

COLLECTIVE IMPACT:

How Backbone organizations influence change without formal authority

By Kara Bixby

INTRODUCTION

Collective impact initiatives are playing an increasingly important role in the youth development field in Minnesota and across the nation. They offer an innovative approach to address complex social issues like the disparities in educational outcomes that fall along racial and socioeconomic lines. As education funding remains scarce and pressure to demonstrate results increases, collective impact initiatives are seen as a way to better utilize resources and identify effective practices.¹ Yet their role and influence in the field have yet to be fully investigated; research on collective impact models is in its infancy.

Collective impact initiatives are long-term commitments made by important cross-sector actors to a common agenda in order to solve a specific social issue.² John Kania and Mark Kramer, who first articulated the concept in 2011 in a Stanford Social Innovation Review article,³ describe the alternative to collective impact as isolated impact: thousands of competing nonprofits attempting to solve the same problem as if there is a single cure that must be discovered. Isolated impact requires exponentially more resources to solve social problems and may not result in a viable, scalable solution. Further, Kania and Kramer argue that major social problems are not caused by a single organization or entity and thus cannot be solved by one.⁴

It is important to note that collective impact does not simply imply more partnerships or collaborations. Kania and Kramer clarify that “it requires a systemic approach to social impact that focuses on the relationships between organizations and the progress toward shared objectives. And it requires the creation of a new set of nonprofit management organizations that have the skills and resources to assemble and coordinate the specific elements necessary for collective action to succeed.”⁵ Collective impact moves beyond traditional modes of partnership and collaboration, as articulated in a follow-up Stanford Social Innovation Review article written by Hanleybrown, Kania and Kramer. They contend that more people “have come to believe that collective impact is not just a fancy name for collaboration, but rather, represents a fundamentally different, more disciplined, and higher performing approach to achieving large-scale social impact.”⁶ A recent blog post by Anderson Williams, which examines the nature of truly effective collaborations, contends that this type of systemic approach is frequently lacking in collaborations. Williams argues that too often collaboration occurs after strategic decision making, i.e., after programs determine whom they will serve, how, when, where, etc. As he points out, “collaboration becomes a reactionary tactic attempting to overcome the lack of an actual integrated system.”⁷

In contrast, collective impact initiatives attempt to build an integrated system of cross-sector partners to address a social issue. In order to distinguish these initiatives from more traditional partnerships, it is important to understand the necessary components of collective impact. Using a variety of case studies, Kania and Kramer outline the specific elements necessary for this systemic approach. They identify five conditions present in successful collective impact initiatives shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1*Five Conditions for Collective Impact Success*

#1 Common Agenda	A shared vision and definition of the problem along with agreed upon goals.
#2 Shared Measurement System	An agreed upon way to measure and report on progress.
#3 Centralized Infrastructure	A backbone organization with staff who coordinate the initiative.
#4 Mutually Reinforcing Activities	The coordination of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
#5 Ongoing Communication	A consistent way for participating organizations to communicate and build relationships.

Adapted from Collective Impact, 2011.⁸

A successful example of collective impact on educational outcomes is seen in the Strive Partnership of the Greater-Cincinnati area. Initiated in 2006, the Strive Partnership includes leaders from nonprofit organizations, businesses, government, and education institutions as well as community and corporate funders. The partnership’s focus is on preparing students cradle to career for school, postsecondary education and the workforce. The Strive Partnership demonstrates all five conditions outlined by Kania and Kramer and boasts significant progress toward its goals.⁹ The most recent results show improvement for nearly all success indicators since the baseline year.¹⁰ In fact, the partnership’s success in Cincinnati has led to the development of a national network of cities called StriveTogether, which is implementing the same cradle-to-career collective impact framework.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Despite the recent rise of collective impact initiatives, there is limited research on how they most effectively achieve their goals. The majority of research has focused on defining and identifying the components of collective impact. While collective impact networks have the potential to increase educational outcomes, their success depends on how they are conceived, developed and implemented. When effective collaboration efforts take Williams’ integrated approach—by co-creating collective strategy, goals, key roles, responsibilities and tactics—questions of authority come to the forefront. How and by whom are strategic goals determined? What are the requirements of participation? How are programs held accountable and by whom?

In a 2013 Stanford Social Innovation Review two-part online series, Turner, Errecart and Bhatt explain that a significant portion of collective impact work involves changing behaviors and attitudes.¹¹ In order to achieve the five conditions, the backbone entity needs participating organizations to build consensus around a common goal, agree on how progress will be measured, and coordinate activities to maximize results. However, the backbone entity has no formal authority over participating organizations. As a result, it must build its own authority to exert influence.

This paper will examine how backbone organizations effectively engage organizations and build authority to influence change. It will focus specifically on the field of education, examining three collective impact initiatives in the Twin Cities Metro Area. These questions are timely and relevant to the education field in Minnesota, where networks like Sprockets, the Tutoring Partnership, Generation Next, Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood and Ignite Afterschool are presently grappling with these issues. According to a survey conducted by the University of Minnesota in 2011, there are over 500 initiatives in the Twin Cities dedicated to closing the achievement gap.¹² The survey reveals that initiatives focused on the same goals often use different measures of success; in addition, they often lack formal mechanisms for identifying and scaling best practices. This environmental scan demonstrates the need for more effective collaboration and coordination, specifically the need for the type of integrated system that collective impact can offer.

METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate how backbone organizations build authority to influence behaviors, this study will use a two-pronged approach. First, it will look at issues of authority from the perspective of the backbone organization. Second, it will attempt to better understand how participating organizations view collective impact networks. The two analyses will then be synthesized to share lessons learned.

There are numerous organizations using collective impact strategies in the education field in Minnesota. This study will investigate three networks in the Twin Cities Metro Area: Sprockets, Generation Next and the Tutoring Partnership. These three backbone organizations were selected because they have similar goals, yet implement different approaches in regard to issues of authority and autonomy. In addition, they are in varying stages of development. The paper will use case studies for each collective impact initiative to compare their approaches and highlight effective practices. Data for the case studies is derived from staff interviews at each organization as well as the collation of key historical documents (e.g., strategic plans, logic models, annual reports). One 90-minute staff interview was conducted for each organization. The criteria for interviewee selection included length of time at the organization, proximity to the coordination of collective impact activities, and decision-making capacity at the organization. Staff members with a longer tenure, close proximity to the activities and the ability to make decisions on behalf of the initiative were prioritized. Refer to the interview protocol in Appendix A for more detailed information.

The interview transcripts were coded for specific themes and then compared across the three backbone organizations. See Appendix B for an explanation of the coding process used. A two-page profile was created to serve as an overview of each case study. The similarities and differences between the three networks will be addressed in the analysis section of the paper.

To explore how participating organizations experience collective impact, a survey of youth program staff was conducted. The survey was conducted online and sent to all organizations that participate in the three networks, with total number of 158 recipients. A total of 50 people responded, resulting in a response rate of 32%. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C. The majority of respondents provide academic support (86%), youth development (72%), and enrichment activities (58%) to students. In addition, their programming is focused primarily on K-12, with 74% serving grades K-5, 74% grades 6-8, and 70% grades 9-12. Only 28% of respondents serve students in pre-K.

The respondents primarily conduct programming in Saint Paul (90%) while about half (48%) conduct programming in Minneapolis; 12% conduct programming outside of the two cities. This geographical breakdown is expected since two of the networks (Sprockets and the Tutoring Partnership) take place solely in Saint Paul. Participation in the networks varies slightly, with 78% participating in Sprockets, 65% in the Tutoring Partnership, and 55% in Generation Next. In addition, the respondents identify other collective impact networks in which they participate, including Youthprise, Everybody's In, Northside Achievement Zone, Youth Intervention Programs Association, MACC Alliance of Connected Communities, and Minneapolis Coordinating Board. It is important to recognize the limitations of the survey sample. All of the respondents currently participate in at least one collective impact network, which potentially introduces selection bias. The survey was sent only to staff members that participate in one of the three highlighted initiatives. As a result, the findings do not reflect the perspectives of organizations that do not presently participate in collective impact in the Twin Cities.

The qualitative survey data was coded for specific themes, using the same coding system as the interview transcripts. The results of the survey are shared in the analysis section of the paper. In the Lessons Learned section, the highlights of the two data sets will be integrated, synthesizing the commonalities and discrepancies between the two perspectives.

CASE STUDIES

By conducting three case studies of collective impact networks in the Twin Cities Metro Area, this paper seeks to investigate how the backbone organization of a collective impact network can effectively engage organizations and influence change. Sprockets, Generation Next and the Tutoring Partnership are all collective impact networks working in the field of education in the Twin Cities. Although the scope of their work differs, they are all focused on improving youth outcomes. The mission statements of the three networks demonstrate the common focus on increasing outcomes for all youth (see case studies on the following pages).

The three mission statements include language that refers to all youth, students or children. Nevertheless, the scope of each initiative varies significantly. Sprockets is focused on out-of-school-time learning and the youth outcomes typically associated with after-school programs, including non-cognitive and social-emotional skills. Generation Next and the Tutoring Partnership, in comparison, seek to impact academic outcomes. Generation Next spans cradle to career, with academic goals from Kindergarten to career readiness. The Tutoring Partnership has a smaller scope, aiming to increase third grade reading and eighth grade math proficiency. The following case study profiles provide an overview of each collective impact initiative, including their goals, history, participation and accountability systems. In addition, they outline which of the five collective impact conditions are currently present.

CASE STUDY #1: SPROCKETS

Sprockets is Saint Paul's out-of-school time (OST) network that works to increase the access to and the quality of youth programs.

OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVE

Year Founded: 2011

Location: Saint Paul

Network: 62 youth-serving organizations participate in the OST network

Mission: To improve the quality, availability and effectiveness of out-of-school-time learning for all youth in Saint Paul through the committed, collaborative and innovative efforts of community organizations, government, schools and other partners.

Goals: (1) Increase effective use of public and private OST resources, (2) Increase youth participation in youth programs, (3) Increase youth program effectiveness.

Organizational structure: Staff of 4 is a partnership of community-based agencies (i.e., Augsburg College, YWCA, and City of Saint Paul).

HISTORY

The start of the initiative can be traced back to the election of Mayor Chris Coleman in 2006. One of his priorities was improving the lives of young people in Saint Paul through education. At the time, there were several neighborhood collaboratives of youth programs, so he built on a tradition of collaboration. He created the Second Shift Commission, which included the school district; community organizations and activists; local non-profit, business and civic leaders; parents and youth; and public servants like police and libraries to provide recommendations regarding OST in Saint Paul. The commission received a boost in 2008 from a National League of Cities grant, which allowed it to learn about best practices in other cities across America.

The Second Shift Commission held listening sessions throughout the city with over 350 participants, ranging from corporations, businesses, parents, youth, community partners and schools, to create a vision for youth success. This process resulted in the Framework for Youth Success. Once the vision was solidified, the commission made three recommendations to achieve it: develop a city-wide data system, create a searchable website with program information, and provide resources that improve the quality of youth programs. A multi-year grant from the Wallace Foundation made it possible to implement these recommendations. In March 2011, Sprockets was launched as Saint Paul's OST network to take on these activities.

"Because the initiative was developed over a long period of time, the public will and political support required to build a successful network were in place."

– Erik Skold, Sprockets associate director

NETWORK PARTICIPATION

Participation in Sprockets is voluntary and programs come to participate in a variety of ways. Depending on how they participate, programs' levels of commitment vary. For example, there are options that entail limited requirements. A program can opt in to the program finder (a searchable website filled with program information for youth and families) as long as it serves young people. A program can also sign up for the Sprockets email list, receive information about trainings and attend them. In contrast, there are more intensive modes of participation, such as the Sprockets citywide data system, quality improvement project, and Survey of

Academic and Youth Outcomes (SAYO) project, which all have their own specific requirements. Some projects are selective; for example, the After School Accelerators project includes only five slots which were determined by a competitive application process. Ultimately, the goal is to get programs to participate in the way(s) most useful to them. This structure was influenced by the culture of the network which was present from the beginning. At the onset, organizations rallied around a shared vision and Sprockets recruited programs to participate by sharing the vision and offering useful tools and support.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT STRATEGIES

Sprockets currently implements three of the five collective impact strategies fully; two of the five are presented as opportunities. Sprockets' shared vision serves as the common agenda: all of Saint Paul's youth will develop their abilities as learners, contributors, and navigators so they can recognize and achieve their greatest potential. Sprockets staff, which is a partnership of community-based agencies, provides the centralized infrastructure. The network also coordinates ongoing communication; it has a robust communication infrastructure that includes face-to-face, electronic and paper communication.

CURRENT STRATEGIES

- Common agenda
- Shared measurement system
- Centralized infrastructure
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Ongoing communication

At this point, Sprockets provides opportunities for a shared measurement system and the coordination of mutually reinforcing activities. Sprockets does not directly facilitate partner activities; however, there are opportunities for network partners to share their work and collaborate. The network also encourages programs to collect and use data. Yet, programs are ultimately able to decide what data they collect. If programs want support from the network and want to align with Sprockets, the network offers specific tools related to its goals (e.g., Cityspan database, Scores Reporter).

ACCOUNTABILITY

Sprockets recently implemented a new accountability structure around improvement. Participating programs are held accountable to having an improvement plan. This structure was determined by Sprockets staff and approved by the network's various governing bodies. While the quality improvement process involves specific trainings and convenings, the formal accountability mechanism will be the creation of an annual improvement plan. In addition, there is an informal accountability structure embodied in the network's vision. Programs inspire each other to do better, the shared vision brings people together around common goals, and Sprockets provides resources for programs to improve. This allows for shared learning and organic forms of accountability.

SUCSESSES

- Garnering support for OST by demonstrating to stakeholders (e.g., funders, systems and organizations) the importance and power of OST.
- Developing resources that allow youth programs to use data for improvement.
- Providing youth workers opportunities to improve their practice, learn, and develop.

CHALLENGES

- Sustaining the work after current national funding ends.
- Staying useful and relevant to a broad array of organizations while being lean.
- Learning how to stay strong at core functions while being innovative and adaptable.

CASE STUDY #2: GENERATION NEXT

Generation Next is a coalition of civic, business and education leaders working to close the achievement and opportunity gaps for students of color in Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVE

Year Founded: 2012

Location: Minneapolis & Saint Paul

Network: 69 organizations participating in 3 action networks

Mission: To dramatically accelerate educational achievement of all children from early childhood through early career through an aligned partnership of community stakeholders.

Goals: (1) Kindergarten readiness, (2) third grade reading, (3) eighth grade math, (4) high school graduation and (5) college and career readiness.

Organizational Structure: Non-profit organization with 6 full-time staff members; official Emerging Network Member of the national StriveTogether network.

HISTORY

In 2011, Robert Jones, then a senior vice president of the University of Minnesota, read the Stanford Social Innovation Review article on collective impact and learned about the success that Cincinnati had in increasing its student outcomes. The article attributed Cincinnati's success to the collective impact initiative, the Strive Partnership, which was being replicated in other cities across the country. Robert Jones convened a group of local leaders who decided to invest in a Twin Cities Strive network. The initiative was started in early 2012 by a few high-level stakeholders, most of which were funders, e.g., University of Minnesota, Greater Twin Cities United Way, Target Corporation and General Mills. This Leadership Council decided to name the local initiative based on the StriveTogether national framework *Generation Next*. Greater Twin Cities United Way provided critical hosting support during the start-up phase, while Wilder Research offered expertise and support around data and measures. In February 2014, Generation Next went through the official StriveTogether review and received approval as a StriveTogether Emerging Network Member.

The initiative was started in early 2012 by a few high-level stakeholders, most of which were funders.

– Jonathan May, Generation Next director of Data & Research

NETWORK PARTICIPATION

Participation in Generation Next is voluntary and time-based. Organizations, whether they are funders, other networks or community organizations, opt in. Action networks, formed around each goal area, develop annual charters and action plans. Once these charters are complete, organizations have the opportunity to sign on to the charter and its action plan. No new members are allowed after the charter is solidified. One year later, the charter and action plan are revisited and organizations have another opportunity join. This one-year membership model is based on the national StriveTogether framework. The model was debated internally at Generation Next and staff decided that utilizing it was, in fact, the best approach to participation.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT STRATEGIES

Generation Next attempts to use all of the collective impact strategies, and does so with varying levels of success. Looking at the organization overall, the five goal areas comprise the common agenda. Generation Next also convenes networks around each of these goal areas. For example, the Reading by Third Grade Action Network comes together to decide what it is going to take to get all students reading proficiently by third grade. The shared measurement system looks different for each goal area; each network decides on performance indicators and measurements for its goal area. The director of Data & Research identifies the most cost efficient data collection methods and systems; this is currently in progress for the three networks. Generation Next and its staff of six serve as the backbone organization, along with support from consultants. The monthly action network meetings provide the platform for ongoing communication in addition to an online secured site available to network participants. Mutually reinforcing activities are determined annually by the action networks when they create their charter and action plan and determine specific roles for participants.

CURRENT STRATEGIES

- Common agenda
- Shared measurement system
- Centralized infrastructure
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Ongoing communication

ACCOUNTABILITY

The accountability mechanism for participation is a commitment to continuous improvement. Generation Next action networks are organized around the five goal areas. Once the networks solidify their one-year charter and action plan, organizations have the opportunity to sign on. Task forces are developed around each of the strategies selected in the action plan. For example, the college and career readiness network selected the strategy of providing all students with a caring adult who will help them complete a post-secondary plan. A task force has been formed of organizations that will work on this strategy over the next year. The programs that opt in to this task force will be held accountable to participate in ongoing meetings and commit to continuous quality improvement related to this strategy.

If an organization does not sign on to continuous improvement, this will be made public. Generation Next plans to share this information broadly. Based on the national StriveTogether model, the idea is focus on improvement and best practices, as opposed to lifting up one program over another. Generation Next does not want to pick winners and losers. However, if an organization does not want to change or improve, funders and other stakeholders will know. Conversely, Generation Next will use its relationship with funders to advocate for the organizations that commit to continuous quality improvement.

SUCSESSES

- Getting the broader community to agree on a shared agenda.
- Developing strong relationships with the two public school districts to build their capacity to collaborate and better serve students.
- Bringing important issues to the forefront in a new way, by taking asset-based approach to alter perceptions and garner support for education.

CHALLENGES

- Maintaining momentum to prevent the initiative from stalling.
 - Developing relationships with key players, e.g., funders, network partners, data partners.
 - Balancing the need for internal capacity and strategic partnerships to deliver on all of the goal areas and network convenings.
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CASE STUDY #3: TUTORING PARTNERSHIP

The Tutoring Partnership is a collaborative of nonprofit community organizations that provide academic supports to students in Saint Paul.

OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVE

Year Founded: 2007

Location: Saint Paul

Network: 20 community organizations participate in the Tutoring Partnership

Mission: To accelerate academic achievement for all students and close gaps for low-income students and students of color in Saint Paul Public Schools.

Goals: (1) Accelerate reading and math proficiency for students in Saint Paul, (2) Increase the quality of tutoring programs, (3) Provide a Saint Paul-wide learning community around tutoring.

Organizational Structure: Program of the Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation with 2 full-time staff members and 2 AmeriCorps VISTA members dedicated to the network.

HISTORY

When the Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation was restarted in 2006, its executive director and board members led discussions with school district staff (i.e., superintendent and administrative staff) to determine how the organization could best support its key partner. One request from the school district was to coordinate tutoring for Saint Paul Public School (SPPS) students. Although district staff were aware that tutoring was occurring throughout the city, they did not know whether it was impactful or high-quality. As a result, the school district asked the foundation to investigate effective tutoring practices and create a network around them.

The foundation undertook a feasibility assessment led by an external consultant, convening school district staff, foundation staff, board members, and community tutoring providers. The feasibility assessment included a literature review of tutoring best practices, an environmental scan of tutoring providers citywide, and a needs assessment to determine the support that would benefit tutoring organizations. The process of determining the need and subsequent role of the partnership was an inclusive, grass-roots endeavor. A group of six tutoring programs voluntarily agreed to inform the needs assessment. The Tutoring Partnership was created in response in order to serve as the bridge between community partners and the school district, helping them align their work around the research-informed best practices. Today, the Tutoring Partnership serves as a learning community, providing professional development for staff, training for tutors, volunteer recruitment and technical assistance to 20 community organizations.

The process of determining the need and subsequent role of the partnership was an inclusive, grass-roots endeavor.

– Nora Robinson, Tutoring Partnership manager

NETWORK PARTICIPATION

Participation in the Tutoring Partnership is voluntary. If an organization is interested, Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation staff initiate a process to determine if participation is in fact a good fit, which includes a site visit and program observation. Together, foundation and program staff decide whether the partnership is a good match for the program.

In order to participate in the Tutoring Partnership, an organization must sign a memorandum of agreement and meet the Tutoring Partnership

Requirements. There are four minimum requirements: measure implementation of best practices, conduct criminal background checks, provide orientation and training to tutors, and participate in the evaluation of tutoring. In addition, the organization must provide academic supports to students and become an authorized SPPS partner. The Tutoring Partnership Requirements were developed in 2011 by an advisory group, a self-selected group of Tutoring Partners, foundation and school district staff that convened to guide the development of the Tutoring Partnership. The requirements were initiated by Tutoring Partners who wanted to maintain the integrity and reputation of network participation.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT STRATEGIES

The Tutoring Partnership utilizes four of the five collective impact strategies. The partnership has a common agenda to increase the quality of programs so that students who receive tutoring have better outcomes. There is also a shared measurement system, with common data points that are collected across all Tutoring Partners. While the Tutoring Partnership does not enforce what individual programs measure, it does require programs to collect certain types of data in order to measure the impact of tutoring on academic growth and proficiency. Foundation staff provide the centralized infrastructure. Ongoing communication is

another function of the Tutoring Partnership, providing opportunities for Tutoring Partners to regularly and informally communicate with each other at events and convenings. Additionally, the Tutoring Partnership facilitates sharing between partners, where one program learns from another. The only strategy the Tutoring Partnership does not implement is the coordination of mutually reinforcing activities. Foundation staff give insight and feedback on program activities, but it does not direct the activities organizations undertake. This may happen organically, but it is not a focus of the work at this point.

CURRENT STRATEGIES

- Common agenda
- Shared measurement system
- Centralized infrastructure
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Ongoing communication

ACCOUNTABILITY

Tutoring Partners are held accountable to the Tutoring Partnership Requirements. This is the formal accountability system of the network. It was developed by an advisory group and driven primarily by Tutoring Partnership program staff. Programs are also informally held accountable through their relationship with the Foundation. The Tutoring Partnership builds and maintains strong relationships with each organization. As a result, Foundation staff discuss issues and improvement areas with program staff on a regular basis. The informal accountability structure based in strong personal relationships is staff-driven and directly tied to the Tutoring Partnership's philosophy of continuous quality improvement.

SUCSESSES

- Improving student outcomes; students who are tutored perform better than similar students who do not receive tutoring.
- Creating a collective impact initiative that provides program-by-program support.
- Developing a reputation as a strong, citywide initiative that is considered a thought leader by other key players.

CHALLENGES

- Expanding the work outside of Saint Paul while remaining a program of the Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation, whose mission is focused on SPPS.
- Balancing collaborative relationship building with high expectations for accountability.
- Measuring student success, including both academic and non-academic outcomes, with the data and tools currently available.

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES

The case studies reveal three important themes: philosophy, history and people. The philosophy that guides the collaboration affects participation, accountability and ultimately the influence the initiative can garner. Additionally, the founding story of the backbone organization shapes how people engage in the network. The history of the organization impacts the structural development of the network, creating varying spheres of influence. Lastly, the people who drive the decisions and activities play an important role in building relationships and cultivating authority.

PHILOSOPHY: WHAT THE WORK IS ABOUT

The philosophy of a collective impact initiative influences which organizations participate, how they participate, and how they are held accountable. The case studies reveal a shared focus on increasing youth outcomes by improving quality. The coding analysis highlights a common theme among all three networks, continuous quality improvement. All three networks utilize the philosophy of continuous improvement to hold programs accountable. For all three networks, this is clearly articulated as their formal accountability structure. Sprockets requires participating organizations to complete an annual improvement plan; Generation Next requires programs to commit to continuous quality improvement in the action network's charter; and the Tutoring Partnership requires an annual assessment of best practices. All three networks see continuous quality improvement as the mechanism to achieve better outcomes for youth. This philosophy is critical to developing the authority to generate change.

Synthesizing experiences from a variety of collective impact models, Education Northwest finds a similar trend. Its report, *Mobilizing Communities: Improving Northwest Education through Collective Impact*, explains how “a continuous improvement mindset drives these groups to learn from their peers, reflect on their own experience, and refine their strategies as the work evolves. These steps are critical in facilitating the adaptive change.”¹³ Research from the youth development and out-of-school-time fields supports this notion as well. As Wendy Surr of the National Institute on Out-of-School Time argues, a philosophy of continuous quality improvement acknowledges the central importance of quality, aligns outcomes with program practices, and utilizes self-assessment as a driver for change; as a result, accountability grounded in continuous quality improvement produces better results for after-school programs in the long run.¹⁴

For Sprockets and the Tutoring Partnership, continuous improvement is focused on program quality. These two networks strive to increase program quality by providing tools and resources to program staff, such as the Youth Program Quality Intervention. Generation Next does not have the same focus on programs. In fact, Generation Next intentionally refers to effective practices, as opposed to effective programs. Its philosophy, which is grounded in the national StriveTogether framework, is to identify effective practices that can be tested and scaled. Jeff Edmondson describes this approach in his blog post entitled “The Difference between Collaboration and Collective Impact.” He explains that data is used to identify effective practices across programs and systems, as opposed to simply scaling an individual program.¹⁵ Fundamentally, all three initiatives are striving to create a learning community among participating organizations. They are fostering positive relationships and trust so that participants share data and lessons learned, improving quality and scaling what works.

HISTORY: HOW THE INITIATIVE BEGAN

Referring back to Williams' concept of an integrated system, the start of a collective impact initiative plays a vital role in determining how organizations engage in the network. Williams describes effective collaboration as co-creating a collective strategy that guides decision making, roles, responsibilities and tactics.¹⁶ This type of integration must occur early on in the development of the initiative when strategic,

organizational and institutional decisions are made. The founding stories in each case study reveal some important similarities and differences that shape how they engage organizations and build their influence over time.

Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer outline three circumstances that must be in place before launching a collective impact initiative: an influential champion, adequate financial resources, and a sense of urgency for change. They explain that “together, these preconditions create the opportunity and motivation necessary to bring people who have never before worked together into a collective impact initiative and hold them in place until the initiative’s own momentum takes over.”¹⁷ All three collective impact case studies started with an influential champion who helped acquire adequate resources and create a sense of urgency. Sprockets started with a call to action by the mayor of Saint Paul; Generation Next began when a vice president of the University of Minnesota came across compelling research on collective impact; the Tutoring Partnership was developed in response to a request from the school district. A key player with significant power recognized an opportunity and used his or her influence to make it happen.

Turner, Errecart and Bhatt identify six sources of influence that help collective impact initiatives change behaviors and attitudes: competence, commitment, objectivity, data and information, network and visibility.¹⁸ A powerful actor, like the mayor for example, helps the backbone organization build its network and visibility. Backbone organizations can build important relationships with cross-sector players and community members when they have a powerful actor at the forefront. As Turner, Errecart and Bhatt point out, endorsements from influential champions enhance visibility and people’s trust in the backbone organization. Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer similarly assert that “the most critical factor by far is an influential champion (or small group of champions) who commands the respect necessary to bring CEO-level cross-sector leaders together and keep their active engagement over time.”¹⁹

While the three networks were each initiated by a powerful actor, the subsequent stages of development diverge. The unique aspects of each network’s history highlight the different ways the networks engage organizations and build influence. All of the networks have voluntary participation, but organizations come to join them in a variety of ways.

The inception of Generation Next, which is still in the early stages of development, was led primarily by a few high-level stakeholders, most of which are funders. Generation Next initially attracted organizations seeking additional funding; the majority of people showing up to meetings were development staff members. This changed over time as the network started to narrow its scope around the five goals. Generation Next manages participation through its action networks, which are centered around each goal area. The goals were also determined by a leadership council made up of key funders. Additionally, a majority of the structural and strategic decisions are pre-determined because the initiative is based on a national collective impact framework. The action networks have annual membership opportunities, where programs can opt in and sign on to a year-long charter and action plan. Membership is closed once the charter and action plan are solidified; it is revisited on an annual basis when the charter and action plan are revised. This process was adopted as part of the national StriveTogether framework. Engagement in Generation Next mirrors the founding story of a network based on a national model that was started by a small group of powerful leaders.

The development of Sprockets, in contrast, involved a variety of stakeholders from funders and city officials to parents, youth and community members. To determine its vision, the network held community listening sessions receiving input from over 350 people including typically underrepresented groups like parents and youth. Participation in Sprockets reflects this flexible, grass-roots beginning. Organizations participating in the Sprockets network come to join in a variety of ways. Sprockets offers several modes of participation, and

the commitment differs depending on the mode. For example, a program can opt in to the program finder (a searchable website filled with program information for youth and families) as long as it serves young people. Yet, if a program wants to receive support around quality improvement, it must conduct a self-assessment of quality, participate in specific training sessions, and develop an improvement plan. Sprockets hopes that the resources and tools it offers incentivize deeper participation. As Associate Director Erik Skold explains, “While [programs] may have joined for one reason (e.g., the program finder), they stay engaged because they find the other resources valuable.”

The creation of the Tutoring Partnership falls somewhere in the middle of the continuum. The school district, Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation staff and board members played a key role in the development process; community organizations providing tutoring were also invited into the process to offer input and guidance. Yet, the foundation did not go as far as Sprockets to engage the broader community. The Tutoring Partnership, with its narrower focus on academic interventions, functions as a closed network with an application process for participation, outlining the requirements and benefits of joining the network. The Tutoring Partnership Requirements are the minimum standards that programs must achieve in order to receive the benefits of the network. While these requirements are implemented by foundation staff, they were initiated and developed by the programs themselves. Participating organizations viewed membership in the network as a “stamp of approval” from the school district and other stakeholders. As a result, they wanted to maintain the integrity of the partnership by implementing minimum requirements. This desire was also supported by foundation staff, who perceived requirements as a way to ensure a minimum level of quality. This type of self governance supported by staff aligns with the network’s founding story.

PEOPLE: WHO DRIVES THE WORK

The coding analysis also reveals that the people who drive the decisions and activities play an important role in building relationships and cultivating authority. The case study of Sprockets consistently highlights the engagement of external stakeholders. Throughout the history of Sprockets, an array of diverse stakeholders has shaped the vision and activities. Unlike the other two networks, Sprockets is not an organization. Rather, it is a partnership of community-based agencies. As a result, Sprockets has often turned to the community for input and guidance. In contrast, one of the key themes of the Generation Next case study was funders. Funders played a key role in the development of the initiative and they continue to shape the work moving forward. For the Tutoring Partnership, the central force behind the activities is foundation staff. Many of the key decisions and activities are staff-driven.

There are distinct advantages to each of these situations. For example, a network that continually seeks input from external stakeholders demonstrates objectivity, one of the key sources of influence identified by Turner, Errecart and Bhatt. They explain that “backbones are most influential when community constituents view them as honest brokers with no personal stake in the collaboration’s ultimate course of action and no competitive dynamic with those involved. In these situations, constituents trust that the backbone is motivated by the common good and not personal gain. Further, backbones that are inclusive demonstrate that all viewpoints are welcome. They create safe spaces for difficult conversations and represent the needs of others; this enables them to exercise influence by appealing to shared values.”²⁰ A key lesson learned from the Education Northwest case studies is the challenge of engaging typically underrepresented groups like parents and youth. The report states, “An unfortunate reality of collective impact is that the emphasis on engaging community leaders can often make it easy to overlook less ‘powerful’ voices in the conversation, especially those whom the project is designed to support.”²¹ Sprockets has intentionally reached out to parents and youth to provide opportunities for input and participation.

Because Sprockets has an inclusive, objective approach focused on its shared vision, it builds credibility within the community and with its partners.

As an entity with strong ties to funders, Generation Next is able to demonstrate the power of its network. It can use its “bully pulpit with funders to advocate for the organizations that commit to continuous quality improvement,” Jonathan May, the director of Data and Research at Generation Next articulates. In addition, the network receives substantial visibility. This is bolstered by its executive director, former Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, a public figure who is well-known throughout the Twin Cities. This can incentivize participation in the initiative, ultimately increasing the influence it can have in the field.

As a staff-driven initiative, the Tutoring Partnership experiences different advantages. Turner, Errecart and Bhatt emphasize the importance of staff who can build relationships. They contend that “when backbone staff has strong interpersonal skills, they are more influential, as constituents trust that the organization can help them work together effectively.”²² The Tutoring Partnership has relied on staff members to develop relationships with participating organizations in order to hold them accountable to the goals of the partnership. This approach has created trust in the partnership and its activities.

These three case studies demonstrate that collective impact initiatives with similar goals can in fact approach the work differently. While their philosophies of continuous improvement align, their history, engagement and drivers vary. These factors shape how the backbone organization builds its authority to exert influence over participating organizations.

ANALYSIS OF YOUTH PROGRAM PERSPECTIVES

Youth programs are the primary participants in the three collective impact initiatives. Moreover, they are the catalyst for change; backbone organizations attempt to change their behaviors and attitudes in order to achieve better outcomes for youth. As a result, their perspectives on participation, accountability and benefits are valuable and should inform how networks attempt to build influence.

First and foremost, the survey of youth program staff reveals a strong belief in collective impact’s capacity for change. Nearly all participants (94%) strongly agree or agree that collective impact networks can increase student outcomes in the Twin Cities. Six percent are neutral; no respondents disagree with the statement. This sentiment also applies to the networks’ effect on youth programs themselves. Again, 94% of respondents strongly agree or agree that collective impact networks can help their youth program better achieve its goals. Six percent are neutral; no respondents disagree with the statement.

The survey also reveals three key themes that provide insights into how backbone organizations can create change: participation, accountability and incentives. Backbone organizations should determine participation through the shared vision. Once expectations for participation are clear, the initiative should develop an accountability system focused on improvement. This will create a learning community where effective practices are identified. Finally, the backbone organization should provide support to programs that allows the learning community to flourish and scale lessons learned.

PARTICIPATION: CREATE A SHARED VISION

Respondents were asked what the most helpful role is that collective impact networks can play in increasing student outcomes. A key theme that emerges from the survey results is a shared vision. Youth programs value the common agenda that collective impact initiatives bring. Respondents repeatedly say that networks should determine common goals and outcomes and base participation on those shared goals. A majority of respondents (66%) think that collective impact networks should have requirements for participation. Only

10% disagree while 21% are neutral. When asked how participation should be determined, the major theme is a shared vision. Youth program staff generally want a shared vision—similar goals, target groups, and values—to determine participation.

One respondent maintains, “I believe that sharing a common goal is an important first step for collective impact networks. While we may not see immediate impacts of these networks, I think they will demonstrate long-term, sustained impact. The success of these networks depends on the clarity and alignment of their goals.” This finding relates directly to the first of Kania and Kramer’s five conditions, creating a common agenda. In their follow-up article, they break down the process of creating a common agenda into two steps: determining boundaries and developing a strategic action framework.²³ The survey results highlight the importance of the first step, determining boundaries. Respondents want clarity on the boundaries of the issue and the systems and organizations that should participate.

ACCOUNTABILITY: DEVELOP A LEARNING COMMUNITY FOCUSED ON IMPROVEMENT

The second theme emphasizes the desire for a learning community grounded in continuous quality improvement. Eighty-six percent of respondents see the learning community as a benefit of collective impact networks. When asked specifically to identify the most helpful role collective impact networks can play, the role of the network as a learning community also surfaces. Youth programs want to share resources, data and lessons learned to improve what they do and how they impact students. The survey asks youth program staff about accountability and data use in particular. Overwhelmingly, respondents think data should be used to improve programming and identify effective practices. The open-ended responses highlight a desire to share data in order to identify and scale proven practices. Yet, many feel that data should be shared only in the aggregate. Respondents also want accountability to be linked to improvement. They want to be held accountable to their commitment to continuous quality improvement. Several respondents suggest the specific requirement of developing a program improvement plan.

These responses underscore the importance of two additional conditions from Kania and Kramer, a shared measurement system and ongoing communication. As Kania and Kramer explain, the shared measurement system provides the basis for the learning community. When organizations have a common language, performance measures and evaluation tools, they are able to discover what works across programs and systems.²⁴ Yet they emphasize that “having shared measures is just the first step. Participants must gather regularly to share results, learn from each other, and refine their individual and collective work based on their learning. Many initiatives use standardized continuous improvement processes, such as General Electric’s Six Sigma process or the Model for Improvement.”²⁵ Continuous communication allows for relationship building, thus creating the trust and transparency to share data, align resources and learn from one another. The survey results do demonstrate some hesitancy in this area; several respondents think that data should be shared only in the aggregate. This stresses the tension between practices and programs and demonstrates a potential need to strengthen relationships.

INCENTIVES: PROVIDE SUPPORT TO PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The prevailing theme throughout the entire survey is support for participating programs, which is evident in both the quantitative and qualitative results. The survey asks respondents to identify the benefits of collective impact networks. Ninety percent of respondents identify training as a benefit; 84% evaluation resources; 74% funding; and 72% technical assistance. When respondents were asked the most helpful role collective impact networks can play in increasing student outcomes, the dominant theme was program support. Most frequently, respondents identify support for youth programs as the most helpful role collective impact networks can play. This includes providing training, resources, and technical assistance. Several responses comment on the cost effectiveness of support provided by collective impact networks. For

example, smaller organizations with limited resources are able to access professional development and training that would otherwise be cost prohibitive.

At the same time, respondents identify the greatest drawback to collective impact networks as the time commitment. For youth programs, time is a valuable resource. As many respondents articulate, collective impact is often slow and time-consuming, all the more so when done well. Therefore, incentives to participate are especially important. Program support, which can come in the form of funding or in-kind resources such as training and technical assistance, can serve as influential incentives. As the case studies from Education Northwest assert, maintaining engagement from a broad group of stakeholders over time is difficult. One interviewee explains, “First and foremost the work must benefit kids and families, but it also needs to benefit the partner organizations or they will stop participating.”²⁶

Overall, survey respondents believe that collective impact networks have the ability to impact youth outcomes positively. They view the networks as valuable resources, especially in regard to evaluation, data collection, training and best practices. These findings affirm that backbone organizations can influence behaviors without formal authority.

LESSONS LEARNED

While the five conditions provide a solid foundation for collective impact networks, these case studies together with the youth program survey demonstrate the need for an additional condition: program support. Youth programs want tangible resources and support; these benefits can be used to incentivize participation. The two quantitative survey questions asking about networks’ capacity for impact demonstrate this link. Almost all (94%) of respondents believe that collective impact networks can both increase student outcomes in the Twin Cities and help their youth program achieve its goals. They see the vision of the networks aligning with the goals of their programs.

Under the five conditions, successful collective impact initiatives identify effective practices through the common measurement system, implement mutually reinforcing activities that maximize outcomes, and scale what works across programs and systems. This all occurs within a continuous quality improvement framework. While the current conditions reveal what needs to be done, they do not necessitate the support to do it. In other words, collective impact networks limited to the five conditions are helping participating organizations identify the changes they should make without directly providing the support to make them. The findings from this paper suggest that collective impact networks should also serve as capacity builders for participating organizations.

The successes and challenges that the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati has faced reflect the need for this sixth condition. In the latest Partnership Report, the evaluation results stress the value of program support. The report states that “there is agreement on what Strive has done well to date, and how it has added value to community-level efforts. Most notably this has occurred when Strive has played the role of: convener, capacity builder, network weaver, and promoter of data-based decision-making.”²⁷ The identified areas for improvement show the importance of clarifying the support the network provides. The report draws attention to questions about the specific resources and support that Strive can offer to members. Stakeholders have differing perceptions about the benefits they expect to receive and do in fact receive from participation in the network.²⁸

In all three case studies in the Twin Cities, the networks provide some form of program support, although the level and intensity varies. The Tutoring Partnership provides the most intense level of individualized program support as its staff-to-partner ratio is the lowest. In 2013-2014, the partnership provided 77 hours

of training to tutors, 57 hours of professional development to program staff and 210 hours of technical assistance to 19 programs. It is important to note that the Tutoring Partnership functions as a close network with an application process; moreover, it has a defined focus on academic interventions. This narrow scope allows it to serve a comparatively smaller number of organizations deeply. Sprockets also offers a substantial amount of in-kind resources, including access to a citywide database, professional development for program staff, access to evaluation tools, external assessments, and coaching around quality and data use. Sprockets, however, is faced with a broader scope and scale, serving over 60 out-of-school-time organizations that provide a variety of youth programming. Since Generation Next is still in the initial phases of development, it is difficult to project the extent to which it will provide capacity building services. Based on the staff interview conducted for this paper, it is clear that Generation Next will help organizations share, understand and utilize data. The training and technical assistance related to continuous quality improvement will be determined as the initiative moves into its implementation phase.

In conclusion, capacity building is a crucial role that backbone organizations can and should play. The ways in which backbone organizations provide support will likely differ depending on the context, scope and internal capacity. For example, a lean backbone organization with minimal staff may opt to use consultants or external stakeholders to provide support. By providing support, backbone organizations will not only increase their influence over participating organizations, but they will be more likely to achieve the desired change.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The results from the youth program survey bring an important tension of collective impact to light, the tension between the desire for a shared vision and the desire for an inclusive, diverse group of organizations. Respondents warn against the danger of generalization. Collective impact networks seek to bring together diverse stakeholders around a shared vision. Sometimes this can lead to programs feeling pressured to divert resources when their activities do not align; in other cases, programs are excluded because they fall outside of the agreed upon goals. The survey results highlight this tension between a common agenda and inclusivity.

This tension is evident in the caution against high barriers to participation. The majority of respondents agree that there should be participation requirements, yet, they feel that the requirements should not be onerous. For example, many suggest regular attendance as the requirement for participation. Several respondents acknowledge that requirements may depend on the level of involvement. They are specifically concerned that high barriers to participation will result in exclusivity and a lack of diversity.

Education Northwest identifies a similar challenge in its report, explaining that “A crucial early hurdle is convening diverse, cross-sector partners and encouraging broad buy-in for the work. The collaborative structures of collective impact demand that stakeholders really understand, share, and invest in the core goals of the effort.”²⁹ Ongoing engagement is specifically challenging for community organizations. The report clarifies that “Community-based organizations (CBOs) are key partners in education-focused collective impact initiatives—providing critical supports that scaffold a student’s experience. It can be challenging, however, to continually engage them as the work evolves. Once the project identifies specific goals and transitions to implementing targeted programming or strategies, conversations can shift away from the broader youth or community issues that initially brought everyone together. This evolution can make it difficult to maintain close relationships with partners who may feel excluded by an initiative’s narrowed focus, since not everyone at the table will have a direct role in implementing the chosen strategies.”³⁰



It is critical that future research examine the dynamic between inclusivity and a common agenda. This is especially true for social issues like educational disparities that fall along racial and ethnic lines. Exclusion and over-generalization could exacerbate the issue and further disenfranchise underrepresented communities.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. Interview Documentation

Organization:	
Interviewee Name:	
Interviewee Title:	
Interviewer:	
Date of Interview:	
Location:	
Documents Obtained:	

II. Introduction for Interview

Hi [insert name],

I have asked to speak with you today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about collective impact and your organization. The research project as a whole focuses on collective impact models and how they can effectively support youth programs. The study does not aim to evaluate you or your initiative; rather, it seeks to identify effective practices and approaches used by collective impact organizations.

During the interview today, I will take notes of our conversation. I have planned this interview to last no longer than ninety minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete the questions. After the interview, I will type up my notes and email them to you. You will be able to verify that I captured your answers accurately and offer any necessary edits.

III. Interviewee Background

1. How long have you been in your current position?
2. How long have you been at this organization?

IV. Interview Questions

1. Can you provide a brief description of your initiative?
2. Collective impact models utilize five strategies: a common agenda, an agreed upon measurement system, centralized infrastructure with a dedicated project staff, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communications among participants. Which of these strategies does your initiative use?
3. How was the initiative started?
 - a. Who was involved?
 - b. When did it start?
4. What are the goals of your initiative?
 - a. How were the goals decided?
 - b. Who was involved in the process of identifying the goals?
5. How is participation in the initiative determined?
 - a. Are there requirements for participation? If so, who determined the requirements?
 - b. Is participation voluntary? How was this decided?
 - c. Can programs be forced to leave?

APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

6. Is funding related to the initiative? (If yes) How is funding related to the initiative?
 - a. Is any funding contingent on participation?
 - b. Is data collected for the initiative used in funding decisions?
 - c. Does participation in the network influence funding decisions? If so, how?
7. What data is collected for the initiative?
 - a. What types of data (e.g., implementation data, outcome data)?
 - b. How are data collected (e.g., paper and pencil, etc)?
 - c. Who collects the data?
 - d. How is the data used?
 - e. Who participates in analyzing and interpreting the data?
 - f. How is the data shared? Is individual program data shared? If so, with whom?
8. Do you utilize an accountability structure, i.e., a way of holding programs accountable to your goals?
 - a. Who is responsible for holding programs accountable?
 - b. How was this accountability structure determined?
 - c. How do you measure whether you are achieving your goals?
 - d. What do you do if you are not achieving your goals?
9. Describe the impact your initiative has had on its goals so far.
 - a. What would you identify as your top three successes?
 - b. What would you identify as your top three challenges?
 - c. How do you deal with these challenges?

V. Interview Closing & Next Steps

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about your work. I will type up what I have recorded and email it to you for verification. I look forward to sharing my paper with you when it is completed.

APPENDIX B: CODING SCHEME

Code	Definition
Academic Success	A focus on academic achievement and school-related outcomes
Access	Increasing, measuring and understanding access to youth programs
All Youth	The emphasis on increasing outcomes for all youth or students
Charter	An agreement on goals, membership, measurements, etc. for the group
Citywide Data	An attempt to collect data across the city or cities
Collaboration	Multiple entities working together to achieve a goal
Cost Effectiveness	Prioritizing the efficiency, or cost effectiveness of a decision/intervention
Direct Influence	The ability to directly influence a decision or outcome
Formal Accountability	The formal mechanism for holding participating organizations accountable
Funders	Powerful actors that provide financial resources to organizations
Improvement	A philosophy of using data as reliable information to improve programming
Indirect Influence	The attempt to influence a decision or outcome, but indirectly
Informal Accountability	The more subtle, indirect ways that programs are held accountable
Learning Community	A group of individuals and/or organizations that convene to learn from one another
Multiple Stakeholders	The act of bringing together a variety of stakeholders to inform a decision
National Funding	Money and resources that come from national foundations, corporations, etc.
National Model	A national framework for collective impact that is applied to cities across the country
Engagement Opportunity	An opportunity for participating organizations to engage with the network (vs. requirement)
Powerful Actor(s)	People or organizations with a significant amount of power to make things happen
Program Discretion	An opportunity where participating organizations have the decision-making ability
Program Quality	The focus on implementing effective program practices with fidelity
Program Support	Any type of support (e.g., funding, training, technical assistance) offered to programs
Public Perception	A focus on changing how the public views something
Relationship Building	Creating trust and personal relationships between organizations
Requirements	Minimum standards or actions that need to happen to participate
Research	Using research to inform the work
Restricted Membership	Participation that is closed at a certain point
Scaling Effective Practices	The focus on spreading proven practices to other programs, sites, schools, etc.
Self-Governance	Network participants determine the rules of the network
Shared Vision	An agreed upon vision for the future, including goals and the problem being addressed
Staff-Driven	A process or decision that was determined primarily by backbone organization staff
Use	Focus on how useful or valuable resources or data will be; a utilization-focused approach
Voluntary	Not required or mandatory; programs opt in
Youth Success	A broader definition of success, including non-academic and academic outcomes

APPENDIX C: YOUTH PROGRAM SURVEY

I. Survey Introduction

Collective impact networks are long-term partnerships made by organizations to solve a specific social issue. The convening entity (the network) brings together organizations around a common agenda and utilizes a shared measurement system. In addition, network participants coordinate their activities and maintain ongoing communication. Some examples of collective impact networks in the Twin Cities include Generation Next, Sprockets and the Tutoring Partnership.

The purpose of this survey is to investigate how collective impact networks can most effectively support youth programs to achieve their goals. The survey is anonymous and confidential. Findings will be summarized in a paper that will be shared with local networks to improve and inform their work with programs.

II. Instructions

As a staff member at a youth program, your perspective can help inform local networks. Rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Please note that student outcomes refer to both academic outcomes (e.g., reading, math, writing, and critical thinking skills, high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, etc.) and non-academic outcomes (e.g., social-emotional development, leadership skills, cultural identity development, etc.).

III. Youth Program Perspectives

1. Collective impact networks can increase student outcomes in the Twin Cities.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Comments:

2. Collective impact networks can help my youth program better achieve its goals.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Comments:

3. The benefits of collective impact networks include (select all that apply):

Learning community Training Funding Political clout Policy advocacy
 Networking opportunities Access to research Technical assistance Communication with other organizations Evaluation resources

Other (specify):

4. How should participation in collective impact networks be determined?

5. Collective impact networks should have requirements for participation.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Comments:

6. How should data (e.g., participation data, outcome data, program quality data) be used within collective impact networks to improve student outcomes?

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

7. How do you want your program to be held accountable by collective impact networks?
8. What is the most helpful role that collective impact networks can play to increase outcomes for students?
9. What are the greatest drawbacks to collective impact networks?
10. If you have any other comments or insights about collective impact networks, include them here.

IV. Program Information

11. My organization's youth programming occurs in the following locations (select all that apply):
 Minneapolis Saint Paul Other (specify):
12. Program focus (select all that apply):
 Academic support Enrichment Arts Athletics Music
 Youth development Other (specify):
13. Grades served (select all that apply):
 Pre-K K-5 6-8 9-12
14. My organization currently participates in the following networks (select all that apply):
 Generation Next Sprockets Tutoring Partnership Other (specify):