

Using the Collective Impact Process as a Model to Address Complex Community Problems: Lessons Learned from the Opioid Response Project

Edited by Kimberly L. Nelson



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Chapter 1

Background and Introduction

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For several years leading up to the beginning of the Opioid Response Project (ORP), faculty at the University of North Carolina's School of Government were hearing about how opioid misuse was contributing to a diverse set of problems in their communities. According to a number of grim statistics, North Carolina has been hit hard by the opioid crisis. In 2018, North Carolina ranked twenty-third in drug-overdose mortality; 78 percent of those deaths were related to opioids (CDC 2020). Between 1999 and 2016, more than 12,000 deaths were reported in North Carolina from opioid-related overdoses (NC DHHS, n.d., "Opioid Epidemic"). In 2018 alone, nearly 7,000 people went to emergency departments for opioid-overdose treatment, and there were more than 3,000 community overdose reversals with naloxone (NC DHHS, n.d., "NC Opioid Dashboard").

The impact of the opioid epidemic is felt across the nation at every level: individual, family, community, local government, and state. While some of the effects are obvious and make headlines, many additional, and dire, consequences are less observed and talked about. At the local level, the problems run the gamut of local government policy areas and service-delivery considerations. In addition to the areas typically concerned with substance abuse, such as public health and law enforcement, the opioid crisis has affected public works, every area of social services, and land-use planning (among others).

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This chapter was also written with the assistance of Shakera Vaughn, who completed the background research on collective impact.

improve state and local government. As individual faculty responded to various problems that communities encountered related to the opioid crisis, they began to discuss how the School might put its expertise and resources toward assisting communities as they tackle this complex and devastating problem.

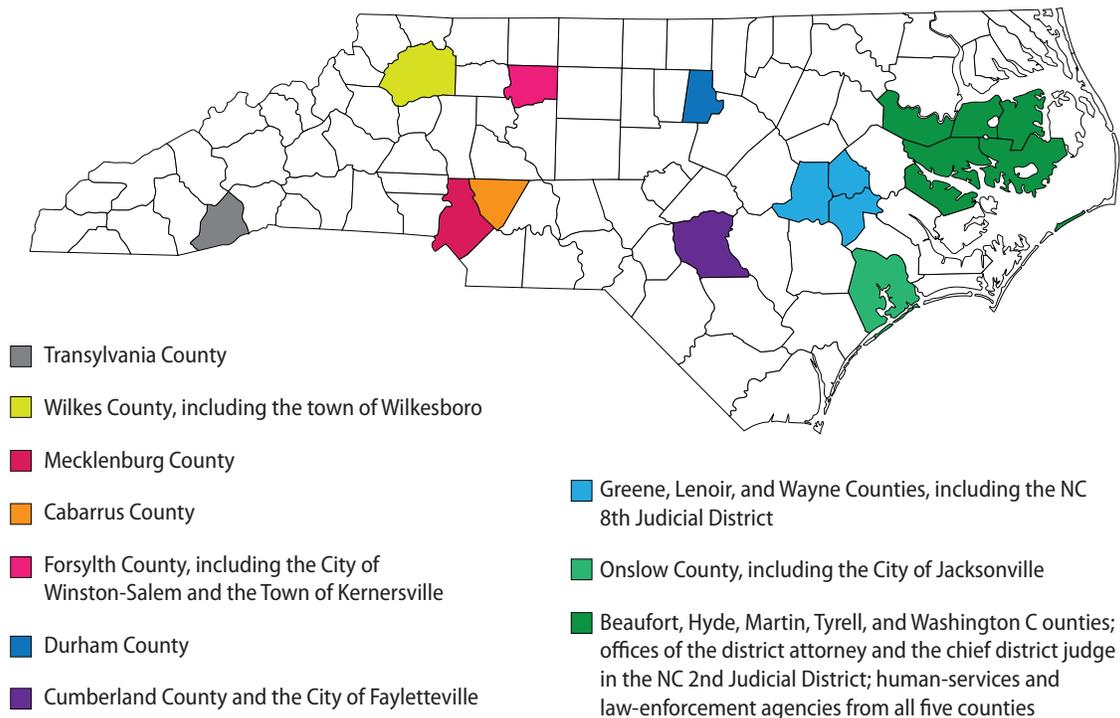
The School of Government partnered with Blue Cross NC to create the Opioid Response Project with hopes of assisting communities in North Carolina to create collaborative, long-term, comprehensive plans to reduce the effects of the opioid epidemic. This guidebook provides insights from the ORP experience and draws on expertise and resources to assist other communities that are interested in pursuing a similar process for addressing “wicked” problems using a collective impact model. While the ORP is used as an example throughout this guidebook, the process, resources, worksheets, and lessons provided in the following chapters could be used to address any number of complex, interjurisdictional problems. Those interested in more detail about the opioid problem and the tools that the School created specifically for this project can visit the project’s website at <https://orp.sites.unc.edu/>.

Description of the Opioid Response Project

The ORP was a two-year learning collaborative, made possible by support from Blue Cross NC, designed to engage ten North Carolina collaborative teams in addressing the opioid epidemic in their local communities using a modified collective impact model. This multiple-county intervention aimed to (1) plan and deliver activities in support of local-community teams responding to the opioid crisis; (2) build capacity to help local-community teams plan, implement, monitor, and sustain their community programming; (3) strengthen collaboration and connections around the opioid response efforts; and (4) broaden the base of stakeholders for wider dissemination of resources and findings.

Ten teams were selected through a competitive process. Selection criteria centered on creating a diverse set of teams. This diversity included location, demographics, quality of the current collaborative, community type (urban, rural, or suburban), and types of issues experienced in connection with the opioid crisis. The ten teams selected represented all regions of North Carolina and sixteen counties (see figure 1.1 for a map of the communities participating in the ORP effort). Seven teams were from a single county, while two others were based on multicounty judicial districts.¹

1. Throughout this guidebook, the ten ORP community teams will be referred to as *ORP teams*.

Figure 1.1. ORP Community Teams

ORP teams remained active during both years of the ORP, participating in a coordinated series of forums, webinars, and meetings, during which they learned the collective impact process and received information about opioid-specific topics. They also engaged in peer learning by sharing their experiences with members of other community teams, forging connections with other people engaged in similar work throughout the state. Teams were also given access to resources and technical assistance from the School of Government and project coordination by the ncIMPACT Initiative. Throughout this project, the School assembled faculty, staff, consultants, and other outside experts to teach and guide the ORP teams.

By the end of the project, ORP teams had enacted or expanded a host of new programs to mitigate the opioid crisis in their communities. Local awareness had increased as a result of their work on updating websites, leveraging social media, distributing marketing materials, and crafting media campaigns. Several teams were able to seek additional funding from outside sources to help sustain their work. Additional details about the teams' accomplishments can be found in chapter 2.

The School project team chose to use a modified collective impact approach with the intention of either expanding the capacity of existing collaborative efforts or, in communities without existing collaboratives, helping them create a high-capacity collaborative team. As described in the next section, the collective impact approach starts with a common agenda found in other types of collaborative efforts and adds four other critical components to maximize the capacity of multiorganizational and jurisdictional teams. Modifying the collective impact approach to include an active role for the School provided an additional layer of support for the teams.

Description of the Collective Impact Approach

While models of collaborative interorganizational, intergovernmental efforts have been in use since the 1960s (and probably before), collective impact is a relatively new approach for accomplishing community or regional change. According to John Kania and Mark Kramer (2011), who originally articulated the model, collective impact involves the commitment of a group of actors from different organizations or sectors to a common agenda to solve a particular social problem. To work, the process requires dedication from everyone involved to see the common goals through to completion. The process also requires a robust communication framework.

Why Use a Collective Impact Approach?

A premise of the collective impact approach is that not all problems are created equal. Some are simple, some are more complicated, and some are truly complex. The collective impact approach is designed for problems that are extremely complex, or “wicked” (discussed in greater detail in chapter 3).

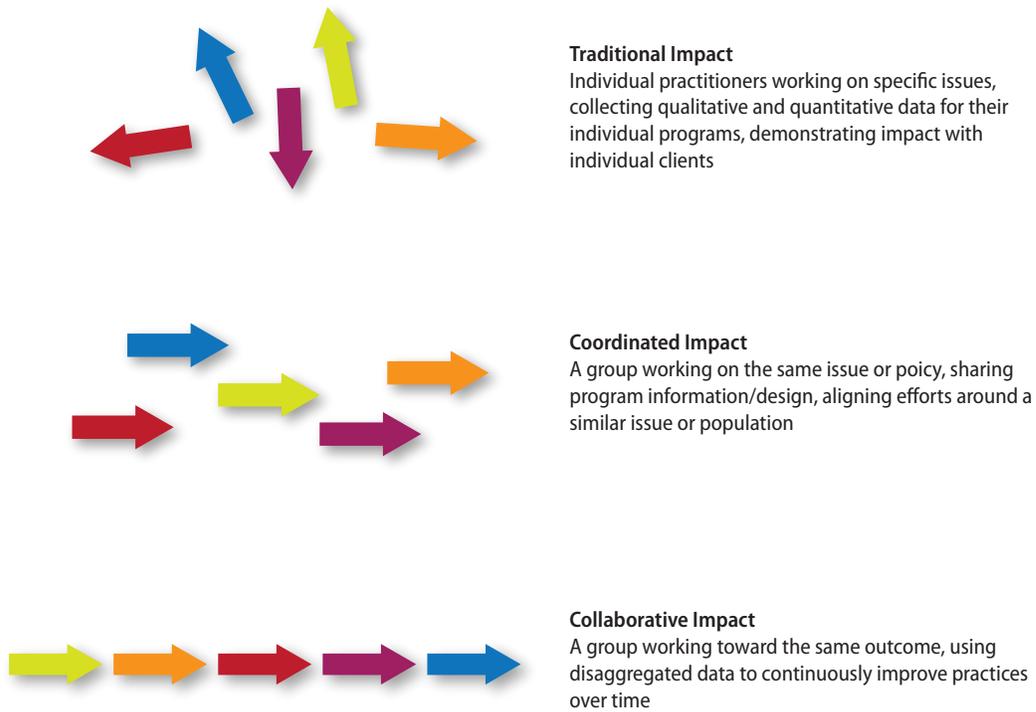
Collective impact can be used to approach nearly any complex social problem that requires system-wide change. Throughout the United States, there have been many issues that have been addressed through collective impact initiatives. These complex problems are ones that have no single, agreed-upon cause nor a single, agreed-upon solution. Such problems do not remain confined to a single jurisdiction and, perhaps most vexing, many of them cannot be ameliorated without changing people’s behavior. Collective impact has been employed on issues revolving around health, education, homelessness, poverty, youth programs, and community development (“Highlights of Collective Impact Efforts” 2011; “Shape Up Somerville” 2013; Turner, Ballance, and Sinclair 2018; Tamarack 2011).

A complex problem cannot be addressed discretely. In most cases, it is connected to other, equally complex problems. To affect such a problem, it is important to examine the problem as it exists within a social system, how it interacts with other problems, and how a substantial number of stakeholder groups are touched by it. This is why collective impact brings a diverse set of actors together to respond to the problem.

Differentiating Collective Impact from Other Collaborative Efforts

Collective impact is a distinct type of joint effort. It requires a centralized infrastructure, dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, and continuous communication among all involved parties (Kania and Kramer 2013). Figure 1.2 illustrates the differences between individual, coordinated, and collaborative impact. While collaboration is often seen as a two-way street, collective impact has been described as “building on the muscle of collaboration, creating an entire community that is intentional about its approach to solving a problem together” (National Council of Nonprofits, n.d.). Collective impact may also require more discipline and higher performance to achieve social change.

Figure 1.2. Traditional, Coordinated, and Collaborative Impact



Experts have differentiated collective impact from other collaborative efforts in several ways. Collective impact organizes stakeholders around shared outcomes rather than programs or initiatives (Edmondson and Hecht 2014). It also focuses more on the use of data to make improvements in real time, whereas other forms of collaboration use data to support arguments. Figure 1.3 summarizes some additional differences.

Figure 1.3. Differences between Collaboration and Collective Impact

Collaboration	Collective Impact
Convenes partners around initiatives	Brings partners together to move outcomes
Uses data to prove efficacy	Uses data to improve efficacy
Adds to what you do	Is what you do
Advocates for ideas	Advocates for what works

Adapted from Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer 2012; Kania, Hanleybrown, and Juster 2014.

The Collective Impact Model

There are five components that are foundational to a collective impact approach (see figure 1.4). The first is that participants share a *common agenda* for change. Participants do not have to begin the process with a shared understanding of the problem's solutions, but they do need to have a common understanding of the problem itself and to see a need for a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions. The shared agenda allows participants to coordinate their work and develop shared goals for change.

The second necessary element is a *shared measurement system* that establishes how success will be measured and reported. Groups develop common indicators that allow for consistent measurement and collection of data across all efforts. These indicators ensure accountability and alignment of efforts, and they can be used for learning and improvement. To evaluate whether efforts are in alignment and whether progress toward goals is being made, shared measures ensure that the group's various actions are all reinforcing the accomplishment of the shared agenda. While in many efforts, evaluations are designed to isolate a particular organization's impact, shared measures create a chance for multiple organizations to share a view of how their collective work is making an impact and how their individual efforts are contributing to the same goal. This model recognizes that progress depends on working toward the same goal and measuring the same things.

While members of the collective may have separate responsibilities and activities, the collective impact approach recognizes the need to engage in *mutually reinforcing activities*. A diverse set of stakeholders coordinates a set of different activities toward accomplishing the goals in a collaboratively developed action plan. To be mutually reinforcing, the activities must be coordinated with each other and must be aligned with the common agenda, the group's shared vision, and the common indicators of success.

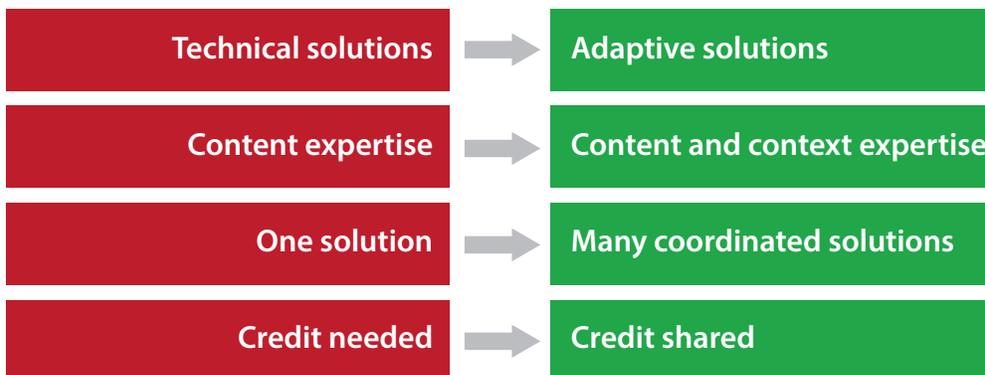
Throughout the process, *continuous communication* is essential to building trust and motivating participants. Continuous communication is necessary to keep members of the collective updated on goal progress, ensure shared objectives, share learning, address roadblocks, and keep members engaged in the process. Without this communication, members may become disaffected and less dedicated to working toward the established goals, and they will lack important insight into what others are learning and doing. Finally, a *backbone organization* is necessary to keep the process moving forward. A backbone organization provides "a dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations who can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly" (Kania and Kramer 2011).

The backbone organization provides support by guiding the initiative's vision and strategy. It also provides expertise, aligns activities, establishes shared-measurement practices, convenes the group, and supports coordination in order to keep the participants on task.

The ORP departed somewhat from convention by dividing the backbone role into two complimentary roles. The School of Government served as the convener and a major communication conduit for the ten community teams. Each team was assigned a faculty member from the School, who served as its liaison, providing individual support for the team. Each team also hired a project manager from within its community, who took on the other traditional backbone functions. Project managers convened and facilitated community meetings, enabled continuous communication between team members, and coordinated team activities. In most collective impact efforts, a single organization within the community serves as the backbone for the collective, without external support.

Figure 1.4. Five Components of Collective Impact

In addition to the five components, an important distinction of collective impact is that it requires those participating to accept a shift in how they approach complex problems (see figure 1.5). Participants need to move beyond technical solutions offered by experts. Complex, ambiguous problems require creative solutions that incorporate considerations of the system as a whole. A single solution will not be sufficient. Participants in a collective impact process have to implement multiple solutions and may encounter new problems that will require additional adaptive solutions as their programs are implemented.

Figure 1.5. Mindset Shifts for Collective Impact

Adapted from Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer 2012; Kania, Hanleybrown, and Juster 2014.

Collective Impact's Success

Experts have praised collective impact initiatives for their ability to form successful multisector collaboratives in communities (Wolff 2016). Participants in a collective impact process can be members of the government, a nonprofit, or the private sector; represent organizations or their own interests; or be experts on the issues being addressed. Collective impact has been used on both small-scale initiatives (e.g., the neighborhood level) and large-scale initiatives (e.g., the regional or state level). In the example of the ORP, each community team represented either an entire county or multiple counties.

Proponents of collective impact argue that such efforts can represent a monumental leap forward in the ability of communities to address pervasive social challenges (Edmondson and Hecht 2014). Because the model was conceptualized only about a decade ago, there is not a lot of empirical evidence to establish how well it works. However, there are many examples of projects implemented throughout the United States that have reported success with the model, including the ORP.

How to Use This Guidebook

This guidebook was designed to help communities that are interested in using a collective impact approach to address complex problems. These chapters draw on the lessons learned while implementing the Opioid Response Project. Thus, it does not present the collective impact process exactly as it was implemented for the ORP but as it would be implemented were it to be done again, using the lessons learned from the first project. Users of this guidebook should consider how the resources might be tailored to fit the needs of their communities. In some cases, one or two chapters may be all that is needed to help a community collaborative. In other cases, it may be useful to follow the steps in every chapter.

This guidebook is organized into eight chapters. This chapter introduces the guidebook and the collective impact model. Chapter 2 presents a preview of the components of the collective impact model and the perspectives of the participants in the ORP. These voices provide real-world perspectives on engaging in collective impact.

Chapter 3 can help in assessing whether collective impact is the best approach for a given community. While the collective impact model is a potentially powerful tool for addressing complex problems, it is not without limitations.

Chapter 4 provides readers with information about how to begin a collective impact project and how to construct and run the meetings of the collective team. Perhaps nothing is more important in a collective impact process than laying a good foundation. Setting ground rules, identifying a backbone organization, and finding a skilled meeting facilitator are all critical to the success of the collective.

Chapters 5 through 7 walk readers through the steps necessary to implement a collective impact process for a complex community problem. This multistep process includes analyzing the problem, mapping its system, creating a shared agenda, establishing a shared measurement system, and implementing an action plan. In these chapters, the authors refer to the ORP to provide examples and share the lessons learned. They also provide templates and worksheets used in the ORP that can be adapted for use in other communities.

Finally, chapter 8 discusses how to ensure that the collective effort is sustained over time as well as how to address common challenges that arise. These efforts take years to realize major outcomes. In that time, many changes will occur. Collaboratives need to be able to adapt to those changes to be successful. This effort was in many ways an experiment, and its insights may help others who plan to address complex problems in their own communities.

Resources

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Chapter 2

Lessons from the Opioid Response Project

Anita Brown-Graham and Adam Lovelady

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This guidebook provides an overview of the stages of engagement using the collective impact model. As described in chapter 1, the examples used throughout the book will be drawn from the Opioid Response Project (ORP). This chapter adds context and voice from the ORP teams. Their critical insights may be useful to other communities considering a similar process. Each of the following chapters will provide additional lessons from the ORP relevant to each element of collective impact.

The impacts of substance-use disorder reverberate beyond individuals and single organizations. There are effects on the individual, the family, the neighborhood, the local government, the health system, the justice system, and more. Just as those varied actors and organizations are affected by the challenge, they are each also part of the solution. Coordinating action between them is not easy work, however, as each often comes to the table with differing priorities, perspectives, expertise, and resources.

The UNC School of Government's ORP was an effort to coordinate and enhance local efforts to address the opioid crisis. As discussed in chapter 3, the collective impact model is a tool for addressing complex community problems, and for the School project team, the collective impact model provided a framework that accommodated the many organizations and agencies in localities addressing the effects of substance abuse. As outlined in chapter 1, the strength

of the collective impact model is its call for five key conditions: a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and a backbone support organization. This chapter offers insights and lessons learned from the ORP, with a focus on beginning the process, organizing the effort, creating a shared vision, establishing shared measurement, implementing the program, and sustaining the efforts.

Benefits and Drawbacks of Collective Impact

This model is not for the faint of heart. It can be messy and feel very inefficient. But despite its embedded and unavoidable challenges, and even with some clear drawbacks, the ORP teams found the benefits of collective impact to be worthwhile. Particularly, the evaluation surveys from participants highlighted that some tension was created by working with people who had differing work styles, priorities, perspectives, and expertise. However, all the conveners noted the benefits of doing and learning from work that would not have been possible without working as a collective (Livet and Richard 2020, 25).

The ORP team members indicated that the benefits of the collective impact model outweighed the costs. ORP team members highlighted certain challenges, including engaging stakeholders and keeping them engaged, turnover of participants, limited time, limited capacity, managing differing perspectives and priorities within the team, and maintaining communications (internal and external) (Livet and Richard 2020, 25). However, all ORP team members responding to the final evaluation survey (100 percent!) said they would recommend the experience to others. Being involved in the project, they said, allowed them to get a broader perspective of the opioid crisis, afforded them the opportunity to network and collaborate with teams working on similar interventions across the state, facilitated greater team building and unity in their communities, and allowed them to benefit from having a backbone organization with the support, structure, and expertise that the School provided (13). They also reported increased team capacity to plan, implement, and evaluate their local opioid-response efforts and, notably, “reported significantly higher levels of collaboration between their own organizations and other community organizations within the team at the end of the project compared to the beginning” (18–19).

There is strong evidence that the benefits of participation in the ORP resulted in communities being better positioned to address the opioid crisis because of strengthened networks. As one example, the Mecklenburg team established a transitional-care work group and involved providers from major hospitals to improve support for emergency-room patients suffering from overdose. The work group created an assessment tool to evaluate patient eligibility for various treatment facilities, and it helped create an accountability system to ensure that hospitals contacted treatment facilities in advance to help them prepare to receive patients after an overdose (Parry, n.d.-g). The work would not have been possible without the shared vision and measures created through the collective impact model.

It is important to note that the strong reliance on peer learning across teams was one aspect of the ORP that distinguished it from the conventional collective impact model. The School deliberately brought together a cohort of communities to learn from each other, from School faculty, and from guest experts, and the results were positive.

The diversity of communities represented by the ORP teams—large and small, urban and rural, eastern and western—allowed for a variety of perspectives and challenges, which contributed to the value of the peer learning. “Even though we all live in different areas of the state, we’re all dealing with the same issue,” said Sophia Hayes, project coordinator with the Onslow County Health Department. “Access to leaders in different counties has been both helpful and reassuring as we continue on this path, helping our community respond to the opioid epidemic” (quoted in Parry, n.d.-h).

Beginning the Process

In North Carolina, the county is the unit of government overseeing many important functions relating to impacts of substance misuse, including public health, social services, and criminal justice. County involvement is therefore key to addressing substance-use issues. Of course, the county alone cannot create all the needed change. Effective response to substance misuse requires partners in the areas of recovery, mental health, medicine, housing, job training, municipal government, and more.

ORP teams varied in size, with participants representing many perspectives. Twenty percent of the organizations that were represented in the project were mental-health providers (including behavioral health and substance-abuse treatment). There was also substantial representation of county and municipal organizations (16 percent) and public-health organizations (12 percent). Court systems, fire-and-rescue departments, emergency medical services, law enforcement, health-care systems, and universities were also well-represented, but participants also came from harm-reduction coalitions, medical practices, pharmacies, schools, social services, and the military (Livet and Richard 2020, 14). Reflecting on his experience, Jim Hardy from the CARE Coalition of Transylvania County said, “Being part of this team has created an opportunity for local leaders to sit down at the table together in an organized way to hear from each other and collaborate on working toward solutions to the opioid epidemic” (quoted in Parry, n.d.-i).

Attributes to Consider

There is no single formula for the “right” membership of a collective impact team, but here are some key strategies that the School project team used to support the ORP teams. For more details about recruiting the team and engaging stakeholders, see chapters 4 and 5 .

Motivation

What is the motivation for the stakeholders to come together to solve a community challenge? The School project team used the opioid crisis that was ravaging communities across North Carolina as a rallying cry to help teams come and stay together. The School project team worked hard to collect and communicate relevant data about the costs of opioid use in the state. It also celebrated the ORP teams, promoting them in a monthly newsletter to leaders in the state, in correspondence to local elected leaders, on social media, and on the ncIMPACT television program on PBS North Carolina.

Diversity

How different are the collaborators in terms of perspective, sector, or personal demographic? There is considerable research on the importance of the relationships between people in diverse groups. All teams were asked to regularly evaluate membership to ensure diverse, active participation.

Organization

How do team members organize themselves initially for the collaboration? The School project team asked each ORP team to first convene a core team, with three to four members who were responsible for managing the group and moving things forward with the project manager. The larger community meetings were held less frequently than the core team's meetings.

Supports and Contributions

What does each stakeholder bring to the table? ORP teams were asked to engage in rigorous stakeholder analyses to determine what supports and contributions team members brought to the table. This was true even when a preexisting coordinating group or collaborative served as the starting point for the new ORP team.

Starting New or Starting Anew

For some teams, the ORP was the spark to assemble. "Because of the Opioid Response Project grant, we were able to launch our Strategic Opioid Advanced Response Team," said Sophia Hayes. "We're now partnering with physicians, mental health specialists, religious groups, and others, working with a shared purpose. It's exciting!" (quoted in Parry, n.d.-h).

For other teams, the ORP was an opportunity to boost an existing effort. The collaboration that would become the Eighth Judicial District Opioid Crisis Team dated back to at least 2011, when the state of North Carolina removed funding for drug-treatment courts. In response, local leaders began looking for other ways to fund the drug-treatment court and address the broader issues of substance use in the district. Despite the challenges involved, they benefitted from participating in collective impact efforts in general and in the ORP in particular (Parry, n.d.-b).

Organizing the Effort

As described in chapter 1, the collective impact model calls for a backbone organization. This organization is responsible for

- guiding vision and strategy,
- supporting aligned activities,
- establishing shared-measurement practices,
- building public will,
- advancing policy, and
- mobilizing funding.

The School project team decided not to strictly follow the collective impact model but recognized the need for a coordinating organization and project management that delivered the above functions. Each team hired a project manager to oversee most of the traditional backbone functions, but the School served as the central coordinating organization. Strong capacity at

the local level ensured that deadlines did not slide, meetings did not wander off course, and messages did not fall through the cracks. The strength of the core teams and project managers was a key factor in the success of the ORP.

This bifurcated approach worked but, in retrospect, support for ORP teams' project managers should have been even greater. A strong project manager serves as a hub for communications and document management, coordinates meetings and facilitates them (or identifies a facilitator), brings consistency and organization to the otherwise loosely organized team, and more. The School provided funding to support five to ten hours per week. There is no doubt that project managers invested more time than that.

After interviewing the community teams, Melanie Livet and Chloe Richard (2020) found that “the ORP was an effective strategy to facilitate improved communication among community team members. It also provided an opportunity to create and structure community teams. Interviewees reported that this project brought organization to their teams and allowed everyone to develop a common understanding of the teams' focus and future directions. It also helped clarify the structure of the teams' leadership, work groups, and subgroups” (17). Melissia Larson, with C-FORT of Cumberland County, said, “Because of our participation with the UNC Opioid Response Project, we have been able to really pull this team together and employ a community coordinator. . . . That has been critical to our success and will really help propel us going forward” (quoted in Parry, n.d.-d). As it relates to organizing the effort, another unique feature of the ORP was the required team forums (five spanning over the two-year commitment). Part of the success for organizing the effort was shoring up time from day-to-day activities to engage in strategic and generative work. Generative work is a concept borrowed from nonprofit governance that entails “temporary suspension of what we *think* we know about how we are *supposed* to think and problem solve . . . to enter the discussion at an earlier phase and have more philosophical, broader conversations before we discuss a course of action” (Trower 2013, 34). In many ways, the forums functioned like leadership retreats for the ten community teams, allowing dedicated space for this important work. This was incredibly important to overall success. As a team member reported after the third forum, “Our team finds forums so valuable. It allows us time to reflect as a team, which strengthens the relationships. I wish we had more time like this.” Chapter 4 offers additional details on structuring teams for success by discussing strategies for recruiting team members, determining roles for members and the backbone organization, and facilitating meetings.

Creating a Shared Vision

If diverse stakeholders are going to come to the table and stick around to do the hard work of implementation, they must have a shared vision of what to accomplish and how to accomplish it. That shared vision (or *common agenda*, in collective impact terminology) is key, and it was an overarching theme of the benefits of the ORP in Livet and Richard's evaluation. However, the work of creating a shared vision is tough. It requires frank discussions, commitment to hear many perspectives, and commitment to continual refinement and improvement. For a step-by-step guide for crafting a vision and moving to action, see chapter 6.

With a clear shared vision, a team can move forward and garner additional support. The ORP's emphasis on a shared vision helped the Mecklenburg County team get more attention at the county level. This team was especially large and composed of busy community leaders.

Simply having to create a shared vision as part of the ORP helped the team to define itself and its purpose (Parry, n.d.-g). “We needed a system for holding us accountable for follow-through,” said team member Victoria Beaton, a prevention specialist (quoted in *ibid.*)

Each of the ten ORP teams crafted its own vision and plan for action. These shared visions were specific to the politics, perspectives, and resources of each community. Because they were all addressing opioid use, though, there was some overlap between them. Some themes that emerged from the teams’ statements included

- increasing access to or engagement with treatment (e.g., “Accessible treatment for all,” “Improve engagement and care for persons identified with or at risk of substance use disorder”);
- decreasing access to opioids and preventing new cases of substance-use disorder (e.g., “Decrease flow of prescription and illicit drugs”);
- educating the local community about opioid addiction, use, misuse, effects of opioid misuse on the community, and options for prevention and treatment (e.g., “Increase community awareness and eliminate stigma,” “Raise awareness about opioid use and impacts in X County through information and education programs”);
- improving health, safety, and recovery (e.g., “Improve health and recovery,” “Build a more resilient community by increasing healthy stress management and enhancing nurturing relationships within families and public serving”);
- increasing collaboration and capacity (e.g., “To create a community-supported, sustainable network to address and reduce adverse effects of illicit drug use through harm reduction strategies”); and
- increasing access to funding (e.g., “Increase access to funding to support, enhance, and create opioid-related programs through community partnerships”). (Livet and Richard 2020, 15).

Establishing Shared Measurement

Agreement about shared measurement is crucial, and it is difficult to achieve. As discussed in chapter 7, which goes into shared measures in more detail, members of a collective impact team needed to share data to build a common understanding of what problem they are trying to address, to assess their progress, and to refine the effort. Commenting on planning action and tracking progress, Kirsten Smith of the Second Judicial District Opioid Coalition noted, “We’ve been able to develop an action plan and set goals. It has been so good to show what we’re doing and track what we’re doing, keeping people involved and morale high” (quoted in Parry, n.d.-a).

Through the ORP, community teams were able to build relationships and coordinate data reporting to better monitor the opioid epidemic in their communities. Livet and Richard (2020, 24) noted in the evaluation report that teams’ ability to share data on opioid misuse in the community with community collaborators, like emergency medical services and law enforcement, allowed those collaborators to integrate up-to-date information into their opioid response programming.

There is an overwhelming amount of data on substance use. Successful teams cut through the noise and the mountains of data to focus on key performance indicators. Cabarrus County (2021), for example, has used a density heat map of Narcan deployment to track overdose hot spots.

Implementation

Effective implementation is the purpose behind getting the right people to the table, managing the process, creating a shared vision, and measuring the progress. That fact was reflected in the ORP.

The most significant output of the ORP cited during interviews with both the [School project team] and [ORP team members] (also highlighted in the community profiles) was the community programming that was implemented as a result of the project. [ORP teams] developed new content, programs, services, and processes to address the opioid crisis. Establishment of treatment facilities and programs (e.g., MAT in jails, EMS providing Subutex, syringe exchange programs, post overdose interventions), distribution of treatment and prevention items (e.g., Narcan kits, medication lock boxes), management of drug take back events, [and] creation of successful PSAs are but a few examples that were cited. (Livet and Richard 2020, 16).

For one example, one of the Second Judicial District Opioid Coalition's biggest successes was the launch of two syringe-exchange programs in its highest-need counties. Eventually, each of the district's five counties benefitted from a syringe-exchange program (Parry, n.d.-a).

Implementation is not always about personal action; it may be about supporting a partner. Members of the Forsyth team were "most proud of their support for syringe exchange programs in the area and helping groups like the Twin City Harm Reduction Collective emerge and grow." The Twin City Harm Reduction Collective has since become a separate, fully operational and mobile nonprofit that provides supplies and education to improve public health (Parry, n.d.-f).

Sustaining the Efforts

The ORP launched with a hurricane and ended amid a global pandemic—the first forum was delayed due to Hurricane Florence and the final forum was held virtually because of the coronavirus. Throughout the two-year project, managers and ORP team members came and went. Individuals faced personal and professional challenges that taxed their time and focus. Community priorities shifted, and other funding sources ebbed and flowed. Through it all, the ORP teams found ways to adjust and thrive. The experience highlighted the simple truth that money matters, but sustainability requires more than money. Chapter 8 offers practical guidance on confronting challenges and sustaining the effort.

Sustainability requires relationships. While financial support is important, it is the relationships among individuals and institutions that really drives sustainability. Wanda Boone from the Durham County ORP team said it best: "The secret sauce to coalitions is bringing together different talents, networks, and strengths—all of that on a budget. Human capital is just as important as financial capital" (Parry, n.d.-e). Building trust among those relationships over time allows for a collaborative team to align goals and efforts, to make dollars stretch further, and to continue the effort long-term.

Sustainability requires shared responsibility. A resilient community relies on many contributors, not a single individual or organization. Collaboratives must be prepared for

changes in personnel. A collaborative must not be so dependent on one individual that the effort collapses when that individual is no longer involved. When there are changes—whether new faces coming in or old faces leaving—the collaborative should revisit its vision, its norms, and its plans. Members need to contribute to—and buy into—a shared vision and a shared plan.

Sustainability requires flexibility. A successful and sustainable project is poised to transition to the next crisis when it comes along. As Brandy Harrell from the Eighth Judicial District Opioid Crisis Team said, “Being involved with the Opioid Response Project has strengthened our collaboration in a way that will benefit our community even after the project ends” (quoted in Parry, n.d.-b).

Grants Awarded to ORP Teams

Second Judicial District Opioid Coalition. Up to \$275,000 Community Linkages to Care grant to start a syringe-exchange program in Martin County and \$400,000 grant for recovery court (NC DHHS 2020; Johnson and Basden 2019)

Cabarrus Mental Health Advisory Board. Community Linkages to Care grant up to \$275,000, which helped the advisory board hire a full-time certified peer-support specialist and expand syringe-exchange services (NC DHHS 2020).

Cumberland-Fayetteville Opioid Response Team. US Department of Justice grant of \$900,000 to support a comprehensive opioid-abuse site-based program (Soles 2019)

Durham Joins Together to Save Lives. Blue Cross NC grant of \$171,000 to create community and family peer-support networks in Durham, Vance, Granville, Edgecombe, Nash, Craven, and Yadkin Counties and Community Linkages to Care grant of \$275,000 for overdose prevention (Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina 2019; Durham County 2019)

Forsyth Opioid Project Team. Grant of \$270,000 to support harm reduction, which the team used to expand harm-reduction efforts in the county and to work with surrounding counties.

Eighth District Opioid Crisis Team. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention grant for \$870,000 (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 2020)

Mecklenburg County Opioid Task Force. Anuvia Prevention and Recovery Center contributed in-kind hours for the project-manager role to be maintained. Anuvia received CARES funding to launch the [MeckHope Campaign](#). The total value of the campaign was \$516,000, \$240,000 of which was in kind.

Strategic Opioid Advanced Response Team. US Department of Justice grant for \$900,000 to fund a case manager to get started on a prearrest-diversion program, school psychologists focused on educating students on opioid use and misuse, and an overdose-fatality-review team (Bureau of Justice Assistance 2019)

Transylvania Opioid Response Team. HRSA Rural Communities Opioid Response planning grant of \$200,000 will allow this team to continue its work, including harm reduction and treatment (US DHHS 2021). A Drug-Free Communities grant of \$125,000 per year was renewed for another five years (Transylvania Times 2019).

Healthy Wilkes: Community Opioid Prevention and Education Team. Wilkes Recovery Revolution received a Golden LEAF grant of \$423,459 for peer support, transportation, health care, and education supports to improve employability (Tribune 2021).

And yes, sustainability requires money. As described in the evaluation report, the ORP process of identifying needs, developing an action plan, and establishing relationships led to strong grant applications. ORP teams won federal and local grants for a variety of strategies, including syringe-exchange efforts, harm reduction, post-overdose visits, medication-assisted treatment, peer support, outreach, and more. All ten teams reported pursuing or receiving additional grant funding due to their involvement in the ORP (Livet and Richard 2020, 17). The table below highlights some of the grant funding secured by the community teams during the ORP.

Sustainability requires all these things: relationships, shared responsibility, flexibility, and financial resources. In the best circumstances, one strength leads to another, as was the case for the Healthy Wilkes Community Opioid Prevention and Education Team. Heather Murphy, executive director of the Health Foundation in Wilkesboro, noted that “because of this work, we’re more prepared to take advantage of a growing number of other offerings. . . . We have received a federal grant to help provide more treatment services for pregnant women. And we were in a position to participate in the Appalachian Regional Commission Listening Tour, which covers Work to Recovery programs in the vast Appalachian region, including Ohio and Kentucky” (quoted in Parry, n.d.-i).

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Chapter 3

Complex Community Problems and the Collective Impact Model

Kimberly L. Nelson

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Assessing the Nature of the Problem

The first step in determining whether collective impact is the right approach is to consider the nature of the problem. As discussed in chapter 1, collective impact works best for addressing *complex problems* (sometimes called *wicked problems*) using a systemwide perspective.

The concept of complex problems was originally developed in the planning literature in the 1970s to highlight the distinction between problems with great complexity from other problems. In their seminal *Policy Sciences* article, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” Rittel and Webber argued that “tame” problems are those that are routinely encountered, could be solved within a short period of time, and involved engaging only a single stakeholder or a small number of stakeholders. They contrasted tame problems with complex problems, which they called “wicked problems,” using the following ten characteristics (Rittel and Webber 1973, 160–7; see also Peters 2017).

A wicked problem has no single, agreed-upon definition. How it is defined depends on the perspective from which it is viewed, and no perspective can be categorically considered the “best” one. A law enforcement professional may approach the opioid problem, for example, differently from someone in the public health sector.

There is no stopping rule. A wicked problem cannot be solved, only mitigated, so there is no defined end goal. Programs addressing issues like poverty and homelessness do not end because they have solved the problems. They end because funding runs out or the parties working on them believe they have done what they can.

Solutions to wicked problems are not right-or-wrong but are good-or-bad. Solutions to typical, tame problems can be evaluated as successful or not. For example, a city's budget deficit is a typical problem that can be remedied by levying a new fee for a service. For complex problems, the solutions may present new problems. In addition, interested stakeholders may judge a solution to be good or bad depending on their personal perspectives. In many places, syringe exchange is a popular strategy for mitigating the opioid problem, but some communities see syringe exchange as a bad solution that promotes drug misuse.

There is no immediate and ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem. Often the proposed solution to a typical problem, like a city's budget deficit, can be assessed before it is implemented. But it is difficult to assess whether attempts to solve a wicked problem will work. In some cases, it may take years to see any effect. These attempted solutions can also have unforeseen consequences.

Attempted solutions may have effects that are not reversible. There is no trial-and-error. Every attempted solution has lasting, sometimes permanent effects. In response to the opioid problem, there has been a concerted effort to reduce the number of prescribed opioids. While few would argue that this was an unwise initiative, it has had several negative consequences. For example, there has been an increase in the supply of heroin on the street since the crackdown on prescription narcotics.

There is no single solution to a wicked problem nor, potentially, a set of solutions. These problems have multiple causes, so a single solution will not work. Even a set of solutions may address primary issues but leave a host of secondary issues unresolved. For example, making welfare payments to low-income individuals provides a basic level of subsistence but does not affect the underlying causes of poverty.

Every wicked problem is unique. Despite similarities between various wicked problems, the differences mean there can be no shared solutions. Alcohol abuse and methamphetamine abuse are wicked problems with obvious similarities, but a solution that mitigates alcohol abuse can still fail to affect methamphetamine abuse (or opioid abuse). There is no set of shared solutions that can be applied to this class of wicked problems.

Every wicked problem can be construed as a symptom of another problem. In some cases, this is due to an individual's perspective on an issue, while in other cases, there exists a "chicken or the egg" phenomenon. For example, a wicked problem like homelessness may be seen as an outcome of mental illness. Mental illness may also lead to substance dependency, for which homelessness can also be an outcome. So is the cause of homelessness mental illness or substance dependency?

There are multiple explanations for a wicked problem. Because wicked problems are inextricably linked with other wicked problems, it may be impossible to identify a single root cause of a wicked problem. For example, the opioid problem has been attributed to the ready availability of prescription opioids, too much heroine being imported from Central America, too many synthetic opioids, and other causes.

Policy makers have no right to be wrong. The decisions made by policy makers have consequences, some of which can be irreversible or even permanent, and the policy makers bear the blame for results that are unintended and harmful. This consequence may disincentivize aggressive, innovative approaches to tackling wicked problems.

Another approach to determining whether a problem is a complex problem is to consider the degree of complicity. [The Community Tool Box](#) developed by the University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development (n.d.) classifies community problems as *simple*, *complicated*, or *complex*. Each type requires a different approach.

A simple problem can be resolved by an individual or a single organization. It will require minimal resources—in time and cost. An example of a simple problem in local government is excessive printing costs for board-meeting packets due to the number of attachments. A solution could be to issue electronic tablets to board members and send the packets electronically.

A complicated problem may take more than a year to resolve, but it can be done by a single individual or a single organization. An example of a complicated problem for local government would be a structural deficit due to a major revenue loss. While it might take several years and significant budget cuts to get back on strong financial footing, it could be done internally.

By contrast, a single organization or individual cannot resolve a complex problem, and it may take many years to mitigate it. Other than the opioid crisis, which is used as an example throughout this guidebook, local governments face a number of other complex problems, including poverty, crime, and lack of affordable housing.

Collaboration may not be necessary to address a simple problem or even a complicated one. However, if a problem has all or most of the characteristics that make it a complex problem, it may be appropriate for a systemwide process for attempted mitigation. Collective impact is one approach to addressing complex problems, but it is not the only one.

Systems and Complex Problems

Complex problems cannot be successfully addressed by thinking about them as discrete issues. As described in chapter 1, part of what makes a problem complex is its interconnection with other complex problems, and numerous categories of individuals and organizations are affected by or working to alleviate the problem or its associated effects. This is why it is so difficult for a single municipality, county, or even state to mitigate these complex problems. Therefore, it is important to think of the problem as existing in a system. The system includes all people and organizations with some type of interest in the problem as well as the other problems—both complex and simple—that are related and will be the target of the intervention.

The focus of this chapter is on how collective impact can be an effective way to address complex problems using a systems-thinking approach. Collaboration is a complicated endeavor in the best of circumstances. When working to effect change on the most challenging problems, it is helpful to use a method of collaborative engagement that is tailored for a systems approach.

Chapter 5 provides guidance on how to analyze a problem and create a system map that helps identify the interconnected elements of the problem. It is a challenge to develop a comprehensive system map in a single session, even with a large group of stakeholders. This process is normally one that will require multiple sessions. Collaborative groups may only realize that a part of the system is missing well after implementation of strategies has begun.

It is natural for people to assume that their conception of a problem or issue is shared by others. This may particularly be the case when working with others who share a similar interest in the issue. However, given that few issues are black-and-white, it is rarely the case that people share identical definitions of these issues. While sometimes it is expected that perspectives will differ, such as between people from different countries or those who work in different industries,

other times it may be surprising. For example, with the ORP, several teams had members of both law enforcement and public health as part of their collaborative. Police may see opioid use as a criminal issue while public health practitioners see it as a medical issue. Even within public health, perspectives differed. For example, on one team, the health director was unwilling to support syringe-exchange programs for fear of enabling addicts, while the other public health officials saw these programs as an important tool to combat the secondary problems of opioid misuse.

It is also important for collaboratives to move away from technical definitions of the problem and consider adaptive definitions. Technical definitions can lead to an oversimplification of the problem. A technical definition may also lead collaboratives to rely too much on experts rather than considering the ways lay people can contribute to mitigating the problem. Using an adaptive definition of the problem acknowledges its complexity and lack of predictability. In most cases, there will be room for collaboratives to consider the technical challenges that exist and can be solved through expert engagement. These challenges can usually be overcome more quickly and easily than the adaptive aspects of the problem. So collaboratives may consider working on one or two of these technical aspects early in the work of the collaborative. To effect any significant change in the overly complex problem at issue, adaptive definitions and solutions will be required.

When engaging in collective impact, it is important to involve those with context expertise (a person's lived experiences) as well as content expertise. Those with content expertise are most adept at technical change, whereas those with context expertise can think of the problem through a different, more complex lens. For example, in the ORP, some teams had members who were doctors or judges—those with content expertise. However, the teams also had family members who had lost loved ones to overdose and people who were recovering from opioid dependency.

Identify Community Needs and Resources

Before deciding whether the collective impact approach is appropriate for a given problem in a given community, it is important to take stock of the needs of the community. Typically, collaboratives that convene around a complex problem already have some level of awareness of the extent of the problem in their community. As discussed above, stakeholders will have different perspectives given their individual experiences and may be able to highlight various aspects of the problems other members may be unaware of. The problem-mapping exercises described in chapter 5 are one way to think about the different aspects of the problem.

Different members of a collaborative may also be able to provide different data and resources to help develop a complete understanding of the extent and nature of the problem in the community and the existing capacity in the community to work on the problem. Data are important in developing shared measures (discussed in chapter 7) and in tracking the progress of the collaborative's work. Most of the teams in the ORP already collected data important for understanding the opioid epidemic in their community-needs assessments. There are a number of resources available for creating needs assessments, if data is not readily available in a community (see Neuber et al. 1980). Over time, the collaborative should be able to find new data sources, but an initial analysis of the early data can help understand where the greatest needs are or what the problem's most significant aspects are for the community.

Cataloguing the resources of the collaborative can also be useful. In some cases, members will be working as individuals or in their individual organizations before the collaborative is formed. Members may already be receiving grant money or funding from the local government. Collaboratives may find that an important early step in the process of working together is determining which resources can be used for the collaborative's work and where they might go to seek additional support for their future work. These preliminary steps to assess needs and capacity can also help collaboratives decide whether collective impact is the appropriate method to try to improve the problem in their community.

Deciding on Collective Impact

In the United States, the traditional method for solving problems in a community has been to formulate policy solutions within a single jurisdiction. Collaboration across jurisdictions is a somewhat new approach, perhaps due in part to the fragmented system of government in the US, and the challenges and disincentives that often face multigovernmental collaboratives. However, given the increasing number of complex problems that do not respect jurisdictional boundaries, it is no surprise that communities are seeking ways to bring resources together to tackle them.

Today, there is greater recognition that these problems cannot be mitigated without engaging many stakeholders and bringing as many resources as possible together to increase capacity beyond what is possible for a single organization. Problems that already have engagement from a number of different organizations and sectors are often ideal for a collective impact approach.

The collective impact approach is not necessarily the right fit for every community seeking to address complex problems. It is important to remember that the collective impact process takes years. While there are likely to be some short-term wins, the most significant changes should not be expected within the first two years.

Taking a collective impact approach requires moving away from the traditional, more isolated ways that service organizations attempt to solve problems. Traditional, isolated approaches to affecting outcomes often look like this:

- Funders select individual grantees.
- Organizations seeking to implement change work separately, often competing against each other for funding.
- Evaluation is structured to isolate a particular organization's impact to show progress.
- Large-scale change is assumed to depend on scaling individual organizations or interventions.
- Intervention is focused on developing programs.
- Corporate and public sectors are not heavily involved in the process.

Like other approaches to collaborative action, collective impact engages multiple players in working together to solve complex social problems, but there are important differences.

- Funders and implementers understand that social problems—and their solutions—arise from the interaction of many organizations within a larger system.
- Organizations actively coordinate their actions and share lessons learned.
- Progress depends on working toward the same goal and measuring the same things rather than initiating programs.

- Large-scale change depends on increasing cross-sector alignment and learning among many organizations.
- Data are used to inform and guide the choice of goals and strategies.

Overall, collective impact is a systemwide approach to solving complex problems. Whereas other collaborative approaches bring organizations together to seek an additive effect of their individual efforts, collective impact seeks a multiplier effect. The process is intended to increase the capacity of the individuals and groups working toward the same goals rather than simply combining their efforts. The ideas that are generated to address the problems in the community are drawn from the community itself rather than imported. Traditional hierarchies and leadership approaches are discarded in favor of shared decision-making models.

Weaknesses in the Collective Impact Approach

Although collective impact seems to be superior to other approaches for collaborative action, it is not without drawbacks. When considering what collaborative method to use, community teams should consider these challenges.

First, the collective impact model does not offer a lot of guidance about how to connect with stakeholders in a meaningful way outside of developing a shared agenda. In the ORP, several teams experienced problems connecting to stakeholders. For example, it was difficult for some ORP teams to maintain consistent representation from important stakeholder organizations. In other cases, teams were challenged to even get key parties involved at all. ORP teams were encouraged to engage in periodic reevaluation of the stakeholders they were working with to make sure the right people were engaged and taking on appropriate roles. This aspect of collective impact takes a lot of time and thoughtfulness to get right. (See chapter 5 for more on stakeholders.)

Some have argued that collective impact does not adequately address equity issues. The model itself offers little in the way of guidance to help members of a collaborative understand how to address such issues. However, complex problems almost always occur within a system containing inherent inequities. For this reason, it is important that equity considerations are integrated through all components of the collective impact process (see McAfee, Blackwell, and Bell 2015). Collective impact also requires a shift in mindset regarding the nature of expertise. In traditional collaborative models, those with technical (or content) expertise are typically the only ones sought out for advice. In collective impact, context expertise is just as valuable as technical expertise. In the case of the ORP, families of those who died from an overdose of opioids had limited technical expertise but knew a great deal about the struggle with opioid addiction.

Another critique of collective impact is that it places significant demands on the backbone organization. Many collaboratives will have difficulty securing long-term assistance from an organization unless there are ample funds available to support it. In the case of the ORP, the School of Government served as a backbone for all teams and granted a small amount of funding to support hiring a person within each community to serve as a project manager. The project manager served some of the functions of a backbone as well, including acting as the communication conduit for the ORP team. In any collaborative effort, challenges arise. It became clear early on that ORP teams needed consistent project management and skilled facilitation of community meetings. Without adequate resources, it is difficult to support the administrative needs of the collective impact team.

While the collective impact model increases the capacity of collaboratives to achieve their goals, it is not a simple process. It is a complex method for dealing with complex problems. This complexity contributes to the need for a substantial role for support personnel and the commitment of financial and human resources for a sustained period of time. Part of this complexity comes from the need to develop shared measures. This may also require specialized support.

Lessons from the ORP Teams

Community members who are reading this guidebook to decide whether the collective impact process is right for their effort may find the advice provided by the ORP team members useful. At the end of the multiyear ORP, team members were asked to reflect on the project and offer advice for other communities that may be considering a similar initiative. The following advice was developed from this feedback and the feedback from faculty and staff at the School of Government.

Team Composition Is Important

Develop a devoted core team to provide stability and leadership. Build a solid foundation by bringing as many key stakeholders into the process as possible. Make sure that you are considering a diverse group when getting people engaged and bringing individuals to the table. Ensure that all relevant sectors are represented, and include people who have personally lived with the problem or issue.

Determine How Tasks, Roles, and Responsibilities Will Be Distributed

In addition to your core team, designate a project manager to lead the project. Make sure that this project manager can dedicate at least twenty hours per week to the project. Clearly establish and agree on the roles and expectations of team members. Work should be distributed fairly among members, ensuring that each member takes on at least some of the necessary responsibilities. Ensure that team members commit to the work. Hold them accountable for their responsibilities while being realistic about how much time they can dedicate to the project.

Be Flexible and Committed

A great deal can change during a long-term project. Be aware of this so that the group will be able to shift goals and strategies to meet the changing needs of the community. (For more on this, see chapter 8.) Understand that the process takes time. Stay committed to the long, hard collaborative work, and celebrate small wins.

Know Your Community

Conduct an assessment of the problem and the community before developing ideas for goals and objectives. Be sure to assess how your community differs from others that are using similar programs. There are no “cookie cutter” solutions to complex problems.

Communication Is Critical

Member organizations within the collaborative need to be in constant communication. Keeping everyone updated and on the same page keeps everyone invested. Also, ensure that the collaborative is making significant efforts to inform the community about the work and the progress.

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Chapter 4

Recruiting Team Members, Determining Roles, and Facilitating Meetings

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Collective impact emphasizes the importance of encouraging outreach to stakeholders and ensures that the collaborative engages a broad set of stakeholder groups. Engaging a broad and diverse group of participants in the work of the collaborative is very challenging. Chapter 5 explains how to recruit and engage stakeholders in more detail. Members of the collaborative need to receive clear communication throughout the process. And bringing together a diverse set of people in large community meetings has a host of additional challenges. This makes the leadership and administrative support even more critical, and this support must include having a skilled facilitator to run the meetings and manage group discussions. A skilled facilitator will help ensure that all stakeholder interests are brought to the discussions and respected in all decisions.

This chapter discusses the establishment of a leadership team and the determination of its members' roles in the collective impact effort. Once members of the collaboration are

identified and engaged, it is essential to convene them in ways that make the time and effort worthwhile. To that end, this chapter also discusses approaches and strategies to effectively convene collaboratives, including the importance of expert meeting facilitation. But before a collaborative can decide who should be considered a stakeholder for a given problem, it is important to consider who may be the best fit to provide the initial direction for the team.

Who Should Be in the Room When Starting a Collective Impact Process?

Because every community is different and has different needs, there is no perfect set of actors for starting a collective impact initiative. In most communities, it is fairly clear who the key relevant parties are. These individuals, government agencies, and private-sector organizations (both for-profit and nonprofit) are all generally working to alleviate the problem or some aspect of the problem. They may or may not have attempted to collaborate with each other previously. Once the initial group is convened, some initial decisions about leadership and organization for the collective impact effort may begin.

In the case of the ORP, the ten teams were rooted in a variety of arrangements, both formal and ad hoc. It is also important to note that the ORP teams were required to have certain structural and leadership elements in place in order to get funding from the program. This funding, in some cases, provided incentives for new ORP teams to form. This is somewhat counter to what is usually seen in collective impact, in which both leadership and team formation is more inductive. These differing arrangements proved to have different challenges for the ORP teams. In cases where there was an existing collaborative effort, they had to consider how to expand their membership. Some also struggled to make an existing structure work for a new process. For example, one ORP team had begun as a countywide collaborative dedicated to mental health in general. This team found it difficult to have enough time in the community meetings to discuss the opioid problem specifically.

When initially convening the community collaborative to begin collective impact, it is not critically important to include all possible community members who are stakeholders for the problem. A smaller set of individuals with the passion, commitment, and initiative to start the effort can work well. This small group of leaders can help to create the space to explore the problem, examine root causes, conduct stakeholder mapping, and start to build the administrative support needed to undertake the work. Stakeholder identification and inclusion will be an ongoing process throughout the implementation of collective impact rather than a single event (for more details on stakeholder recruitment, see chapter 5).

Determining Leadership and Administrative Roles

Identifying and establishing roles and responsibilities, particularly those tasked with facilitating communication and providing administrative support, is an important early step in the collective impact process. There is no single, ideal method to facilitate communication between members of the collaborative. A collaborative may decide to designate several members as the core leadership team, as was done in the ORP project. In other cases, collaboratives may decide to share the roles or rotate them.

If a core team is designated, its members should be able to engage consistently with the process for the duration (or at least several years). They should have the support of the leaders of the organizations they work for because some of their time will need to be diverted to the collective impact process, and the efforts of the collaborative may affect the work of the institution, depending on the strategies developed.

For the ORP, members of the core team generally came from constituent organizations that were prepared to commit the most resources to the project. These organizations were usually municipal or county governments, judicial districts, or large nonprofit organizations. Typically, the team's project manager was also an employee of one of these organizations. The School project team also required all core team members to provide letters of support from their supervisors (or elected officials, in the case of a municipality or county).

An early discussion about decision-making authority is also an important step. Will the core team make key decisions informally as a group, by consensus, or by majority vote? If consensus decision-making is the goal, what will the process be for resolving conflict? While the collective impact process is one of shared decision-making, collaboratives may choose to improve efficiency by delegating someone to make minor decisions for the group. These are some of the questions that should be resolved before building the broader community collaborative, and they should be revisited with the broader group once it is convened.

Establishing Expectations for Involvement

Once members of the core team have been identified, they may start the process by developing a shared understanding of their commitments to the team. These may include addressing questions like the following:

- Should members of the core team attend every meeting of the community collaborative?
- How often should the core group meet?
- Is there a potential need for travel?
- How will administrative tasks be divided?

Over time, the needs of the collaborative may change, or they may find that their initial projections were not realistic. As with all parts of the collective impact process, flexibility is beneficial. For the ORP, the School required that members of each core team sign an agreement that laid out the expectations for their involvement. While this was largely a symbolic exercise—there was no enforcement—it did serve as an expression of the commitment that each member was making to the project.

Once the initial core team is formed, the members should decide how they will engage members of the broader community as members of the collaborative. How do they intend to seek input from the community collaborative? How will the community collaborative determine who will carry out which roles? How will the community collaborative determine the differing levels of responsibility and decision-making input for its members? It is also possible that the core team will choose to revisit its own membership and roles in both leadership and administration. Collective impact is more inclusive than traditional collaboration, and it encourages involvement and shared decision-making from a variety of stakeholders.

Backbone Organization

The backbone organization is one of the elements that sets collective impact apart from other collaborative efforts. Often the backbone organization is selected from organizations that already have representation in the collaborative, but it is not uncommon for collaboratives to be flexible in their selection methods and their criteria (Klempin 2016, 2). However the backbone organization is chosen, its leadership should be committed to the success of the collective impact initiative.

From a financial perspective, the backbone organization may also provide staff to support the collaborative's effort. For the ORP, the School of Government, with financial support from Blue Cross NC, provided a \$10,000 stipend to supplement the funds from local organizations to hire or divert an existing employee's time to the project. The intent was to ensure support for work on the ORP to replace a portion of the employee's existing workload. In some cases, an employer assigned the project-manager role to one of its employees without reducing that employee's existing workload. In these cases, project managers became overwhelmed and were not able to fulfill their roles as effectively, decreasing their probability of long-term success. Project managers were encouraged to have weekly check-ins with the core team. While community teams generally met once a month, it was important for the core team to meet more often. Discussion points for these weekly check-ins often focused on plans for the next community meeting, next steps in the project overall, and resource constraints.

Project managers were also asked to work with the core team to develop a communication plan. The communication plan included details about how the team members would share information. For example, would the team use an online system, like Google Docs or Microsoft Teams? For the duration of the ORP, the teams were given access to Sakai, the learning-management system used by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This provided team members an online platform where they could upload documents and send messages to each other. Whether a collaborative chooses to use a single, integrated software platform or chooses simply to communicate via email, the key considerations are who will be responsible for managing the communication and what types of information should be shared.

In addition to the local support provided by the project manager or other team-member organizations, there may be an opportunity to partner with an external organization for additional support. This was the case in the ORP. The School of Government served as a supplemental backbone organization, training participants, providing encouragement, and facilitating communication. The School also provided each ORP team a faculty liaison. Liaisons visited teams during community-team meetings, provided advice, and connected teams with additional resources.

One final note about roles and responsibilities: There will be a sizeable number of people who would like to participate but cannot devote a great deal of time to the project. They may show up at community meetings sporadically, for example. The collaborative may decide to give different members different amounts of decision-making authority. This needs to be done openly and consistently, so that everyone is aware of and okay with the differing levels of authority. While many collaboratives welcome any involvement in their efforts, those individuals who are able to make a consistent time commitment and who are associated with organizations doing most of the work should have more input than those whose involvement is inconsistent. Community collaboratives can become very large and difficult to manage if everyone is provided the same level of authority.

Meeting Facilitation

Because community collaboratives can grow large and may be difficult to manage, another consideration for administrators is who will take on the task of facilitating the meetings. Meetings are where much of the initial work of collective impact takes place. In these meetings, collaboratives will establish roles and responsibilities, determine ground rules, brainstorm the problem, and map the stakeholders. Later in the process, meetings determine the collaborative's vision, goals, and objectives, and develop shared measures for the action plan. Meetings may also be scheduled to share information, revisit some aspects decided early on, or evaluate progress. Meetings must be planned and executed to use team members' time productively.

When convening large groups of people with different backgrounds and different levels of power, it can sometimes be difficult to ensure that all participants feel heard and valued. People with no or limited experience facilitating large group conversations may not be able to effectively manage these meetings. In the ORP, some teams quickly realized that they could benefit from support for meeting facilitation.

As stated earlier, ideally a staff member from the backbone organization is assigned as project manager for the collective impact project. The project manager should either already have experience facilitating meetings or should be sent for training on meeting facilitation. Since the project manager will be responsible for maintaining communication between team members and organizing meetings, this person is generally the logical choice to facilitate meetings.

The facilitator should ensure that all participants are treated equally in meetings. The facilitator organizes and moderates the discussion and tries to prevent any one voice or interest from overpowering the others. In the absence of a skilled facilitator, participants can become more focused on how the discussion is being managed than on the issue itself. Perceived disparities in who gets recognized or how frequently the stronger voices are acknowledged can be a serious distraction; it can also cause participants to lose interest, take a back seat to participating in the discussions, or even simply quit coming to meetings. Having a facilitator who skillfully observes these kinds of meeting dynamics is critical to project success in collective impact.

Lessons from the ORP Teams

ORP project managers were responsible for organizing the meetings, developing the agendas, and coordinating all communications with stakeholder groups and the School. Skilled group facilitation is a defined element of the backbone agency's responsibilities, so ORP teams were encouraged to select project managers with good facilitation skills.¹ However, there was wide disparity in the level of training and experience in meeting facilitation among project managers.

Because there were significant differences between the project managers' backgrounds and the teams' resources, a workshop on basic facilitation skills was developed to ameliorate disparities in facilitation experience. It focused on specific functions and tools for facilitation, including developing productive meeting agendas to maximize input from all stakeholders,

1. A follow-up to Kania and Kramer's (2011) influential article on collective impact lists six "essential functions" that backbones serve: "providing overall strategic direction, *facilitating dialogue between partners*, managing data collection and analysis, handling communications, coordinating community outreach, and mobilizing funding" (Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer 2012; emphasis added).

managing meeting dynamics, and tailoring decision-making processes to stakeholder makeup. The [resource packet for that training](#) is available in appendix 4.1 (see pages 41–49). There are a number of online and in-person facilitation-training opportunities available. The same variety of personalities and power dynamics that makes collective impact a strong approach can also make meetings especially challenging to facilitate. This variety can greatly influence the willingness of participants to speak up, engage in debate, and openly share their opinions.

While the project managers often took primary responsibility for meeting facilitation, some ORP teams found different ways to distribute facilitation responsibilities. This distribution often evolved into one of three approaches:

1. group facilitation becoming a shared responsibility,
2. the project manager transitioning to a designated external facilitator, and
3. group facilitation being requested later in the process as part of a broader call for support.

An example of each of these models is described below.

Onslow: Core Stakeholders as Co-facilitators

The Onslow County team designed a unique approach to group facilitation. Although initially the project manager acted as facilitator, the team evolved into using a “co-facilitation” approach. Members of the core team shared the responsibilities, alternating the task from meeting to meeting so that all members were involved. At each meeting, different team members facilitated different portions of the meeting agenda. In a single meeting, for example, one member would lead the welcome/introductions portion, a second led the discussion on data sharing, a third managed the group discussion, and a fourth led the discussion about next steps. Sophia Hayes described the benefits of this approach for the Onslow team: “This opened up the discussion a lot more, and members were more willing to share with the group. We . . . set up our meeting room for face-to-face communication instead of a classroom setting, which helped. . . . Especially during the COVID-19 experience using virtual meetings, the co-facilitation style helped increase the interaction we get from our members in attendance. The conversation seems to flow easily since we have about four core members leading each item on the agenda.”

Wilkes: The Project Manager as Temporary Facilitator

The Wilkes County team started its work with the project manager temporarily serving as the group facilitator while a skilled external facilitator assumed this role. A trained facilitator who was well-known to the community was willing to do the work, but she was not immediately available.

During the interim, the project manager and the facilitator stayed in close communication. Meetings were coordinated to allow the facilitator to attend, so she was able to become familiar with the goals, strategies, and group dynamics. This prepared her well to assume the facilitator role when she became available, and it ensured a smooth transition. This group pointed out that a skilled facilitator knows how to ask the tough questions that allow discussions to go deeper. It becomes safer to disagree and to explore the nuances of an issue when an outside party facilitates. Heather Murphey of the Wilkes County team described having a designated facilitator as “essential to group discussions. This person begins and ends the meeting on time, sets expectations for participation, designs processes so that everyone’s voices are heard, manages conflict, and promotes diversity of thinking. Collective impact only works when there is a strong backbone entity—this includes a facilitator. I can’t imagine being without one, and we never were.”

Transylvania: A Team Requesting Assistance

In a few cases, special assistance was requested as the teams became more immersed in complex issues, such as developing key performance indicators and defining goals and strategies (see chapter 7 to learn more about key performance indicators and shared measures). One example is the Transylvania County team. Kristen Gentry, the team's project manager, was highly capable but had only 10 percent availability for a role that needed 50 percent. She later pointed out that the group tended to have great, ambitious goals, but she was the person most often tasked with doing the work.

In the final months of the grant timeline, the Transylvania County team was provided an external expert. She was primarily tasked with helping the stakeholder group develop its key performance indicators, defining roles and responsibilities, and assigning specific tasks to bring the project to closure, but she also provided some facilitation assistance. The presence of an outside expert was instrumental in helping this ORP team complete its work and position itself to continue working beyond the funding period.

Outside support can help when members of the backbone organization become overwhelmed. As outsiders, such support staff can also probe and push group members to be specific, to get clear about what is doable, to have realistic expectations, and to share the responsibilities. Gentry recalled, "It was difficult for me, as the initial facilitator for the first eighteen months, to be able to ask [the hard] questions. . . . She was better able to help delegate tasks and ask, 'Who is going to do this? How long will it take? [The project manager] can't be doing 95 percent of the work here. These ideas are great, but we have to share the work when we are actually putting the pieces together.'"

Convening the Community Team

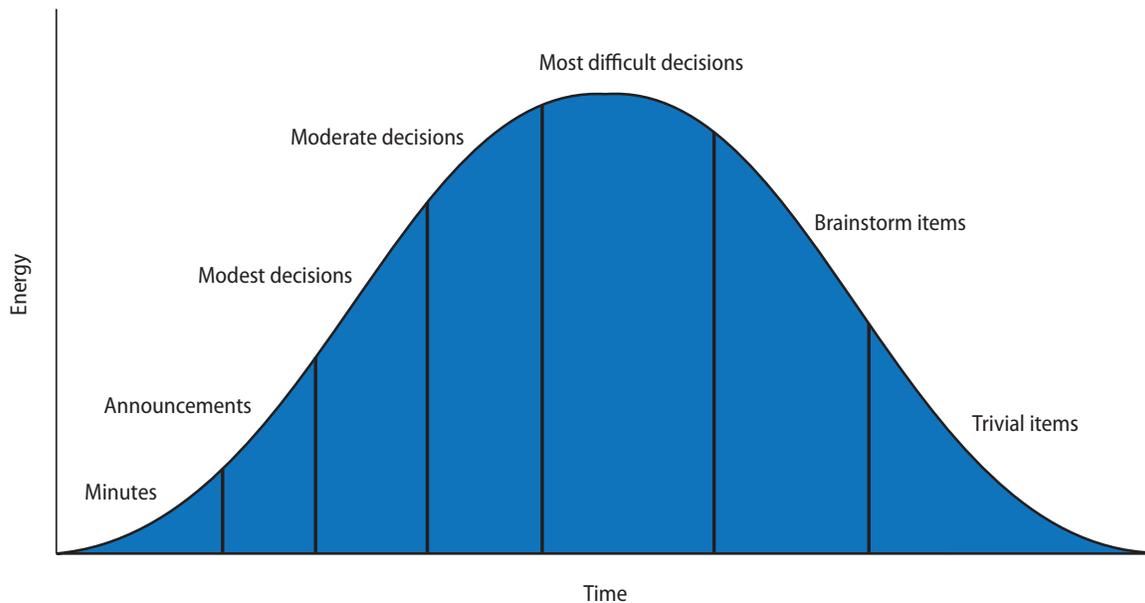
At some point, fairly early in the process, the core team will need to convene a larger group of stakeholders. The point at which this initial community team meeting will be convened will vary from place to place. As stated earlier, many teams will build on existing collaborative efforts. The ORP teams' initial steps were closely guided by the School project team. Each ORP team was encouraged to establish its core leadership and identify a project manager before convening the first meeting with the community. Chapter 5 describes the steps necessary to identify and engage a wide range of stakeholders. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the considerations that are necessary to help community meetings run productively.

For each meeting, it is essential to have an agenda and a set of goals. For ORP teams, the goals were primarily developed by the core team. This work may also be done by the entire collaborative. The meeting goals will initially be structured around the preliminary steps in the collective impact process and later will primarily be related to the implementation of the collaborative's strategies and monitoring progress on the action plan.² Collaboratives may also choose to devote some or all of the time in community meetings to exploring the shared understanding and root causes of the problem that is at the heart of their efforts.

Once goals for a meeting are established, the agenda can be crafted around those goals. As seen in the agenda bell curve in figure 4.1 (also included in the [Facilitation Training Resource](#)

2. See the [Resources section](#) and [appendixes](#) of this chapter for suggested meeting guides and the forms that were provided to ORP teams to help them structure their early meetings.

Figure 4.1. The Agenda Bell Curve



packet in appendix 4.1), agendas should devote the majority of the meeting time to the most complex decisions. Those decision items that are expected to require the most significant levels of debate or discussion should be designated with the most substantial blocks of time.

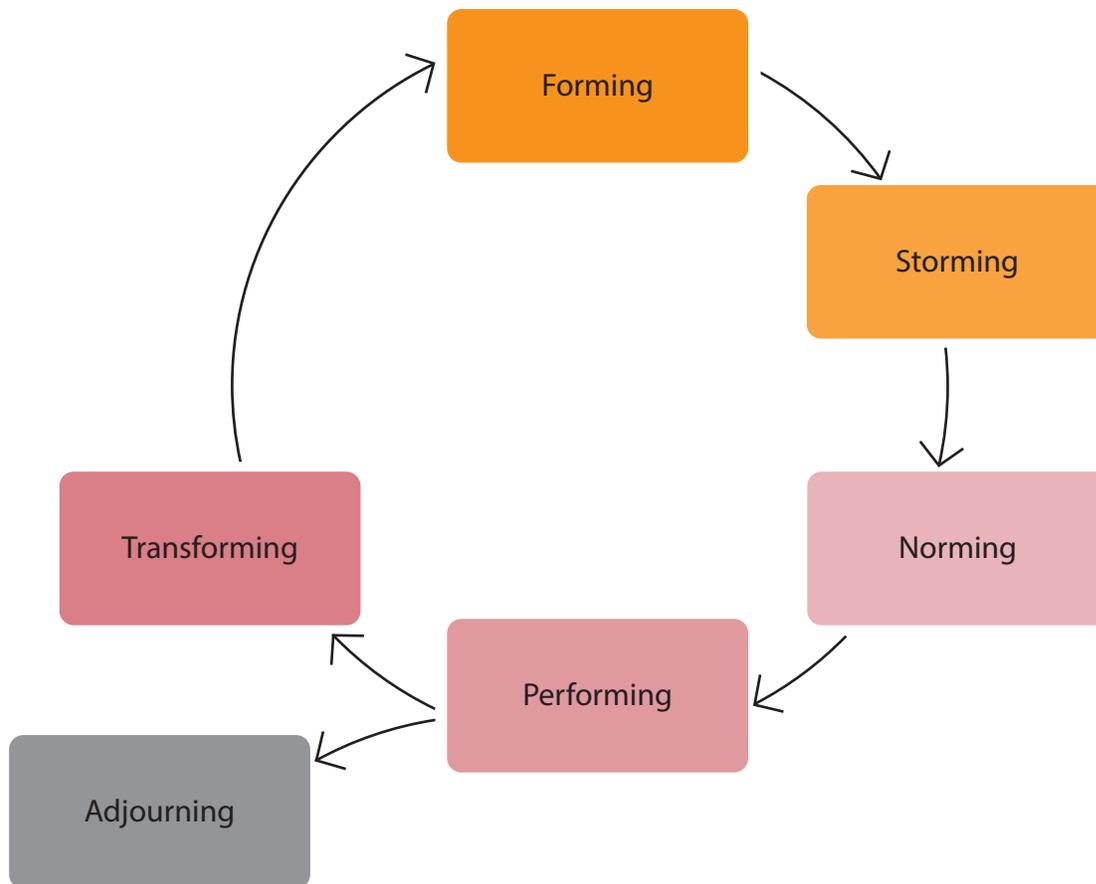
Some of the time in community meetings should be intended to be sure everyone is updated on the collaborative's progress. A quick review of the process, vision, and goals can help ensure that new members feel they are on the same page as other members, and it also serves as reinforcement for returning participants. Caution should be taken, however, not to spend an inordinate amount of time on catch-up. It is inevitable that members will miss meetings, and some will only show up occasionally. It will handicap the rest of the group if too much meeting time is devoted to filling in what people have missed. New members who join the group after the effort is well underway may be welcomed into the group but should be guided to resources they can use to develop a deeper understanding of the collaborative's progress independent of the meetings. These issues highlight the value of having a remotely accessible platform for documents and communication. Participants can use this to read the minutes of missed meetings and see the products of a given meeting.

ORP teams were encouraged to spend time at their first community meeting establishing a set of ground rules that they collectively wanted to engage for their meetings and interactions, and they were provided with [instructions and a worksheet for doing so](#) (see appendix 4.2). Ground rules that are created by the collaborative's members, as opposed to being told to them, promote buy-in from the whole group. Ground rules should cover aspects of group collaboration that members believe are important. They can cover process rules, behavioral norms, and task-related expectations. For example, a group may decide that meetings must begin and end

on time to be respectful of everyone's time. A second example is that members may commit to completing all assigned tasks on time.

In addition to ground rules, it is important to recognize how group dynamics can shape the success or failure of a collaborative effort and that these group dynamics will shift over time. As figure 4.2 illustrates, groups go through stages as they develop.

Figure 4.2. Stages of Small-Group Formation



Adapted and expanded from Tuckman (1965, 396).

When a collaborative is initially *forming*, members are generally optimistic and excited about the endeavor they are undertaking. The behaviors of the group during this early phase are centered around determining the ground rules. Collaboratives also need to undergo brainstorming to define the problem, identify stakeholders, and establish a vision.

During the *storming* phase, members learn to work together. This may involve adjustment issues, including arguing and choosing sides. Members may feel uncomfortable with this new way of working with others, and confidence in the group's success may wane.

As the group grows more comfortable working on the project, it enters the *norming* phase. At this point, members are able to give and receive constructive feedback, and confidence in

the group's success increases. Behaviorally, members avoid conflict and conform to established ground rules.

A group may eventually reach a point where members believe they have accomplished enough of their original goals to consider new opportunities. During this *transforming* phase, members may envision new and unanticipated goals. For ORP teams, many began looking beyond the opioid crisis to consider how their teams might address other complex problems in their communities. For some, the COVID-19 pandemic made this choice for them. Others began to consider how the collective resources of their group might be brought to bear on social issues beyond public health.

In some cases, collaboratives reach a crossroads called the *adjourning* phase. The initial tasks and goals have been completed, so the question becomes whether to disband the group. Members may feel sad about the prospect of the group disbanding and a loss of the attachments they formed to other members and to the project itself. Members must decide whether to transform and accomplish new goals or disband.

Throughout these phases of the group's life cycle, it is the leadership's responsibility to recognize the members' feelings to manage the group in a way that demonstrates empathy with these feelings. Understanding the group dynamics that are at play at any given time provides a partial road map for how to direct the group in a way that is most productive. For example, if a group is in the storming phase, it is critical that it be able to celebrate small wins or partial successes. During the action-planning process, some small goals should be built in so that these early celebrations are possible.

Other Considerations for Collaboratives

The importance of communication to any collaborative effort cannot be overstated, and this is particularly the case in collective impact. A collective impact team's success relies on a shared vision and shared measures. The only way to ensure that members are continuing on the same path toward accomplishing the vision is by sharing progress. Through this communication effort, members learn when others have encountered a hurdle, when existing resources have proven insufficient, when goals have been accomplished, and a host of other important pieces of information. Successful collaboratives require clear and frequent communication.

Ideally, a successful collaborative will have a good balance of participation. If some members believe they are doing all of the work while other members appear to be getting undue credit, this can lead to toxic group dynamics. The word *collective* in *collective impact* refers to people's ability to accomplish more by working together toward shared goals than they can in their individual efforts. To make this work, members cannot feel like others are taking advantage of them. If some members of the group hold more-prestigious positions in key organizations or in the community at large, there is a tendency to give them a greater share of the credit, even if they are not handling the majority of the work.

There are a lot of moving parts in a collective impact initiative. That is another reason why good communication is so important. Members of the collaborative need to be aware of their own activities as individuals but also be aware of how those activities fit in with the activities of other members and the group's overall goals. How the group works together is as important as why the group is working together. Awareness of how the group is performing can allow for early interventions when problems arise.

When considering convening a community-wide group to engage in collective impact, conveners must lay a solid foundation for the work. Everyone who is engaged in the process will be excited and anxious to start working on a problem they likely care passionately about. The base must be strong in order to sustain the collaborative over the years that it will take to be successful. This foundational strength begins with the commitment of a core-leadership team, the establishment of backbone support (including trained facilitation), and the establishment of ground rules for group meetings.

Members should be actively engaged throughout the project. Periodic check-ins should be a part of their ongoing work to make sure the process is working well for everyone. A successful collaborative needs an environment of trust. Members need to be willing to hear divergent points of view, and there should be a cohesive commitment to shared outcomes.

Skilled facilitators recognize behaviors that constrain these outcomes, and this recognition ultimately affects the growth and development of the collaborative. Facilitators are critical observers who draw out the strengths that every member brings to the discussions. Open participation amplifies a collaborative's ability to develop a cohesive vision and implement successful outcomes. Regardless of the facilitation model chosen, this is a primary role for the facilitator. Having every stakeholder fully engaged in every decision is important to the success of collective impact.

For collective impact to realize its full potential, all participants need to feel like their views and opinions matter, that they have some skin in the game, and that their interests are being recognized and respected. Engagement of all stakeholders is important to inform the collective wisdom of the group and to develop ongoing commitment to their shared vision. Achieving these outcomes requires skilled group facilitation.

Resources

- Informed Decisions* (blog). 2016. "Answers to Essential Questions: Creating Ground Rules or Group Agreements." August 16, 2016. <https://informeddecisionsblog.wordpress.com/2016/08/16/answers-to-essential-questions-creating-ground-rules-or-group-agreements/>.
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- University of Minnesota Office of Human Resources. n.d. "Managing Team Dynamics." Supervisory Development Program website. <https://supervising.umn.edu/module-4-leading-teams/managing-team-dynamics>.
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Appendix 4.1. Resource Packet for Facilitation Training

Opioid Response Project
Facilitation Training
Resource Packet

THE
OPIOID
RESPONSE
PROJECT



Part 1. Basics of Meeting Facilitation

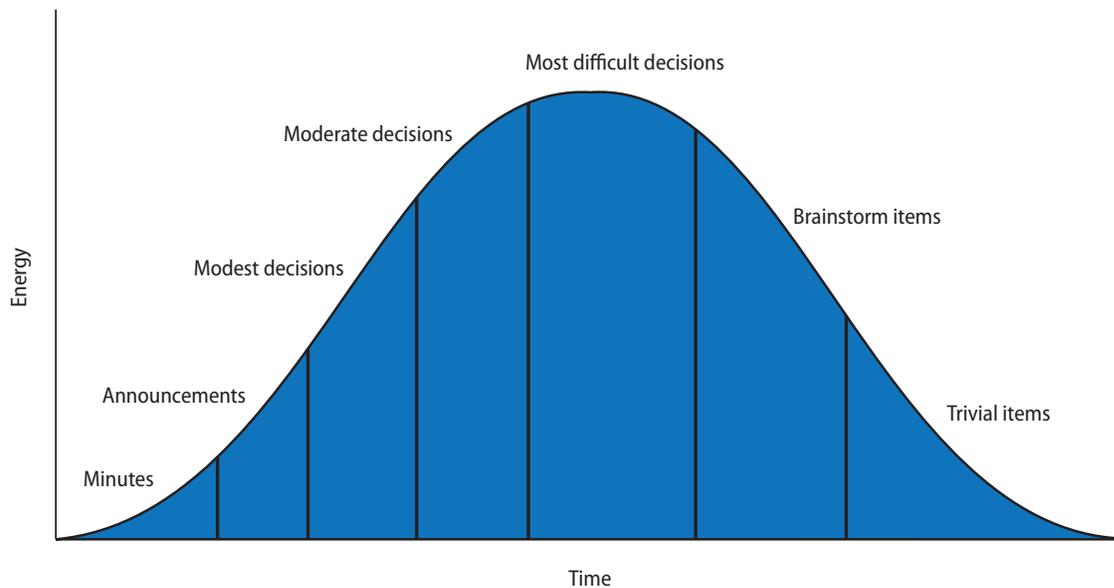
Sample Agenda

The Agenda Bell

Sample Agenda

The Agenda Bell

Figure 4.1. The Agenda Bell Curve



Approval of the minutes. It happens at the beginning of the meeting and is done quickly.

Announcements. These are short, straightforward, and factual and should not occupy more than 10% of the total meeting time. If they do occupy more than 10%, select the most important to announce and put the rest on an announcement sheet. Announcements should not stimulate any questions except, Could you repeat that?

Items for decision, however, need to be tiered in terms of increasing toughness. The agenda organizer goes back to the rule of halves and divides the decision items into three piles.

Easy decision items. Items that need action but have little controversy and low “fatefulness,” and can be handled relatively quickly.

Moderately tough decision items.

Difficult decision items. These should be addressed in the middle of the meeting, beginning about 1/3 of the way through the meeting and ending about 2/3 of the way through. It represents the most difficult issues up for decision that day. These issues may not be the most difficult ever, but they are the most difficult in the batch or group that is being considered at that time.

Why place the difficult items in the middle of the meeting? First, late arrivers will have arrived. Second, early leavers will not yet have gone. Third, psychological energy and attention is at its highest. Fourth, physical energy and attention is at its highest. These are group-level resources that can be brought to bear to assist in the decision-making process. Instead of waiting until the bitter end, when most have left and others are fatigued, this process is one that locates the toughest items with the greatest group resources to deal with them.

Brainstorming. Brainstorming at this point in the meeting allows for some decompression while interaction within the group continues. Second, as just noted, because these items are

somewhat future-oriented, it is possible to actually re-craft them, make suggestions, and make a difference. We are seeking to end the meeting on a more pleasant note, both emotionally and “interactionally.”

If there are some hard feelings based on the decisions made earlier, there is a chance for feathers to be smoothed and feelings to be mellowed a bit. When interaction around “non-decisional” items takes place, it allows the meeting to wrap up on a positive note, if at all possible. That is much to be desired, both because of the short-term benefits (the next meeting the participants go into) and because of the long-term benefits (how they feel when they open the meeting notice for your next meeting).

Trivial item. To finish the meeting, choose some short, non-controversial item. It could be a simple adjournment, a thank you, or outlining an agenda for the next meeting.

Source: John E. Tropman, *Making Meetings Work: Achieving High Quality Group Decisions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 34–37, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483328737.n4>.

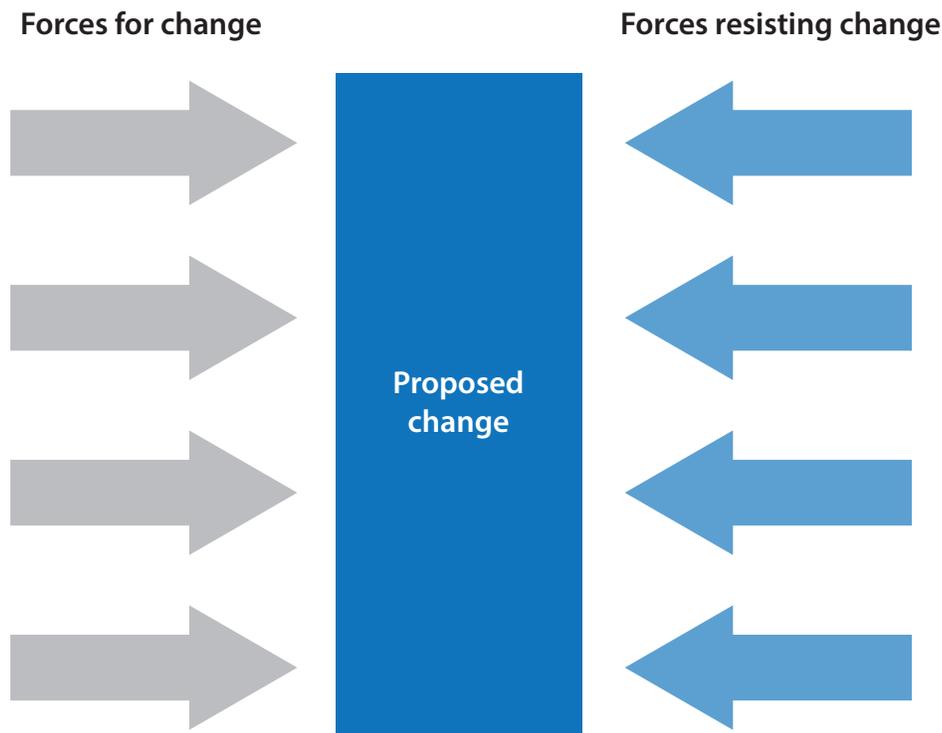
Part 2. Tools for Group Brainstorming

Force-Field Analysis

Fishbone (Cause-and-Effect Analysis)

Force-Field Analysis

The Force-Field Analysis is a useful decision-making tool. For change to occur, the forces resisting change must be minimized, while the forces supporting change must be enhanced. The first step in this process is identifying the forces for and against change (see the illustration below).



Conducting the Analysis

Using a blank sheet of paper, or the worksheet available from the link at the bottom of the page, place your objective at the center. Next, in groups or as individuals, identify as many forces that can help drive the change as possible. Both internal and external drivers should be included. Drivers are not only the stakeholders who can influence the change. They also include resources that may be available, situational factors, or cultural forces. After the driving forces have been added to the left side of your sheet, identify the forces that are resistant to change and add those to the right side of your sheet.

Using the Completed Force-Field Analysis

The completed analysis can be used to identify strategies to improve the potential for success in implementing the change or accomplishing the objective. Some strategies would be designed to counteract the forces opposed to change. Others would be intended to support the forces that are promoting change.

Adapted from "Force Field Analysis: Analyzing the Pressures for and against Change," Mindtools.com, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_06.htm.

Fishbone Diagrams (Cause and Effect)

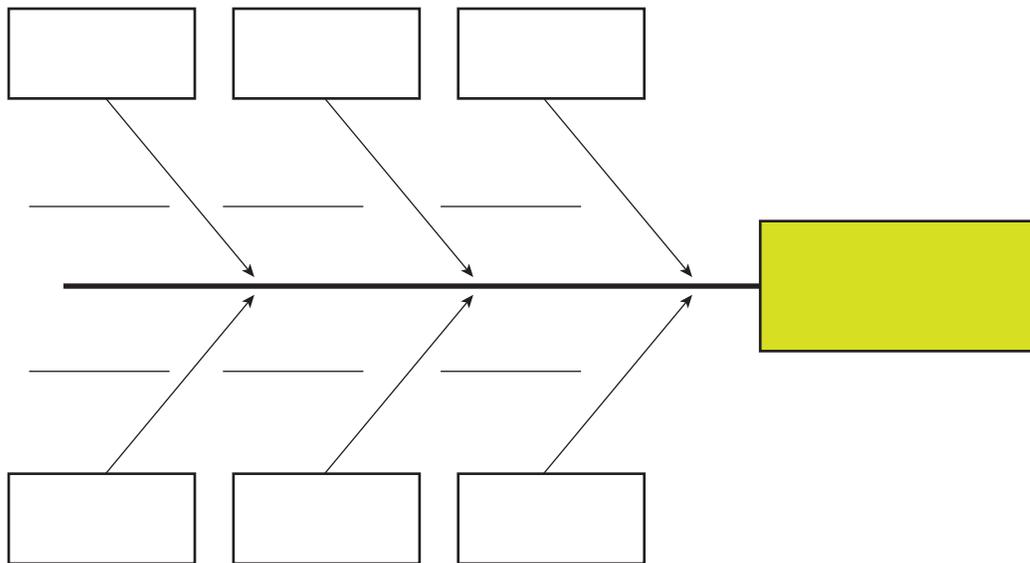
The Fishbone Diagram is a useful tool for finding the root cause(s) of a problem or for identifying why a process/program has stalled.

First, identify the problem and write it in a box on one side of a large piece of paper. Draw a horizontal line out from the box.

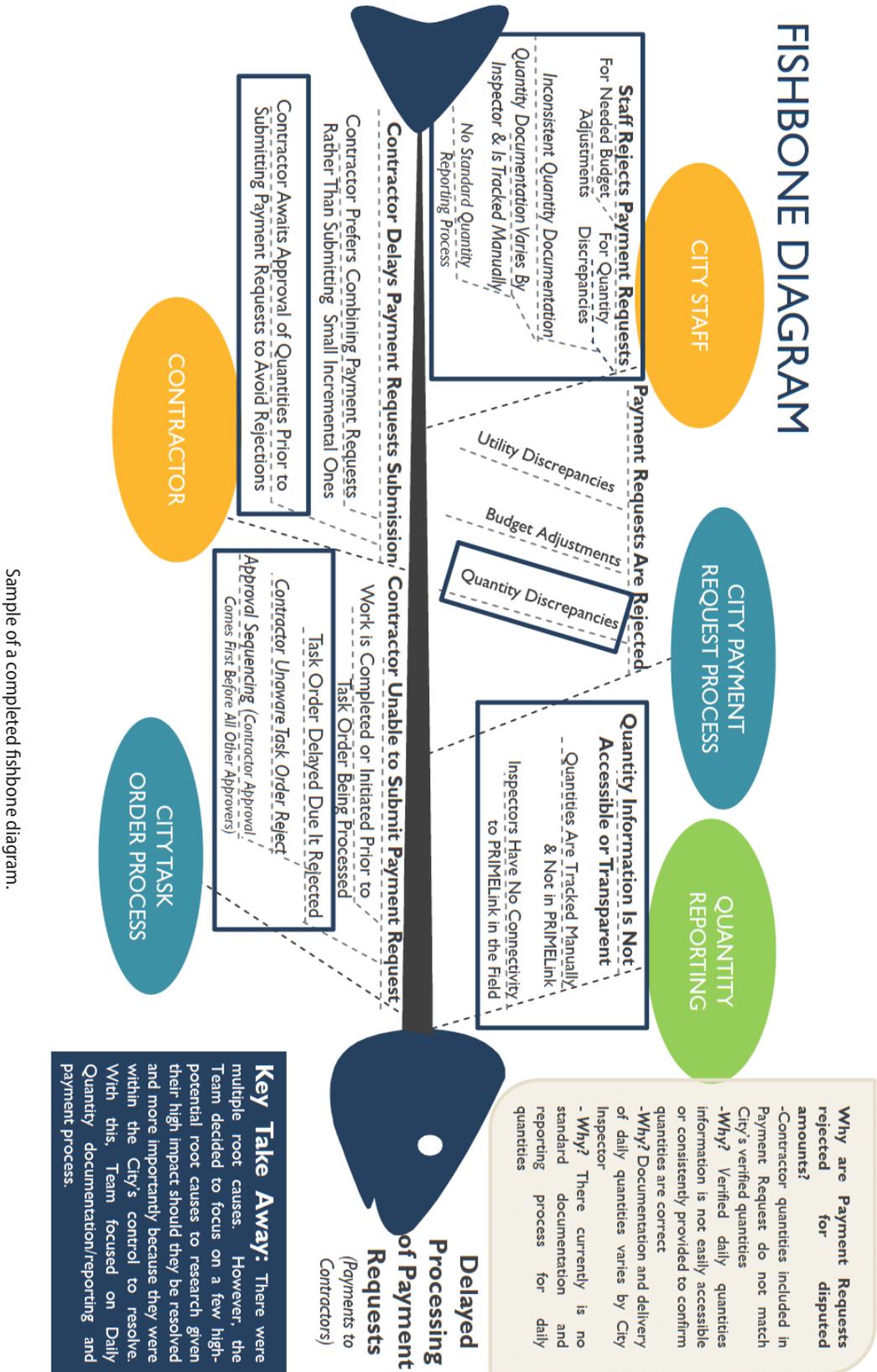
Second, brainstorm the factors (categories) that may contribute to the problem. This could be stakeholder groups, individuals, resources (or lack of resources), cultural or social forces, or other factors. Each participant should write the factors on individual post-it notes as they brainstorm.

Third, combine the groups brainstormed list, removing any duplicates. Write the list of factors in boxes along the horizontal line (see sample diagram below).

Fourth, brainstorm potential causes and record under each factor category. For example, if one category of causal factors is resources, a cause under that category could be the expiration of a funding source.



The final step is to analyze the completed fishbone diagram (see the sample of a completed fishbone diagram on the following page). Determine which of the listed causes are contributing most significantly to the problem. You may need to do further investigation or research to gain a better understanding of the issues. Once that research is complete, develop strategies to mitigate the causes of the problems.



Sample of a completed fishbone diagram.

Adapted from "Cause and Effect Analysis: Identifying the Likely Causes of Problems," Mindtools.com, accessed July 29, 2021,

Appendix 4.2. Ground-Rules Worksheet

Team

As a team, you are concerned about not only getting the work done but also *how* the work gets done. Ground rules are an important tool for helping individuals function together as a team. They reflect what is important to the members about how they work together. Ideally, the rules are set at the first meeting, allowing them to become second nature to the team. Discussing ground rules after problems arise is much more difficult.

Below are two options for leading the discussion and developing ground rules for your group. You may opt to use questions from both, but we encourage you to take the time to explore and develop a set of ground rules early in the process and to revisit them as new team members join or as the team changes. They should be reviewed if the team is not functioning well. You may also consider including team values in your ground rules.

What you will need for setting ground rules: a facilitator, flip chart paper.

Setting Team Ground Rules (Option 1)

Ground rules articulate a set of expected behaviors for group conduct.

When thinking about ground rules for your team it is helpful to reflect on previous experiences and what have made those satisfactory or not. Below are some questions you can ask your group to start the conversation about and draft ground rules.

1. Ask the group members to think about the best group discussions they have been a part of, and reflect on what made these discussions so satisfying.
2. Next, ask them to think about the worst group discussions in which they have participated and reflect on what made these discussions so unsatisfactory.
3. For each of the positive characteristics identified, ask members to suggest three things the group could do to ensure that these characteristics are present.
4. For each of the negative characteristics identified, ask members to suggest three things the group could do to ensure that these characteristics are not present.
5. Use suggestions to draft a set of ground rules to which you all agree, and distribute them in writing.
6. Periodically, ask the group to reflect on whether the ground rules established at the beginning of the semester are working, and make adjustments as necessary.

(Adapted from Stephen D. Brookfield and Stephen Preskill, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 53–54.)

Setting Team Ground Rules (Option 2)

Three elements that can be important in establishing ground rules are task, process, and norms. These elements can be of differing importance to members depending on working styles and, as such, addressing all serves to respond to varied working styles and preferences.

- Tasks – Expected activities and deliverables for the team.
- Process – How the activities will be carried out.
- Norms – Ways in which team members will interact with each other.

Steps in Setting Ground Rules

1. Set aside time at a team meeting to discuss ground rules. All team members should have a chance to provide input.
2. Ask team members to discuss prior group experiences. What worked well? What created problems?
3. As a group, describe what you'd like to happen when you work together.
4. Write down the ground rules to which the team has agreed. Each member should have a copy.
5. Ground rules should be reviewed periodically.

Questions to Ask

Ground rules for tasks:

- What are the expectations and deliverables for the team? (Review team charter if applicable)
- What does each member bring to the table?
- How will tasks be assigned?

Ground rules for processes:

- What are the standards for meeting attendance, promptness, and participation?
- What roles need to be filled (time keeper, note taker, facilitator) and how will they be assigned?
- How will the team gather data and feedback from team members and other stakeholders?
- How will team members share information?
- How will performance be monitored?

Ground rules for norms:

- How will decisions be made?
- How will problems be solved?
- How will the team handle conflicts?
- How does the team define respectful behavior?
- How will team members be held accountable?
- How will team members communicate with each other (voice mail, e-mail, etc.)?

(Adapted from University of Minnesota Office of Human Resources, "Managing Team Dynamics," Supervisory Development Program website, accessed July 29, 2021, <https://supervising.umn.edu/module-4-leading-teams/managing-team-dynamics>.)

Sample Ground Rules

Sample 1

- Everyone will participate and take ownership of group projects.
- When appropriate, subgroups will be assigned to work on specific activities.
- Team members will complete assignments on time.
- Meetings will start and end on time—no backtracking if someone is late.
- Each meeting will have a note taker (rotating task), who will distribute notes and record decisions and assignments.
- Anyone who is absent from a meeting is responsible for finding out what they missed.
- Members will respect the value of each individual's contribution.
- Member will present feedback in a *constructive* manner only.
- Resolution of differences will typically be by majority decision, but on key issues the group will reach consensus.

Sample 2

- Members will be at all meetings (except for illness and emergencies). If you can't attend, notify the facilitator in advance.
- Agendas will be distributed before each meeting.
- Meetings will start and end on time.
- The group will listen respectfully to the opinions of all team members by
 - Using active listening.
 - Not using "killer phrases" or negative body language.
 - Brainstorming without editing.
 - Avoiding side conversations.
 - Talking from *their own* beliefs and experiences—avoid blanket statements such as, "Everyone feels that. . . ." Instead try "I feel that. . . ."
- Information from the meetings is public and should be shared with other stakeholders, but confidentiality will be respected when requested.
- The team owns all ideas and concepts—do not talk disrespectfully about team activities in public.

Sample 3

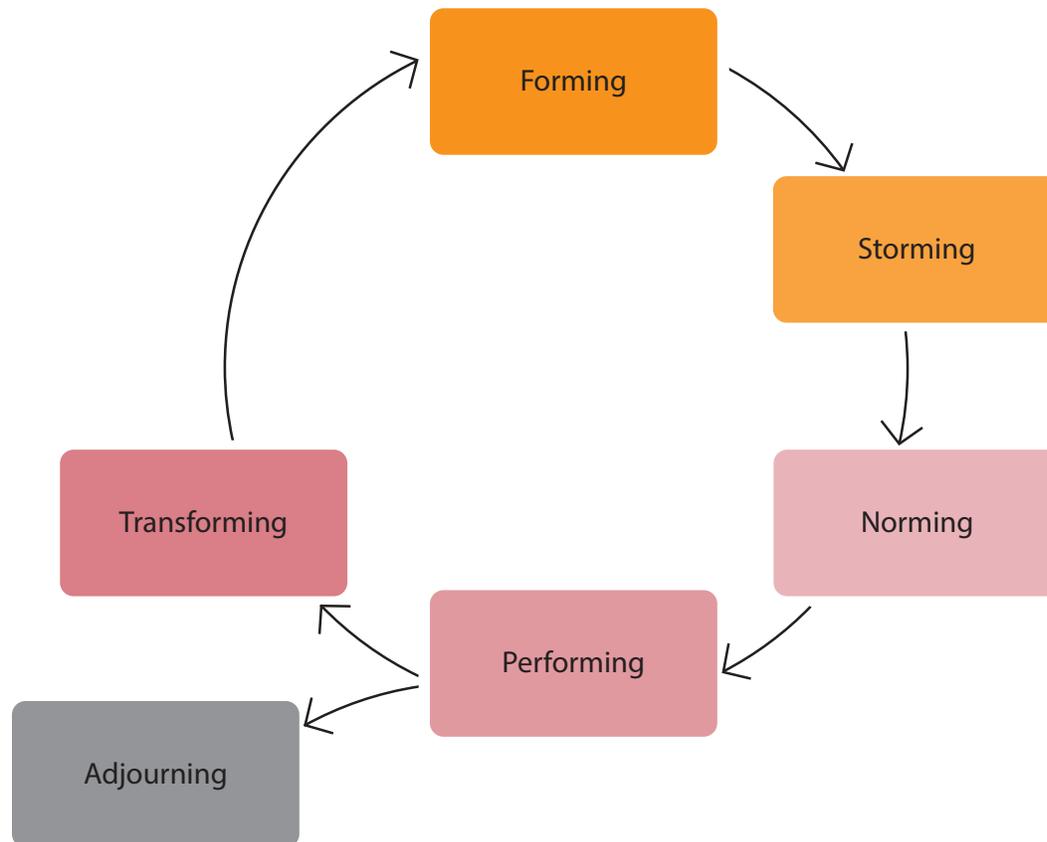
- Meetings will start and end on time.
- Meetings will follow an agenda prepared by the leader / approved by members a day before / set during the prior meeting.
- Agenda items will address team goals, health and functioning of the team, and progress reports.
- Members will complete the tasks they have committed to.
- Only one person will speak at a time.
- Members will not check their phones during the meeting.

After the ground rules are drafted, please upload a copy to Sakai.

Appendix 4.3. Team Dynamics and Resources

Team Dynamics

Stages of Small-Group Formation



Adapted and expanded from Bruce W. Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin* 63, no. 6 (June): 396.

Emotional and Behavioral Dynamics within Small Groups during Each Stage of Formation

Stage	Members' feelings	Members' behaviors
Forming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excitement, anticipation, optimism • Initial, tentative attachments to the group • Fear, anxiety, and suspicion about the work ahead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to define the task and how to accomplish it • Determining acceptable group behavior and how to deal with problems • Deciding what information needs to be gathered
Storming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to the task and to doing things differently from how members have done them before • Fluctuating confidence in the team's chances for success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguing even when members agree on the real issues • Becoming defensive and competitive—choosing sides • Questioning the wisdom of those who selected the project and appointed members of the team
Norming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New confidence in the ability to give constructive criticism • Acceptance between members of the team • Relief that things will eventually work out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking harmony by avoiding conflict • Sense of cohesion, common team spirit and shared goals • Agreeing and conforming to team ground rules and boundaries
Performing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members have insights into personal and group processes • Satisfied with the team's progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructive self-change • Anticipate and prevent team problems • Feel closely attached to other members of the team
Transforming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members envision new and greater goals that supersede traditional group expectations • Members exceed traditional outcomes to strive for un-anticipated goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformative individual and group insight • Envision goals that transcend the organization and team • Perceive the team has the potential to transform the organization and/or systemic change
Adjourning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment to members of the team and to the project • Sadness in having to disband the team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to resist dissolving the group • Pledge loyalty to members of the team

Successful Team Recipe

- Clarified team goals*: everyone understands and agrees to the team's purpose and goals
- Implemented improvement plan*: members of the team decide what advice, information, assistance, training, or other resources they may need to accomplish their task
- Clearly defined roles*: every member of the team has an important role to play in accomplishing the task
- Clear communication*: members of the team have a process and can depend on one another to pass along important information
- Beneficial team behaviors*: team members know how to advocate for their own ideas, seek input and feedback from others, build consensus, and keep conversations focused on the task
- Well-defined procedures*: members have a transparent decision-making process and members are aware of how they make decisions and reach agreement
- Balanced participation*: all members of the team contribute and participate in the task and the process using their natural talents and supporting others' efforts
- Established ground rules*: members have open discussions about how they will and will not behave within the group
- Awareness of group process*: members of the team are sensitive to how everyone is behaving and how the group works together
- Scientific approach*: the team relies on good data for solving problems, and it uses reliable information to reduce conflict and clarify appropriate courses of action

Source: Peter R. Scholtes, *Team Handbook: How to Use Teams to Improve Quality* (Madison, WI: Joiner Publishing, 1988).

Helpful Resources

Here is a suggested process to use for developing ground rules for your group:

http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/forming_ground_rules.pdf.

Here is an article that outlines eight ground rules for running meetings:

<https://hbr.org/2016/06/8-ground-rules-for-great-meetings>.

Here are some helpful thoughts on creating ground rules or group agreements:

<https://informeddecisionsblog.wordpress.com/2016/08/16/answers-to-essential-questions-creating-ground-rules-or-group-agreements/>.

This website provides a great set of tools and resources for managing a team:

<https://supervising.umn.edu/module-4-leading-teams/managing-team-dynamics>.

Chapter 5

Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement

Ricardo S. Morse

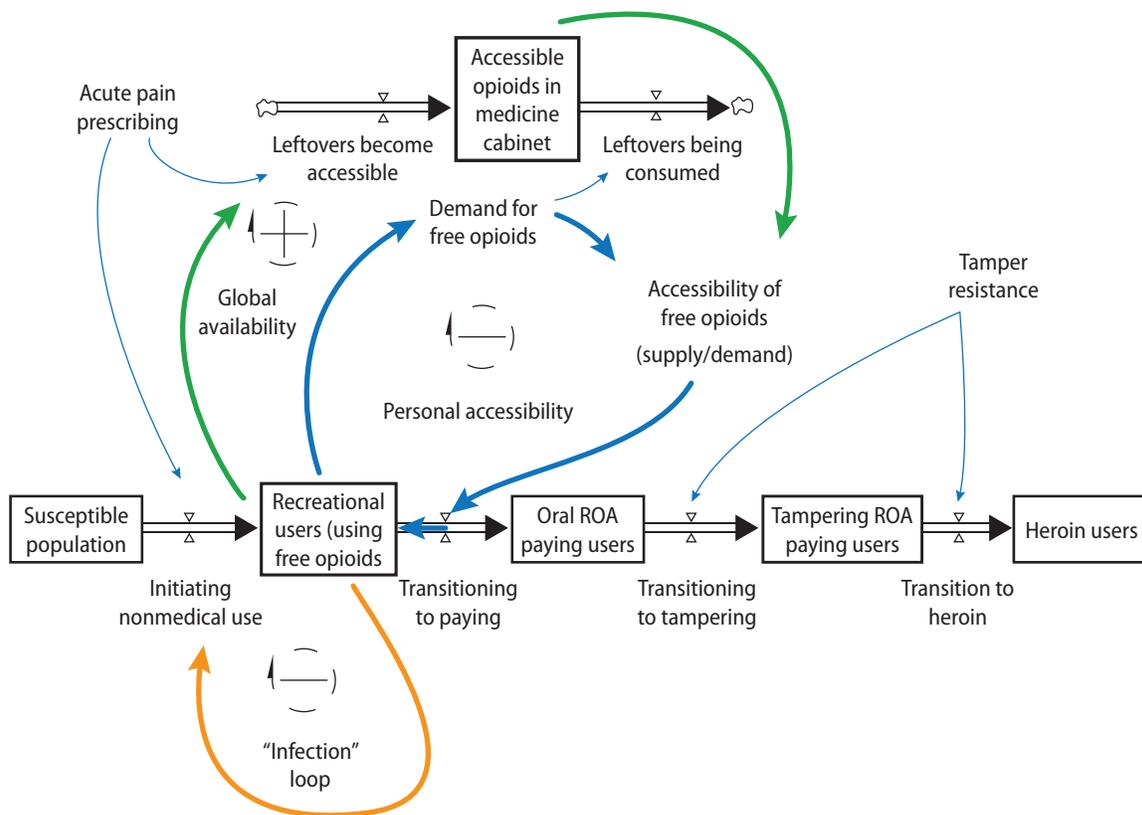
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Collective impact starts with the premise that too many groups and organizations are working in silos when the issues they care about demand collective or collaborative work across traditional boundaries. Complex public problems require people to come together, to work in and through partnerships. *Stakeholder analysis* is a tool to help local champions identify who needs to be at the table. *Stakeholder engagement* is the practice of inviting various stakeholders to engage in the collective effort at appropriate times and in appropriate ways.

Stakeholder analysis and engagement were first articulated and developed in the context of strategic planning. Organizations use strategic planning as a process for bringing organizational stakeholders together to develop a mission, a vision, and goals. Identifying and engaging stakeholders in this manner rests on the principle of “*no involvement, no commitment*” (Covey 2004, 151). In other words, if organizational leaders desire commitment around mission, vision, and goals, they need to involve all the stakeholders of the organization in developing them.

Stakeholder analysis in strategic planning is organization-oriented, yet the application of the stakeholder concept goes well beyond organizations. Democratic ideals are rooted in

Figure 5.1. Systems Model of the Opioid Problem



Adapted from Wakeland, Nielson, and Geissert (2015).

the idea that the stakeholders in a given community (or state, or nation) have a right to be involved in decisions that determine their destiny. Further, this understanding of the complex and interconnected nature of public problems illustrates that, as a practical matter, engaging stakeholders in a joint effort to address those problems is required. Thus today, one cannot think about collective impact to address community issues and create change without considering who the relevant stakeholders are and how they can be engaged in a collective effort around the issue.

This chapter provides a framework for understanding and analyzing stakeholders as well as thinking about when and how to engage them in collective impact processes.

Complex Public Issues and Analyzing Stakeholders

The increasingly interconnected nature of issues that communities face requires community leaders to think in terms of interconnected approaches to addressing them. Complex problems do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they should be thought of as existing in a system, with

different actors and organizations having different interests and influences on the problems themselves.

Furthermore, the fragmented nature of organizations that “own” pieces of the issues that the public cares about also demands that members of collaboratives think across the boundaries that they normally work within. Government jurisdictions rarely align neatly with the issues they are concerned with. The sectoral boundaries (between public, private, and nonprofit sectors as well as between policy areas such as health, education, and human services) also do not neatly align with the issues of concern. Thus, stakeholder analysis and engagement is not a desired add-on but a necessity if any of the groups tackling these problems want to make progress. Working alone in silos will not suffice.

Problem Mapping

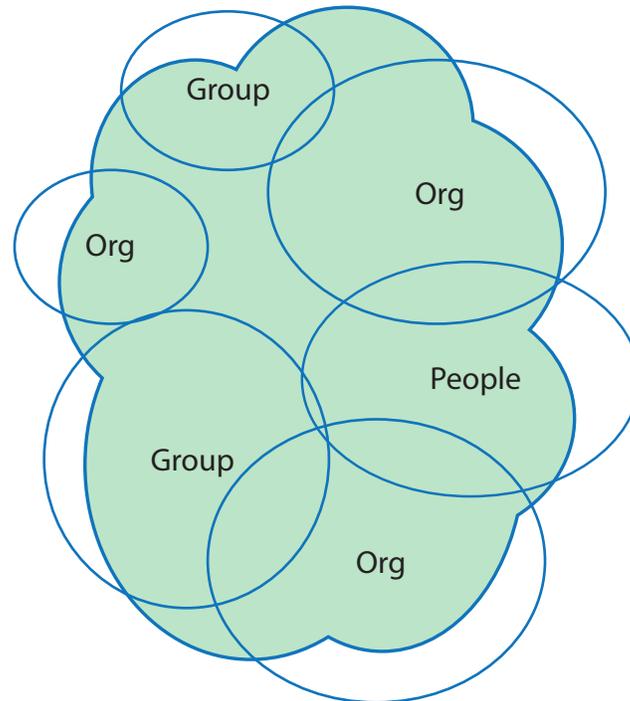
Thinking in terms of complex systems can be a precursor to fully appreciating the array of stakeholders connected to a particular issue. *Systems thinking* is the term used for the mental discipline, language, and associated set of tools for “seeing” and describing “multiple connections and interrelationships” (Luke 1998, 175). Peter Senge describes it as “the art of seeing the forest *and* the trees” (1990, 127). Instead of thinking of an issue in simplistic terms (e.g., the problem with opioids as being in the domain of rehab clinics), systems thinking zooms out in order to understand multiple antecedents of the problem, direct effects, indirect effects, ripple effects, and so on. Rather than being a neatly contained, finite issue with a single cause and a single solution, the problem emerges from a complex web of interactions (127–8).

Mind-mapping tools can be employed to help visually map these complex systems. Mind maps (or cognitive maps) can be done with software designed for the purpose, but they can also be sketched out on a whiteboard or piece of paper. Individuals or groups can brainstorm various aspects of a problem and then link them in terms of causes and effects or of relationships with each other. Figure 5.1 is an example of a systems model of the opioid-misuse problem.

Figure 5.1 is an example of a causal-systems map. Other types of problem mapping include fishbone diagrams, force-field analyses, and simpler mind maps. Regardless of the technique used, the idea is to brainstorm the various parts of the broader complex system and consider how those parts are interrelated. Seeing the broader system in this way serves at least two important purposes: (1) it allows those working to address the issue to see possible leverage points or aspects of the system where strategic intervention may be most effective, and (2) it helps clarify the full range of stakeholders within the system that need to be engaged, at least to some degree, for change to be possible.

Problem-mapping exercises, whether they be simple brainstorming, mind-mapping sessions on a piece of paper or whiteboard, or something more rigorous, such as the research behind the model displayed in figure 5.1, are an excellent starting point for collective impact efforts. It allows community change agents to step back and consider both the forest and the trees. It opens channels to new insights and perspectives, and it can act as a counterweight against preconceived ideas based on the limited purview of single actors. And it drives home the point that disparate stakeholders throughout the system will need to come together and work together to make significant progress on changing the problem.

Figure 5.2. “Seeing” Stakeholders



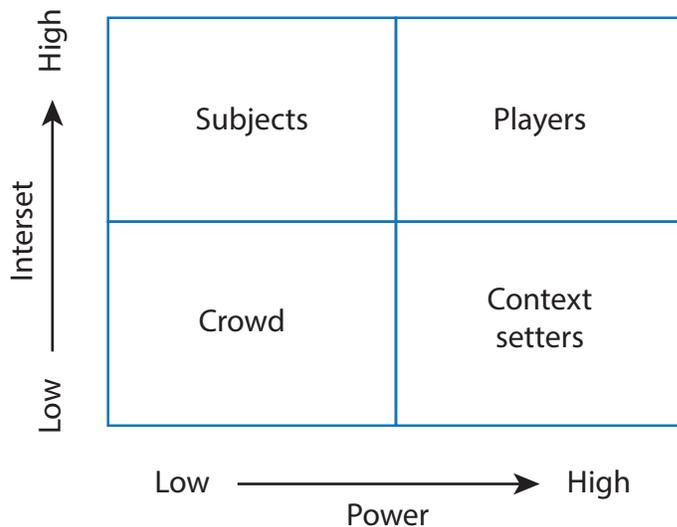
Defining Stakeholders

So, who or what is a stakeholder? Early scholars of strategic planning defined stakeholders with reference to organizations and their strategic imperatives. Nutt and Backoff (1992, 439) speak of stakeholders as parties who can or will be affected by an organization’s strategy. Eden and Ackerman (1998, 117) refer to people or small groups who have the power to respond to, negotiate with, and change the strategic future of the organization. However, in collective impact and community partnerships, the locus of concern is the *community issue* instead of any organization per se.

One way of thinking about stakeholders in the context of collective impact is to start with the issue (instead of the organization). In figure 5.2, the green blob represents the issue. The circles represent the people, groups, and organizations that have a stake in the issue. Some of them overlap, and some have a larger “piece” of the issue than others. The point is that no one person, group, or organization owns the whole issue. Rather, many persons, groups, and organizations own some piece of the issue, either in terms of being affected by it or having some ability to affect it. (Often, it’s both).

Jeffrey Luke (1998), drawing on the seminal work of Crosby and Bryson (1992), defines stakeholders as “individuals, groups, and organizations with interests in the issue area. They hold a stake in either changing the issue or maintaining the status quo. Stakeholders also include individuals, groups, or organizations affected by the causes or consequences of the particular issue” (Luke 1998, 170). Stakeholders may or may not understand themselves to be stakeholders. Sometimes, they understand that they can influence an issue or that an issue affects them directly. Other times, key stakeholders may not recognize themselves as having

Figure 5.3. Power versus Interest



Adapted from Eden and Ackermann (1998).

a direct stake. They may have substantial ability to help make change happen, but the issue itself may not be on their radar screen. So when identifying stakeholders, some will be obvious, but others, not so much. Therefore, having a framework to systematically approach the question of stakeholders can be useful.

The link between problem or systems mapping and stakeholder identification is worth reemphasizing. The very process of considering all the parts of a complex system (the “what”) can also, in turn, yield specific insights about stakeholders (the “who”).

The Power-versus-Interest Grid

The power-versus-interest grid (see [appendix 5.1](#)) was introduced by Colin Eden and Fran Ackermann in their seminal 1998 work on strategic management. It remains a critical analytical tool for identifying stakeholders, not just for organizations but also for community collaboratives (equally or even more so, given the critical importance of stakeholder engagement to creating collective impact).

The premise is simple in that stakeholders can be thought of in terms of various degrees of *power* or *influence* over the issue as well as various degrees of *interest* in it. Interest can be thought of on at least two levels: (1) intellectual interest, as in “I care about this issue,” and (2) direct interest or impact, as in “this issue affects me directly.” Power or influence come in many forms. Here, French and Raven’s (1995) “five bases of power” is helpful:

- *Legitimate power* is based on the belief that one has a right to make demands of others.
- *Reward power* is based on one’s ability to compensate others for compliance.
- *Expert power* is based on others’ perception of one’s knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- *Referent power* is based on the respect or admiration someone attracts.
- *Coercive power* is based in the belief that one can punish others for noncompliance.

Obvious community stakeholders with power and influence are those with official positions that project legitimate power, reward power, and coercive power. Perhaps underappreciated is the referent power of community members who may not hold official positions but can provide positive energy or become a significant roadblock to an effort.

Expert power is also highly relevant in collaborative processes. For example, outside facilitators with process expertise can be very valuable in helping a collaborative get past conflict and make decisions. Content experts such as researchers or professionals can be enormously influential. In the ORP, physicians in the community, particularly those working in emergency medicine and addiction recovery, were important stakeholders with critical expertise. External funders might also be thought of as having reward and legitimate power that can boost collective efforts substantially.

Stakeholder analysis, therefore, can start with identifying key actors in each of these quadrants and considering the implications and identifying strategies based on that analysis. To use Eden and Ackermann's terminology, "players" have both high interest and substantial power; "subjects" have high interest but little power; "context-setters" have substantial power but little interest; and the "crowd" has little power or interest (1998, 121–5).

The World Bank (n.d.) utilizes the power-versus-interest grid in its development work but uses different terminology for the stakeholders in different quadrants, referring to players as "promoters," subjects as "defenders," context setters as "latents," and the crowd as "apathetics."

- "Promoters" have strong interest and enough power or influence to affect a change effort's likelihood of success.
- "Defenders" are interested and supportive of change but have little power or influence.
- "Latents" have substantial power or influence and could effect change, were they to be involved, but at present are not particularly interested.
- "Apathetics" have little interest or power. (World Bank, n.d.)

The players are more or less obvious. An initial stakeholder brainstorm will identify them first, and they are critical to the change process for obvious reasons. The subjects also tend to be easy to identify because they tend to be vocal and clear about their interest. For the ORP, one group in the subject category is the families of children who have died because of opiate misuse. Subjects may be diminished or overlooked due to their lack of power, but there are important reasons to give them full consideration. For one, this category of stakeholders may be in a marginalized group. In other words, it may lack power due to structures in place that make it difficult for the subjects to have power or influence over an issue they care a lot about. So simply out of concern for equity and justice, collective impact should involve these subjects. Further, their high level of interest makes subjects more likely to add a lot of energy and support, which can also be considered a kind of power. Another important reason to consider and engage the subjects is that they are often closest to the issue at hand than those with more power, and they may provide unique perspectives and insights. Do not fall into the trap of minimizing the relevance of these stakeholders.

The context setters are perhaps the most important category in a stakeholder analysis. They may be the hardest to engage due to minimal interest, at least at first. But they have power and influence that is critical to actually creating community change. They may be from a funding organization with financial resources to help move a project from idea to action. They may be government agencies or officials with the ability to change policy, community influencers or gatekeepers who can galvanize others in the community, or experts in the issue with critical

information or insight that other passionate stakeholders might not have. When conducting a stakeholder analysis, pay particular attention to this group. They are “latents” because their engagement is not automatic. It may take extra effort to engage them, but their involvement may well be critical to a partnership’s success.

Members of the final group, the crowd (or apathetics), by definition are not critical stakeholders to consider. They are essentially “everyone else,” the organizations, groups, and individuals not identified in the other three categories. While perhaps not relevant initially, they still may need to be engaged to some extent, depending on the aims of the effort.

Helpful Questions for Brainstorming Stakeholders

- Who is affected by the condition that you see as a problem?
- Who has an interest or has expressed an opinion about that condition?
- Who can influence the condition, positively or negatively?
- Who else should care?

Doing a Stakeholder Analysis

Once a core group has come together to initiate a collective impact process, one of the first steps is to conduct a stakeholder analysis. The process need not be overly complicated. It is usually best done as a group activity and can begin with a simple brainstorm. Individuals can be asked to write down people, groups, and organizations that connect in some way to the issue. Then the lists can be aggregated into a master list. The next question may be, And who else? The results can then be sorted into the power-versus-interest grid. The process of sorting can be very helpful in clarifying which key stakeholders need to be engaged in the near term. It can help identify who needs to be at the table for the process to go forward.

When conducting a stakeholder analysis as a small-group activity, it may be useful to use sticky notes for people to write names on. Then the notes can be arranged on a large power-versus-interest grid (on a whiteboard or flip chart, for example). It is also helpful at this stage to capture the data on a simple spreadsheet. One way to organize such a spreadsheet is to use the first column to list stakeholders, categorized into individuals, groups, and organizations, and devote additional columns to a ranking of each stakeholder’s power (e.g., on a scale of one to ten), a ranking of relative interest, and whether the stakeholder’s attitude toward the effort is more likely to be positive or negative. Other columns then capture information related to equity, inclusion, or links with other stakeholders. The relevant information to track for each stakeholder will be context dependent. No matter what variables are captured, the core team should capture them in a spreadsheet or table of some kind.

Once an initial list of stakeholders is created, the power-versus-interest grid may be used to identify who might be missing. Most likely, stakeholders in the subject and context-setter categories will still be missing. It is important to probe deeper and continue to ask, Who else? with those categories in mind to develop a complete picture of the range of stakeholders in question.

Another helpful tool at this stage is the *snowball interview*, which can be done before or after the group exercise. The snowball technique involves asking identified core stakeholders to identify additional stakeholders. The additional stakeholders are contacted and asked to do the same. The names begin to snowball and eventually the same names continue to come up. The names that continue to come up represent key stakeholders that should not be ignored.

Considering Stakeholders at Different Phases of Collective Impact

Analyzing and strategically engaging stakeholders should be an ongoing part of any collective impact process. But there are three broad phases in all collaborative efforts that are important time markers for leaders to step back and carefully assess stakeholders.

Initiation

When a collaborative effort is in its earliest stages, stakeholder analysis is critical in answering the question of who needs to be at the table. As a core organizing group seeks to expand, it should strategically consider that question.

Deliberation

As a collaborative works together to collectively define the problem, creates a shared vision of how the problem will be addressed, and identifies shared measures, the question of who needs to be engaged resurfaces. Usually, the group must look outward at this phase and engage others in the problem-solving process.

Implementation and Maintenance

Once mutually reinforcing activities have begun in pursuit of a shared vision and shared goals, the core group will again need to consider what stakeholder engagement should look like during this phase. Who needs to be involved to maximize impact? Who needs to be involved to maintain positive momentum?

While a stakeholder analysis should occur early in a collective impact effort, the reality is that collaborators should continually consider stakeholders. As with many parts of the collective impact process, this step should be considered iterative. As goals are accomplished and new goals framed, or as new problems are identified for the group to address, it is important to reconsider who is involved. The [worksheet in appendix 5.3](#) can help a group that is already working together assess how well its stakeholder engagement is going.

Engaging Stakeholders

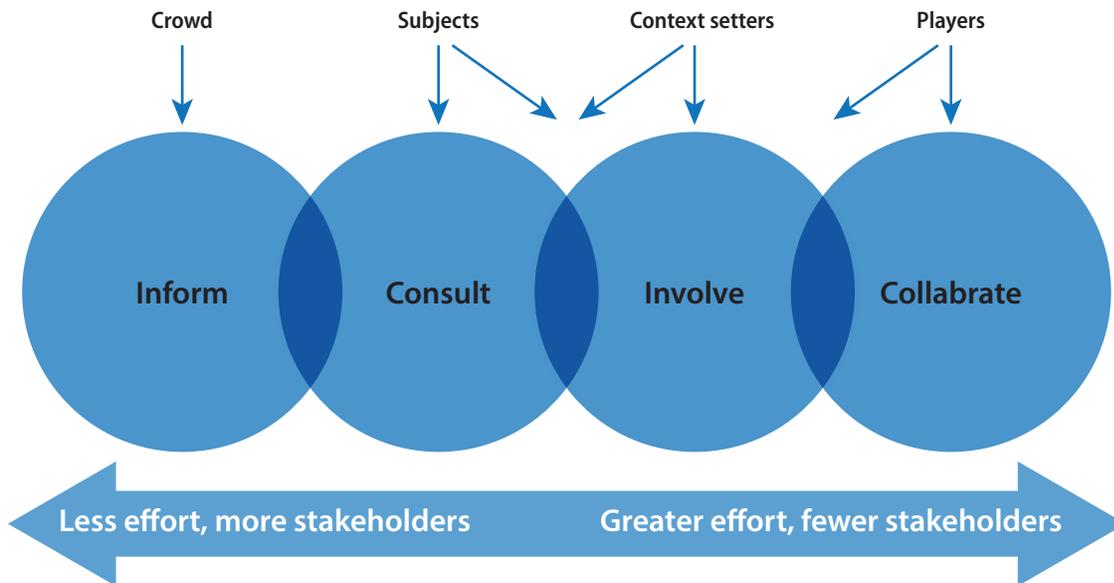
Two critical considerations for stakeholder engagement are (1) matching the type of stakeholder with an appropriate level of engagement and (2) understanding what it takes to motivate those with lower interest into action.

Levels of Engagement

There are different levels of engagement, and not all stakeholders need to be engaged at the same level. In general, low levels of engagement suffice for reaching large numbers of stakeholders who have relatively low interest in the problem, while high levels of engagement are needed for the smaller groups of stakeholders who have more interest. Levels of engagement can be thought of in terms of a spectrum ranging from less effort and more stakeholders to greater effort and fewer stakeholders. With lower levels of participation, the amount of interaction with and input from the stakeholders is minimal. At the higher levels, stakeholders are the primary actors affecting community change.

At the lower-effort, more-stakeholders end of the spectrum, engagement entails informing the stakeholders or simply getting information out. Websites and social media, for example,

Figure 5.4. Spectrum of Engagement

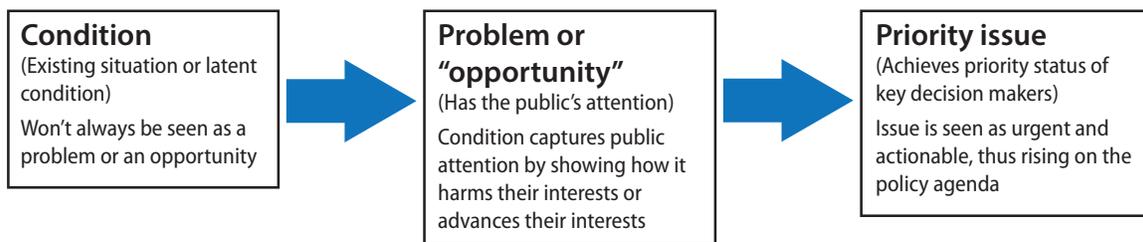


can put information out to virtually everyone in a community. Consultation is the next-highest level of engagement and requires interaction. Stakeholders receive information but also have the opportunity to provide input. Surveys or public meetings are typical ways stakeholders can be consulted. Involvement is a form of engagement that is more extended and substantive than consultation. Rather than asking for one-time input, stakeholders are involved in ongoing decision-making and are more committed than those who are merely being consulted. The most intense level of engagement, collaboration, makes stakeholders part of the partnership itself.

As is evident in figure 5.4, the distinctions between the four levels of engagement are not hard and fast. There is some overlap. The exact distinction between consulting and involving is not as important as simply understanding that not all stakeholders need the same level of engagement. Further, the levels build on one another in the sense that anyone who is being consulted is almost certainly being informed, those who are getting directly involved are also being informed and consulted, and so on.

The spectrum of engagement also corresponds to some extent with the stakeholder grid. The so-called players would almost by default fall into the “collaborate” level, though some—due to time or other constraints—may opt to stay more “involved” but not necessarily become a core partner. The subjects will need to at least be consulted and keep informed. The crowd will, at minimum, have the opportunity to be informed. The context setters will need to be involved as much as possible, and some may even be brought in as collaborators, which is where the most effort will be required. By definition, the context setters have low interest (or a low stake) and will take extra effort to engage.

However, as mentioned above, different stages of collaboration may require different levels of engagement for different stakeholder groups. In the initial phases of organizing, a subject

Figure 5.5. The Issue-Attention Cycle

Adapted from Luke (1998, 44).

may not need any engagement more involved than informing or consulting. But perhaps implementation will require more involvement. Perhaps experts need to be involved early on but will have no role in implementation. Stakeholder analysis needs to be ongoing. Leaders must keep coming back to it and reconsidering the role stakeholders should have.

Framing the Issue to Engage Stakeholders

Complex problems are ultimately social constructions. In other words, a problem is only a problem when people define it as such; otherwise, it is just a condition. Conditions are not necessarily problems. For a condition to be a problem, it must capture the public's attention and be viewed as harming or meeting interests in some way. For example, drug misuse occurs in every community in America. That is a condition. In some communities more people abuse drugs and in others less, but the condition exists everywhere. Drug misuse is only a problem when people in the community consciously identify it as such.

However, not all complex problems are priority issues for stakeholders that can actually do something about it. Priority issues are those that are on key stakeholders' agendas. People and organizations have only so much time, money, and other resources. No person or organization can devote time, money, and resources to every issue that has been framed as a problem. This recognition is at the heart of the "issue attention cycle" (Luke 1998, 42; see figure 5.5).

The question of stakeholder engagement—particularly for stakeholders who might recognize the problem but not have it on their priority agenda—is how to make the issue a high enough priority to elicit their participation. The issue-attention cycle suggests that, in order for an issue to be included on stakeholders' action agendas,

- it must be important to them (i.e., they view it as a problem and not just an acceptable underlying condition),
- it must be seen as urgent, and
- there must be hope, a sense that something can be done about the problem (Luke 1998, 47–53).

If any one of these conditions do not exist, engagement is unlikely.

The last condition speaks in large part to the need for positive leadership and a sense of credibility created by the core team championing a would-be community partnership. Collective impact enables stakeholders to collaborate as a team and provides a process and structure for teams to achieve their goals.

But what can be done to raise an issue's profile while also creating a sense of urgency around it? The way the issue is presented, or framed, can make a big difference. Social psychology has provided lessons on how community leaders can strategically frame issues for stakeholders in ways that instill both importance and urgency. Different presentations may speak to different stakeholders in different ways. There are critical differences in the kinds of communication strategies that appeal to different people. Consider tailoring the message to meet the needs of specific stakeholders. Some predominant tools for communicating salience and urgency include data, stories, images, and focusing events.

Data

Reports, facts, and figures can make a convincing argument, particularly for people who look for and are persuaded by data. It is one thing to say that the county has a problem with opioid addiction. It is quite another to publish a report showing that the per capita incidence of overdoses in the county is three times the overall per capita rate in the state.

Stories

While data can be powerful, stories can be even more influential. Stories appeal to people's emotions, which are the actual drivers of their decisions. Data appeals to their rational brains, which is important, but stories make them feel the issue. They connect to people personally. Thus, a report on the incidence of overdoses can be an important framing tool, but add to that a story about a local mother losing a son to addiction, and the feeling of connection, of importance and urgency, is greatly heightened.

Images

For similar reasons, powerful images can help create a sense of urgency more effectively than a twenty-page report. One such image, published in 2016, is a photo showing a couple, overdosed on drugs and passed out in the front seat of a car, while a small child sits behind them in a car seat. The image went viral and captured the public's attention and helped bring the issue to the forefront of the national conversation. Sometimes one image can tell a story better than words.

Focusing Events

Also referred to as *attentional triggers*, or simply *crises*. Focusing events are dramatic, usually unexpected events that can draw people's attention to an issue. Luke notes that "nothing advances a problem as forcefully as a dramatic event or series of events that highlights a disturbing condition" (1998, 54). These events can be accidents or disasters, like a hurricane or a market meltdown. But sometimes they can be intentional, like a summit planned for the purpose of raising awareness of an issue. Whether unexpected or intentional, these events should be strategically leveraged. They might capture stakeholders' attention in a way that other methods might not. "Never let a crisis go to waste" is as much a truism in building community coalitions as it is in politics.

These so-called issue-framing tools can help build emotional concern in stakeholders—a sense of importance and urgency—but not necessarily the sense that something can be done about it. Without hope, it is unlikely that stakeholders will invest time and energy in an issue, even if they consider it important and urgent. Thus, for organizers of collective impact efforts, instilling a sense of hope and optimism is crucial. Further, having a clear and positive process,

such as using the collective impact model, can go a long way toward communicating that working together on the issue can make a difference.

In the ORP, most teams began with a small core group of stakeholders and then expanded their reach from an agreed-upon vision. The development of these partnerships was not by chance. Passionate champions were needed to communicate with stakeholders in a way that instilled a sense of importance, urgency, and confidence in the ability to make a difference. Luke calls those efforts “catalytic leadership,” the kind of leadership that brings stakeholders together to solve problems across traditional boundaries (1998, 4). This kind of leadership does not require a formal leadership role, but it does require the ability to develop the relationships of trust that facilitate collective work.

Providing Ongoing Updates to External Stakeholders

Stakeholder engagement does not stop with the initial framing for stakeholders. Getting stakeholders to the table is not enough. Rather, communication and ongoing engagement are intentional practices that the collaborative will need to manage.

Ideally, collaboratives will be able to use or modify their progress-tracking internal documents shared internally to share with external stakeholders. Decisions about the format for sharing progress will be driven largely by the audience the collaborative plans to reach. Often, collaboratives will create different types of progress reports for different audiences. A collaborative may decide to keep a public website that tracks progress, create slideshows for presentations to specific audiences, or use audiovisual materials. For example, in the ORP, several teams included in their slideshow presentations to elected officials a version of the red, yellow, and green tracking explained earlier. The School of Government also helped ORP teams make brief spotlight videos to share their most significant accomplishments.

Stakeholder identification and engagement is a critical element of any collective impact process. It is part of applying systems thinking to complex problems (like the opioid epidemic) and developing collaborative solutions that seek to change the system. Collective impact is about forming partnerships across traditional boundaries to solve problems that cannot be solved by individual organizations. Seeing the interconnections and the different stakeholders that are involved in the system is essential to conceiving and implementing the mutually reinforcing activities that lead to change. In the ORP, partnerships made up of many different stakeholders were able to reduce the effects of opioid abuse in their communities. The leaders involved will need to continue assessing stakeholder engagement in order to maintain and strengthen their partnerships and create more lasting value for their communities.

Resources

System Mapping

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Stakeholder Analysis

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Other Helpful Resources

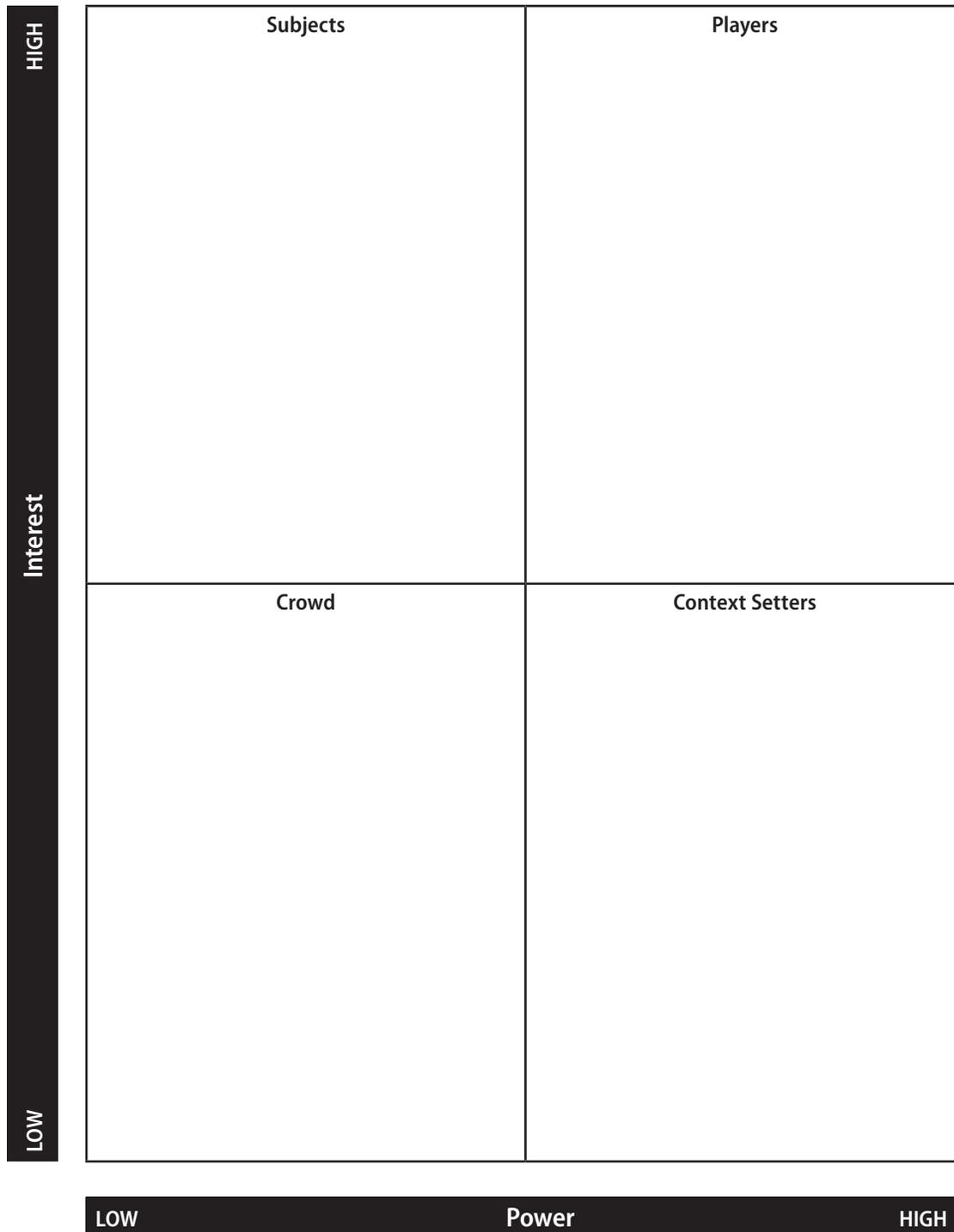
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Appendix 5.1. Power-versus-Interest Grid



Appendix 5.2. Stakeholder-Engagement Planning

Stakeholder (organization, group, or individual)	Goal for engagement (e.g., collaboration, reengagement)	Primary stakeholder needs and interests	Engagement strategy that addresses stakeholder needs and interests
1.			
2.			
3.			

Appendix 5.3. Stakeholder-Engagement Assessment

- 1a. Which key players (high interest, high power/influence) are already fully engaged as collaborators? To what extent is their partnership role meeting their interests?
- 1b. Which key players are not collaborating as well or effectively as we need them to be? What are their core interests? How might we better meet those interests through the partnership's work?
- 2a. Which of the context setters (low interest, high power/influence) do we need to help increase their interest so that they grow more engaged and more likely to become collaborators? What engagement strategies could help generate that interest?
- 2b. Which context setters' needs do we need to be sure we are meeting? What engagement methods will meet those needs?
3. How are the stakeholders with high interest but low power/influence being consulted? How could they be better involved and utilized to build broader support and awareness?
4. How are we informing the broader community (low interest, low power/influence) of our efforts?

Stakeholders need to view the issue as (1) important; (2) urgent; and (3) possible ("We can do this!") in order to prioritize it enough to take action.

Chapter 6

Creating a Shared Vision, Goals, and Objectives

Willow Jacobson and Amy Wade

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What Is a Common Agenda?

One of the key tenets of collective impact is establishing a common agenda, which requires participants to agree on a vision for change and on the actions that will be taken to bring that change about. A common agenda is the foundation for a successful collective impact effort, forming a common understanding and shared vision for all members. A common agenda helps to mobilize communities to change. Investing the time when creating the common agenda and ensuring input from everyone involved makes further steps in the collective impact approach, such as shared measures, easier and increases the probability of effectiveness and sustainability. It's a collective commitment to a community (Born 2017).

This chapter discusses the concept of the common agenda and the use of vision and goal exercises as tools to create and operationalize a common agenda for a collaborative, including specific actions and lessons from the ORP. The second part of the chapter explains the concept

of mutually reinforcing activities and the use of action planning, with examples of ways that ORP teams used community action-planning strategies and templates were utilized to ensure that the visions and goals could be supported by tangible actions. The chapter concludes with challenges and lessons learned from the ORP teams as they engaged in the process of creating a common agenda.

Using a Shared Vision to Support a Common Agenda

Broadly, a common agenda promotes shared values, sets the “rules of engagement,” and draws on best practices for collaborative efforts. (See chapter 4 for more on establishing expectations for involvement). In the ORP, development of a common agenda focused on creating and embracing a shared vision. A common agenda for collective impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it. (For more on defining problems, see chapter 5). In the most basic sense, a common agenda helps establish a shared expectation of what the collaboration will strive to achieve. Therefore, engaged discussion of the relevant issues and the desired change is critical to establishing a meaningful common agenda. In the ORP, all actors sought to reduce opioid misuse in the community, but at the outset, there was not always a shared understanding of the problem or the approaches to take. Creating a shared understanding of the problem and root causes is needed. With this common agreement of what the problem is, collaboratives are then able to explore the change they want to create together.

Begin Bold: The “Blue Skies” Approach

To facilitate the creation of the shared vision in the ORP, the School project team used the “blue skies” approach to encourage open dialogue. This approach allows participants to brainstorm, without limits, positive changes that their collaboration could create for the community. To begin identifying aspirational commonalities, the School project team encouraged ORP teams to suspend reality and be creative, “making a wish” for successful resolution in their communities.

ORP teams followed four guidelines, developed by organizational psychologist Patricia Thompson: (1) “be clear about your desired destination,” (2) “dream big,” (3) “communicate a strong purpose,” and (4) “set strategic goals” (Thompson 2017). ORP team members were able to develop their blue-skies changes individually and then seek commonalities in their aspirational wishes for the community as a team. This exercise was intended to boost morale and team cohesion as each ORP team moved on to the more challenging work of creating a vision statement that would serve as a guide for developing an operational action plan.

From Blue Skies to a Vision Statement

The [blue-skies approach](#) (see appendix 6.1) is an exercise to get team members engaged in the change they hope to create in their community, but building consensus and formalizing a shared vision is difficult in practice. To achieve a shared vision statement, the following questions should be considered.

- Will the vision be understood and shared by members of the community?
- Is the vision statement broad enough to include a variety of local perspectives but not so broad that it lacks opportunity to resonate with key stakeholders?

- Is the vision statement inspiring and uplifting to everyone involved in the effort?
- Is the vision statement easy to communicate?

If team members do not share a commitment to the vision, they are less likely to stay engaged with the group or to be willing to contribute to collective efforts as the team moves into the action phases.

With a shared vision in place, an activity like the “[T-shirt exercise](#)” (see appendix 6.2) can be used to refine that vision into a concise statement. A vision needs to be easy to communicate, so each ORP team was asked to design a T-shirt for its vision statement (embellishing it with any images or art the team wanted to use). This exercise helped the teams fight the common tendency for vision statements to grow into long strings of prose with several clauses as team members work to consolidate a range of views into one statement. Teams were pushed to get down to a concise and easily communicated vision statement.

From Vision to Action

Visions are idealistic and long term. They create the inspiration and guide the collaborative in decision-making broadly. Still, visions alone are not enough to guide cohesive collaborative efforts, so the group needs to put goals and objectives into place in order to realize its vision. Goals operationalize the vision and make it achievable. They are a means of describing the large outcomes that are necessary to realize the vision. Goals are still intangible and aspirational, and they identify strategic priority areas for the medium term (the next couple of years, for example). They are an expression of a collaborative’s values and can serve to orient group members toward the vision. They should not be confused with SMART objectives, which are measurable and specific. In the ORP, the School project team members pushed ORP teams to define their goals broadly. Operationalizing those goals with more-specific action-oriented outcomes (SMART objectives) occurred later. In many ways, this intermediate step was very helpful for the ORP teams. They were able to organize subteams or working groups that were aligned with the goals. (See chapter 8 for more on this.)

When developing goals, collaboratives should consider three or four broad outcomes that the group wants to accomplish in order to achieve its vision. When articulating these outcomes, including directional words—like *improve*, *increase*, or *decrease*—helps to keep the goals aspirational. Use of directional words in goal setting lays the foundation for when the group later develops shared measures.

The SMART acronym stands for

Specific: What does the collaborative hope to accomplish (e.g., changes in attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs)?

Measurable: What data and information can be obtained from records, collected, or detected to determine whether change has occurred?

Achievable: Is the objective possible and can the group attain it?

Relevant: Is there a clear connection between the objective and the group’s vision?

Time-based: By when will the objective be achieved?

The ORP teams developed a limited number of goals to help clarify and prioritize their focus. It is challenging to select and articulate a limited number of goals that are mutually agreed upon by the collaborative's members. This process is made more challenging by the fact that goals can conflict, may need prioritization, and might still defer to actors in the collaborative with more formal or perceived power.

In summary, ORP teams worked to create visions that were ideal, unique, future-oriented, and focused on a common purpose. With their desired destinations in mind, the teams were then able to determine the goals that would help them realize their visions.

SMART Objectives

With goals established, the ORP teams then created SMART objectives to help move goals to a level of measurable outcomes. SMART objectives are specific, measurable results of an initiative and create a precise intention for the broader goals articulated as part of the common agenda. Once there is a general consensus on what objectives should be accomplished, it is much easier to align the actions of different organizations through strategy development.

Once SMART objectives are established, collaboratives should be encouraged to take some time to reflect on the types of objectives initially developed. This is also a great time to reflect on the difference between SMART objectives that are strategic and those that are operational or process oriented. As often happens with collaboratives, given the greater challenge of developing strategic objectives, many of the ORP teams identified primarily operational objectives and had fewer broad, strategic objectives. Ideally in collective impact efforts, collaboratives will include a mix of both operational and strategic objectives.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Effectively managing mutually reinforcing activities is usually one of the more challenging aspects of collective impact work. Even when collaboratives spend a great deal of time carefully coming to a consensus on what the vision, goals, and objectives are, activities often remain independent and siloed. Establishing mutually reinforcing activities requires going slow in order to go fast. Each organization's immediate concerns or current actions and strategies should be temporarily suspended in order to take a broader view of what needs to be done and what each organization can do to support the effort. This process can be tedious, and it may need to include asset mapping or difficult conversations about fragmentation and duplication of services in the community. It is important to recognize that current efforts have not worked to solve this problem, so collaboratives need to have genuine openness to new ways members can work together to tackle it.

One of the primary benefits of mutually reinforcing activities is simultaneous learning. As organizations partner to explore activities for meeting their goals and objectives, they develop responses to new learning collectively and concurrently. Mutually reinforcing activities ideally tie to shared measures, so partners will need to check in regularly, have baselines and milestones, and identify which activities and strategies have been effective. This means that all organizations learn together, pivoting the collaborative's strategies as necessary to better achieve its vision. Stated another way, when activities reinforce each other, knowledge becomes diffuse, and effective strategies are less likely to be siloed within an individual organization or program.

Strategies and Actions: Specifics

Mutually reinforcing activities, in practice, are created through the development of strategies, activities, or tasks that partners of the collaborative will take over the years to make progress toward their SMART objectives. Unlike visions, goals, and objectives, strategies should be both deliberate and emergent, and they are more likely to change throughout the life cycle of the collective impact initiative if it becomes clear that certain activities are not achieving the outcome articulated in the SMART objective.

In operationalizing the concept of mutually reinforcing activities, collaboratives should consider the multiple actors that may positively affect the strategies if engaged. They should also consider

- whether the strategy is broader than any one institution's work,
- whether the strategy involves multiple partners,
- whether the methods for tracking the strategy's process are identified and shared,
- whether there is a communication plan for coordinating activities or actions,
- whether the strategy is clearly aligned with objectives (directly) and goals (at least indirectly), and
- whether this is a new strategy and not just a list of things partners have already been doing. It may require some broad and creative thinking to make changes to the old strategies in order to achieve the collective's objectives.

Once the SMART objectives have been identified and collaboratives have developed relevant strategies to work toward those objectives, it is helpful to think through a number of strategic and administrative considerations for each strategy. These considerations include who takes the primary responsibility for the strategy (this should be a diverse set of people), how high the strategy's priority is, what resources are needed to undertake it (a good strategy takes into account barriers and resources), the plan for communicating progress to the broader group, and a timeline that describes when it will start, when it will end, and its current status. Some strategies might be dependent on others or impossible to implement until another strategy is in place, so hashing out these details can help collaboratives think about sequencing their strategies. It is also important to identify performance measures in action plans, which provide an internal means for a collaborative to track milestones (i.e., measures of completion) and baseline data. (For more information on measures, see chapter 7.)

Action Plans as Road Maps

All of these steps, from vision through strategies, can be organized and formalized through the development of an [action plan](#) (see appendix 6.1). An action plan outlines what should happen to achieve the vision for a healthy community and includes goals, objectives, strategies, timelines, and a clear delineation of partner commitment to support the vision and goals. Action plans are similar to organizational strategic plans, but they focus on alignment techniques, providing a systematic way of enabling multiple organizations to find productive roles in a larger, shared

agenda for community change. Chapter 8 discusses how the action plans should be viewed as living documents, especially when exploring the sustainability of efforts amid a global pandemic. The formalization of an action plan includes

- SMART objectives with identified activities or strategies to support the goals;
- identification of individuals and organizations in charge of carrying out each activity under the SMART objective, with a focus on two or more partners contributing to each;
- timelines for completion, supporting the *T* in the SMART objective (deadlines and milestones);
- resources needed to complete the activities;
- measures to evaluate progress; and
- priority ranking for each SMART objective in terms of low, medium, or high priority. (See Athuraliya 2021.)

In summary, once a collaborative has created an action plan, members need to consider how they will use the action plan to make decisions and how they will communicate and revisit progress. In the ORP, teams that spent the time truly engaging the questions about the action plan were more likely to stay true to their agreed-upon actions and objectives, less likely to face mission drift, and more successful at retaining membership because their members had a clearer sense of direction, accomplishment, and progress. From the outset, action planning is more effective if the collaborative considers

- whether it has the money and resources to carry out the strategies in the action plan;
- whether it has reliable commitment from the people necessary to carry out the plan;
- whether certain changes, such as a key actor's transitioning to a new position, could potentially hinder the plan;
- whether those with delineated responsibilities have enough time to carry out the listed activities;
- whether group members are excited by the strategies and motivated to carry them out;
- what risks need to be assessed; and
- what kind of opposition the team might encounter.

Lessons from the ORP Teams

Taking the time to time to create a shared vision, even if members of the collaborative are anxious to move to action, is important to do. Many of those working on complex problems, such as the opioid epidemic, are “doers.” In the ORP, stopping and talking about the larger picture was not natural for the teams. It was challenging for them to shift from thinking about short-term tactics to thinking about where they wanted to be in the future, especially if they did not all see the same future or if they conceived of it in terms that were too broad and abstract. These teams needed to create a vision that was broad enough to include the diversity of actors involved but specific enough to be unique and meaningful for their community.

Collaboratives should not assume that previously established groups are structured for collective impact. In many cases in the ORP, several of the organizations and individuals had worked together before, and many believed that their vision was inclusive. Over time, some of the ORP teams came to the realization that the previous structures' working relationships and

vision statements needed to be reinvigorated under the new model of collective action and to include the new members and actors. It is hard to let go of previously established plans and strategies, but not doing so could serve to exclude important newly identified actors and efforts under the collective impact model.

Action plans push beyond an inventory of independent organizational activities. It is often easy to agree on a shared vision but rely on what individual organizations are already doing when it comes to carrying out activities in the action plan. While it is typical for organizations or actors to own specific activities in the plan, the activities carried out are more effective because they occur in tandem with other actors' activities. The purpose of collective impact is not to expand one organization's capacity. Rather, each organization plays a role in a larger plan so that new levels of learning about how to address the community challenge can be achieved.

Collectives also need to be aware of barriers to entry for diverse partners. Brint Milward, Katherine Cooper, and Michelle Shumate (2016) argue that a common agenda is vital to establishing a collective impact initiative but can also derail it. They note that while common agendas are important, they should be viewed "as an aspiration rather than a destination" (41). Partners creating a common agenda need to be especially aware of barriers to entry for diverse partners whose views differ from "mainstream" values and assumptions. Milward, Cooper, and Shumate warn of two common barriers in particular. The first is homophily, the tendency for groups to comprise members who share a common experience based on characteristics such as race, class, gender, or education. Homophily within an organization can allow members to bond more easily, build a common agenda more quickly, and create an efficient process, but the lack of diversity can lead to a lack of innovation, effectiveness, and resiliency—the exact problems that collective impact efforts have aimed to respond to. The second barrier is the "two hats" problem: "Members have interests in their organizations *and* the network. This tension can lead to hidden agendas, which are toxic in networks" (42). To overcome these barriers, collaboratives need to acknowledge differences, account for them, and recognize that members are balancing the "two hats" of their dual interests. Milward, Cooper, and Shumate suggest that groups create a threshold of agreement and not insist on a completely common vision, thus acknowledging that some elements of the vision may be more relevant than others to various members.

The common agenda should be viewed as a continuous dialogue. This makes it easier to encourage and accommodate diverse views and to make any necessary adjustments when new information emerges. Partners need to remain aware of the differing opinions and values of stakeholders, approaching communication and work in various ways. The goal of the common agenda is to make sure everyone is on board and willing to invest and move forward. The group should remember the vision its members share and why they do the work, and use that as the basis for the goals, objectives, and reinforcing activities they engage in.

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Appendix 6.1. Blue Skies

Team

Considerations for Developing Your Vision Statement

A vision statement is a statement about ideal conditions or how things would look if the issue important to you were completely, perfectly addressed. Common characteristics of vision statements:

- Understood and shared by members of the community
- Broad enough to include a variety of local perspectives
- Inspiring and uplifting to everyone involved in your effort
- Easy to communicate

Instructions

1. Identify one person to take notes while the group brainstorms ideas (start by brainstorming silently and individually—for 5 minutes or so—and then brainstorm as a group) and one person to document the decision reached through consensus.
2. Ask the following questions, record key points, and discuss common themes (30 minutes):
 - a. *Essential why*: What is the dream or ideal that you and your community seek?
 - b. *Essential what*: What would have to change for this dream to come true?
3. Come to consensus about what the vision statement should be by considering the following (10 minutes):
 - a. Will it draw people to the common work?
 - b. Does it give hope for a better future?
 - c. Will it inspire community members through positive, effective action?
 - d. Does it provide a basis for developing the other aspects of your action-planning process?
4. Record the agreed-upon statement on your handout.

Vision Statement:

Action Plan

Example

Goal

Decrease teen pregnancy

ACTION	WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?	PRIORITY	RESOURCES	STATUS	START	END	COMMUNICATION PLAN	MEASURES	NOTES
Strategy 1: Provide information to students: Develop and display information about contraception options. Display and communicate in a variety of locations and forums.	Publicity sub-committee (includes parents, teachers, & students)	Medium	PTA funds	In progress	January 10th	June 10th	Sub-committee will have Slack channel for day-to-day communication. They will have bi-weekly meetings to update on progress and create new publicity materials.	Conduct survey of students before publicity campaign and after 6 months about their awareness of and level of knowledge about contraception.	Two teachers on the sub-committee are scoping out most visible places in the school for displays

Objective #1: Increase awareness of multiple contraceptive options to 75% of all high school students by June 2019 as measured by a student survey (pre/post).

Adapted from *The Community Tool Box*, a service of the Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas.

Objective #1:										
ACTION	WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?	PRIORITY	RESOURCES	STATUS	START	END	COMMUNICATION PLAN	MEASURES	NOTES	
Objective #2:										
ACTION	WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?	PRIORITY	RESOURCES	STATUS	START	END	COMMUNICATION PLAN	MEASURES	NOTES	
Objective #3:										
ACTION	WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?	PRIORITY	RESOURCES	STATUS	START	END	COMMUNICATION PLAN	MEASURES	NOTES	

Chapter 7

Developing and Using Shared Measures

Alexander Kroll

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Effective collaborations require feedback along the way. While there are many different ways to obtain feedback, using performance measures and data is one systematic approach that has received a fair amount of attention (Kroll 2015; Moynihan 2013). Much useful, practical advice has been given regarding working with performance-management practices (e.g., Ammons 2019; Niven 2008). These insights, though helpful in traditional, hierarchical structures, need to be adjusted to be applicable to collaborative settings. Performance metrics that are collectively used in group settings can be referred to as *shared measures*.¹

This chapter discusses practical issues regarding the use of performance practices in collaborations. The first half provides an overview of the basics of working with shared

1. For the purposes of this guidebook, *shared measure* refers to the data that were collected based on a performance measures as well as the measure itself. The abbreviated term is more intuitive, although practitioners tend to agree that both terms (*measures* and *data*) go hand in hand.

measures. The second half focuses on some of the practical lessons from the ORP. The chapter should be understood not as a complete or comprehensive account of the topic but as an attempt to facilitate some instant lesson-learning based on the ORP teams' experience.

What's Different about Shared Measures?

Performance measures and data are generally different from other feedback. Performance management is a systematic and routine effort that follows a control-cycle logic: today's data are collected based on measures defined at an earlier point in time to track goal achievement. In other words, this is a regular, routine process, which is neither random nor ad hoc. Shared measures are performance metrics with three defining attributes.

First, they are agreed upon by a collaborative. Unlike performance measures developed in a hierarchical, bureaucratic setting, shared measures are not defined by the upper levels of an organization and imposed from the top down. Rather, it is the members of a group who develop the measures and collect the data in a collaborative effort. Second, they span organizational boundaries. Although performance measures are often limited to one organization's jurisdiction in a traditional agency, shared measures can be as cross-cutting as the big-picture goals whose achievement they try to capture. Third, members are jointly responsible for them. There is rarely any external oversight of shared measures. Group members are supposed to use their own measures and data to improve performance and create accountability.

Just like other performance metrics, shared measures could be used to capture achievements at the strategic or operational levels. That is, they could be attached to goals at the highest level as well as goals at lower levels; for example, a goal can be broken down into more specific subgoals. In this chapter, though, shared measures are those used to track progress regarding the collaboration's highest-level goals. The idea here is that shared measures are most influential at that level, and once useful measures have been put in place at this most strategic echelon, operational measures could follow. In that sense, the use of shared measures in this chapter is similar to what conventional performance-management approaches have labelled "key performance indicators." However, the term *shared measures* will be used throughout the chapter to emphasize their collaborative nature.

Developing and Using Shared Measures

Although it was mentioned earlier that the process for developing shared measures is a collaborative one, it is also important to know a little more about their content. Put differently, how does one find good measures? While there is a lot of useful best-practice advice (see, for example, Ammons 2019 or Niven 2008), this chapter will emphasize three points, which are described in the following three sections.

Make Sure the Measures Are Strategic

The measures should have relevance for the medium term (perhaps three to five years). Specifically, a good measure should capture the progress toward central goals via multiple actions or initiatives. If a metric loses its relevance once one action has been successfully completed, then the metric is not very strategic. Rather, a measure should help sort out

over time which initiatives are more or less effective. A measure such as “number of pills in circulation” should be able to track progress achieved via several different actions, such as regulating prescription practices, implementing different ways to collect pills, or finding approaches to creating public awareness.

Use a Selection of Quantifiable Measures

The first part of this recommendation emphasizes that shared measures, when used like key performance indicators, should be limited to the three-to-five most important metrics per goal. If there are more measures, some work should be done to identify and prioritize the most central ones. But at least three measures are needed to identify reliable cross-cutting trends in a data set. The second part of the recommendation highlights the need for measures to be specific and quantified enough for different people using the same measure at different times to collect the data the same way. Accordingly, just putting down “pharmacy survey” on the measurement sheet is not sufficient. While surveys can be a useful instrument, it is important to specify the question that serves as the measure as well as the response scale that makes up the metric that is being used.

Track Both Outputs and Outcomes

Collaborative teams want to track outcomes (their work’s impact) because changes in client or community-member behaviors are what most stakeholders are really interested in. However, outcomes can be affected by many things, not just the efforts of the collaborative, so teams should also track *outputs*, the quantity and quality of what is being done. While outputs certainly do not capture the intended effects, they do measure factors that are in the team’s control. Examples of output measures include the number of overdose-prevention kits distributed, the number of active campaigns, or the number of people screened. Examples of outcome measures include the number of pills dispensed, of overdose fatalities, or of repeat calls.

While devoting time to the creation of good measures is crucial, it is equally important to think about how the performance data will be used after they are collected. Particularly since nonuse tends to be the default option, data need to be usable, timely, and decision relevant. The literature on facilitating the use of performance information is still growing (Kroll 2015; Moynihan 2013), although there is much less research on the use of shared measures in collaborations.

Lessons from the ORP Teams

As described in earlier chapters of this guidebook, the ORP was a two-year multicompany collaborative effort in North Carolina that sought to address the consequences of opioid misuse. This section of the chapter summarizes some lessons learned from this project around shared measurement and use of data. The first six lessons discussed below are concerned with creating shared measures and setting up the related infrastructure, while the last four focus on data use.

Develop Trust before Developing Measures

When starting a collaborative effort, it may seem like a good idea to bring all group members together and work through a vision, goals, objectives, and shared measures in a half-day retreat. It’s not. The potential for conflict is highest when new group members with different

perspectives, who do not know each other, try to identify joint priorities. Trust and team-building help with this process and should be given particular attention before jumping into the nitty-gritty of discussing shared measures. The ORP teams developed differing levels of trust depending on the history of preexisting relationships of the community partners, how much institutional support they were provided, and how fair the team members believed the process to be.

Formalization Can Foster Follow-Through

Sometimes the formalization that comes with the planning process outlined in this and other chapters can distract from doing the actual work, as it absorbs time and resources. However, ORP teams reported that formalizing goals, objectives, and measures and writing action plans helped prioritize initiatives and ensure follow-through between meetings. And following through helps collaborative groups work better.

High-Level Shared Measures Are Broader Than Objectives and Actions

During some of the forums, where all the ORP teams were brought together, some time was devoted to discussing the difference between objectives, actions, and high-level measures. If measures are really just initiatives or short-term objectives, they will not be as helpful as they could be. “Identifying best practices for Opioid Use Disorder referrals” or “developing an addiction/recovery-specific job reentry program” are specific initiatives or can be useful objectives if turned “SMART” (see chapter 6). Keep in mind, though, that shared measures linked to your most-central goals need to be broad enough to capture the progress made by several different initiatives.

The Perfect Is the Enemy of the Good

Writing goals, objectives, and measures is easier than collecting the data for each measure, especially since tracking progress along cross-cutting goals may require data from different agencies or organizations that are not integrated and are sometimes collected in different formats. Therefore, rather than being “perfect,” shared measures need to be practical. One way to support the data-collection effort is to invite stakeholders from different organizations, who could help the group get the data it needs, to become members of the collaborative. (Chapter 5 discusses strategies for engaging stakeholders.)

Getting to the Right Measures Is a Process of Trial and Error

If the collaborative compiles its list of what it considers key shared measures, but members find themselves consistently talking about other data in team meetings, that list should be revisited. While it is critical to use the same measures for a longer period of time (to enable comparisons and to see trends), measures can still be replaced at the beginning of that process.

Consider Establishing a Data Group

Most ORP collaboratives were structured using three layers: the entire task force, work groups organized by themes, and a leadership team. If a collaborative has enough capacity and resources, it may want to establish a data group that supports the work groups’ use of goals, measures, and data. While such specialization can help improve the quality of the data work, leadership teams should not outsource all knowledge and skills involving shared measures from

the work groups. The work groups still need to learn how to use shared measures and link goals, data, and strategies. Hence, the data group should support the work with shared measures, not “take it away” from other collaboration members.

Create a Data-Review Routine

Devote some time in every meeting to discuss data. This will help members become more comfortable working with numbers and provide the group with possibly interesting input. Such data segments may include ad hoc data presentations by group members or external speakers. However, review the data collected based on shared measures with some regularity, too. If many measures are used because the team is tracking progress at higher as well as lower levels, one possibility is to rotate data discussions by work-group theme.

Be Realistic about What “Data Use” Means

Data-informed decision-making is not as linear a process as it may seem. The data will not tell a team what to do, and trying to draw lessons from data can be a messy and convoluted process. Data will give signals in terms of how the team is doing, especially if the data are compared over time or across benchmarks. But getting from data to a data-informed decision will likely require additional context, triangulation with other feedback sources, and brainstorming or discussion among group members.

Personal Biases Drive Interpretations

One reason different people draw different conclusions from the same data is that their interpretations are driven by their values, roles, and experiences. That is, group members working in law enforcement or public health or who were affected by the opioid epidemic personally may have very different perspectives. Emphasizing this point up front may prevent discussions from becoming overly heated or destructive. Interestingly, as shown by recent behavioral-science-inspired research, a benefit of group settings like these is that they may mitigate or “average out” individual biases (James et al. 2020).²

Use Shared Measures for Communication

Most collaboratives do well in terms of using measures and data to learn what works (or what doesn't) or for other managerial, internal functions. However, one important purpose behind working with a selection of the most central high-level shared measures is that they can be put into a one-page document, which can be used to explain to external stakeholders what the collaborative is doing. This can be useful to recruit new members, advocate for resources, or give account to interested community members.

2. A video that summarizes some of the central themes from James et al. (2020) can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quVHjsrRSvg> (Kamensky, Moynihan, and Van Ryzin 2020).

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Appendix 7.1. Developing Key Performance Indicators

Exercise: Developing Key Performance Indicators

Task: In the spaces on the next page, fill in your group's goals.

- If you have less than five goals, fill in your most strategic objectives (altogether a total of five).
- Develop three KPIs for each goal (or strategic objective).
- Try to mix outputs and outcomes (30 min).

Purpose: *This brainstorming activity should get your team started on its KPI development. The assignment needs to be completed within your teams and submitted to the School of Government.*

Recall the characteristics of KPIs:

- Strategically relevant
- Quantifiable
- Valid and reliable
- Timely and actionable
- Practical and cost-effective

Exercise: Developing KPIs

GOAL:

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

GOAL:

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

GOAL:

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

GOAL:

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

GOAL:

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

KPI: _____

Chapter 8

Confronting Challenges and Sustaining the Effort

Willow Jacobson and Amy Wade

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The collective impact model helps organize communities for systemic change. Communities embracing change, using this approach or others, are likely to encounter roadblocks and challenges as they attempt to get the work done and sustain efforts over the long term. This chapter discusses potential and common challenges to collaborative work and ways to mitigate them, including challenges encountered by teams participating in the ORP. Sustainability is a central concern and a challenge for any collaborative. This chapter provides resources to support collaboratives in planning for sustainability. The chapter concludes by presenting the challenges that ORP teams faced as they adapted their efforts due to a global pandemic. While it is unlikely that future collective impact initiatives will encounter a crisis of this magnitude, collective impact projects operate in an open-systems environment and are susceptible to a number of factors that make adapting to change inevitable.

Common Challenges with Collaboration

In collective impact efforts, a commitment to the fidelity of establishing a meaningful framework to support the collaboration is essential, but even so, challenges are likely to arise. As is common with any significant collaborative effort, issues of time, trust, and turf, if not addressed up front and maintained, can act as barriers to success.

Time

Collaborative efforts take a significant investment of time among members. In addition to the time required to establish the administrative aspects of the collaborations, time must be invested in building trust and mitigating turfism, as discussed below. One recommended method for beginning a collective endeavor is to have leaders conduct a listening tour. A listening tour is where the collaborative's leadership meets with as many key stakeholders as possible to ask questions, hear concerns, identify barriers, and build rapport. Listening tours can feel time intensive but can be critical to building needed relationships and understanding. Additional strategies to keep these lines of communication open will be needed, especially as leadership and group composition change. Keep in mind that group process and decision-making always take more time than individual efforts, but as the collaborative reviews items and talks through progress, it is important to ensure that all members are included and that everyone is on the same page.

Trust

ORP teams identified the challenge of building the needed trust and commitment among participants. For the project participant “doers,” this process of taking the time to focus on relationships and process could feel tedious, but they came to realize that activities to build trust and commitment should not be rushed. Paul Schmitz, an organizational consultant for nonprofits, argues that “these efforts, if done well, will require dedicated engagement, patience, deliberation, debate, and conflict” (Schmitz 2012). If inadequate time is spent building the foundation of trust between participants, then conflict, which is inevitable, will be destructive rather than constructive. Throughout the process, resources were designed with a focus on helping the teams build trust and inclusion. For example, when drafting the shared agenda, the process was designed to encourage all members to have a voice by having individual and group iterations. Across activities including action planning, the process was structured to encourage open sharing and support for all members, no matter their background or role. Members of a collaborative need to continually maintain an environment of trust and commitment, and they should work to instill that sense of trust in new members and sustain it among long-term participants.

Turf

Another common challenge experienced by collective impact groups is turf issues. The collective impact model starts with the desired final state that the community hopes to see and suggests that shared efforts, accountability, and credit will be necessary to get there. This approach lends itself to turf issues because it runs counter to how a lot of organizations, funders, and stakeholders are accustomed to operating, including that most organizations are measured on the success of their individual efforts. One potential way to address this pitfall is to seek creative ways for participants to align one or two of their organizational goals with the goals of the collective impact effort (see chapter 6). Proactive conversations with funders

and stakeholders to gain buy-in for collective success can also help to mitigate potential turf issues. Indeed, more funders are seeking to enhance their impact by funding collaborative or ecosystem/network efforts.

Time, trust, and turf are emphasized in this chapter because they need to be addressed during the collaborative's development. If they are not attended to early on, problems related to them can become latent features of the collaborative itself and significant liabilities as the collaborative transitions from its initial founding to its ongoing operation. In order to promote the likelihood of long-term functionality and overall success, collaboratives may consider using a process framework up front so that time-, trust-, or turf-related issues down the road are easier to resolve.

Lessons from the ORP Teams

Communication

Both internal and external communication were challenges for ORP teams. To aid with internal communication, teams were asked during the action-planning phase to document how they would facilitate communication involving objectives and strategies, which required them to describe how they would collect and share progress data. Teams needed to determine what strategic communication would look like and the right balance of volume—that is, enough communication to keep people involved without overwhelming them. There are many different tools and techniques teams can use to maintain continuous communication. No matter what methods the team decides to use, expectations for how often work groups' leaders are to check in and the information they should provide should be established early and maintained consistently throughout.

There were a number of common concerns about strategy for maintaining continuous communication. First, how will communication be maintained? Some teams decided to use a collaborative software platform such as Microsoft Teams or Google Workspace. These software platforms allowed for a method to organize and share documents. Another critical consideration was who would be tasked with providing the updates to the broader team. Assigning responsibility for the communication task for each work group was common and appeared to provide greater consistency and reliability. Finally, strong communication models included tracking and communicating progress. When developing key performance indicators, teams often also determined what method they would use to communicate their progress.

Teams were encouraged to use a red, yellow, or green color code to track progress on key performance indicators. This chapter's appendixes include both a sample of a community team's use of the method and a template that can be used for other community teams. The color-coded tracking provides a quick visual of the progress that the work groups or the community teams are making toward implementing strategies and achieving goals and objectives. However, this color system, or something similar, can also be used to help communicate progress and priorities internally.

External-communication challenges included establishing outlets for communication and framing strategic messaging. Limits in operational capacity made it difficult for teams to keep social media and other communication channels up to date. Often, they were also uncertain *what* to communicate. This was addressed by helping the teams establish and communicate their public value (defined and discussed below).

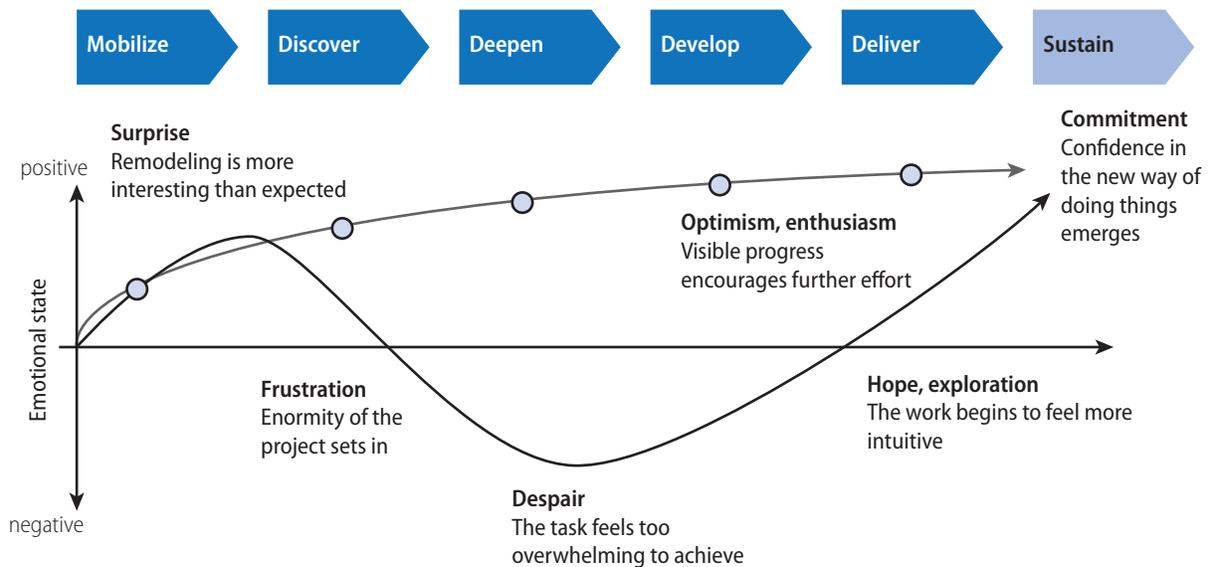
In considering the communication of results or success, ideally teams can report their progress to external stakeholders by using the same progress-tracking documents that they use internally, or modified versions of them. Decisions about the format for sharing progress should, however, be influenced by the team's intended audience. Often, the ORP teams needed to create different types of progress reports for different audiences. A team may decide to keep a public website that tracks progress, create slide shows for presentations to specific audiences, or use audio-visual materials. In the ORP, several teams presented slide shows that included a version of the red, yellow, green tracking to the elected officials in their communities.

Continued Commitment and Engagement: Team Dynamics

During the initial stage of a collaborative effort, participants have relatively high energy, engagement, and motivation. But once the initial enthusiasm subsides, it is natural for teams' overall engagement and motivation to decline as well. In the ORP project, decreased motivation was most visible while formalizing actions plans, as teams attempted to muddle through all the existing programs and services in the community ecosystems, working to align the right package of services with their goals and objectives. Teams that experienced significant leadership changes throughout the life span of the ORP also encountered setbacks with engagement and motivation. As new players came to the table, it was important to step back and help them build trust, understand efforts to date, contribute meaningfully to future efforts, and so forth.

Figure 8.1 summarizes the changes that can be anticipated with energy, motivation, and engagement during the span of a collective impact project. Collaboratives go through many stages over time. As collaboratives develop, it is important to recognize that it will take time to determine roles, responsibilities, and group norms. Members of new collective impact efforts should also recognize that momentum can wane, and they should plan for ways to keep engagement and involvement high. Collective impact efforts are designed to tackle complex problems, where long-term gains feel elusive, but celebrating "small wins"—or small steps of progress—helps keep momentum. The School project team encouraged ORP teams to celebrate a range of relationship- and result-based small wins, including continued member engagement, new members, strategy implementation (such as successfully creating a public-service announcement), and the receipt of new funding or other forms of support. Taking time to celebrate and acknowledge these wins is critical and should be planned for.

Collaboratives looking for guidance on how to successfully implement this work should be cautioned to avoid cutting corners during the planning phase. Indeed, funders should be encouraged to heavily invest in planning and initial implementation, allowing for a year of funding to be dedicated as a planning grant. Teams fail when they lack leadership (support, consistency of direction, vision, budget, and resources), lack focus (clarity of purpose, roles, strategy, or goals), or lack capacity (critical skill sets, knowledge, and ongoing development) (Rayner 1996). These initial considerations must also be maintained. Without adequate attention, the same roadblocks can diminish the hopes of creating a sustained effort over the long term.

Figure 8.1. The Emotional Curve and Engaging in Collective Impact

Adapted from Pat Collarbone, *Creating Tomorrow: Planning, Developing and Sustaining Change in Education and Other Public Services* (New York: Network Continuum, 2009), 45.

Navigating Challenges Up Front

Ann Marie Thomson and James L. Perry (2006) present a process framework for understanding the elements involved in collaborative efforts. This framework identifies five “dimensions” of collaboration. Two are structural (governance and administration), two relate to social capital (mutuality and norms), and one pertains to agency (organizational autonomy) (24). Investment of time and effort in each dimension up front can serve to enhance performance and avoid or lessen problems down the road.

In all collaborative efforts, decision-making should occur rather differently than it does in more traditional, bureaucratic organizational structures. “Partners who seek to collaborate must understand how to *jointly* make decisions about the rules that will govern their behavior and relationships; they also need to create structures for reaching agreement on collaborative activities and goals through shared power arrangements.” (Thomson and Perry 2006, 24). In the ORP, to support the governance dimension, teams received instruction on collaborative processes generally, how to build consensus for a shared vision, and how to engage partners in the development of agreed-upon action plans to formalize and guide the work. Action plans, which encouraged multiple partners to support activities, not only clarified the collaborative activities but also encouraged activities that were mutually reinforcing, supporting shared power. Some ORP teams were more effective than others at building a process for shared decision-making. ORP teams who rushed through these elements and centralized decision-making experienced less shared distribution of power in the longer term, and more trust issues arose. Conversely, teams that took the time to collaborate rigorously on the development of the shared vision and action plan were more likely to see positive outcomes throughout the process.

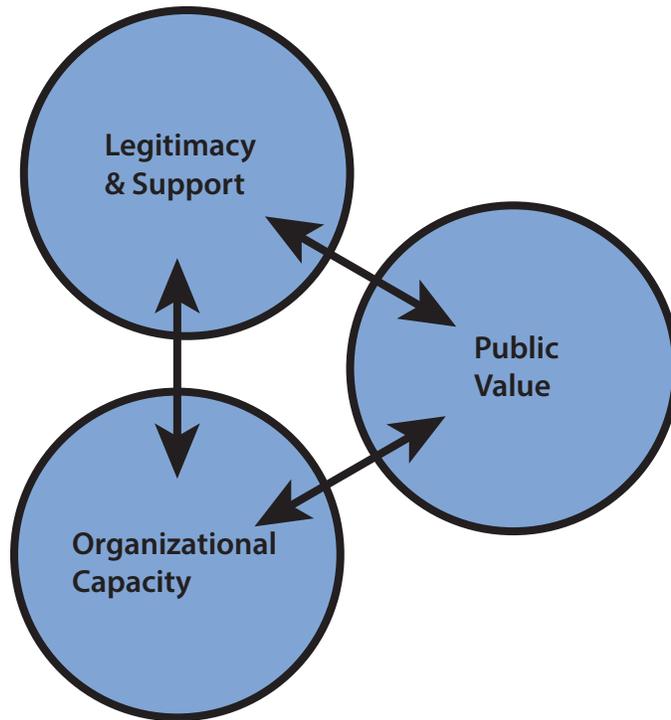
Effective collaboration often led to the establishment of subcommittees aligned with goal areas within the action plan, which in turn resulted in greater distribution of power and clearer agreement on the work to be done.

The administrative dimension of collaboratives provides a basis for moving from shared agreement on values and goals to actual execution of strategies and activities. “Collaborations are not self-administering enterprises. Organizations collaborate because they intend to achieve a particular purpose. To achieve the purpose that brought the organizations to the table in the first place, some kind of administrative structure must exist that moves from governance to action” (Thomson and Perry 2006, 25). Consistent with the governance dimension, a commonality among the more successful ORP teams was the formation and successful utilization of semiautonomous subcommittees to advance actions and strategies.

Mutuality is when members move from independent interests to collective interests and activities. “Although information sharing is necessary for collaboration, it is not sufficient for it to thrive. Without mutual benefits, information sharing will not lead to collaboration. Mutuality has its roots in interdependence. Organizations that collaborate must experience mutually beneficial interdependencies based either on differing interests . . . or on shared interests” (Thomson and Perry 2006, 27). For some members of the ORP teams, clearly identifying the benefits of participating in the collaborative was an important step to ensure that members stayed engaged, especially for those who might already have been working on this issue, and especially if they did so as a primary role at work. Here, ORP involvement could feel time-consuming, like a duplication or a diversion from a member’s main focus or recognized institutional role.

Shared norms, especially those that support trust and reciprocity, cannot be assumed in collaborative work and require intentional development and maintenance. “Reciprocity can be conceptualized in two different ways: one that is short term and contingent, and one that is long term and rooted in a sociological understanding of obligation” (Thomson and Perry 2006, 27). In terms of trust, people need to have a sense that others will make good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any explicit or implicit commitments, will be honest in whatever negotiations proceed from such commitments, and will not take excessive advantage of each other, even when the opportunity arises. Given the range of participants’ fields, including public health, law, public safety, and faith-based work, the personal and institutional norms they brought to this work varied considerably. Creating a new set of shared norms to guide this collective impact effort is necessary and is only achieved with purposeful action and attention.

Collaboration requires members to adopt the shared vision and commit to achieving collective as well as individual goals. “A defining dimension of collaboration that captures both the potential dynamism and the frustration that is implicit in collaborative endeavors is the reality that partners share a dual identity: They maintain their own distinct identities and organizational authority separate from (though simultaneously with) the collaborative identity” (Thomson and Perry 2006, 26). As people come together in a new undertaking, they do not give up their identities or the needs of their organizations. Rather it is the balance of honoring the needs and differences while embracing the mutuality and shared agenda.

Figure 8.2. The Strategic Triangle of Public Management

Adapted from Moore (1995) and Collins (2019).

Sustainability of Collective Impact

Sustainability is an issue for any collaboration and one that needs to be considered and addressed directly and early in the process. ORP teams were encouraged to tackle sustainability, which was described as a “community’s ongoing capacity and resolve to work together to establish, advance, and maintain effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality of life for all” (CDC, n.d., 8). There are many models and approaches to sustainability. Two that were especially helpful for sustainability planning for the ORP teams were the work of Ohio’s Collective Impact Model for Change Initiative (available at <https://collectiveimpact.mha.ohio.gov/Project-Information/Sustainability>) and David Collins’s presentation for the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (2019). Collins uses Mark Moore’s (1995) “strategic triangle” of public management to clarify important considerations for the long-term sustainability of collective impact efforts. Figure 8.2 presents the three points of the strategic triangle.

The strategic triangle focuses on three questions that are vital to a project’s purpose: those of the organization’s public value (What evidence is there that this endeavor is worth sustaining?), its authorizing environment (What institutional supports, structures, or policies need to be in place to ensure its sustainability?), and its operational capacity (Is it feasible, and where will its operational resources come from?) (Moore 1995, 22; Collins 2019).

Public Value

The strategic triangle grounds sustainability foremost on the question of an initiative's public value. Public value is achieved when overseers, clients, and beneficiaries agree that the collaborative effort yields substantive value for the community. To operationalize this, each ORP team considered how its work positively affected the community, what results from the work were valued by the community, and how to ensure the right actors in the community knew about their work. Teams reported that they felt empowered and excited when they got to revisit the value that they were creating. It rekindled enthusiasm about the vision that could otherwise get lost while they were busy doing the work.

Authorizing Environment

Once ORP teams had developed a shared understanding of public value and made commitments to enhance communication to critical stakeholders, the School project team asked them to consider sustainability in light of the authorizing environment. Any strategies or activities of the collaborative that create public value are more likely to be sustainable if they also fit the authorizing environment, that is, if they are legitimate and politically viable. To explore the authorizing environment, each ORP team considered the institutional supports, structures, and policies supporting the team; which of those structures could be strengthened to ensure the team's sustainability; what structures or policies were obstructing its progress; and which structures or policies were still needed to sustain it.

Many teams identified a lack of political support from local elected officials and explored how they could make their case and engage this needed population through further development and dissemination of public value. Examples of helpful political support included drug courts and police carrying naloxone (an emergency medication for opioid overdose). Teams often shared ideas on how to get local officials involved and what barriers to intervention success arose from a lack of that support. It also helped groups to go back and recognize they may have cut corners in initial design or may not have known about potential partners or organizations whose involvement would have been beneficial. As indicated above, sometimes at the start a group is so busy just trying to get formed and move forward that it can overlook elements or stakeholders, and this review of the authorizing environment allows for reflection, further development, or course corrections.

Operational Capacity

Finally, the third area identified in the strategic triangle is operational capacity. Like other collaborative efforts, many collective impact initiatives receive seed money to begin to address systemic change, but this money rarely comes from a permanent source. Collaboratives must address whether they have the capacity (financial and other resources) for the long term. Capacity is assessed in many ways, including the ability to secure diverse resources and access to the appropriate expertise. The School project team asked each ORP team to consider

- the operational capacity it had built through the networks it had developed (i.e., partnerships, collaborations, the ecosystem, and so on),
- how those networks would contribute to the sustainability of the ORP team's efforts,
- what current resources were necessary to sustain those efforts,
- which of those necessary resources was insufficient or vulnerable,
- what skills and expertise each team's initiative relied on to sustain its positive outcomes,

- which of those necessary skills and expertise could be strengthened to ensure sustained positive outcomes, and
- which skills and expertise were missing but needed.

One common area identified as a gap in operational capacity was data and shared measures. ORP teams recognized that in order to demonstrate public value, for example, they needed data subcommittees and needed to explore funding and other opportunities to create public-facing data dashboards to demonstrate progress on key performance indicators.

As ORP teams began to explore and understand these concepts, they were encouraged to form sustainability subgroups. Teams were also encouraged to consider outside experts in their communities who could provide support or consultation on sustainability.

The School used the strategic triangle of public value for the ORP project, but there are other resources and models out there. As a group determines its sustainability plans, it should select the model that best fits its needs. For example, another model by Marek and Mancini (2004) identifies seven factors of sustainable community change. These include leadership competence, effective collaboration, understanding the community, demonstrating results, strategic funding, staff involvement and integration, and community responsiveness. Ultimately, the public-value approach was used with the ORP teams, but other initiatives should look at several sustainability models to determine the right one for them.

Sustainability and Crisis Response

Even with good planning, there are times when it is necessary to revisit what collaboratives can and will do. The ORP teams had many changes to adapt to over the project's two years, including membership changes, political transitions, and evolving state and federal resources. The task of navigating these naturally occurring changes was compounded by the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In our effort to support ORP teams, the School used a "triage tool," published by Marian Urquilla (2020) on the Center for Community Investment blog, as a resource for ORP teams to use as communities navigated a host of changes affecting their service delivery and their priorities. This tool focuses on managing crises, but it could be helpful even outside of a crisis. It forces a group to think through its priorities, needs, and time limitations when faced with changing environmental constraints.

In a global pandemic, the ORP teams had to fundamentally change their priorities and strategies in unforeseen and uncharted ways. Many team members were called to play greater roles in the delivery of essential services within their organizations. Teams felt the effects of funding priorities shifting to immediate pandemic support. They also had to learn to communicate in new ways, hosting virtual meetings under stay-at-home orders. While at times it might have been easier to just halt certain programs and initiatives and wait the pandemic out, the teams quickly recognized that there was no way to know how long the pandemic would last or its full impact. Additionally, early data indicated that the pandemic was exacerbating opioid misuse as many communities saw an increase in overdoses in the early months of the pandemic and a spike following the distribution of stimulus checks. The School project team encouraged the ORP teams to recognize new constraints and barriers while remembering that there were still opportunities to fulfill their goals and objectives. This meant they had to think of action plans as living documents whose practicality could be reevaluated in light of the new operating environment.

Figure 8.3. Strategy Triage Tool

<p>Guiding Question/Line of Sight: What will it take to . . . ?</p> <p>The guiding question defines the line of sight: Where are you heading? What are you trying to achieve? The question should be open-ended and future focused. It should not make assumptions about who is responsible or what the solution is.</p>	
<p>Current Priority—Still Relevant—Continues Forward (with modified approach)</p> <p>These are items that are relevant and possible and will go forward, though perhaps not as planned. Make a few notes on likely modifications.</p>	<p>Pause and Resume with crisis “over” (assuming a 6–18 month delay—high uncertainty)</p> <p>These items will be paused. Either they are not feasible now or they need to be paused to make room for emergent priorities. You don’t really know for how long. Six to nine months is a ballpark and may be too long or too short.</p>
<p>Emerging Priority or Existing but Newly Prioritized (because of current conditions)</p> <p>These items are new or newly prioritized items that are on the table (or front burner) because of current conditions. You are being asked to do them or you realized they are necessary and/or urgent.</p>	<p>Unknown Status/Approach (need more data, too much in flux to know)</p> <p>These are items that are either unclear or too much in flux to decide. You need to have more data, talk to others, or let the dust settle a little bit before deciding.</p>
<p>Honor and Let Go (not going to happen)</p> <p>Conditions make these items impossible.</p>	

Adapted from Urquilla 2020. Copyright CC-BY-SA StrategyLift 2020.

ORP teams used the triage tool to reflect and restructure, giving themselves space to feel safe acknowledging that abandoning certain strategies or changing their intent in light of the pandemic was not tantamount to failure. It can be hard to let go of plans and strategies that have been painstakingly formulated. It is a helpful step in the right direction to be aware of that loss and acknowledge it as groups create and adapt to the new challenges.

The triage tool is made up of five categories. The first focuses on the “guiding question,” which expresses the group’s desired direction and what it is trying to achieve. The guiding question should reflect the group’s shared agenda or its vision statement, but the scope of its agenda or vision may need to be revisited in light of the crisis. Once the guiding question is clear, the tool can be used to reorganize previous strategies, focusing on their feasibility and priority. It can take a few tries to settle on a revised plan that is viable, but the tool was helpful in the ORP as teams began to adjust to the “new normal.” It provides five categories into which a project’s work can be sorted: (1) items that remain relevant and should continue (perhaps with modified implementation), (2) items to put on hold until the crisis is over, (3) new items that have arisen because of the changed conditions, (4) items whose priority and feasibility have become unclear, and (5) items that are no longer possible and should be discarded.

One ORP team, for example, initially planned to deliver its public-service announcements in local movie theaters. At the time of the pandemic, this team still classified public-service announcements under “current priority—still relevant.” However, the mechanism for reaching the intended audience was no longer valid despite the relevant objective of raising community awareness. The team revisited the action plan and changed how it delivered public-service announcements. Another team categorized a new education and prevention “emerging priority” for populations that became at risk for opioid abuse because of mental-health stressors caused by the pandemic. Finally, a majority of teams had one or more strategies that they needed to “honor and let go.” In our observations, the tool empowered teams to understand that even the best-laid plans can shift, but that does not mean that a collective impact effort must pause indefinitely or will be unsuccessful. Given the ongoing challenges of group engagement and motivation, having a process to revise and reevaluate work appeared to help groups think beyond the short term and elevate their collective energy to sustain the initiative.

Sustainability Lessons from the Opioid Response Project

Plan for Waning Enthusiasm

The excitement of a new group, a new initiative, a new funding source, and a new way to engage is wonderful but can be hard to maintain. When groups come together to work on complex and embedded problems such as those addressed through collective impact efforts, they are not without issues. These complex problems require long and sustained efforts, and the outcomes or results may be years away. Collaborative efforts require energy, enthusiasm, and infrastructure to keep members engaged and moving in the same direction. These efforts are not without challenges and roadblocks. Issues of time, turf, and trust are present throughout collaborative efforts and must be managed continually.

Celebrate the Big and the Small

By celebrating small wins, groups become more likely to have increased creative productivity, motivation, and happiness over the long run (Amabile and Kramer 2011; Ellis 2020). While it might seem unnecessary to celebrate seemingly slight progress when the final goal is still so far away, small wins have a major effect on individual and group engagement in a project (Amabile and Kramer 2011, Marchal 2016). Celebrating small wins not only produces happiness and a sense of success but also encourages individuals to continue pressing forward, building on the small wins along the way (Smith 2019). Too often people focus only on their shortcomings or failures, but when they focus instead on small wins, they are reminded that they are headed on the right path, no matter how far away the end goal might seem (Ellis 2020).

Small wins are especially important when dealing with complex problems. Celebrating small wins when working with complex problems allows people to “embrace ambiguity, uncertainty, and interconnectedness and welcome new understandings” (Termeer and Defulf 2017). No matter how small a win might be, recognizing and appreciating it can launch a collaborative forward and provide some respite from the complexity and frustration of dealing with a complex problem. When collaboratives do not celebrate small wins, they risk losing innovative thinkers and potential creativity (Ellis 2020; Weick and Quinn 1999). Celebrating the small stuff is actually really big!

Call In Help

Although all of the ORP teams were committed to the same broad goal of addressing opioid disorder in their communities, each team's community, composition, and specific goals were unique. Because of this, they each faced different issues that required specific expertise. For example, in rural settings with limited economic bases, teams needed specialized assistance for fundraising, while teams in the more-urban communities tended to already have members with specialized fundraising skills. In other cases, bringing in an external facilitator for some community meetings helped a team get people on board and address any intragroup tensions that had developed, especially between grassroots leaders and leaders whose authority was more formal. Despite the variety of talents that members of a collective impact effort may have, there are times when they may need to draw on external resources and consultants. In collaborative efforts, content-specific issues arise, and it is important to be prepared to address them—internally or with external support.

Lead Collaboratively

To sustain efforts and mitigate challenges over the long term, collaboratives must build leadership. This does not have to entail designating a single person or group of people as *the* leaders, but members do need to be able to perform key leadership functions. This involves leadership efforts at administration as well as inspiration and engagement. To successfully lead collective impact work in communities, collaboratives should apply the characteristics and practices of collaborative leadership to foster an environment in which members take ownership and power is diffuse. This often requires applying reflective practice and challenging the conceptual models of leadership ingrained by traditional, top-down hierarchies.

Don't Rest on Your Laurels

Sustainability does not just happen. Collaboratives must be intentional about sustainability and about addressing their challenges and roadblocks. The School project team found that ORP members underestimated the amount of planning needed to ensure long-term sustainability. Teams often indicated that they thought they had done sustainability planning until they looked at the components of the sustainability model and discovered serious gaps. For example, a majority of teams acknowledged the work needed in the authorizing environment to get the support and funding necessary to achieve medium- and long-term goals. Specifically, ORP teams identified structural or policy changes necessary for goal attainment, requiring increased efforts in both communicating public value and garnering support in the authorizing environment. Building sustainability is not a one-time process but part of the group's ongoing work.

Collaboratives, like small businesses, can fall apart if they lack the leadership, commitment, resources, or planning for sustainability. All of this said, the ORP teams accomplished great things in the hardest of times. With commitment, focus, and passion to make a difference, great results are possible.

Wrapping Up

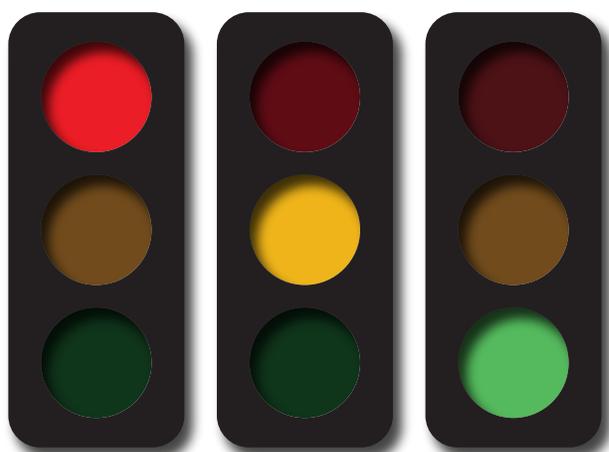
This guidebook is designed to help communities and collaboratives that are interested in using a collective impact approach to address complex problems. Throughout, the practices, steps, and approaches have drawn on lessons learned while implementing the Opioid Response Project. This book presents a tailored and modified approach to the collective impact model.

Part of the benefit of the collective impact model is that the process is driven by members of the collaborative. So each community will make choices regarding how to best leverage the elements of this model to meet their individual and contextual needs. For further information about the ORP and using the collective impact model to address the opioid crisis, the School of Government has prepared an online resource: [The Opioid Response Project](https://orp.sites.unc.edu/), <https://orp.sites.unc.edu/>.

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Appendix 8.1. Using Red, Yellow, Green to Track Progress with KPIs



Using a red, yellow, green color coding to track progress on goals and objectives can help share progress between teams in a clear, easily interpreted way. There are some things to consider when using this method.

1. Agree Ahead of Time on Success Measures

Teams or subcommittees should come to consensus about what constitutes reaching “green” status. In the template provided, green represents greater than 50% achievement of an objective. Your team may decide to only code something green after full achievement. This is particularly useful if your objective is not quantifiable.

2. Not All Objectives Are Measured with Numbers

Achieving a certain outcome by a certain date is an example of a measurable objective that is not numerical.

3. Color-Coded Success Criteria Should Describe Results

As we’ve discussed before, a KPI should usually evaluate not the accomplishment of a task but the objective that underlies the accomplishment of a task. So the team may create a PSI about opioids, but the team’s KPI should address how well the PSA accomplishes its goal rather than the fact that the PSA was made.

Appendix 8.2. Sample Red, Yellow, Green Tracking

Vision: A healthy, safe, and thriving county.

Goal 1: Accessible treatment for all.

Objective 1: Increase the percentage of individuals involved in the initiative who make their first scheduled treatment appointment from 19% to 25% by 2021.

Objective 2: Increase public education related to local treatment options.

Goal 2: Prevent prescription-medication misuse.

Objective 1: By September 30, 2019, the percentage of high-school students (in grades 9–12) with access to prescription medications being stored in unlocked cabinets or drawers in their homes will decrease from 84% to 79%.

Objective 2: By April 2020, decrease the percentage of high-school students who report using a prescription medication without a doctor’s prescription from 9.6% to 8.6%.

Objective 3: Decrease the number of opioid pills dispensed in the county by 10% by 2021.

Objective 4: Increase the number of pills collected through prescription-medication drop boxes by 10% by 2021.

Goal 3: Create a community free of stigma.

Objective 1: Investigate and develop a measurement tool to assess community-wide stigma by January 2020.

Goal 4: Develop a supportive recovery community.

Objective 1: Define and develop the definition of a supportive recovery community.

Objective 2: Increase the number of recovery centers from 0 to 1 by 2021.

Goal 5: Address harm and risk associated with substance use.

Objective 1: Increase the number of syringe-exchange-program sites.

Objective 2: Increase knowledge of harm-reduction strategies and resources among law enforcement agencies annually.

Objective 3: Monitor data quarterly to assess potential risks and threats related to opioid use.

Green: In progress

Yellow: Started, minimal progress made

Red: Not started, No progress

Appendix 8.3. Tracking Template

Goals	Objectives	Responsible Group/ Individual(s)	KPIs	Resources Needed	Status
Goal 1	Objective 1				
	Objective 2				
	Objective 3				
Goal 2	Objective 1				
	Objective 2				
	Objective 3				
Goal 3	Objective 1				
	Objective 2				
	Objective 3				
Goal 4	Objective 1				
	Objective 2				
	Objective 3				

Status Key
Less than 1/3 complete
1/3 to 1/2 complete
More than half complete

Note: Each team should decide what metric to use for each category. Just be sure to indicate on the form so that all readers understand.