Leadership Board Meeting
Thursday, April 7, 2016
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Alameda County Administration Building, Room 255
1221 Oak St, Oakland, CA 94612

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions 2:00-2:30
3. Tackling the Housing Subsidy Problem 3:20-4:20
4. Alameda County Housing Bond 4:20-4:40
5. Wrap-Up and Next Steps 4:40-5:00
April 4, 2016

Dear EveryOne Home Leadership Board Members:

Welcome to the 2016 EveryOne Home Leadership Board! Much has changed since 2004 when we developed the countywide plan to end homelessness by 2020. A foreclosure crisis generated a catastrophic economic downturn, investments in public services and resources for those living in poverty reached historic lows and low-income families were displaced from their homes. Moreover, the dissolution of Redevelopment Agencies contributed to steep declines in funding for affordable housing development. Our community felt the dramatic consequences of all these changes. In spite of these broad social forces, our collective effort has pressed forward and observed some modest declines in the numbers of people experiencing homelessness.

Fast forward to 2016 and we find ourselves living in a region with a booming economy and tremendous job growth. We have more people that want to live and work here than we have places for them to live. Rental vacancy rates are at record lows and income inequality is on the rise. Average rents continue to escalate at a pace far in excess of general inflation. Many long-term residents in Alameda County particularly lower income people have been moving to places where they can afford to live. Not strikingly, people of color are disproportionately impacted by these economic and social changes.

The Affordable Care Act has expanded the number of people with health insurance and stimulated greater interest in the social determinants of health among health professionals and policy makers. Criminal justice reform has created a large de-institutionalization movement without adequate planning and resources to ensure supported re-entry for many ex-offenders.

We know that when communities and top-level leaders mobilize together, it’s possible to establish policies and systems that effectively end homelessness. A national focus on ending homelessness among Veterans has helped some communities achieve this goal. Other communities have ended long-term or chronic homelessness. As a member of the EveryOne Home Leadership Board, we need your experience and leadership to help Alameda County get to its goal of ending homelessness.
Our primary focus as a leadership board in 2016 is on the current housing affordability crisis. Preventing and ending homelessness requires that we have adequate affordable housing resources for individuals living in poverty including seniors, people with disabilities, and those living on fixed or extremely low-incomes. Our local housing authorities and programs that utilize tenant-based rental assistance funds continue to report on their inability to use these resources in the current private rental market. A proposed Alameda County General Obligation Bond for affordable housing can help address these challenges. We will also need a concerted and coordinated effort to engage the private housing market so that we can put our housing subsidy funds for low-income people to effective use. In addition to this primary focus on affordable housing, the Leadership Board will review recommendations from a variety of EveryOne Home committees on the development of regional housing resource centers and a coordinated system for addressing housing crises and homelessness.

We will have four meetings together in 2016 and want to use these gatherings as springboards for action throughout the year. Each one of us will need to make commitments and contributions inside and outside of these meetings to reach our ambitious goals. I’m looking forward to working with you and monitoring the impact of our efforts. In preparation for our first meeting, I encourage you to thoroughly review your Leadership Board packet and to familiarize yourself with EveryOne Home and the EveryOne Home plan by visiting www.everyonehome.org. Let’s have an impact filled year together!

Sincerely,

Robert Ratner, MPH, MD
Housing Services Director
Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services
2016 EveryOne Home Co-Chair
rratner@acbhcs.org
(510) 891-8925
MEMORANDUM

Date: April 4, 2016

To: EveryOne Home Leadership Board

From: Advocacy Committee

Re: EveryOne Home Position on Alameda County General Obligation Bond to Fund Affordable Housing

Background

The Board of Supervisors in considering the possibility of placing a general obligation affordable housing bond on the November 2016 ballot. The Board tasked the members of its Health Committee to lead a series of work sessions to determine the viability of a County housing bond and to recommend a set of processes and timeline for the potential measure. The Health Committee members (Supervisors Wilma Chan and Keith Carson) will conduct these work sessions to discuss relevant housing bond matters, including but not limited to financing, projects, programs, services, community engagement, and public education. More details on the process are attached, but the measure is planned to go to the Board of Supervisors for a vote at its June 14, 2016 meeting.

The EveryOne Home Leadership Board will not meet again before that time. Therefore, the Advocacy Committee is recommending that the Leadership Board adopt the following endorsement of the potential bond measure:

The EveryOne Home Leadership Board supports placing a general obligation bond on the November 2016 ballot that will expand affordable rental housing. We strongly encourage those crafting the bond to ensure that it provides resources proportionally to narrow the affordable housing gap for homeless and extremely low income residents.
Process and Schedule for a 2016 County Housing Bond

BACKGROUND:
Since the 2007-2009 Great Recession, housing has become less affordable. Housing has become extremely expensive that many households are forced to make serious tradeoffs in order to afford living in California. The combination of both falling wages for middle-income earners and rising home prices due to significant housing shortage have raised concerns about housing affordability.

While Alameda County and the larger Bay Area region are experiencing economic and employment growth, wages and salary growth have not kept up and residents cannot afford to buy or rent a home in their own communities. Housing has become the biggest cost in a household budget. Overpayment of rent for renters is common across all cities in the County, wherein 46% of all renter households pay more than 30% of their income in rent. There are also 55,000 extremely low income (ELI)\(^1\) and very low income (VLI)\(^2\) renters with severe rent burden that pay more than 50% of their household incomes in rent. In Alameda County alone, there is a 58,680 unit shortfall for affordable homes to extremely low and very low-income households.\(^3\)

Of the 10 projected fastest growing professions, only 4 are considered “moderate” or “above moderate” income job categories, where people earn enough to afford to live in the County. The other 6 growing professions will still be “very low” or “extremely low” income jobs.

Due to the county-wide housing crisis, the County’s Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) of the Community Development Agency (CDA) has made presentations to the Board of Supervisors’ Transportation and Planning Committee November 2015 and January 2016 meetings, to inform the Supervisors and educate the public on the scope of the problem. At the February 9, 2016 Board of Supervisors Retreat, in consideration of its legal authority to place a County bond on the November 2016 General Elections, the Board reviewed the current county housing crisis and needs, and decided to explore the opportunities of a County General Obligation Bond for housing for the November 2016 ballot.

WORK SESSION PLAN:
The Board tasked the members of its Health Committee to lead a series of work sessions to determine the viability of a County housing bond and to recommend a set of processes and timeline for the potential measure. The Health Committee members (Supervisors Wilma Chan and Keith Carson) will conduct these work sessions to discuss relevant housing bond matters, including but not limited to financing, projects, programs, services, community engagement, and public education. The work sessions will have multiple purposes, including:

- To review the viability of a county-wide General Obligation bond for housing and to ensure that the County is organized and equipped with knowledge regarding a housing bond that addresses the current County housing needs.
- To discuss and consider housing bond policy and programmatic proposals.

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\(^1\) Extremely Low Income (ELI) Households are defined as those earning between 0 to 30% of AMI.

\(^2\) Very Low Income Households (VLI) are defined as those earning between 31 to 50% of AMI. While, Low Income Households are defined as those earning at or below 80% of AMI.

\(^3\) California Housing Partnership Study. 2014.
Proposed Plan for Work Session on November 2016 Housing Bond

- To provide an opportunity for the Board to engage and solicit input and participation from the public and other interested stakeholders for potential policy proposals and desired programmatic use of the bond.
- To make a recommendation on the housing bond measure language and authorizing resolution.
- It is goal of the work sessions to present the final housing bond measure language and authorizing resolution to be voted on by the full Board of Supervisors at its meeting on June 14, 2016, in advance of the elections filing deadline to place a County measure on the November 2016 ballot.

There will be 6 Work Sessions, starting in March and concluding in early June. Sessions will be held on the following dates:
- **Session 1** – March 2 – 1221 Oak St., #536, Board Conference Room at 2:00 pm
- **Session 2** – March 28 – 1221 Oak St., 5th Floor, Board Chambers at 9:30 am
- **Session 3** – April 11 – 1221 Oak St., 5th Floor, Board Chambers at 3:00 pm
- **Session 4** – April 25 – 1221 Oak St., 5th Floor, Board Chambers at 9:30 am
- **Session 5** – May 16 – 1221 Oak St., 5th Floor, Board Chambers at 9:30 am
- **Session 6** – June 6 – 1401 Lakeside Drive, GSA Conference Room 1107 (11th Floor) at 9:30 am

Each session will be 1 to 1.5 hours and will be publicly noticed. PowerPoint presentations will be prepared for each session with research provided by HCD staff, outside experts (consultants, financial advisors, and bond counsel), County Counsel and other relevant County departments, as needed.

In addition to the Work Sessions above, updates will be provided to the entire Board of Supervisors for discussion and feedback approximately monthly between March and June 2016.

**PROCESS OVERVIEW AND SCHEDULE**
The process between now and the end June 2016 is divided into four phases:

- **PHASE 1: March 2 – April 8 – Initial Stakeholder Process**
  During this time period a County-facilitated stakeholder process will be conducted to discuss county housing needs, receive input and feedback on desired programs, and engage other interested parties.

- **PHASE 2: April 10 – May 22 – Draft Bond Program and Stakeholder Process**
  During this time period policy and programmatic proposals will be discussed with stakeholders, city housing staff and officials, County housing staff, and Supervisors to develop a proposed program for use of housing bond revenues.

- **PHASE 3: May 2 – May 22 – Supervisiorial District Town Hall Meetings**
  During this phase, it is proposed that each Alameda County Supervisor host at least one district town hall meeting to inform and educate constituents about the housing bond, and to gauge support and garner feedback.

- **PHASE 4: May 22 – June 14 – Finalize Ballot Language & BOS Vote**
  During this phase, the Board of Supervisors will finalize the bond ballot language and authorizing resolution. The goal is to have the Board vote on the language and resolution during the June 14th Board meeting.
Collective Impact
By John Kania & Mark Kramer

Stanford Social Innovation Review
Winter 2011

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Collective Impact

LARGE-SCALE SOCIAL CHANGE REQUIRES BROAD CROSS-SECTOR COORDINATION, YET THE SOCIAL SECTOR REMAINS FOCUSED ON THE ISOLATED INTERVENTION OF INDIVIDUAL ORGANIZATIONS.

By John Kania & Mark Kramer

Illustration by Martin Jarrie

The scale and complexity of the U.S. public education system has thwarted attempted reforms for decades. Major funders, such as the Annenberg Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Pew Charitable Trusts have abandoned many of their efforts in frustration after acknowledging their lack of progress. Once the global leader—after World War II the United States had the highest high school graduation rate in the world—the country now ranks 18th among the top 24 industrialized nations, with more than 1 million secondary school students dropping out every year. The heroic efforts of countless teachers, administrators, and nonprofits, together with billions of dollars in charitable contributions, may have led to important improvements in individual schools and classrooms, yet system-wide progress has seemed virtually unobtainable.

Against these daunting odds, a remarkable exception seems to be emerging in Cincinnati. Strive, a nonprofit subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks, has brought together local leaders to tackle the student achievement crisis and improve education throughout greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky. In the four years since the group was launched, Strive partners have improved student success in dozens of key areas across three large public school districts. Despite the recession and budget cuts, 34 of the 53 success indicators that Strive tracks have shown positive trends, including high school graduation rates, fourth-grade reading and math scores, and the number of preschool children prepared for kindergarten.

Why has Strive made progress when so many other efforts have failed? It is because a core group of community leaders decided to abandon their individual agendas in favor of a collective approach to improving student achievement. More than 300 leaders of local organizations agreed to participate, including the heads of influential private and corporate foundations, city government officials, school district representatives, the presidents of eight universities and community colleges, and the executive directors of hundreds of education-related non-profit and advocacy groups.

These leaders realized that fixing one point on the educational continuum—such as better after-school programs—wouldn’t make much difference unless all parts of the continuum improved at the same time. No single organization, however innovative or powerful, could accomplish this alone. Instead, their ambitious mission became to coordinate improvements at every stage of a young person’s life, from “cradle to career.”

Strive didn’t try to create a new educational program or attempt to convince donors to spend more money. Instead, through a carefully structured process, Strive focused the entire educational community on a single set of goals, measured in the same way. Participating organizations are grouped into 15 different Student Success Networks (SSNs) by type of activity, such as early childhood education or tutoring. Each SSN has been meeting with coaches and facilitators for two hours every two weeks for the past three years, developing shared performance indicators, discussing their progress, and most important, learning from each other and aligning their efforts to support each other.

Strive, both the organization and the process it helps facilitate, is an example of collective impact, the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Collaboration is nothing new. The social sector is filled with examples of partnerships, networks, and other types of joint efforts. But collective impact initiatives are distinctly different. Unlike most
collaborations, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants. (See “Types of Collaborations” on page 39.) Although rare, other successful examples of collective impact are addressing social issues that, like education, require many different players to change their behavior in order to solve a complex problem. In 1993, Marjorie Mayfield Jackson helped found the Elizabeth River Project with a mission of cleaning up the Elizabeth River in southeastern Virginia, which for decades had been a dumping ground for industrial waste. They engaged more than 100 stakeholders, including the city governments of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach, Va., the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Navy, and dozens of local businesses, schools, community groups, environmental organizations, and universities, in developing an 18-point plan to restore the watershed. Fifteen years later, more than 1,000 acres of watershed land have been conserved or restored, pollution has been reduced by more than 215 million pounds, concentrations of the most severe carcinogen have been cut sixfold, and water quality has significantly improved. Much remains to be done before the river is fully restored, but already 27 species of fish and oysters are thriving in the restored wetlands, and bald eagles have returned to nest on the shores.

Or consider Shape up Somerville, a citywide effort to reduce and prevent childhood obesity in elementary school children in Somerville, Mass. Led by Christina Economas, an associate professor at Tufts University’s Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, the program engaged government officials, educators, businesses, nonprofits, and citizens in collectively defining wellness and weight gain prevention practices. Schools agreed to offer healthier foods, teach nutrition, and promote physical activity. Local restaurants received a certification if they served low-fat, high nutritional food. The city organized a farmers’ market and provided healthy lifestyle incentives such as reduced-price gym memberships for city employees. Even sidewalks were modified and crosswalks repainted to encourage more children to walk to school. The result was a statistically significant decrease in body mass index among the community’s young children between 2002 and 2005.

Even companies are beginning to explore collective impact to tackle social problems. Mars, a manufacturer of chocolate brands such as M&M’s, Snickers, and Dove, is working with NGOs, local governments, and even direct competitors to improve the lives of more than 500,000 impoverished cocoa farmers in Cote d’Ivoire, where Mars sources a large portion of its cocoa. Research suggests that better farming practices and improved plant stocks could triple the yield per hectare, dramatically increasing farmer incomes and improving the sustainability of Mars’s supply chain. To accomplish this, Mars must enlist the coordinated efforts of multiple organizations: the Cote d’Ivoire government needs to provide more agricultural extension workers, the World Bank needs to finance new roads, and bilateral donors need to support NGOs in improving health care, nutrition, and education in cocoa growing communities. And Mars must find ways to work with its direct competitors on pre-competitive issues to reach farmers outside its supply chain.

These varied examples all have a common theme: that large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations. Evidence of the effectiveness of this approach is still limited, but these examples suggest that substantially greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social problems if nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda to create collective impact. It doesn’t happen often, not because it is impossible, but because it is so rarely attempted. Funders and nonprofits alike overlook the potential for collective impact because they are used to focusing on independent action as the primary vehicle for social change.

**ISOLATED IMPACT**

Most funders, faced with the task of choosing a few grantees from many applicants, try to ascertain which organizations make the greatest contribution toward solving a social problem. Grantees, in turn, compete to be chosen by emphasizing how their individual activities produce the greatest effect. Each organization is judged on its own potential to achieve impact, independent of the numerous other organizations that may also influence the issue. And when a grantee is asked to evaluate the impact of its work, every attempt is made to isolate that grantee’s individual influence from all other variables.

In short, the nonprofit sector most frequently operates using an approach that we call isolated impact. It is an approach oriented toward finding and funding a solution embodied within a single organization, combined with the hope that the most effective organizations will grow or replicate to extend their impact more widely. Funders search for more effective interventions as if there were a cure for failing schools that only needs to be discovered, in the way that medical cures are discovered in laboratories. As a result of this process, nearly 1.4 million nonprofits try to invent independent solutions to major social problems, often working at odds with each other and exponentially increasing the perceived resources required to make meaningful progress. Recent trends have only reinforced this perspective. The growing interest in venture philanthropy and social entrepreneurship, for example, has greatly benefited the social sector by identifying and accelerating the growth of many high-performing nonprofits, yet it has also accentuated an emphasis on scaling up a few select organizations as the key to social progress.

Despite the dominance of this approach, there is scant evidence that isolated initiatives are the best way to solve many social problems in today’s complex and interdependent world. No single organization is responsible for any major social problem, nor can any single
TYPES OF COLLABORATIONS

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

**Funder Collaboratives** are groups of funders interested in supporting the same issue who pool their resources. Generally, participants do not adopt an overarching evidence-based plan of action or a shared measurement system, nor do they engage in differentiated activities beyond check writing or engage stakeholders from other sectors.

**Public-Private Partnerships** are partnerships formed between government and private sector organizations to deliver specific services or benefits. They are often targeted narrowly, such as developing a particular drug to fight a single disease, and usually don’t engage the full set of stakeholders that affect the issue, such as the potential drug’s distribution system.

**Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives** are voluntary activities by stakeholders from different sectors around a common theme. Typically, these initiatives lack any shared measurement of impact and the supporting infrastructure to forge any true alignment of efforts or accountability for results.

**Social Sector Networks** are groups of individuals or organizations fluidly connected through purposeful relationships, whether formal or informal. Collaboration is generally ad hoc, and most often the emphasis is placed on information sharing and targeted short-term actions, rather than a sustained and structured initiative.

**Collective Impact Initiatives** are long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Their actions are supported by a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communication, and are staffed by an independent backbone organization.

Shifting from isolated impact to collective impact is not merely a matter of encouraging more collaboration or public-private partnerships. 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.

THE FIVE CONDITIONS OF COLLECTIVE SUCCESS

Our research shows that successful collective impact initiatives typically have five conditions that together produce true alignment and lead to powerful results: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations.

**Common Agenda** | Collective impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions. Take a close look at any group of funders and nonprofits that believe they are working on the same social issue, and you quickly find that it is often not the same issue at all. Each organization often has a slightly different definition of the problem and the ultimate goal. These differences are easily ignored when organizations work independently on isolated initiatives, yet these differences splinter the efforts and undermine the impact of the field as a whole. Collective impact requires that these differences be discussed and resolved. Every participant need not agree with every other participant on all dimensions of the problem. In fact, disagreements continue to divide participants in all of our examples of collective impact. All participants must agree, however, on the primary goals for the collective impact initiative as a whole. The Elizabeth River Project, for example, had to find common ground among the different objectives of corporations, governments, community groups, and local citizens in order to establish workable cross-sector initiatives.

Funders can play an important role in getting organizations to act in concert. In the case of Strive, rather than fueling hundreds of strategies and nonprofits, many funders have aligned to support Strive’s central goals. The Greater Cincinnati Foundation realigned its education goals to be more compatible with Strive, adopting Strive’s annual report card as the foundation’s own measures for progress in education. Every time an organization applied to Duke Energy for a grant, Duke asked, “Are you part of the [Strive] network?” And when a new funder, the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, expressed interest in education, they were encouraged by virtually every major education leader in Cincinnati to join Strive if they wanted to have an impact in local education.¹
**Shared Measurement Systems** | Developing a shared measurement system is essential to collective impact. Agreement on a common agenda is illusory without agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported. Collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level and across all participating organizations not only ensures that all efforts remain aligned, it also enables the participants to hold each other accountable and learn from each other’s successes and failures.

It may seem impossible to evaluate hundreds of different organizations on the same set of measures. Yet recent advances in Web-based technologies have enabled common systems for reporting performance and measuring outcomes. These systems increase efficiency and reduce cost. They can also improve the quality and credibility of the data collected, increase effectiveness by enabling grantees to learn from each other’s performance, and document the progress of the field as a whole.1

All of the preschool programs in Strive, for example, have agreed to measure their results on the same criteria and use only evidence-based decision making. Each type of activity requires a different set of measures, but all organizations engaged in the same type of activity report on the same measures. Looking at results across multiple organizations enables the participants to spot patterns, find solutions, and implement them rapidly. The preschool programs discovered that children regress during the summer break before kindergarten. By launching an innovative “summer bridge” session, a technique more often used in middle school, and implementing it simultaneously in all preschool programs, they increased the average kindergarten readiness scores throughout the region by an average of 10 percent in a single year.3

**Mutually Reinforcing Activities** | Collective impact initiatives depend on a diverse group of stakeholders working together, not by requiring that all participants do the same thing, but by encouraging each participant to undertake the specific set of activities at which it excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others.

The power of collective action comes not from the sheer number of participants or the uniformity of their efforts, but from the coordination of their differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. Each stakeholder’s efforts must fit into an overarching plan if their combined efforts are to succeed. The multiple causes of social problems, and the components of their solutions, are interdependent. They cannot be addressed by uncoordinated actions among isolated organizations.

All participants in the Elizabeth River Project, for example, agreed on the 18-point watershed restoration plan, but each is playing a different role based on its particular capabilities. One group of organizations works on creating grassroots support and engagement among citizens, a second provides peer review and recruitment for industrial participants who voluntarily reduce pollution, and a third coordinates and reviews scientific research.

The 15 SSNs in Strive each undertake different types of activities at different stages of the educational continuum. Strive does not prescribe what practices each of the 300 participating organizations should pursue. Each organization and network is free to chart its own course consistent with the common agenda, and informed by the shared measurement of results.

**Continuous Communication** | Developing trust among nonprofits, corporations, and government agencies is a monumental challenge. Participants need several years of regular meetings to build up enough experience with each other to recognize and appreciate the common motivation behind their different efforts. They need time to see that their own interests will be treated fairly, and that decisions will be made on the basis of objective evidence and the best possible solution to the problem, not to favor the priorities of one organization over another.

Even the process of creating a common vocabulary takes time, and it is an essential prerequisite to developing shared measurement systems. All the collective impact initiatives we have studied held monthly or even biweekly in-person meetings among the organizations’ CEO-level leaders. Skipping meetings or sending lower-level delegates was not acceptable. Most of the meetings were supported by external facilitators and followed a structured agenda.

The Strive networks, for example, have been meeting regularly for more than three years. Communication happens between meetings too: Strive uses Web-based tools, such as Google Groups, to keep communication flowing among and within the networks. At first, many of the leaders showed up because they hoped that their participation would bring their organizations additional funding, but they soon learned that was not the meetings’ purpose. What they discovered instead were the rewards of learning and solving problems together with others who shared their same deep knowledge and passion about the issue.

**Backbone Support Organizations** | Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization and staff with a very specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative. Coordination takes time, and none of the participating organizations has any to spare. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails.

The backbone organization requires a dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations who can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly. Strive has simplified the initial staffing requirements for a backbone organization to three roles: project manager, data manager, and facilitator.

Collective impact also requires a highly structured process that leads to effective decision making. In the case of Strive, staff worked with General Electric (GE) to adapt for the social sector the Six Sigma process that GE uses for its own continuous quality improvement. The Strive Six Sigma process includes training, tools, and resources that each SSN uses to define its common agenda, shared measures, and plan of action, supported by Strive facilitators to guide the process.

In the best of circumstances, these backbone organizations embody the principles of adaptive leadership: the ability to focus people’s attention and create a sense of urgency, the skill to apply pressure to stakeholders without overwhelming them, the competence to frame issues in a way that presents opportunities as well as difficulties, and the strength to mediate conflict among stakeholders.
FUNDING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Creating a successful collective impact initiative requires a significant financial investment: the time participating organizations must dedicate to the work, the development and monitoring of shared measurement systems, and the staff of the backbone organization needed to lead and support the initiative’s ongoing work.

As successful as Strive has been, it has struggled to raise money, confronting funders’ reluctance to pay for infrastructure and preference for short-term solutions. Collective impact requires instead that funders support a long-term process of social change without identifying any particular solution in advance. They must be willing to let grantees steer the work and have the patience to stay with an initiative for years, recognizing that social change can come from the gradual improvement of an entire system over time, not just from a single breakthrough by an individual organization.

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

This is a shift that we foreshadowed in both “Leading Boldly” and our more recent article, “Catalytic Philanthropy,” in the fall 2009 issue of the Stanford Social Innovation Review. In the former, we suggested that the most powerful role for funders to play in addressing adaptive problems is to focus attention on the issue and help to create a process that mobilizes the organizations involved to find a solution themselves. In “Catalytic Philanthropy,” we wrote: “Mobilizing and coordinating stakeholders is far messier and slower work than funding a compelling grant request from a single organization. Systemic change, however, ultimately depends on a sustained campaign to increase the capacity and coordination of an entire field.” We recommended that funders who want to create large-scale change follow four practices: take responsibility for assembling the elements of a solution; create a movement for change; include solutions from outside the nonprofit sector; and use actionable knowledge to influence behavior and improve performance.

These same four principles are embodied in collective impact initiatives. The organizers of Strive abandoned the conventional approach of funding specific programs at education nonprofits and took responsibility for advancing education reform themselves. They built a movement, engaging hundreds of organizations in a drive toward shared goals. They used tools outside the nonprofit sector, adapting GE’s Six Sigma planning process for the social sector. And through the community report card and the biweekly meetings of the SSNs they created actionable knowledge that motivated the community and improved performance among the participants.

Funding collective impact initiatives costs money, but it can be a highly leveraged investment. A backbone organization with a modest annual budget can support a collective impact initiative of several hundred organizations, magnifying the impact of millions or even billions of dollars in existing funding. Strive, for example, has a $1.5 million annual budget but is coordinating the efforts and increasing the effectiveness of organizations with combined budgets of $7 billion. The social sector, however, has not yet changed its funding practices to enable the shift to collective impact. Until funders are willing to embrace this new approach and invest sufficient resources in the necessary facilitation, coordination, and measurement that enable organizations to work in concert, the requisite infrastructure will not evolve.

FUTURE SHOCK

What might social change look like if funders, nonprofits, government officials, civic leaders, and business executives embraced collective impact? Recent events at Strive provide an exciting indication of what might be possible.

Strive has begun to codify what it has learned so that other communities can achieve collective impact more rapidly. The organization is working with nine other communities to establish similar cradle to career initiatives. Importantly, although Strive is broadening its impact to a national level, the organization is not scaling up its own operations by opening branches in other cities. Instead, Strive is promoting a flexible process for change, offering each community a set of tools for collective impact, drawn from Strive’s experience but adaptable to the community’s own needs and resources. As a result, the new communities take true ownership of their own collective impact initiatives, but they don’t need to start the process from scratch. Activities such as developing a collective educational reform mission and vision or creating specific community-level educational indicators are expedited through the use of Strive materials and assistance from Strive staff. Processes that took Strive several years to develop are being adapted and modified by other communities in significantly less time.

These nine communities plus Cincinnati have formed a community of practice in which representatives from each effort connect regularly to share what they are learning. Because of the number and diversity of the communities, Strive and its partners can quickly determine what processes are universal and which require adaptation to a local context. As learning accumulates, Strive staff will incorporate new findings into an Internet-based knowledge portal that will be available to any community wishing to create a collective impact initiative based on Strive’s model.

This exciting evolution of the Strive collective impact initiative is far removed from the isolated impact approach that now dominates the social sector and that inhibits any major effort at comprehensive, large-scale change. If successful, it presages the spread of a new approach that will enable us to solve today’s most serious social problems with the resources we already have at our disposal. It would be a shock to the system. But it’s a form of shock therapy that’s badly needed.

Notes

1 Interview with Kathy Merchant, CEO of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, April 10, 2010.
4 Indianapolis, Houston, Richmond, Va., and Hayward, Calif., are the first four communities to implement Strive’s process for educational reform. Portland, Ore., Fresno, Calif., Mesa, Ariz., Albuquerque, and Memphis are just beginning their efforts.
The Continuum of Care Membership/Collective Impact Initiative

Leadership Board (17-25)

- 3 members
- 6 members

Steering Committee (co-chairs + comm. chairs)
Organizational Health Committee (3-5)
HUD CoC Committee (9)
Nominating Committee
Advocacy Committee
Home Stretch Committee
Coordinated Assessment committee
Op Vets Home Committee

Representation:
- 6 appointed gov. agencies
- 1 elected by CoC membership
- 3 appointed by HUD CoC Committee
- 10-15 recruited

Key:
- Open membership
- Selected membership
- Existing
- To be formed
- Staffed by EH
- Staffed by HCD
- Staffed by EH & HCD
- Elects to
- Appoints to

HMIS Administrator
Collaborative Applicant
CoC Lead
Homeless Count sub-committee

Performance Management sub-committee
NOFA Sub-committee