



TOOL | PLANNING YOUR BACKBONE SUPPORT

An in-depth study by FSG of successful backbones, revealed that: their value is unmistakable; they share strengths in guiding vision, strategy and supporting aligned activities; they shift focus over time; they need ongoing assistance with data; they build public will, and backbones help to advance policy.

DESCRIPTION

This tool is designed to help you to assess and further develop your Collective Impact initiative's backbone support infrastructure. There are six core roles and responsibilities of backbone organizations in Collective Impact initiatives. The six roles are:

1. Guide Vision and Strategy – This includes building a common understanding of the issue and; providing strategic guidance to develop a common agenda.
2. Support Aligned Activities – This involves ensuring, and monitoring, the mutually reinforcing activities that are taking place.
3. Establish Shared Measurement Practices – This involves tracking and monitoring agreed upon measurements.
4. Build Public Will – This work involves continuing to build consensus and commitment around your issue.
5. Advance Policy – This is about ensuring an aligned policy agenda is part of the Collective Impact effort.
6. Mobilize Funding – This work is focused on aligning public and private funding in support of the Collective Impact effort's goals.

HOW-TO

Step 1. Engage the leadership of your Collective Impact effort to complete the backbone support worksheet together. Consider convening influential community champions to provide input and offer recommendations for key individuals and/or secondments.

Step 2. When completing it, consider opportunities to share, or build redundancy, into key roles and functions. In more mature Collective Impact efforts, consider succession planning needs. (20 min).

DEBRIEF

Suggested debrief questions for this tool include:

- What are the current strengths and weaknesses within the current backbone infrastructure?
- Have we embedded adequate redundancy into essential backbone roles?
- How do we plan for succession?

Step #1 Planning Your Backbone Support Worksheet

Where We Stand with Backbone Support

Your team should spend some time thinking through who will fill, or share, these backbone roles. Identify who can take these on, your overall strengths and weaknesses, and your next steps. Be sure to think long term, not just for the brief timeframe of a single year.

Role	Who Can Fill this Role?	Current Strengths	Current Weaknesses	Next Steps
Guide Vision and Strategy				
Establish Shared Measurement Practices				
Support Aligned Activities				
Build Public Will				
Advance Policy				
Mobilize Funding				