, including both “problem-reduction” as well as “promotion” across key areas of development takes time and, inevitably, leaves indicators valued and used by some on the cutting room floor. There should be a commitment to keeping a broader set of indicators on the radar screen even as priority indicators are identified.
- Even this parsed list may be too many to create a sense of focus and include in high level communications. Identify a subset of indicators with the greatest data and communications power for high-level messaging but select these priority measures in a way that leads back to the full set.

Key takeaways for Leaders

- The variety of perspectives, data and information made possible by a diverse coalition membership base enables a more complete understanding of community problems and solutions.
- A “balanced set” of population-focused indicators acts like a radar screen that can
 - ✓ measure changes in skills, behaviors and attitudes, including both “problem-reduction” as well as “promotion” across key areas of development.
 - ✓ Allows for priority measures to be set that represent the most pressing areas of concern and have high communications value and represent the most pressing areas of concern
 - ✓ Allows for changing priorities as other issues come to the fore (e.g., spike in obesity rates)
 - ✓ Ensure that a diverse set of actors can still see that their primary areas of concern are a part of the picture even as immediate priorities are set.
- Compelling presentations of data do more than share trends one indicator at a time. They provide a more complex view by bringing data about different indicators together. Explicitly highlighting gaps and inequities and committing to address them is one way to get the full range of stakeholders. Juxtapositions can include:
 - ✓ varying outcomes for different populations (e.g., achievement gap)
 - ✓ relationships between outcomes and assets (e.g., between achievement and school quality)
 - ✓ variations in outcomes (e.g., by neighborhood) compared to variations in support (e.g., by neighborhood).



TARGET ACTION – *Mutually Reinforcing Activities*

Why this module is important

- Given the complexity of social problems, it is essential to develop clear visual models that show the collective understanding of cause and effect, and how planned actions are intended to address those underlying causes and, ultimately, improve outcomes. These models should be annotated with clear data points so that the hypotheses about how change is going to happen can be understood and modified over time.
- Understanding how the underlying causes are often the same even though the outcomes that they affect seem very different can help diverse stakeholders understand why they would want to come together to take joint action. It is important to help stakeholders see how critical supports and assets can address multiple outcomes, leading to joint efforts that cross traditional silos.
- A balanced set of strategies focuses on the frontline as well as on broader program and system improvement, but it doesn't stop there. It also maximizes policy and resource alignment, harnesses community demand, and powerfully engages affected populations.
- Prioritization of the range of possible strategies should be informed by the best of "what works" and how they can address the specific indicators of focus. Recommendations should be concrete, addressing who, what, where, when & how much. Explicit connections should be made between each recommendation, improved supports/assets, and changes in outcomes.

What tradeoffs to anticipate

- Everything cannot be tackled at once – prioritizing action areas allows progress to be made in the most important places and concentrates available horsepower. Clearly linking those action areas to multiple desired outcomes, however, can help keep the full range of actors at the table.
- Some people like neat "representational" logic models that connect boxes with arrows. Others can more easily connect with "organic" or "mechanical" models (e.g. trees, gears) that show the relationships between key elements. It may be useful to have both. Organic models are easier to evolve as assumptions change. Both should connect intended actions to intended outcomes clearly. Flexibility and clarity in any visual model is essential.
- Programmatic solutions are often the easiest for community players to generate. A balanced set of strategies requires thinking outside the programmatic box. In identifying solutions, challenge stakeholders to also think about changes in the physical environment, in rewards and consequences, in reducing barriers and increasing access, in strengthening constituent voice and action, and in modifying policies and aligning resources

Key takeaways for Leaders

- Drawing a clear connection between outcomes and inputs doesn't take much time and gives you increased horsepower to:
 - ✓ tell a compelling "cause and effect" story and ensure buy-in and ownership at all levels of your partnership.
 - ✓ give people confidence that they can report and claim progress on improving key supports even though it takes longer to improve specific outcomes, reducing the pressure to set unrealistic timeframes for improving outcomes; and
 - ✓ draw upon useful research to help prioritize and link improvements in community supports to measurable improvements in skills, behaviors and attitudes at the population-level.
- Identified actions should address broad policy issues but should also reflect the "power of the individual," speaking to what everyone involved has to offer, given their resources, skills and connections.



Why this module is important

- Continuous learning is critical to collective impact success. Collective impact, by definition, is a process for collective seeing, learning and doing. Data and insights from evaluation help an initiative learn as it goes, so it can adapt and improve its work over time – ultimately leading to achieving the outcomes that the initiative sets for itself
- Without learning what is working, and what is not working so well (about the functioning of both the collaborative and the programs / work that leaders undertake), we cannot adapt and adjust our work toward what is truly making a difference toward our outcomes
- Data showing progress from evaluation (both the early process indicators and shared measures) can help a group maintain momentum, energy and enthusiasm
- It is important to recognize the importance of evaluating “process”. (i.e., it is important to recognize that the reconfiguration of organizations into a more aligned and coordinated system through a CI initiative is itself a powerful short-term outcome; this evaluation should not be dismissed as just a “process” evaluation.)

What tradeoffs to anticipate

- Balancing the cost of hiring a third party and building the initiative’s own capacity for data collection and evaluation (both are needed, but at different intensities at different points in the initiative’s evolution)
- Balancing evaluation of the initiative itself (e.g., development of the 5 conditions, leader capacity) and evaluation of the programs and systems work (e.g., new collaborative programs; work to change local conditions)
- Knowing when to adapt the evaluation plan and framework as the initiative evolves, and continuing to monitor the work as originally planned

Key takeaways for Leaders

- Embed evaluation in the initiative’s DNA
 - ✓ Have the evaluation look both for *what* progress is being made, as well as *why* that progress (or lack of) is being made
 - ✓ Be intentional about continuous learning
 - ✓ Commit to measuring progress of the initiative itself, as well as evaluating effectiveness and impact of programs that are part of the initiative
- Set reasonable expectations
 - ✓ Be patient about outcomes but track interim indicators to see if we are moving toward outcomes
 - ✓ Manage expectations about results and accountability – a CI evaluation should both provide data in the service of learning *and* accountability
- Be thoughtful about your evaluation partners:
 - ✓ When possible, provide sufficient financial and logistical support for evaluation – it’s worth it
 - ✓ When hiring an evaluator, find one who understand complexity and is willing to flex and adapt to emergent information needs and changing contexts as the initiative evolves



EMERGENCE

Why this module is important

- In **complexity**, the unpredictable interactions of multiple players in a system determine the outcome of a situation or answer to a problem
- In **emergence**, new ideas or solutions come into view that were previously hidden or concealed from the system due to the interaction between parts of the system
- Collective impact is a process for working on complex problems, allowing new solutions to emerge

What tradeoffs to anticipate

- Theories of change and logic models are helpful tools for seeing connections and testing hypothesis, but as collective understanding changes they should change too - allowing for adaptive emergent problem solving
- Knowing when to stay the course, and when to adapt, is not straightforward and requires careful sensing and learning as a collaborative

Key takeaways for Leaders

To embrace emergence, remember:

- **Collective Seeing** comes from having the right, broad set of people in the conversation – and structuring engagement across cascading levels of collaboration
- **Collective Learning** comes through processes such as reflecting on shared measures and using a developmental approach to evaluation
- **Collective Doing** comes when new solutions are discovered that bridge the needs of multiple organizations or are only feasible when organizations work together, or when organizations adopt the new solution at the same time



What is a major takeaway for you as you think about your work?

Is there a resource or tool that you can use in the next 3 to 6 months?

