

C is for **COLLABORATION & COLLECTIVE IMPACT**

Collaborating for Collective Impact: Building Effective Partnerships to Support Young Children and Families

Collaboration is working together to achieve a shared goal. Collective impact happens when people from different organizations or with different perspectives work together to positively address an issue. People often want to collaborate for collective impact to integrate supports or services for young children and their families. Did you know there are key “ingredients” that make collaborating for collective impact successful?

Ways to Make Collaboration for Collective Impact a Success

Based on our experiences and a body of research, here are five key “ingredients” to make collaborating for collective impact successful:

1. A common agenda.

A common agenda includes: (a) shared understanding of the issue, (b) shared goal, and (c) shared plan with actions for solving the issue. In the early stages, it is not unusual for collaborators to have differing perspectives and ideas. Discussing and resolving differences that might interfere with efforts for collective impact helps to establish a common agenda and goal.

2. A shared measurement system.

A measurement system is used to know whether you are achieving your common goal and to communicate the results of your efforts with others. Developing a shared measurement system involves agreeing upon (a) what to measure, (b) when to measure it, and (c) how to share results with others.

3. Mutually reinforcing activities.

Collective impact involves people working together who often have different responsibilities, roles, and expertise. They use their strengths to work on specific activities that will help to achieve the common goal. When everyone's efforts are coordinated and rewarded, more successful outcomes are achieved.

4. Continuous communication.

Ongoing and regular communication is critical for building trust between collaborators, establishing a common agenda, and maintaining coordinated efforts to achieve the common goal. Continuous communication involves ongoing and regular contact, holding regular meetings, and sharing information with collaborators between meetings.

5. A “backbone support” organization.

To facilitate collective impact efforts, supports are needed from a “backbone support” organization. Important roles of the backbone support organization include oversight of activities, communications support, data collection, and reporting outcomes to collaborators and stakeholders.

What We Know About Collaboration & Collective Impact

Collaboration involves groups of people or organizations who interact using shared norms, rules, and structures to achieve a common goal.¹

Although collaborators have common interests, they also have self-interests. Collaboration works when collaborators have their common and self-interests met.¹

Collective impact is a specific type of collaboration that involves individuals from many organizations working together to solve a social issue.²

Collective impact initiatives are more effective for making large-scale changes related to social issues than interventions implemented by individual organizations.³

What We Are Doing

The Anita Zucker Center participates in collective impact initiatives to enhance services and supports for young children and their families.

Visit our website to access more information or resources and learn more about what we are doing.

REFERENCES

¹Wood, D. J., & Gray, B. (1991). Toward a comprehensive theory of collaboration. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 27, 139-162.

²Prange, K., Allen, J. A., & Reiter-Palmon, R. (2016). Collective impact versus collaboration: Sides of the same coin or different phenomenon? Paper 167 from Love of the Place: The Metropolitan University Advantage: 2015 CUMU Conference, Omaha, NE. Retrieved from <https://journals.iupui.edu/index.php/muj/article/view/21119>

³Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011, Winter). Collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 9(1): 36-41. Retrieved from https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact