



TOOL | Collective Impact at a Glance

Collective Impact is not merely a new process that supports the same social sector solutions but an entirely different model of social progress. The power of Collective Impact lies in the heightened vigilance that comes from multiple organizations looking for resources and innovations through the same lens, the rapid learning that comes from continuous feedback loops, and the immediacy of action that comes from a unified and simultaneous response among all participants.

Collective Impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to work together towards common agenda for solving a complex social problem. In order to create lasting solutions to social problems on a large-scale, organizations — including those in government, civil society, and the business sector — need to coordinate their efforts and work together around a clearly defined goal.

As a Collective Impact initiative starts to form they should consider the pre-conditions which has been proven to ensure success when initiating a collaborative. Further, research suggests that there are five conditions and five phases that will also help a collective action to succeed. This tool will outline the basic information and questions that one will need to start a Collective.

Three Pre-Conditions to Collective Impact

There are three pre-conditions to Collective Impact that are critical to long-term success. These are:

- **An Influential Champion** - An individual or small group who command the respect necessary to bring CEO-level cross-sector leaders together and keep them actively engaged over time
- **Adequate Financial Resourcing** - Adequate financial resources to last at least two to three years and generally involving at least one anchor funder to support needed infrastructure and planning
- **A Sense of Urgency for Change** - A new opportunity or crisis that convinces people that a particular issue must be acted upon now and/or that a new approach is needed

The 5 Phases of Collective Impact

Components
for Success

Phase I
Assess
Readiness

Phase II
Initiate Action

Phase III
Organize for
Impact

Phase IV
Begin
Implementation

Phase V
Sustain Action
and Impact

Five Questions to Ponder when Considering Collective Impact

1. Do we aim to affect “needle moving” change? This is a change in the community of +/- 10% or more.
2. Do we believe that long-term investment by several stakeholders is necessary to achieve success?
3. Do we believe that cross-sector engagement is essential for community-wide change?
4. Are we committed to using measurable data to set the agenda and to using it to improve over time?
5. Are we committed to having community members as partners and producers of impact?

Nine Leadership Principles or Backbone Leaders

1. View the system through a lens of complexity
2. Let the vision be “good enough” rather than trying to plan every little detail.
3. Live with balance between data and intuition, planning and acting, safety and risk.
4. Be comfortable with uncovering paradox and tensions.
5. Don’t wait to be “sure” before proceeding with actions.
6. Create an environment of information, diversity and difference, connections and relationship.
7. Mix cooperation with competition – it’s not one or the other.
8. Understand that informal conversations, gossip and rumor contribute to mental models, actions and beliefs. Listen to these in making change.
9. Allow complex systems to emerge out of the interaction of systems, ideas and resources.

Five Conditions of Collective Impact	
Common Agenda	All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
Shared Measurement	Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
Continuous Communication	Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives and create common motivation.
Backbone Support	Creating and managing Collective Impact requires a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies.

Five Things to Consider when Building a Common Agenda

1. Who is driving the agenda? There is a need to work differently together to get to a common agenda – rather than one agenda to “win”.
2. How complex is the issue? By setting boundaries around what you will and will not do you will allow you to increase impact and more easily set an agenda.
3. How does the issue play out in your community? Examine data to inform the common agenda and drive impact.
4. Who is doing what already? Map current community efforts to solve the problem.
5. What is our next step? Get into conversation, explore the problem and talk about what transformation will look like.

Resources

Sources:

- [Moving from Transactions to Transformation - A Common Agenda and Community Change](#)
- www.FSG.org
- [Collective Impact Forum](#)