Healthy Start FAQ: Healthy Start and Collective Impact: Digging Deeper into a Community Engagement and Systems Change Approach

On Thursday, February 12, Healthy Start facilitated an in-depth conversation focused on using the Collective Impact (CI) approach and how CI can benefit healthy start programs. The presentation highlighted the five conditions of Collective Impact that lead to meaningful results, addressed questions from the November convention, and looked at how grantees can move forward with CI. In addition to answering questions from the convention, facilitators also took new questions during the presentation, all of which have been addressed below.

Healthy Start Fall Convention Questions

When a particular area/county/zip code has multiple funding HS Projects, what are the expectations around each project's CAN? Can they/should they combine efforts to have one large CAN? (responded to by DHSPS)

Yes, when there are multiple HS projects in one zip code, they are allowed to have one large CAN. Responsibilities must be clearly identified via an MOU or other agreement, and each grantee will be held responsible for their own community so that if the overall effort is unsuccessful, each grantee's activities will continue.

Responsibility shouldn't be shifted to one organization by piggy-backing on someone else's work. The grantees are expected to play a leadership role and even co-lead such efforts, requiring joint discussion between groups and across funding levels.

Are Level 2 Grantees responsible for serving as the backbone agency for their CI initiative? (responded to by DHSPS)

Yes, when appropriate; we even want Level 1 grantees to serve as backbone organizations when appropriate.

If there are non-HS funded Collective Impact initiatives that include issues related to infant mortality, perinatal health, etc. can a HS site fold into that initiative even if they aren't leading those CI efforts? (responded to by DHSPS)

Yes, but keep in mind that the HS project will be held accountable for delivering outcomes in their area of responsibility and maintain their efforts if the overall effort stagnates or is unsuccessful.

Collective Impact promotes having 50% content experts (legislators, professionals, staff, etc.) and 50% context experts (consumers, community leaders, etc.). For Benchmark reporting purposes, who does "HS Participant Membership" pertain to? (responded to by DHSPS)

In terms of the 50% context experts (community leaders, consumers, etc.), this can go beyond the women (program participants) served through the program and include other community members. This could include individuals who have completed the program (past participants) and those who have openly expressed an interest in continuing to connect to the program. We frequently have participants who have completed the HS program, but are very interested in the topic and want to stay connected.
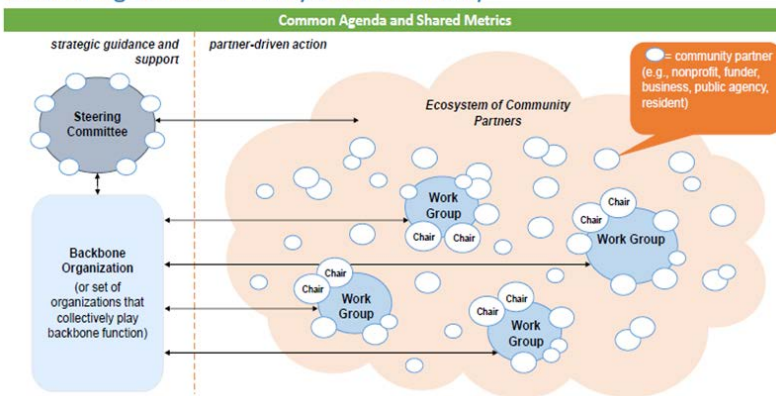
Additionally, selection of context experts must make sense for the program and cannot be randomly selected just to fulfil this requirement. They have to show a genuine interest in achieving the goals of the CAN and want to make a true contribution in order to achieve Collective Impact.

How is Collective Impact different from collaborations and consortiums? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

One of the ways in which collective impact is different from other forms of collaboration, is that collective impact usually entails trying to pull in diverse perspectives for a collective impact effort, which then, understandably, creates challenges in regards to governance because different sectors come with different pre-assumptions about what governance ought to look like. Often times there are a real desire to quickly create a huge governance structure around the collective impact effort. This approach often necessitates layering on an organization lens to work that is much more organic. A challenge is that the focus of the work can remain fuzzy due to unnecessary resistance around agreeing upon the collective aim.

There is an important role for a fiscal sponsor to serve as an established organization for a new collective impact effort. A great example of a successful collaborative structure is the "constellation model" of collaborative governance developed by the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto.

Collective Impact Infrastructure: Structuring for Intentionality and Uncertainty
* Adapted from *Listening to the Stars: The Constellation Model of Collaborative Social Change*, by Tonya Surman and Mark Surman, 2008.

Given the unique circumstances that many healthy start grantees face as they apply Collective Impact, how can CI be retrofitted to Healthy Start CANs that already work together? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

First, adopt an asset-based approach. Before launching out with a clean slate take time to reflect back and identify the strengths of the past approaches. Be intentional about bringing forward any identified collaborative strengths as you take on the collective impact approach. A lot of this work is about thinking together, and visuals can serve as shared anchors to help make individual thinking more transparent in order to build trust. A great option is to ask CAN participants to use the Collaboration Spectrum to visually plot "where they are" and "where they need to be" to accomplish their shared objectives and then perhaps introducing the CI framework as a way to reach the objectives and goals.

Take the time to acknowledge that you're building a shared language. Be as clear as possible around this new language of collective impact to ensure that it's accessible for every participant and allows for full participation and feedback. Build on strengths, develop consensus, trust, and a shared language, and choose programs where passion already exists within the community. Go where the energy already exists. Use these programmatic opportunities as learning labs to test, celebrate success, build trust, and challenge participants to think differently; these can be "safe fail experiments" and the results

will shed light on lessons regardless of outcome. Alternatively the CI Framing Questions (shared in the webinar) can be used to have a dialogue with CAN members.

How do we ensure participation of representatives as "champions" with both accountability and experience in our CANs? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

There is no one single solution to this because the answer depends on so many elements. Gaining a fundamental idea of how a representative would like to be involved and contribute their talents to the larger group can solidify a positive starting point. Some groups have an Advisory Council which periodically convenes at key moments in the project to provide input/feedback and or to contribute resources. Volunteer recruitment and management can also serve as a valuable vehicle for incorporating accountable representatives.

How do we create a common language that engages CAN members from a range of experiences and expertise? (responded to by Sylivia Chuey)

This is a <u>great</u> question, and is an essential process, yet cannot be rushed because language and framing reflect how we think. Employing quality facilitation techniques at meetings is really important. Some specific examples include:

- Establishing process "ground rules" that are reinforced and used during meetings. [PeerSpirit Circle Guidelines](#) offer good starting points.

- Rotating leadership roles when facilitating meetings

- Making it a practice that there are no "stupid" questions and that any/all unfamiliar terms receive clarification.

- Letting people sit in silence and capture their own thoughts before opening up a dialogue, allowing both introverts and extraverts to contribute.

- Using facilitation techniques that involve drawing pictures and visually mapping collective thought, allowing space for shared clarity. [Gamestorming](#) is a good reference for some helpful tools.

Remember that just because folks use the same words does not guarantee that everybody is talking about the same thing. Ensuring that everybody is on the same contextual page is really important, which can often require extra time and attention.

Hit the ground "listening" to those around you.

What does it mean to be the backbone agency if you don't have the authority to mandate change? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

The backbone is primarily focused on maintaining the health of the CI Initiative overall and ensuring good coordination across the partner members.

Going deeper, it's useful to think about the different, unique roles of the backbone agency. As a backbone agency it's important to have a mindset shift away from positional leadership and towards situational/shared leadership. Although an agency can be named the backbone, the community and relating agencies may not immediately engage without first building trust and establishing clear

parameters around what can be given and what is needed from the relationship. Transparency really strengthens relationships within the agency, especially in regards to ensuring that everybody involved is clear on the shared, organizational agenda and that no one personal agenda takes precedence over another.

Mandating change refers to the operational policies of partner organizations or broader policy changes required to sustain the work. The question reminds me of the clever insight that "people do not resist change, the resist BEING changed." Make sure that agency energy flows into willing partnerships, and that the group energy isn't being drained in investing in a single, un-willing partner.

To what extent is the policy change expected to be included in the application of CI for CANs? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

Policy change is important to consider in advancing a collective impact effort because of the mindset shift in program strategies vs. system strategies. Policy changes come from the lens of change happening at the system level in addition to on the program level.

Consider policy changes that foster a more "enabling environment" through which work can thrive in all communities. Any work stemming from policy changes needs to be a piece of a larger holistic set of strategies that propose action on multiple fronts to affect change.

General Q&A

Who is eligible to participate as a member of the CAN? (responded to by DHSPS)

The main criterion is that the selection of CAN members must make sense. A member cannot be randomly selected to fulfill a requirement, but must relate in some way to the Healthy Start program. 50% of CAN members must qualify as context experts. Past participants are welcome to be part of the CAN as context experts. Grandparents and/or the father who assists in raising the child and who are interested in infant mortality can absolutely serve as a member of the CAN; this role is not limited to any particular "type" of participant, as long as they have or had a direct relation to the program.

What are some helpful ways to evaluate/assess Collective Impact activities? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

The Collective Impact Forum recently published a three-part guide on evaluating collective impact, which provides a theoretical framework for evaluation along with an entire list of sample indicators available for reference. In terms of assessing readiness for collective impact engagement, the five framing questions from the White House Council that were shared in the presentation (see image below) could be particularly useful in engaging community leadership to guarantee that everybody is on the same page when embarking on the collective impact approach.

Additionally, there are several simple tools - an outcome mapping tool from the Hamilton Round Table - that could also provide some guidance. Digital storytelling is also an effective evaluation method option in that storytelling links to the community and encourages continuous communication.

Collective Impact – Framing Questions

- Do we aim to effect —needle- change (i.e., 10% or more) on a community-wide metric?
- Do we believe that **a long-term investment** (i.e., three to five-plus years) by stakeholders is necessary to achieve success?
- Do we believe that **cross-sector engagement** is essential for community-wide change?
- Are we committed to **using measurable data** to set the agenda and improve over time?
- Are we committed to **having community members as partners and producers** of impact?

TAMARACK
An Institute for Community Engagement

www.tamarackcommunity.ca

What is or what could be the involvement and use of FIMR and/or the PPOR process that communities sometimes engage in for data related to decision making or developing a common agenda? (responded to by DHSPS and Kimberly Bradley from Zero to Three)

Both the FIMR and the PPOR processes use data as a tool for quality improvement in relation to understanding the systems that impact the well-being of women and improve infant mortality in the community. Where grantees find it helpful, the data from these two processes can be used as a base line or starting point for discussions around developing a common agenda or better yet, setting a stage for Collective Impact. The data that comes from both the FIMR and the PPOR along with the recommendations that come out of Community Action Teams offer guidance and set the stage for the common agenda's focus.

How can collective impact efforts continue to receive input from community providers who have limited availability attend meetings and working groups? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

Recognize time constraints and be respectful of those limits. Figure out how to make a commitment to check in on a routine basis, and be focused and intentional around how best to engage an institution around particular topics. Another helpful option is to pull together an advisory council, which would meet several times a year to offer advice and serve as a sort of sounding board. This way, members can be informed and engaged in work without requiring a routine commitment that they may not be able to meet.

In communities with multiple "CAN like" activities taking place, how can we encourage integration of effort and not duplication of effort? (responded to by DHSPS and Sylvia Chuey)

The CAN must ensure the development of mutually reinforcing activities rather than duplicative activities. For all members of the CAN, embracing and communicating the creation of mutually reinforcing engagements clarifies what portion of the common agenda the healthy start grantees direct and which components the other partners direct.

Be able to honor and respect events already taking place in a community, and verify that any new proposed engagements are either novel or expanding and enhancing a pre-existing activity.

Are there any CI models that would be helpful for "get starters"? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

If your Healthy Start program is just getting underway and you are trying to determine the best starting place for a CI approach, here are some great guiding principles:

Engage stakeholders and assess what is already taking place and/or other peoples' interests that align with your work. When engaging with community members, think about who has expressed an interest in your issues. Look at who is already connected to and engaged in your issue within the community and what they are doing. Check in to see what else they think needs to be done around tackling this issue. Finally, decide how your program can enhance this pre-existing work given your own Healthy Start mandate and the skills and resources available within your program.

What does the local data around your issue demonstrate? The reality is that there are multiple ways in which a community can choose to address an issue as broad and complex as healthy infants. Given this challenge, considering both the specific Goals of Healthy Start and what data illustrates about these issues within your own local context is incredibly important. This information should help to refine and prioritize the work.

Take an ABCD approach with your own team. An Asset-Based approach builds on strengths and successes. Ask staff, volunteers, board members etc. to use frameworks and tools to identify opportunities where further development, education, and/or consensus building may be required.

Create a common language. Before embarking on this process, first recognize that creating a common language requires time and conscious effort even when everyone speaks the same shared language! Focus on creating the conditions for quality dialogue to occur across multiple perspectives. Dialoguing focuses on creating a new understanding that incorporates multiple perspectives. A helpful dialogue framework can be found at [PeerSpirit Circle Guidelines](#).

Build trust by creating a safe environment that encourages questions, curiosity, and thoughtful exploration. Be transparent by sharing not just successes, but also lessons learned, stumbling blocks, and remaining snags.

Emphasize reflection, learning and change, which focus on group learning. Ensure that facilitation and group process skills are present in team meetings as well as at meetings with other stakeholders.

Identify "Safe Fail" Experiments to deepen learning and test individual assumptions about the problem. This process is iterative in that it requires adaptation and change as plans unfold.

CI is a great model but oftentimes opportunities to embrace integration turn into competitions for resources. How can grantees address this issue? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

First, recognize the reality that competition can often infuse collaborative opportunities. Although resource competition can undermine the trust-building element that is fundamental for embracing Collective Impact as a framework, competition can also sometimes serve as a catalyst to explore new methods of action.

Additionally, the resources required to implement a Collective Impact initiative go beyond funding, and include resources of knowledge, talent, skills, in-kind contributions, etc., all of which offer more long-term benefits than a finite dollar funding amount.

Oftentimes the motivation to adopt CI comes when agencies realize that current and/or past approaches are not maximally addressing a shared issue or opportunity. The Collective Impact Framing Questions developed by the White House Council's Community Collaboration Tool Box offer a great way to engage people in assessing their interest and readiness to try something new.

While engaging a powerful and diverse cross-section of organizations and individuals in a Collective Impact initiative is important, remember to not expect full engagement of all organizations and sectors. The central assessment question CI Initiative Leaders need to ask is whether or not the group consists of enough influential and passionate people to begin work on project implementation. Trust that some folks cannot be engaged now due to a variety of possible conflicts, but may join later. Also accept that others may never join the initiative, and that's okay because the CI leader's job revolves around finding ways to engage interested champions in the issue. Some of the ways to do this include:

- Creating an environment that encourages and supports diverse participation.

- Communicating regularly about the group's work and how those interested can contribute and/or get involved.

- Recognizing the contributions of others.

- Remembering to continue asking for support in meeting needs.

What are some suggestions as to how to best handle a situation in which an agency serves as a backbone agency for a CAN while also funding several service providers that serve on the CAN? How can that agency maintain their responsibilities as a funder, monitor their contractors, and engage them and encourage "ownership" in the work of the CAN? (responded to by Sylvia Chuey)

This is a great question. Like much of the implementation of Collective Impact, there are not always definitive answers for how best to address this reality. However, drawing on the experiences of others doing this work, and applicable documents, there are important considerations and dynamics that have been identified for folks who are holding responsibilities as both an implementer and funder of Collective Impact.

Whenever possible, consider how to make funding allocation decisions as transparent and engaging as possible. Are there ways in which those engaged in doing the work can help to review, asses, and evaluate proposals within their sector and make recommendations?

The article *The Role of Grantmakers in Collective Impact* by Lori Bartczak highlights important guiding principles around serving as a funder, including flexibility, long-term commitment, a desire to share power and decision making with others, and recognizing that funders have the unique ability to foster connections between other funders for initiative mobilization and investment.