

Building an Effective Backbone for Collective Impact



CANADIAN NETWORK for
the PREVENTION of ELDER ABUSE

Annual Meeting
September 22nd, 2016

Your Workshop Facilitator



Sylvia Cheuy

Director, [Deepening Community](#)
sylvia@tamarackcommunity.ca (416) 988-6887



www.tamarackcommunity.ca



A Connected Force for Community Change
Join us www.tamarackcommunity.ca

We support **Learning Communities** around five ideas for making significant community change.



**Collective
Impact**



**Community
Engagement**



**Collaborative
Leadership**



**Community
Innovation**



**Evaluating
Community
Impact**

Turning theory into practice is critical for community change. We support two **Action Learning Communities** to get to impact.



Creating an Ecology of Caring



“Care is an alchemist in our communities, unleashing a force deep within us. It enables us to build up our social immune system.”

Vickie Cammack, tyze.com

The Time to Deepen Community is Now!

- Research shows people who feel **a sense of community** are more likely to take action for the **common good**;
- A 2015 Angus Reid Survey on Belonging found that:
 - **32% of Canadians** report a very strong **sense of belonging** to their community;
 - **38% of Canadians** report they “**don’t feel they have a stake** in their local community
- 2014 Stats Can data reported that:
 - 1 in 5 older Canadians describe themselves as “lonely or dissatisfied with life”; and,
 - 64% of Canadian post-secondary students reported feeling very lonely within the last 12 months



We Must Rediscover How to Care for Each Other



- A 2003 Harvard study showed that the higher a community's "social capital" (reciprocity, trust, & civic participation) the lower its mortality rates, from **violent crime AND** from **heart disease**;
- Humans are hardwired to live in community but evidence shows that **our actual experiences of community** have been **steadily declining** since the 1960s.
- A deliberate & intentional effort is needed to **re-learn the skills** to effectively build community
- A well-connected community is **resilient** and can harness its full potential to address the **complex issues** & opportunities

What is Your Knowledge of Collective Impact?



**Very Little or
Nothing**



**Familiar with the
Theory**



**Implementing a
CI Project**

Collective Impact: A Definition



“A disciplined, **cross-sector** approach to solving **complex** social and environmental issues on a **large scale**.”

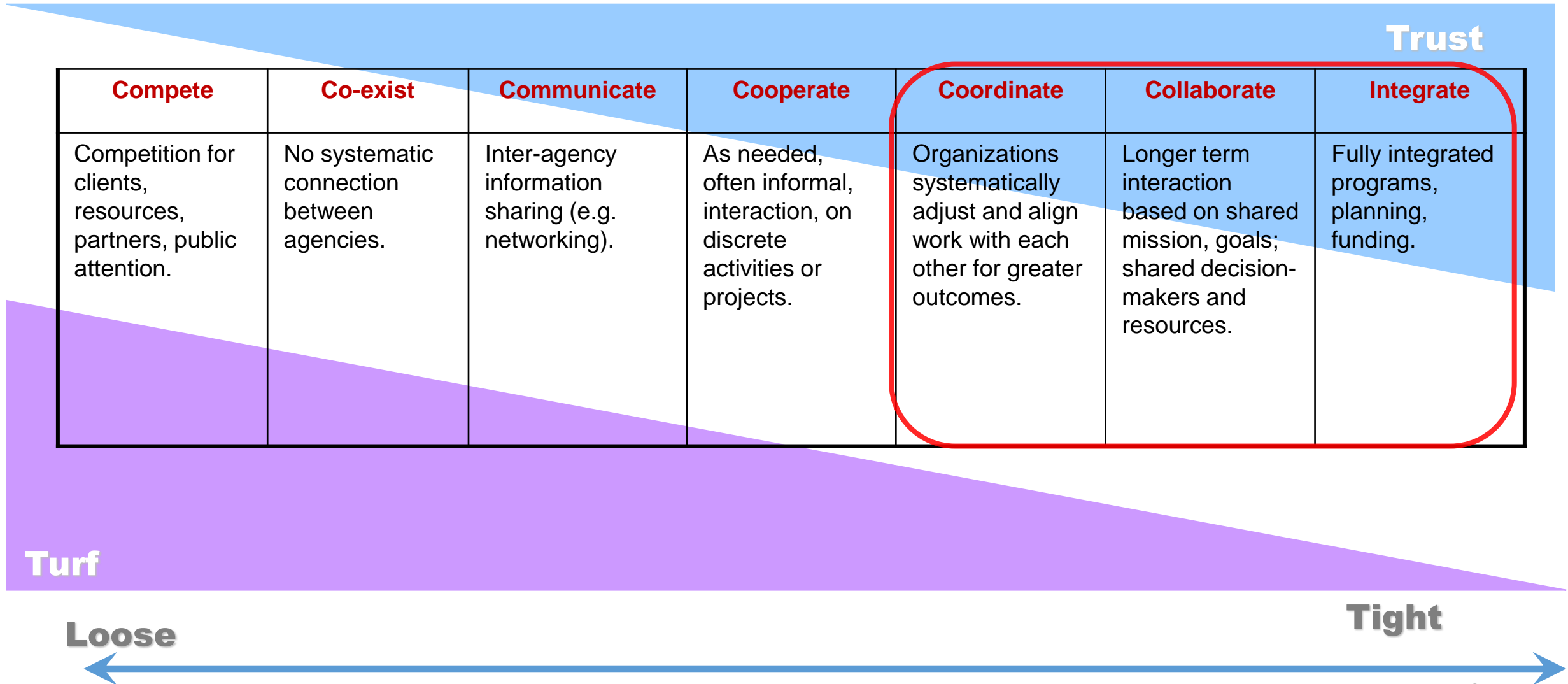
- FSG: Social Impact Consultants

Collaboration & Complexity

Some Grounding Ideas



The Collaboration Spectrum



Used for Many Complex Issues

Teen Pregnancy



Health



Education



Homelessness



Community Safety



Poverty



What Type of Problem Is It?

Simple

Making Soup



Right “**recipe**” essential
Gives same results every
time

KNOWN

Complicated

Sending a Rocket to the Moon



“**Formulae**” needed
Experience built over time
and can be **repeated** with
success

KNOWABLE

Complex

Raising a Child



No “**right**” recipes or
protocols **Outside factors**
influence Experience helps,
but doesn't guarantees
success

UNKNOWABLE

Source: **Brenda Zimmerman**, Director of Health Industry Management Program, Schulich School of Business

Change in Complex Systems



- Behavior of the system can be largely explained by understanding “**attractors**”
- **Relationships** and coordination among parts can be more important than the parts themselves.
- Living systems - follow **simple relationship “rules”** or minimum specifications that create complex adaptability
 - Creates coherence rather than consistency
 - Allows for constant adaptation & innovation

Source: **Brenda Zimmerman**, Director of Health Industry Management Program, Schulich School of Business

Preconditions for Collective Impact

- Influential Champion(s)
- Urgency of issue
- Adequate Resources



The Five Conditions of Collective Impact

Common Agenda

All participants have a **shared vision for change** including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions

Diverse Voices * **Responsive** * **Community Aspiration**

Shared Measurement

Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable

Exploring * **Alignment** * **Tracking Progress** * **Results**

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Participant activities must be **differentiated while still being coordinated** through a mutually reinforcing plan of action

Weaving * **System** * **Supportive** * **Centered**

Continuous Communication

Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and appreciate common motivation

Trust * **Transparency** * **Ongoing** * **Engagement**

Backbone Support

Creating and managing collective impact requires a dedicated staff and a specific set of skills to **serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies**

Facilitate * **Convener** * **Coordinate** * **Movement**



Backbone Building Blocks

Possible Models

Six Core Functions of Backbone Organizations

Guide Vision and Strategy

Shared Measurement

Established Measurement Practices

Continuous Communication

Advance Policy

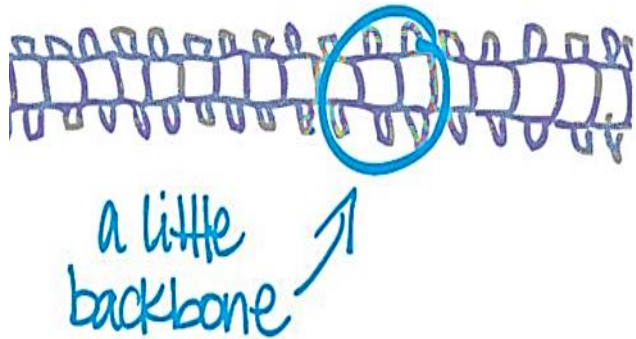
Mobilize Funding

Backbones must balance the tension between coordinating and maintaining accountability, while staying behind the scenes to establish collective ownership.

Source: FSG Interviews & Analysis

Lessons Learned About Backbones

- Their value is unmistakable.
- Backbones shares strengths in guiding vision and strategy and supporting aligned activities.
- Backbone organizations shift focus over time.
- Backbone organizations' partners need ongoing assistance with data.
- External communications, building public will, and advancing policy are common backbone challenges.








Source: Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact Initiatives

Common Misperceptions about the Backbone Role

- **The backbone organization sets the agenda for the group**
- **The backbone organization drives the solutions**
- **The backbone organization receives all the funding**
- **The role of backbone can be self appointed rather than selected by the community**
- **The role of backbone isn't fundamentally different from "business as usual" in terms of staffing, time, and resources**

Source: FSG Interviews and Analysis

Many Types of Organizations Serve as Backbones

Types of Backbones	Examples
<p style="text-align: center;">Funders</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">New Nonprofit</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Existing Nonprofit</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Government Agency</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Shared Across Multiple Organizations</p>	

Selecting a Backbone Should Build Credibility

Open Process

- Conduct landscape scan of key players, including the “usual suspects” and beyond
- Build understanding of the role of a backbone among early initiative leaders
- Approach high-potential backbone organizations to assess their interest in serving as a backbone
- Issue an RFP
- Interview applicants
- Steering Committee and/or funder(s) selects backbone

Pros: Transparent, builds credibility, open to many organizations with different skill sets

Cons: Takes time, must work through potentially difficult decisions

Semi-Open Process

- An “early backbone” helps guide the initiative from the beginning, including helping to select the Steering Committee
- 6-12 months after the first SC meeting, a determination is made to either make the early backbone into a permanent backbone, or open the process to other backbones

Pros: Allows for a backbone “try out,” backbone staff available from beginning of initiative

Cons: May be politically difficult, and inefficient to switch backbones

Pre-determined

- Based on existing knowledge of key players, backbone is “named,” usually by the initiative’s funders
- The backbone helps recruit a Steering Committee, potentially with the help of an early “advisory group” or funders

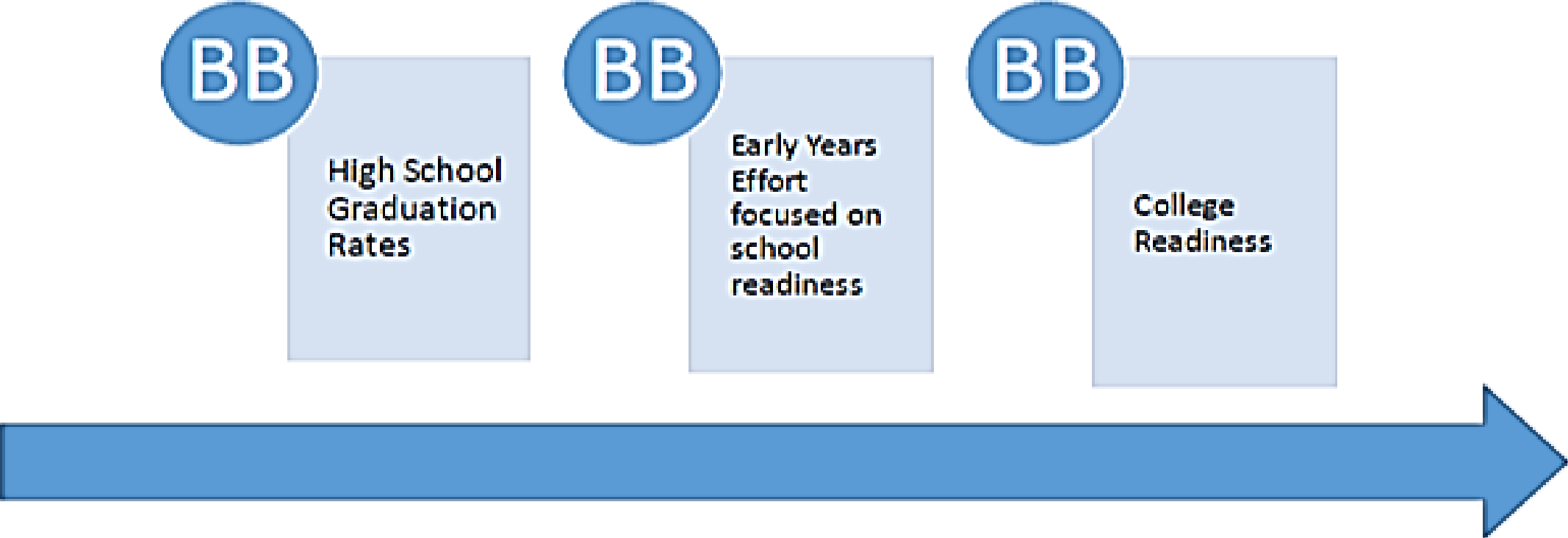
Pros: Quick, avoids difficult conversations in the short-term (though may arise in the long-term)

Cons: May not have high credibility, may not find the org. with the best skill set, assumes funders know best

Understanding Context

Prior History	Positive or negative impact
Pressing Issue	Galvanize leaders across sectors
Data	Determine what you need to understand the impact of your issue on the community
Community Context	Is there community buy-in? Determine community leverage opportunities
Core Group	Determine who needs to be involved in the core group
Convenor	Trusted leadership to facilitate collaborative efforts
Community Engagement	Determine how to engage the broader community in your effort

Issue Focused: Working Across a Continuum



The Aspiration: Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child

Quality Early Learning & Parenting

Skills through Education, Activity & Recreation

Targeted Skills Development (PSE)

Employment

Asset Building Wealth Creation

Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction

Tackling Root Causes: Affordable Housing, Food Security, Income Security, Accessible Transportation, Safe Neighbourhoods

How we will do our work:

- Move from alleviation to prevention
- Tackle root causes
- Work collaboratively across sectors
- Abandon blame – all can be part of the solution
- Emphasize innovation, risk taking, long term change

Linking & Facilitating Role

- Strategic Poverty Focus
- Community Engagement
- Change & Action
- Learning & Accountability

Changes in:

- Structures
- Processes
- Policies
- Indicators

Community-Level Macro Strategy

Critical Points of Investment Strategy

Community-Led Initiatives

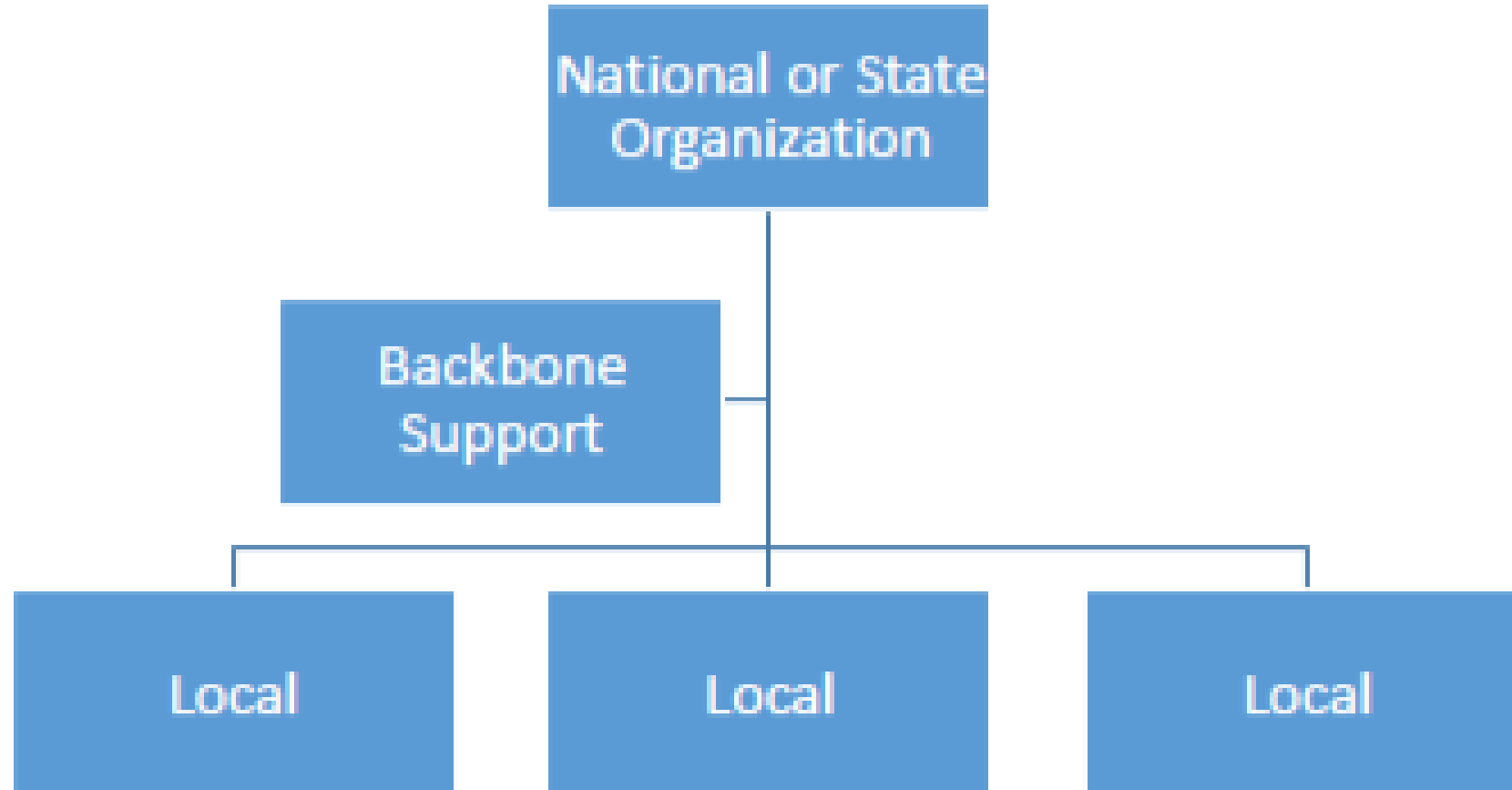
Knowledge Transfer:

- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Evaluation
- Learning

Community Focused: Working Holistically



System Focused: Working Across Scales



Vibrant Communities Canada A National Backbone Organization





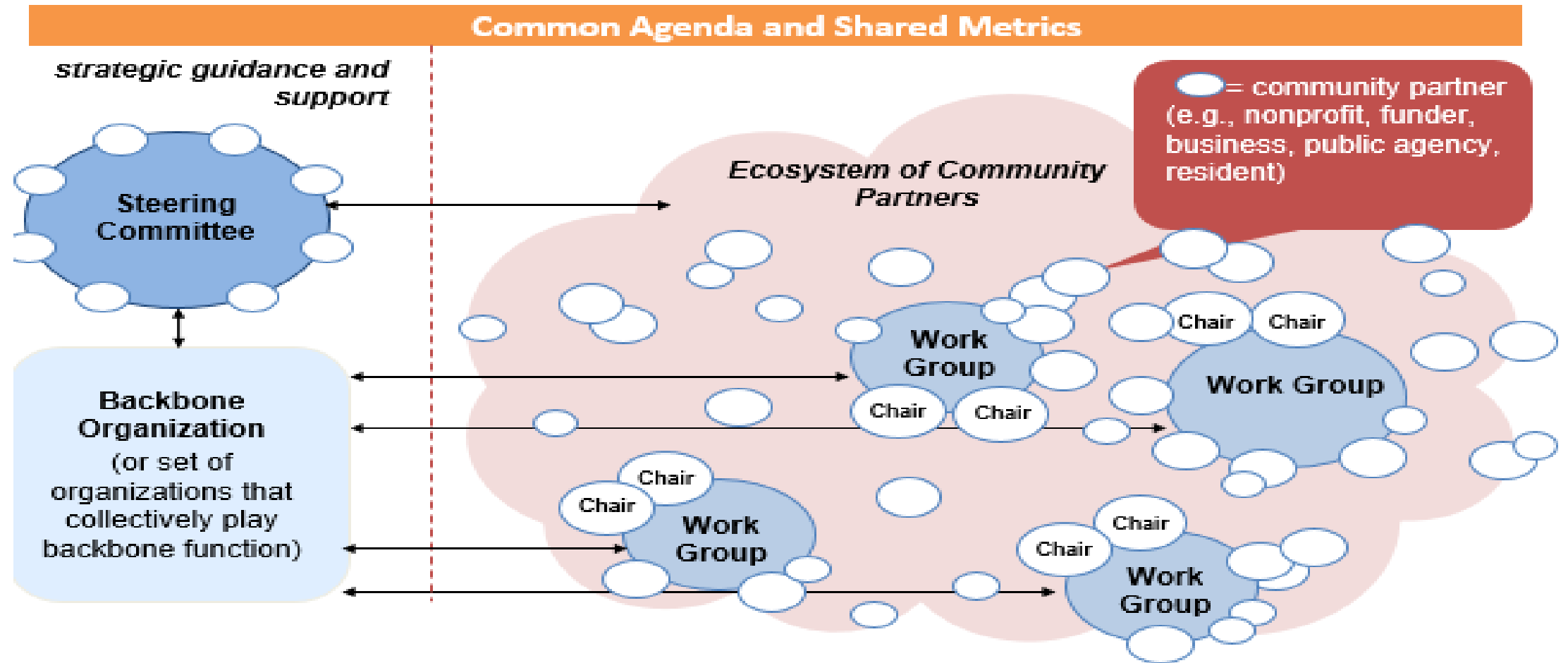
Backbone Building Blocks

Governance

Legal Structures for the Backbone

Type 1	Stand-alone legal charity accountable to its own board of directors
Type 2	Large staff team (5 or more) inside a host organization. Staff team leads with support from an Advisory Committee
Type 3	Small staff team (0-3) inside a host organization working collaboratively with a Volunteer Steering Committee (may also have a larger Advisory Committee)
Type 4	Other?

Collective Impact Governance Structuring for Intentionality and Uncertainty



Adapted from [Listening to the Stars: The Constellation Model of Collaborative Social Change](#), by Tonya Surman & Mark Surman, 2008.

Essential Governance Threads

The Big Picture

- Challenging Community Aspiration
- Guiding Principles
- Framework for Change

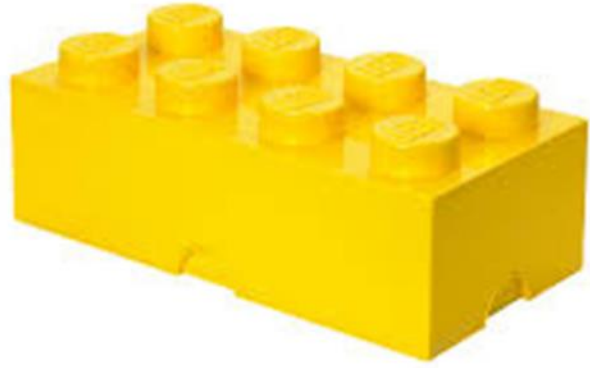


The Technical Agreements

- Memorandums of Understanding
- Terms of Reference
- Conflict resolutions mechanisms

Areas of Focus

- Membership & Decision-making
- Funding
- Communicating & Reporting
- Policies and Procedures

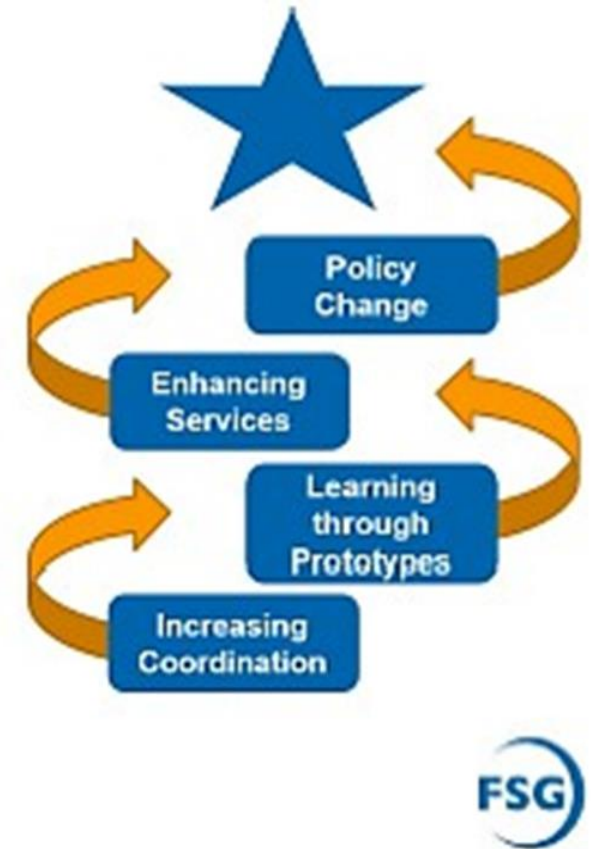


Backbone Building Blocks

Systems Leadership

Strategies to Get to Systems Change

- **Policy** – advocating for policy change at local or provincial levels to improve the systems
- **Enhancing Services** – Bring in previously unnoticed practice, movement or resources to enhance existing local services
- **Learning Through Prototyping** – Start small with willing partners, learn from the experience and then expand
- **Increasing Coordination** – Re-aligning existing programs and stakeholders to maximize system efficacy



Effective Backbone Leaders Share Characteristics

Stakeholders describe backbone organization leaders as:

Visionary

Results-Oriented

Collaborative, Relationship Builder

Focused, but Adaptive

Charismatic and Influential Communicator

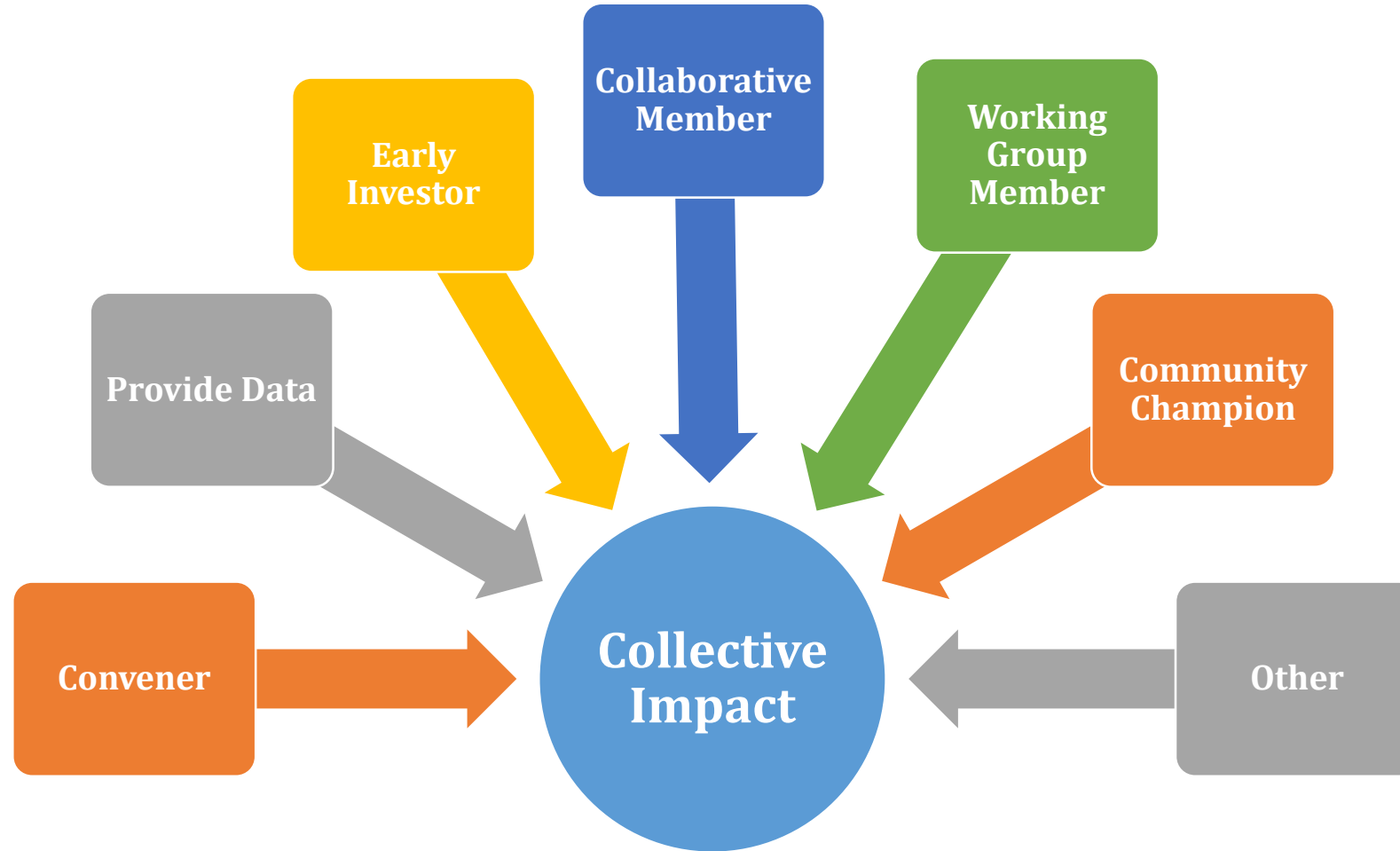
Politic

Humble

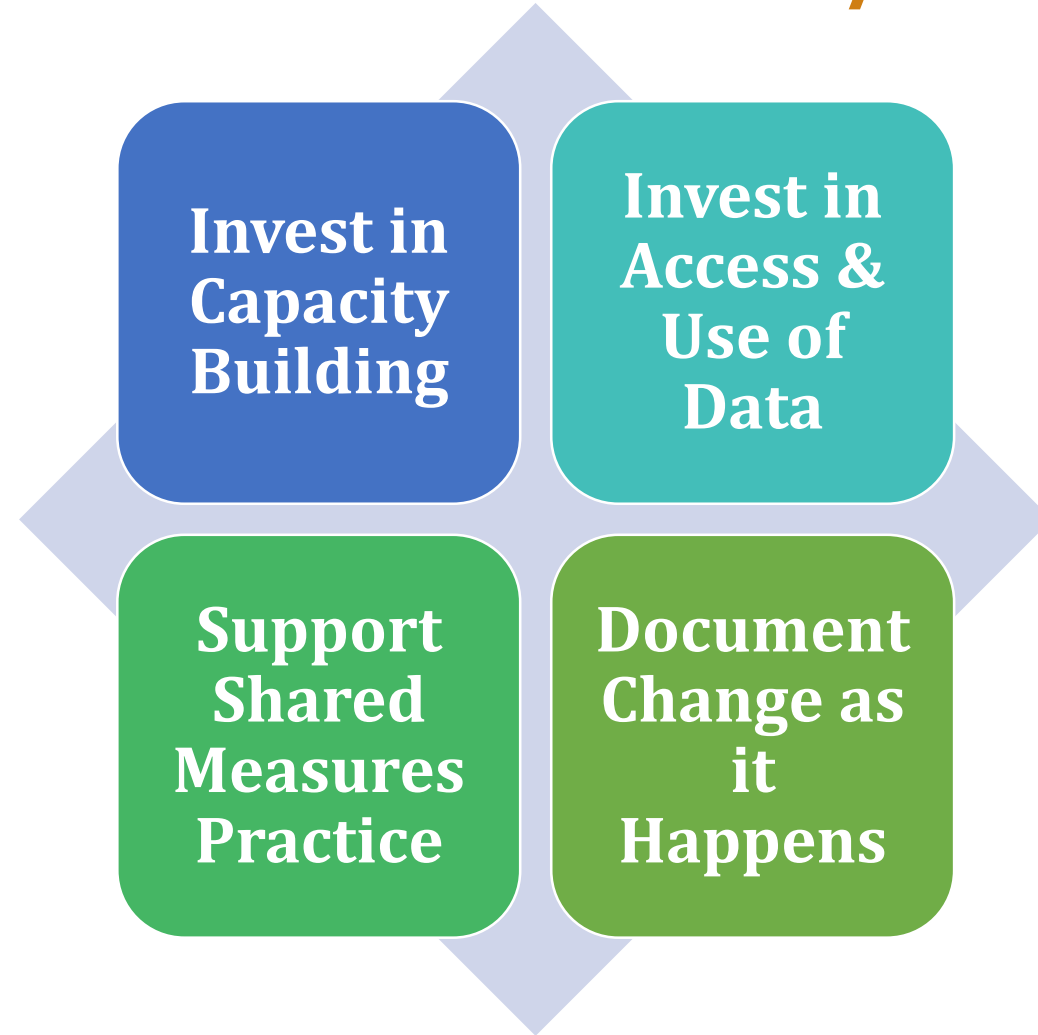
Source: FSG Interviews and Analysis

“Someone who has a big picture perspective—[who] understands how the pieces fit together, is sensitive to the dynamics, and is energetic and passionate.”

Roles in Collective Impact



Strategic Roles for Funders/Government



Taking a Collective Impact Approach Offers the Opportunity to Amplify Impact, Leverage Funding and Drive Alignment

Amplify Impact

- ✓ Involves multiple partners working towards **long term, systemic change**
- ✓ Offers a **holistic approach** by channeling the energy of various stakeholders towards solving a problem
- ✓ Provides opportunities to **influence the system** from within and outside by coupling advocacy with action

Increase Efficiency of Resources

- ✓ Allows **more efficient use of funding**, especially in times of scarce resources
- ✓ Enables **leveraging of public and private sources of funding**
- ✓ Opens channels for organizations to access **additional funding** against an issue

Drive Alignment

- ✓ **Reduces duplication of services**
- ✓ **Increases coordination**
- ✓ Embeds the drive for sustained social change within the community, facilitating **“order for free”**

Things to Consider in Collective Impact



- Patient capital
- Persistence for longer term systems change
- Align funders across sectors to common agenda
- Legitimize the work of the collaborative table
- No playbook, support and advance the skills and capacity of collaborative partners

Collective Impact 3.0

Collective Impact 1.0

- Broad and diverse experimenting with “CI” approach

Collective Impact 2.0

- Shared language and framing of broad parameters & emerging practices

Collective Impact 3.0

- Deepen the practices, capacities and ecology required

Collective Impact 3.0: Diving Deeper



FROM		TO	
The Leadership Paradigm			
• Management		• Movement Building	
The Five Conditions			
• Common Agenda		• Community Aspiration	
• Shared Measurement		• Strategic Learning	
• Mutually Reinforcing Activities		• High Leverage Activities	
• Continuous Communications		• Inclusive Community Involvement	
• Backbone		• Containers for Change	



- Comments?
- Questions?

Tamarack Learning Opportunities

www.tamarackcommunity.ca

Learn together through:

- Monthly tele-learning Seminars
- Communities of Practice
- **Engage!** a monthly, online journal
- Face-to-Face Learning Events
- Online Learning Communities
- **Communities of Practice**



Tamarack Learning Opportunities

The Community Change Institute

September 26-30, 2016 | Toronto, ON

Severn Cullis-Suzuki • Roger Martin • Frances Westley • Stephen Patrick



Severn Cullis-Suzuki

International activist and author brings her ideas of what it will take to save the world.



Roger Martin

Best-selling author and one of Canada's top business and design thinkers.



Frances Westley

Globally recognized social innovation genius and best-selling author.



Stephen Patrick

Top executive advancing Collective Impact for youth innovation.

http://events.tamarackcommunity.ca/ci_toronto