

Building Capacity for Collective Impact Toolkit Series

Collective Impact Readiness Assessments



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October 2011



Introduction

While there has always been collaboration in the social sector, there has recently been considerable interest in wider social and system change. With the recent attention on a specific type of social sector change called Collective Impact, there is more known about what it takes for these types of initiatives to be successful than ever before.

As a result, existing collaborations are exploring what is necessary to go to the next level. Nonprofits, funders and boards are exploring what could be done through Collective Impact initiatives.

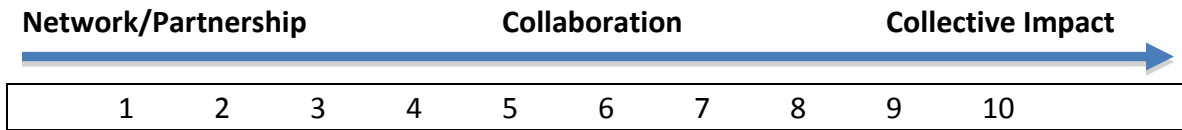
Resources:

- Jane Wei-Skillern and Sonia Marciano, *The Networked Nonprofit*, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Spring 2008:
http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the_networked_nonprofit/
- Fay Hanleybrown, John Kania and Mark Kramer, *Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work*, Stanford Social Innovation Review, January 26, 2012:
http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work

Where to begin?

This document outlines several lenses through which to view readiness for Collective Impact. It is our goal that these will support you and your colleagues in your work.

Where are you now?



1-3 Information sharing, networking, learning

4-7 Organizations working together toward shared goals i.e. advocacy, coalitions, joint fund raising, etc.

8-9 Assessing readiness and preparing for Collective Impact, identifying funding and resources for Collective Impact, and designing a structure for the backbone support functions. Backbone support functions include providing overall strategic direction, facilitating dialogue between partners, managing data collection and analysis, handling communications, coordinating community outreach, and mobilizing funding.

10 Launching Collective Impact initiative

Assessing Readiness for Collective Impact

If your partnership or collaboration is interested in exploring what it would take to undertake a Collective Impact Initiative, a readiness assessment can help. An assessment can help determine which capacities need to be developed to prepare for and launch a Collective Impact initiative.

Types of Readiness Assessments for Collective Impact

The following readiness assessment components are a menu of what could be assessed to help determine:

1. The capacity of nonprofits and other organizations to engage in a Collective Impact initiative
2. The types of technical assistance that could be targeted to support them in the work, and the design of the backbone functions.

Potential readiness assessment components are listed in Chart 1.

Chart 1: Types of Collective Impact Readiness Assessments

Assessment	What is assessed?	Potential benefit of assessment
Readiness Assessment Type I	Readiness for the five elements of Collective Impact	Gives a summary of readiness for each of the five elements of Collective Impact and begins the work of identifying the elements of the backbone support organization.
Readiness Assessment Type II	Readiness of each of the key partner organizations	Provides a snapshot of the capacity of each organization to participate in Collective Impact. This helps to be realistic about what each organization can bring to the table and identify individualized supports.
Readiness Assessment Type III	Assessment of capacities, skills, and resources of key individuals who will be participating in the Collective Impact Initiative	Helps to identify champions and outline the additional capacities, skills, and resources that need to be developed among group members to set the stage for success.
Readiness Assessment Type IV	Assessment and mapping of existing systems	Begins the process of identifying assets and resources that could be applied to Collective Impact Initiative.
Readiness Assessment Type V	Assessment of the key variables that affect success of Collective Impact initiatives	Provides a background of the context of each organization and motivation for participating.

Readiness Assessment Type I—Assessing readiness for the five elements of Collective Impact

Assessment of readiness of each of the 5 common elements:

1. Identification of common agenda:

Readiness assessment questions to ask:

- What exists now among partners?
- What is desired?

2. Mutually reinforcing strategies:

Readiness assessment questions to ask:

- What exists now among partners?
- What is desired?

3. Continuous communication:

Readiness assessment questions to ask:

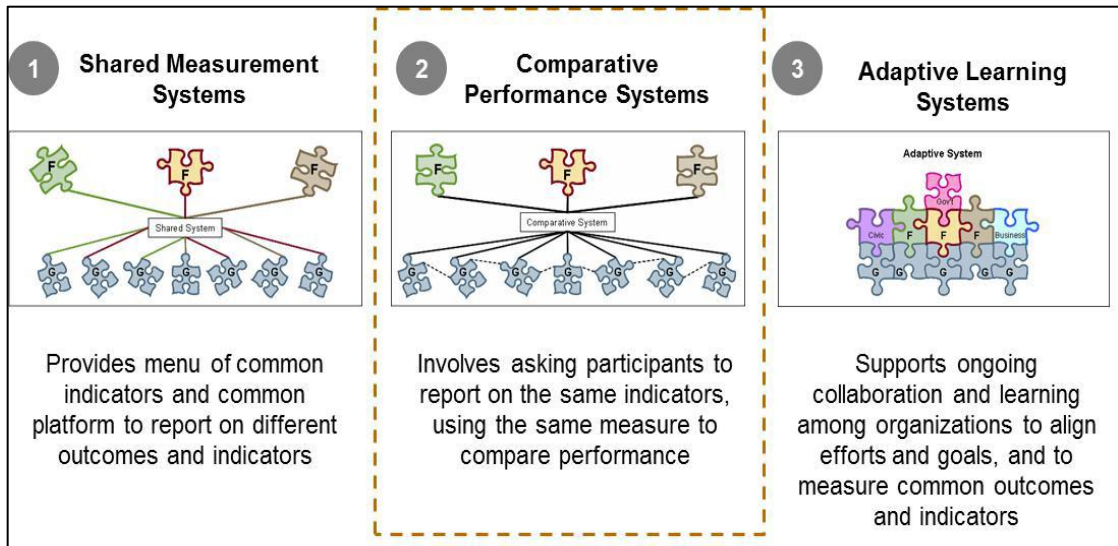
- What exists now among partners?
- What is desired?

4. Shared measurement:**

Readiness assessment questions to ask:

- What exists now among partners?
- What is desired?

According to the Collective Impact literature, there are three types of shared measurement systems that can be used to measure Collective Impact initiatives.



Three types of Shared Measurement Systems ** Project SAM: A Collaboration for Financial Empowerment Comparative Performance System Roadmap & Implementation Guide, prepared by FSG, August 2011.

5. Backbone Support Organization:

Readiness assessment questions to ask:

- What exists now in terms of capacity to provide the following six functions of backbone support organizations?

1. Providing overall strategic direction
2. Facilitating dialogue between partners
3. Managing data collection and analysis
4. Handling communications
5. Coordinating community outreach
6. Mobilizing funding

- What is desired?

Readiness Assessment Type II—Assessment of readiness of each of the key partner organizations

The TCC Group’s Core Capacities Assessment Tool (CCAT) (<http://www.tcccat.com/>) could be used to assess organizational capacity of key partner organizations. The CCAT measures what lifecycle an organization is in, and develops prioritized recommendations that will lead the organization to the next level of development in their growth. This assessment tool could be used to assess each of the key organizations planning to work together. This will provide information on the capacity of each organization to contribute to a Collective Impact initiative, and provide a road map for increasing their capacity.

The research findings from the TCC Group’s database of assessment data show:

- 1.) A small % of organizations are operating effectively.
- 2.) Specific activities, behaviors, and capacities which are predictors of organizational development and advancement.
- 3.) The majority of nonprofits in the social sector are small “mom and pops” that have limited capacity to contribute to Collective Impact initiatives.

Readiness Assessment Type III—Assessment of capacities, skills, and resources of key individuals who will be participating in a Collective Impact initiative

Potential capacities that could be assessed:

- Individual knowledge of Collective Impact;
- Skills and abilities of individuals to identify partner mental models, beliefs, assumptions and how these affect the group’s ability to make progress;
- Understanding of collective leadership and how accountability is achieved in a shared leadership model; and
- Understanding of change models for individuals, organizations, and communities. The stages of change framework (pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, relapse, transcendence), the socio-ecological model, Dilt’s levels of nested learning, and the TCC Group’s Ready Set Go framework for capacity building, are some of the models groups have found useful.

Readiness Assessment Type IV—Assessment and mapping of existing systems

There are a variety of visual processes that can be used to help groups focus their collective efforts such as social network analysis, a visual of existing system and resources, partner mapping (see last page), and political mapping (put a goal in the center and list organizations, groups, and individuals necessary to achieve that goal around the edges.)

Readiness Assessment Type V—Assessment of the key variables that affect success of Collective Impact initiatives

Collective Impact is complicated work, requiring focus and dedication. In order to be successful it is important that those engaged in the process are motivated by the goal (not just the funding). In order to assess commitment and opportunity, the following questions could be used to help align the goals of the community groups and those of funders:

1. Energy around making change, taking on collective work – Where is there energy?
2. Aspiration – Where do people want to be?
3. Resources – What currently exists and what is necessary to achieve what is aspired?
4. Current capacity for Collective Impact – What is a timeline for growing capacity and beginning work?

5. Opportunities – What are the greatest opportunities?
6. Leverage points – What are the greatest leverage points?
7. Collective efficacy – How high is the collective efficacy of the group?
8. History/context – What are historical and contextual factors affecting decisions about design and implementation?

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