



## 12th Annual Champions' Event Discussion Paper The Roy Mussell Dialogue for Council Champions

### “Leadership and Collective Action”

Luncheon/Meeting

Tuesday, May 3, 2011

11:30 am - 4:00 pm

RBC Boardroom

1 Place Ville-Marie, 41st Floor, Montreal, QC

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The 2011 winter issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* talks about large-scale social change requiring cross-sector coordination and collective impact initiatives as part of a long-term commitment by a group of important and influential leaders who commit to a common agenda for solving specific social issues. Their actions are supported by a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communication, which is staffed by an independent backbone organization and backed by commitments of patient capital.

### Join executives with Canada's leading public, private, NGO and Aboriginal organizations for a facilitated discussion on Leadership and Collective Action.

#### Discussion Question

The council is specifically seeking to encourage more companies from a greater range of sectors to invest in, and develop, relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal people, businesses and communities.

Fundamentally this requires a systemic change in the way that corporate Canada understands and works in this space. Assuming the council were to attain the resources needed to become a backbone organization, how could the collective impact model be utilized with our current partners to achieve?...

- increased Aboriginal employment
- increased business partnerships between Aboriginal and mainstream businesses
- increased investments in Aboriginal community health and wellness



## ABSTRACT

### Collective Impact

By John Kania & Mark Kramer  
Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011

Writing in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, social impact consultants John Kania and Mark Kramer state that large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations. Authors cite the success story of Cincinnati-based *Strive*, a nonprofit which brought together local leaders to tackle the student achievement crisis and improve education throughout greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky.

In the four years since the group was launched, *Strive* partners improved student success in dozens of key areas across three large public school districts. Despite the recession and budget cuts, 34 of the 53 success indicators that *Strive* tracks have shown positive trends, including high school graduation rates, fourth-grade reading and math scores, and the number of preschool children prepared for kindergarten.

*Strive* didn't try to create a new educational program or attempt to convince donors to spend more money. Instead, through a carefully structured process, *Strive* focused the entire educational community on a single set of goals, measured in the same way.

Participating organizations are grouped into 15 different Student Success Networks (SSNs) by type of activity, such as early childhood education or tutoring. Each SSN has been meeting with coaches and facilitators for two hours every two weeks for the past three years; developing shared performance indicators, discussing their progress, and most important, learning from each other and aligning their efforts to support each other.

*Strive* is an example of *collective impact*, the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. **Collective impact initiatives** involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants.

Large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations. The nonprofit sector most frequently operates using an approach that we call **isolated impact**. It's an approach oriented toward finding and funding a solution embodied within a single organization; combined with the hope that the most effective organizations will grow or replicate to extend their impact more widely.

Organizations have attempted to solve social problems by collaboration for decades often without producing many results. The vast majority of these efforts lack the elements of success that enable collective impact initiatives to achieve a sustained alignment of efforts.



**Collective Impact Initiatives** are long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for the purpose of solving a specific social problem. Research shows that successful collective impact initiatives typically have five conditions that together produce true alignment that lead to powerful results: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations.

Creating a successful collective impact initiative requires a significant financial investment:

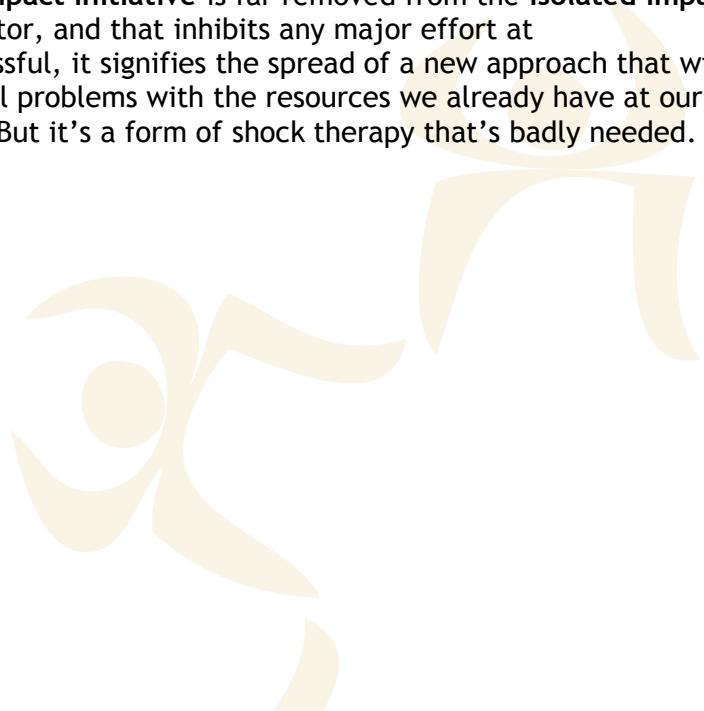
- time participating organizations must dedicate to the work
- development and monitoring of shared measurement systems
- staffing the backbone organization which will lead and support the initiative's ongoing work.

This requires a fundamental change in how funders see their role, from funding organizations to leading a long-term process of social change. It is no longer enough to fund an innovative solution created by a single nonprofit, or to build that organization's capacity. Instead, funders must help create and sustain the collective processes, measurement reporting systems, and community leadership that enable cross-sector coalitions to arise and thrive.

Mobilizing and coordinating stakeholders is far messier and slower work than funding a compelling grant request from a single organization. Systemic change, however, ultimately depends on a sustained campaign to increase the capacity and coordination of an entire field. Funders who want to create large-scale change follow four practices:

- take responsibility for assembling the elements of a solution
- create a movement for change
- include solutions from outside the nonprofit sector
- use actionable knowledge to influence behavior and improve performance.

Funding collective impact initiatives costs money but it can be a highly leveraged investment. A backbone organization with a modest annual budget can support a collective impact initiative of several hundred organizations, magnifying the impact of millions of dollars in existing funding. This exciting evolution of the *Strive* collective impact initiative is far removed from the **isolated impact approach** that now dominates the social sector, and that inhibits any major effort at comprehensive, large-scale change. If successful, it signifies the spread of a new approach that will enable us to solve today's most serious social problems with the resources we already have at our disposal. It would be a shock to the system. But it's a form of shock therapy that's badly needed.





## Comparing Isolated Impact with Collective Impact

Isolated Impact Partnership Models	Collective Impact Model
<p>Isolated impact partnerships models are currently the norm. But they have their restrictions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Funder Collaboratives</b> are groups of funders interested in supporting the same issue who pool their resources. Generally, participants do not adopt an overarching evidence-based plan of action or a shared measurement system, nor do they engage in differentiated activities beyond check writing or engage stakeholders from other sectors.</li><li>• <b>Public-Private Partnerships</b> are partnerships formed between government and private sector organizations to deliver specific services or benefits. They are often targeted narrowly, such as developing a particular drug to fight a single disease, and usually don't engage the full set of stakeholders that affect the issue, such as the potential drug's distribution system.</li><li>• <b>Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives</b> are voluntary activities by stakeholders from different sectors around a common theme. Typically, these initiatives lack any shared measurement of impact and the supporting infrastructure to forge any true alignment of efforts or accountability for results.</li><li>• <b>Social Sector Networks</b> are groups of individuals or organizations fluidly connected through purposeful relationships, whether formal or informal. Collaboration is generally ad hoc, and most often the emphasis is placed on information sharing and targeted short term actions, rather than a sustained and structured initiative.</li></ul>	<p>The Collective Impact Model is characterized by five key features.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Common Agenda</b> - Collective impact 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.</li><li>• <b>Shared Measurement Systems</b> - Agreement on a common agenda is illusory without agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported. Collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level and across all participating organizations ensures that all efforts remain aligned and accountable.</li><li>• <b>Mutually Reinforcing Activities</b> - Stakeholders work together undertaking the specific set of activities at which it excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others.</li><li>• <b>Continuous Communication</b> - Developing trust among nonprofits, corporations, and government agencies is critical. Participants need time and opportunities for relationship building to build up enough experience with each other to recognize and appreciate the common motivation behind their different efforts.</li><li>• <b>Backbone Support Organizations</b> - Creating and managing collective impact requires specific skills. Backbone organizations have: the ability to focus people's attention and create a sense of urgency, the skill to apply pressure to stakeholders without overwhelming them, the competence to frame issues in a way that presents opportunities as well as difficulties, and the strength to mediate conflict among stakeholders.</li></ul>