



# TOOL | COLLECTIVE IMPACT IN PRACTICE: CITIES REDUCING POVERTY

ALISON HOMER

Collective Impact supports communities to address complex social issues and create lasting solutions to social problems on a large scale. This tool illustrates how six Cities Reducing Poverty members across Canada are applying the five conditions of Collective Impact to their work in order to move the needle on poverty in their communities.

## USING THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU:

- Review the 5 conditions of Collective Impact
- Understand how communities across Canada are applying these conditions to poverty reduction work
- Gain ideas on how you can apply Collective Impact to your own work

## OVERVIEW

Collective Impact supports communities to address complex social issues and create lasting solutions to social problems on a large scale. It is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda, and to coordinate efforts around a clearly defined goal.

The term Collective Impact was coined in 2011 by John Kania and Mark Kramer of FSG Consulting, whose Stanford Social Innovation Review article proposes five core conditions that successful Collective Impact initiatives share, that produce true alignment, and that are required for successful community efforts to move from “fragmented action and results” to “collective action and deep and durable impact.”

### COLLECTIVE IMPACT

*Collective Impact is a model of social progress whose power lies in the heightened vigilance that comes from multiple organizations looking for resources and innovations through the same lens, the rapid learning that comes from continuous feedback loops, and the immediacy of action that comes from a unified and simultaneous response among all participants.*

Stanford Social Innovation Review:  
[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)

The five core conditions that successful Collective Impact initiatives share are:

- A common agenda;
- Shared measurement;
- Mutually reinforcing activities;

- Continuous communication; and,
- Backbone support.

Poverty reduction practitioners across Canada apply Collective Impact frameworks as they work to move the needle on this incredibly complex issue. This tool provides examples of how the following six Cities Reducing Poverty (CRP) members are applying the five conditions of Collective Impact to their work: Dufferin County, Edmonton, Saint John, Saskatoon, Sault Ste. Marie, and Winnipeg.

## THE FIVE CONDITIONS OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

### **Common Agenda**

Participating organizations discuss and resolve differences in how they define the problem. While parties may not all agree with every other participant on all dimensions of the problem, they agree on a common definition, and on the ultimate goal that they will be collaboratively working towards.

### **Shared Measurement**

Efforts of participating organizations are aligned as each collects data and measures results consistently across all participants on a short list of indicators. This shared measurement approach enables participants to hold each other accountable, learn from successes and failures, and keep efforts aligned.

### **Mutually Reinforcing Activities**

Diverse stakeholders work together with each participant undertaking a different set of activities at which they excel. These efforts are all coordinated and ultimately advance the common agenda.

### **Continuous Communication**

Partnering organizations have consistent and open communication that builds trust across sectors to the point that they are able to recognize and appreciate the common motivation behind their various efforts. They understand that their own interests will be treated fairly, and decisions will be made, not to favour the priorities of one organization, but to implement the best possible solution to the problem.

### **Backbone Organization**

Supporting infrastructure is in place that supports the development and management of the Collective Impact initiative. This includes having a separate organization and staff with a very specific set of skills, and the capacity to devote both time and expertise to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative.

## THE 5 CONDITIONS OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

<b>Common Agenda</b>	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.
<b>Shared Measurement</b>	Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.
<b>Mutually Reinforcing Activities</b>	Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
<b>Continuous Communication</b>	Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and appreciate common motivation.
<b>Backbone Support</b>	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.

## EXAMPLE #1: DUFFERIN COUNTY'S EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

Established in December 2018, the Dufferin County Equity Collaborative (DCEC) brought together the Dufferin County Poverty Reduction Task Force and the Central West Local Health Integration Network poverty sub-group under one Terms of Reference.

### ***Common Agenda***

Dufferin County's participating organizations encounter challenges across many dimensions of inequity while servicing residents. However, for their collaborative work, they agree both on a common definition and on the ultimate goal of Equity. The DCEC's Terms of Reference was voted on and committed to by 26 member agents representing a diverse cross-section of decision-makers. A roadmap that outlined DCEC's vision, mission and top 3 priorities was created, voted on, and agreed to by all parties. Goals were drafted under each priority, and a survey was used to determine short-, medium- and long-term actions. Working groups drive priority area actions and workplans. DCEC's focus is now on expanding the collaborative's representation of people with lived/living experience.

### ***Shared Measurement***

DCEC participating organizations are working to identify multi-level indicators to be able to consistently collect and measure results. Data sharing meetings were conducted to find out who had what data and to determine what could be shared. The group implemented an *outcomes diary* to collect data under each priority from workgroup participants. Next steps include increasing and aligning data for more meaningful reporting, and filling data gaps. DCEC's shared measurement approach enables participants to appreciate their respective contributions, learn from each other, and continuously improve measures and outcomes.

### ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities***

Diverse stakeholders each undertake a specific set of activities at which they excel. These efforts are supported by and coordinated with the activities of its partners. DCEC's Roadmap and 3 supporting workgroups have helped increase awareness amongst the larger DCEC group, as well as amongst community and municipal representatives. Knowing what each other is doing and understanding challenges and gaps has allowed the group to leverage knowledge and services, close gaps, and provide better service to residents.

### ***Continuous Communication***

DCEC has a communication strategy, brand, website, and social media presence. The group has been deliberate in coming together for productive bi-monthly meetings for decision making across all voting members and the larger DCEC community. Six months in, they held a check-in meeting to report working group progress back to the larger group, and to confirm that they were meeting agreed objectives. A year-end meeting is planned to share the 2019 Impact Report and confirm 2020 objectives. DCEC's partnering organizations have built trust across sectors to the point that they recognize and appreciate each one's respective efforts, and understand that their interests will be treated fairly.

### ***Backbone Organization***

The development and management of DCEC's Collective Impact initiative have included creating a defined organization structure with a required set of skills, and capacity to devote both time and expertise to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative. Co-Chairs organizations – Public Health and Dufferin County Community Services (DCCS) – provide resources on an as-needed basis to initiatives, and part-time dedicated support is available from the DCCS Policy Analyst and DC MOVES coordinator.

## EXAMPLE #2: EDMONTON'S ENDPVERTYEDMONTON

EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) recognizes that no matter how powerful or innovative, no single organization, order of government, or sector can end poverty alone. EPE's model of stewardship is rooted in Collective Impact theory. Through its recently completed Collective Impact Baseline Evaluation, plans are now in place to strengthen the implementation of its five conditions.

### ***Common Agenda***

Edmonton's approach aspires to power a fundamental shift in how a whole community comes together to achieve a shared vision. Its strategy identifies priority actions that were collectively endorsed by Edmontonians, numerous community organizations, and City Council.

- EPE partners and participants have a common understanding of the problem, including a clear and well communicated definition of poverty
- Partners all commit to a shared vision for change, declare alignment with EPE, and have an agreement around goals and approaches to achieving that vision
- Partners and participants have a clearly articulated portfolio of strategies and agreed-upon actions to drive change

### ***Shared Measurement***

EPE has an established Research and Evaluation Advisory committee that is working towards a clearly articulated set of outcomes and indicators, an evolving Evaluation Framework, and a Collective Impact Evaluation Framework. EPE is working to include theories of change, outcomes, and indicators for each of the strategy's Game Changer priorities.

### ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities***

EPE is making an effort to connect Road Map actions where it makes sense to do so, and to coordinate and amplify work to support action under Game Changer areas.

- The initiative has a collective plan of action that specifies the strategies and actions that different partners have committed to implementing
- Partners align their practices and actions with initiative goals and collective action plan(s)
- Working groups have been established to coordinate activities that align with the plan of action
- Partners identify and focus on high leverage opportunities for change (e.g. Basic Income)
- Partners work together on advocacy and policy change (e.g. to influence decision-making)

### ***Continuous Communication***

Integral to EPE's success is a robust and focused internal communications system among its partners. Communication is wide-reaching and adapted to reach a broad and diverse audience of participants.

### ***Backbone Organization***

EPE is a backbone entity supported by a strong core backbone staff with the skills and capacity required to coordinate and manage its operations. Staff coordinate and support activities that include:

- Guiding vision and strategy towards alignment by providing communication and evidence-driven support and expertise to EPE Stakeholders
- Convening stakeholders and partners inclusive of attending meetings, helping working group chairs develop agendas and convening partners outside of regular workgroup meetings
- Supporting alignment of evaluation/measurement and provides strategic learning opportunities
- Cultivating relationships based on trust and empathy

## EXAMPLE #3: SAINT JOHN'S LIVING SJ

Living SJ is co-led by a diverse and growing network of 100 plus members in the Saint John area who are a combination of *content leaders*, who understand the issues and solutions, and *context leaders*, who know how to drive solutions forward.

### ***Common Agenda***

A key feature of Living SJ is an agreement amongst members to work differently together and agree on what can be done differently. Their evaluations support that they have a strong common agenda where members understand the problem, and can accurately describe Living SJ's four priorities.

Living SJ hosts guiding strategies and actions for four Collective Impact Teams to achieve key targets under the following priority areas:

- **Education:** Close the education achievement gap
- **Employment:** Connect low-income residents to employment through education and training
- **Health:** Improve the health of residents through neighbourhood-based models of care
- **Neighbourhoods:** Transform low-income neighbourhoods into vibrant mixed-income communities

### ***Shared Measurement***

Living SJ strives to understand the difference they are making with their actions and aims to have all participating organizations agree on the ways that success will be measured and reported. The group has noted a strong appetite among many partner organizations to measure outcomes in order to learn.

A short-list of common indicators has been identified for some of Living SJ's targets and indicators of success, and data is used for learning and improvement. Living SJ is working toward establishing targets for remaining areas of work, as they strive towards shared measurement.

### ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities***

Living SJ includes a diverse set of stakeholders including non-profit, private business, and all three levels of government. Each has coordinated a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. Organizations have changed their approach to poverty reduction work as a direct result of their involvement in Living SJ. Examples include aligning their organizational focus, increasing collaboration with other organizations, and focusing more on resident engagement.

### ***Continuous Communication***

Living SJ strives to provide members with timely and appropriate information. Their goal is to engage in frequent and structured open communication that builds trust, assures mutual objectives, and creates common motivation.

### ***Backbone Organization***

Living SJ's backbone infrastructure is comprised of an Executive Committee and two full-time staff. The Executive Committee provides strategic oversight of the implementation of Living SJ's strategy. The backbone infrastructure celebrates and disseminates the achievements of partners internally and externally. Partners look to the backbone infrastructure for support, strategic guidance, and leadership.

## EXAMPLE #4: SASKATOON'S POVERTY REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

The Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP) acknowledges and respects that their work happens on Treaty 6 Territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis. They work to create conditions that enable all members of the community to develop talents and abilities, actively participate in economic, cultural and social life, and enjoy a good standard of living that is sustainable.

### ***Common Agenda***

The work of the SPRP is collaborative and founded on a number of core principles including being multi-partisan, open about their agenda, adaptive and innovative, having respect for diverse perspectives and knowledge (e.g. with respect to culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ability), and the essential nature of meaningfully including people living in poverty (first voice) in creating solutions toward eliminating it. In 2017, the SPRP leadership team committed to the development of a poverty reduction strategy, and in 2019, launched *12 Bold Ideas to Eliminate Poverty in Saskatoon*.

### ***Shared Measurement***

SPRP's strategy embeds an intersectoral and multi-jurisdictional evaluation framework that was developed by a team of evaluation experts, from academic, community, knowledge keepers and government agencies. The framework reflects government strategies, community-based organization capacities, and community members' ideas, in order to assess impact. Indicators for change are connected to the 12 bold ideas.

### ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities***

Implementation of SPRP's strategy is broken into the following 4 core areas:

- **Catalyze** capacity regarding social enterprise, social procurement, asset and income policies, social determinants of health, justice, transportation and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
- **Convene** existing teams associated with the lived experience community practice, campus-community engaged research, awareness and advocacy, food security, evaluation and data
- **Coordinate** the leadership team, management team, action teams, funding, conversations and calculation of the local Market Basket Measure
- **Collaborate** on policy and practice, and across teams both inside and outside of the SPRP

### ***Continuous Communication***

SPRP continually seeks out multiple mechanisms to ensure that diverse voices are included in all aspects of the work, including in decision making and leadership. Communication flows between the SPRP coordinator and the members of the SPRP to ensure that consistent messaging and information is provided. Decision-making models and conflict resolution strategies are created for each of the working teams that help mitigate power imbalances, colonial constructs and systemic barriers. All meetings are started with an opening statement that aims to create a safe space for collaborative practice.

### ***Backbone Organization***

The SPRP has created a unique blend of the constellation model and the Collective Impact framework. The Management team provides leadership to the SPRP and oversees the accountabilities of the coordinator, who connects all the pieces. Action teams evolve with community need and capacity, and financials are managed by a founding partner, the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre.

## EXAMPLE #5: SAULT STE. MARIE'S POVERTY ROUNDTABLE

The Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Round Table has adopted a collaborative approach to its work in order to bring together community's many organizations committed to reducing the impact of poverty on the health and well-being of its city's citizens.

### ***Common Agenda***

The Roundtable's theory of change is that: "The health and well-being of low-income people shall be improved through a set of prioritized actions led by a broad-based collaborative of community members and service providers, and endorsed by Sault Ste. Marie's community leadership."

Roundtable participants have had numerous discussions and have identified some objectives and actions that support this overall goal.

### ***Shared Measurement***

The Roundtable is working on establishing a set of Shared Measurement Indicators. A baseline report will be issued by the end of 2019.

### ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities***

Based on numerous consultations, the Roundtable has established five priority areas: Food Security; Essential Services; Community Engagement; Housing; and Workforce Entry. Its efforts are directed at enhancing services to ensure that they reach those most in need when they need it. The Collective Impact approach guided the Roundtable's preliminary 'action analysis.' Here, existing strengths, assets, gaps and challenges were identified, and a series of actions were created to address its key priority areas. Roundtable members have identified desired outcomes for each priority and are in the process of establishing indicators for each outcome. Priorities and outcomes have been endorsed by community leaders. The Roundtable will be obtaining feedback from low-income community members, leaders and the general public regarding proposed actions that will be integrated into their Strategic Action Plan.

### ***Continuous Communication***

The Roundtable recognizes the importance of community leadership endorsing the Roundtable's work and priorities and has therefore undertaken a communication and endorsement strategy to ensure that community members, organizations and leaders all support the Roundtable's Agenda, Theory of Change and Priority Actions.

These actions include:

- Review, revision & approval of Strategic Action Plan by Roundtable members, low-income community members, and Mayor and City Council
- Formation of Working Groups (inclusive of low-income members) to address priority areas.
- Establishment of a Shared Measurement strategy consisting of tools and sets of indicators
- Establishment of a Continuous Communication strategy that provides regular progress and activity reports to all working group members, community leadership and the general public

### ***Backbone Organization***

The Backbone Organization consists of four co-chairs that provide leadership on obtaining political support and ensuring that organizational leadership is at the table, taking minutes and organizing meetings, and facilitating discussion and the Roundtable's processes.

## EXAMPLE #6: WINNIPEG'S POVERTY REDUCTION COUNCIL

The Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (WPRC)'s initiative, TRC92: Youth Employment convenes corporate employers from nine companies as part of an Employer Consortium. The Consortium is framed as "a journey toward Truth and Reconciliation incorporating business-to-business learning."

### *Common Agenda*

The Consortium's common agenda is to work together to address Call to Action 92 in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Report. Participants work and learn together to overcome barriers based on an understanding that simply employing Indigenous job seekers is not a comprehensive approach. As outlined in Call to Action 92, education for management and staff about Indigenous history and its legacy, and about inter-cultural safety and anti-racism, are also important. Changing workplace culture in this way is also a shared vision that plays out in a different way for each company (e.g. depending on the size of their workforce and the level of commitment from upper management).

### *Shared Measurement*

WPRC serves as the backbone organization where one of its functions is to devise evaluation methods. A Developmental Evaluation (DE) approach is used in order to support a 'learning as they go' approach. Methodologies include baseline surveys, interviews, tracking significant conversations and events, and a monthly DE Journal. The Kirkpatrick Model is also employed, which provides an opportunity to document not only what participants are learning, but how behaviour is changing as a result.

### *Mutually Reinforcing Activities*

All participants of TRC92 contribute to the common vision of addressing Call to Action 92.

- **Corporate employers** engage in required learning around Indigenous history and its legacy, strive toward creating a workplace culture that embraces Indigenous ways of being, work with the Employer Consortium to identify and address barriers, and ultimately provide sustained employment for Indigenous job seekers
- **Community trainers** prepare Indigenous job seekers for jobs. They provide wrap-around support to all areas of the job seeker's lives as well as job related skills. They also host the Employer Consortium members with opportunities for them to meet the job seekers
- **Indigenous job seekers** are engaged in training and build relationships with employers around their expectations, hopes and barriers they face
- **Indigenous leaders** provide ongoing support and educational opportunities for employers

### *Continuous Communication*

WPRC uses various ways to communicate about the initiative, both internally and throughout the community including a five-minute video featuring Employer Consortium members, Indigenous job seekers and leaders; an annual Update to the Community, social media, and regular meeting updates. Continuous communication has proven critical in terms of building trust between Employer Consortium members, who now share openly with each other around their successes and challenges.

### *Backbone Organization*

WPRC staff serve as the backbone organization. Their functions include: Providing outreach to stakeholders; convening meetings, producing communication materials; strategizing and planning; sharing resources; carrying out Developmental Evaluation; and building community awareness.



## WORKSHEET: HOW WILL YOU ACHIEVE COLLECTIVE IMPACT?

### ***Your Purpose and Mission Statement:***

#### ***Common Agenda***

*How will you establish a common agenda (i.e. community plan or poverty reduction strategy)?*

#### ***Shared Measurement***

*How will you establish a shared evaluation framework that includes shared indicators and outcomes?*

#### ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities***

*How will the unique skills and assets of the private, public, non-profit, and citizen sectors be utilized?*

#### ***Continuous Communication***

*Who will coordinate communication and what means will you use to communicate with partners?*

#### ***Backbone Organization***

*Who will provide infrastructure support and what will their roles and responsibilities be?*

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