



Collective Impact Questions: Mutually Reinforcing Activities

The Collective Impact framework is particularly useful to take on social challenges that require more than one organization to move the needle on community change. It takes planning strategy from a single organization that runs a program, and allows multiple stakeholders to work together on a shared agenda in a community. Collective Impact includes 5 key elements to help stakeholders from different sectors create social change:

- ✓ Common agenda
- ✓ Shared measurement
- ✓ Mutually reinforcing activities
- ✓ Continuous communication
- ✓ Backbone support

Researchers and practitioners sometimes refer to the third element, mutually reinforcing activities, as the “power source” for collective impact. It is easy to think through and talk about these elements in the abstract—but how does the collective impact effort move from independently operating organizations to shared planning and activities that work together? The following set of questions can help shape a collective impact effort and the organizations involved.

Mapping	
<p>Who and what is contributing to and shaping the knowledge or perceptions about the issues you are working on? It could be a lot of news about violence in particular neighborhoods, or (big P) the governor or mayor mentioning school violence in a speech, or focusing on importance of and (racial disparities in) high school graduation or college, a change in school boards, (little p) another effort that is also working on your issues but with a different model or framework, or even funders in your area raising up your issues to a higher platform.</p>	
What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the political issues connected to your effort? How are they framed by the news? By policy makers? By the public? By funders? Who are the main players? What systems are involved (education, juvenile justice, workforce, housing, health and human services, etc.)? How are they reacting to these issues? What are the BIG P or little p politics involved? Do these issues hurt or help you accomplish your objectives?
Who?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who else in the community working on these issues? What is their mission? What outcomes do they seek? How do they do their work? Are their politics involved with these stakeholders? How do you currently work with or inform their efforts?
How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What opportunities can you leverage? How do those connect to your strategies? How do you currently engage with the issues? Is the risk positive or negative? What will happen if you don't engage (or change how you currently engage)?

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Revisiting Structure

Are you reaching all the organizations and people you need to shape the issue? Identify clear roles and decision making processes.

- Who is involved?
- What/who do they represent?
- How do they engage with your initiative?
- What decisions will they make?
- How do you communicate with them? How often?

Outreach Strategy

How will you actually reach out to different stakeholders and invite them into the designed structure and achieve buy-in so you can align, coordinate or inform their work to reach the shared goal. Look at timing of political issues. How will you communicate to them, how will you communicate together about the initiative?

- How will you connect to the issues?
- Who will be reaching out?
- What are the assets within your initiative that can be leveraged to connect to the issues?
- When will it happen (timing)?

Communications

Do you have a shared communications strategy to get the word out about your project to the right people? What will you tell them? Why should they care?

- Who do you want to know about your project (target audiences)?
- What do you want them to know?
- What have been the most effective messages used to date?
- Who are the most effective messengers given your communications goals and target audiences?
- What are the potential barriers for getting the right messages out externally?
- Is there shared responsibility for external communications across the network? Who and when will they communicate?

Sharing Success

To increase transparency and accountability, maximize and leverage funding, political support or public will.

- How does aligning with other initiatives contribute to your success?
- Can you articulate how initiatives are working together?
- Can you articulate shared outcomes?
- How are you measuring success together?

Developed by Advocacy & Communications Solutions, LLC, on behalf of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Forward Promise Initiative.