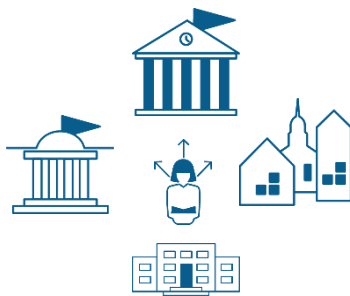


# LEADING HIGHLY EFFECTIVE EXTERNAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



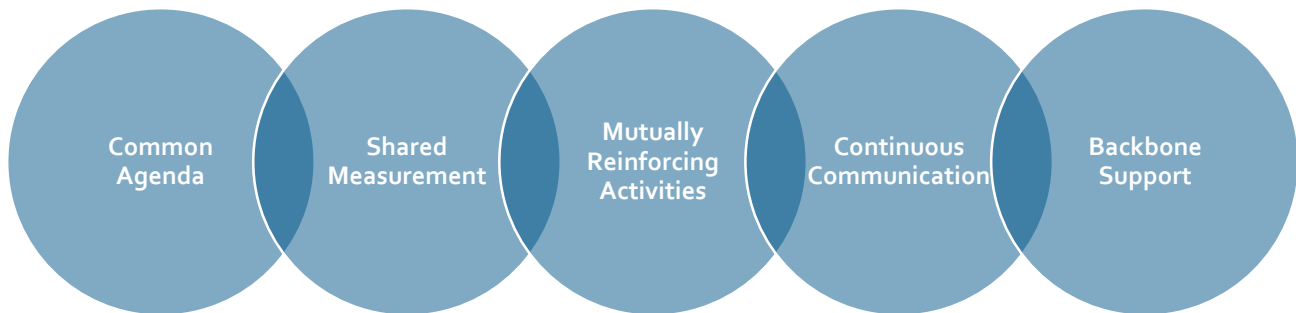
LEADING FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE EXCELLENCE: CURRICULAR RESOURCES

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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# OVERVIEW



Community colleges today are being pressed to deliver significantly higher numbers of quality credentials to a more diverse population, without the infusion of additional public funding. Given the academic and social challenges faced by the growing number of first-generation college-goers, this is a complex and daunting task that requires colleges to look beyond the corners of their campuses and existing means for delivering education.

At the same time, few community college students are just college students or earn undergraduate credentials at only one institution. Many community college students work, often holding full-time jobs while going to school. Increasing numbers are also attending high school, with dual enrollment students estimated to account for up to a quarter of new community college enrollments in 2016. Additionally, many community college students do not graduate from the institution at which they first matriculated, “swirling” into other two- and four-year colleges and universities.

To deliver and resource the education students need in the face of rapidly changing expectations and conditions, exceptional community college leaders are developing new strategic partnerships with other cross-sector organizations in the education-to-employment ecosystem. This module focuses on the dynamics of building effective partnerships between colleges and the neighboring organizations that share complementary missions, using the framework of an emerging field known as “collective impact.”

Collective impact focuses on the power of partnerships across multiple organizations to achieve a common social goal. Most colleges today actively engage in partnerships with key stakeholders. These partnerships are likely focused on a specific project or goal, such as a dual enrollment or internship program, with each of the partners contributing their efforts in support of an agreed-upon outcome. Based on partnerships that have proven highly productive in achieving specific goals, collective impact projects aim to take these elements of strategic partnerships and apply them to create a broader impact: when several organizations work together, with strong structures and communication, more can be accomplished.

What differentiates a collective impact partnership from the more traditional partnership is the structure and the interdependency of five core elements as defined by John Kania and Mark Kramer in *Collective Impact* (Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011): common agenda and goals, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support.

While every element of the above definition has been practiced as long as partnerships have existed, collective impact projects aim to create the conditions and discipline needed to ensure that every element is achieved. This structured

approach to community problem solving holds particular promise for community colleges because the educational continuum starts at K-12 (or community-based adult education) and continues on through community colleges, four-year universities, and post-education employment, posing a set of challenges related to curricular alignment, actionable data, and the needs of a diverse student body that can be effectively addressed only through multi-institutional partnerships.

In this module, participants will apply the framework of collective impact to community college partnerships that engage four essential partners: K-12 schools, community-based organizations, employers, and four-year colleges and universities. We review the literature and examples of successful collective impact projects, focusing on how community colleges can work effectively with a discrete number of organizations, outside of the community college sector, to harness the joint energy of the collective in achieving their joint goals.

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

After completing this module, participants will be able to:

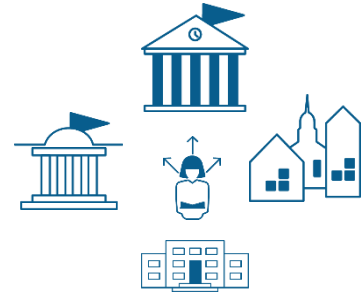
- Understand and articulate the reasons community colleges should engage in collective impact.
- Articulate the definition of and framework for collective impact partnerships.
- Understand how community colleges have used collective impact strategies to benefit students.
- Apply collective impact strategies in scenarios and case studies.
- Develop an implementation plan to build and sustain a collective impact partnership to meet a student success goal for their college.

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## PRE-READING

- Esch, C., & Whitmire, R. (April 2010). *Pathway to the baccalaureate: How one community college is helping underprepared students succeed*. New America Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/pathway-to-the-baccalaureate/>
- FSG. (2013, September 10). *Collective Impact Study: The Road Map Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.fsg.org/publications/road-map-project>
- Hanleybrown, F., Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2012, January 26). *Channeling change: Making collective impact work*. Stanford Social Impact Review.
- Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011, winter). *Collective impact*. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Retrieved from [http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)
- Klempin, S. (2016, February). *Establishing the backbone: An underexplored facet of collective impact efforts*. CCRC Research Brief.

# KICK-OFF ACTIVITY



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## KICK-OFF ACTIVITY: READINESS ASSESSMENT.....20 MINUTES

Explain to participants that partnerships come in many forms. This module will focus on collective impact, a framework for extending partnerships across multiple organizations, and often across sectors, to achieve a common goal. Before diving into the work of the module, participants will take some time to assess their college's existing partnerships and readiness for the work of collective impact.

1. **Allow participants 20 minutes to independently fill out Handout 1, considering their college's most significant partnerships with K-12 schools, four-year colleges/universities, employers, and community-based organizations.**
2. **Then, participants will discuss their answers with a partner or with table groups. Participants can consider the following question: Where were your partnerships closest to or farthest from the principles of collective impact?**



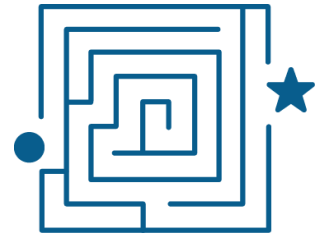
# KICK-OFF ACTIVITY

Take some time to assess your college's existing partnerships and readiness for the work of collective impact by reviewing this inventory of the five elements for collective impact. Considering one major student success challenge, determine where your college falls in the continuum of no partnerships to collective impact.

Collective Impact Element	Your Rating									
	Weak			Moderate				Strong		
<b>Common Agenda:</b> A shared vision for change with a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach for solutions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Shared Measurement:</b> Collecting data and measuring results consistently on an agreed upon list of indicators across organizations to hold each other accountable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Mutually Reinforcing Activities:</b> Coordinating each stakeholders' differentiated activities through an overarching plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Continuous Communication:</b> Several years of regular in-person meetings among organizations' senior level leaders (presidents, CEOs, senior VPs) that build trust and understanding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Backbone Support:</b> A separate organization and staff to plan, manage, and support collective action with facilitation, logistical support, and data reporting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

This inventory is modified from Building Capacity for Collective Impact Toolkit Series (2011), Cassandra O'Neill and Sarah Griffiths, Wholonomy Consulting LLC, [www.wholonomyconsulting.com](http://www.wholonomyconsulting.com) and built upon the Stanford Social Innovation Review (Winter 2011) article, "Collective Impact," by John Kania & Mark Kramer.

# WHY COLLECTIVE IMPACT?



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## KEY LEARNING

While leaders, faculty, and staff at exceptional community colleges take responsibility for the success of students during their enrollment in the college, they also recognize that community colleges, acting alone, do not have the resources—or, at times, the expertise—to deliver much of what students need. The nearly universal goal of students who enroll in community college is to acquire the skills that will lead them to good jobs with family-sustaining wages, either directly after community college or after subsequently earning a bachelor's degree. The likelihood of community college students reaching these goals often hinges on their ability to balance classroom demands with the complex obligations and realities of work and family life, which for most must be done multiple times, as transferring from one institution to another has become the norm. It also depends on a continuum of education that extends before and often after they attend community college, as well as on skills attained during their community college matriculation both within the classroom and outside, including things often best learned off-campus.

To support students on their educational path, excellent community colleges look beyond their physical boundaries, partnering with institutions and other organizations whose mission, goals, and strategies have the potential to enhance—and at times are necessary to “complete”—the community college student experience. Aspen Prize finalist colleges that have been successful in collective impact enterprises involve one or more institutions that fall into four categories: K-12 schools, four-year colleges/universities, employers, and community-based organizations. They move beyond “partnerships” to develop and sustain new structures or pathways that dramatically improve student outcomes for large numbers of students.

To maximize the potential for students to achieve their goals, community college leaders actively seek out partner organizations to join with them in designing and financing new structures and new pathways to enhance student success goals. Examples of these goals include the following:

- Improving academic, financial, and other forms of college readiness among entering students through deep engagement with feeder high schools.
- Ensuring strong pathways of college access, credential completion, and employment for disconnected youth and adults—and securing the provision of support services for all high-risk students, in partnership with community-based organizations.
- Strengthening delivery of the “job-ready” or “soft” skills that employers value — technical, meta-cognitive, and professional skills—through systems that engage employers in rigorous curriculum development, honest program review, and genuine opportunities for students to participate in authentic work-based learning.

- Creating clear pathways to bachelor’s degrees—and potentially further education—by working closely with four-year colleges and universities and at times K-12 school systems.

**Example:** Aspen Prize top ten finalist Indian River State College (IRSC) collaborated with a broad range of public entities—including fire, police, corrections, and emergency management from multiple towns in multiple counties—to develop the Treasury Coast Public Safety Training Complex. Combining criminal justice, fire science, forensics, emergency management, humanitarian assistance, paralegal studies, and human services education in one place for a coordinated response to all types of emergencies, the Complex provides comprehensive, state-of-the-art instruction that leads directly to employment for IRSC students. In addition to improving student outcomes, this collective impact partnership has the potential to create new revenue streams and efficiencies for both institutions and students. The proximity of the Training Complex to public safety agencies helps local communities save money on continuing education and enables them to easily work together to fine-tune interagency response to hurricanes and other natural and manmade disasters. At a broader level, specialized training and workshops attract thousands of public service professionals from around the nation, leading to additional funding from the public and private sectors.

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## GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: ASSET MAPPING.....30 MINUTES

The central premise of this module is that community colleges can positively impact student success by building structures with other entities to jointly address common goals more effectively and efficiently than partnering organizations could achieve on their own. Throughout the module, we will be using the scenarios described below, and on Handout 2, to help explore how each of the five collective impact elements relates to common community college challenges.

**Scenario 1:** Your region has been plagued by a shortage of skilled health care workers. A recent survey of local health care employers predicts that over 10,000 health care jobs will become available in the next five years. Given the high cost of developing and operating nursing and allied health programs, your college has been unable to allocate the necessary resources or deploy the needed staff to expand existing programs or start new ones.

**Scenario 2:** Your region has a high number of immigrant families. Your college has a large ESL program, but just 6 percent of your students enrolled in credit-bearing courses are recent immigrants to the United States. The area has several high-performing community-based nonprofit organizations that serve immigrant families. One of those organizations recently released a study finding that a large percentage of immigrants in your area are mired in low-wage work.

**Scenario 3:** You meet with some of your region’s technology employers and learn that they are very concerned about the shortage of STEM students that are completing college and university programs. After analyzing your institution’s data, you learn that 13 percent of your students who intend to transfer and complete a bachelor’s degree actually do so within six years; the number for STEM majors is only 9 percent.

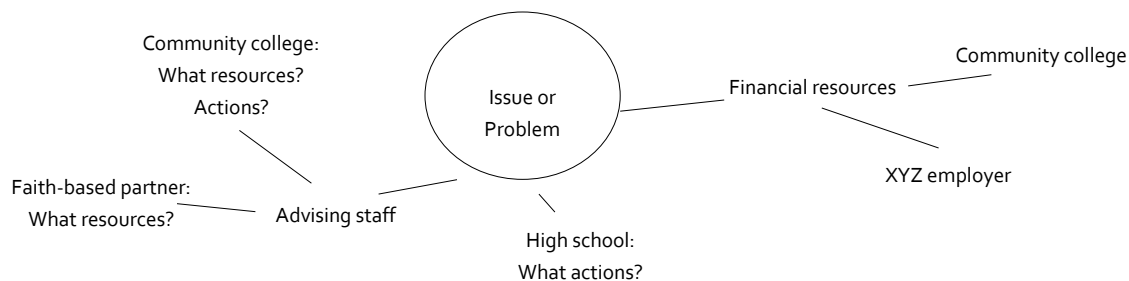
**Scenario 4:** Your region has seen growing tensions following a series of racially charged incidents involving the police. In addition, the region’s largest employer, a hospital, has been accused of discriminating against African Americans in hiring, pay, and promotions. These incidents have caused some long-simmering issues to resurface as community members have expressed frustration and anger over the poor school performance, high dropout rates, and low college-going and completion rates of African American and Latino students in low-income communities. As part of the larger outcry, business and elected leaders have increased their demands that the education community “do something” to reduce achievement gaps between various racial and ethnic groups.

1. **Break the participants up into small groups, and assign each one a scenario. Note that they will work on the given scenario throughout this module.**



2. Using Handout 3, participants will consider how collective impact could address this issue by doing the following:

- Identifying the problem and assessing the strengths and limitations of the college in the prospective partnership.
- Identifying potential partners whose interests, actions, and resources could be utilized to complement the community college's work and fortify collective strategies to reach results.
- Creating an asset map to identify what the community college and potential partnering organizations could bring to the joint pursuit of student success goals in different contexts. An asset map is a visual representation that puts the problem or issue in the center and shows the interconnecting and reinforcing resources and actions of potential partner organizations.



3. Each group will meet for 20 minutes to address the questions posed on their handout and create an asset map that reflects partner organization strengths and resources to meet the scenario challenge. Remind groups to be creative in their mapping, thorough in their identification of possible assets and partners, and flexible in how they choose to represent their mapping visually (there is no one "right" way to map assets). Encourage participants to consider K-12 districts, local organizations, four-year colleges, and employers. Then reconvene as a class to present their maps and discuss findings as a whole group.

4. Bring the group back together for a debrief discussion, focusing on the following questions:

- What was the goal of the prospective partnership?
- What financial assets can the partners bring to the table? How might partners contribute robustly, even without significant financial resources? What other assets might they bring to the collective impact partnership?
- What people are available and influential to achieve collective impact? Did other groups' maps reveal individuals/organizations that you may not have previously considered?
- Considering the collective impact partnerships described in the pre-readings, are certain assets easier or harder to tap into? Must all partners contribute financially in order to have significant impact on the identified issue?
- What do you think is the most important role the community college president can play in bringing these partners together? What limitations or barriers might exist for the president?

# SCENARIOS FOR THIS MODULE



The central premise of this module is that community colleges can positively impact student success by building structures with other entities to jointly address common goals more effectively and efficiently than partnering organizations could achieve on their own. Throughout the module, we will be using the scenarios described below to help explore how each of the five collective impact elements relates to common community college challenges.

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# ASSET MAPPING



Consider your assigned scenario. With your small group, use the questions below to consider how collective impact could address this issue by identifying the problem and assessing the strengths and limitations of the college in the prospective partnership; and identifying potential partners whose interests, actions, and resources could be utilized to complement the community college's work and fortify collective strategies to reach results.

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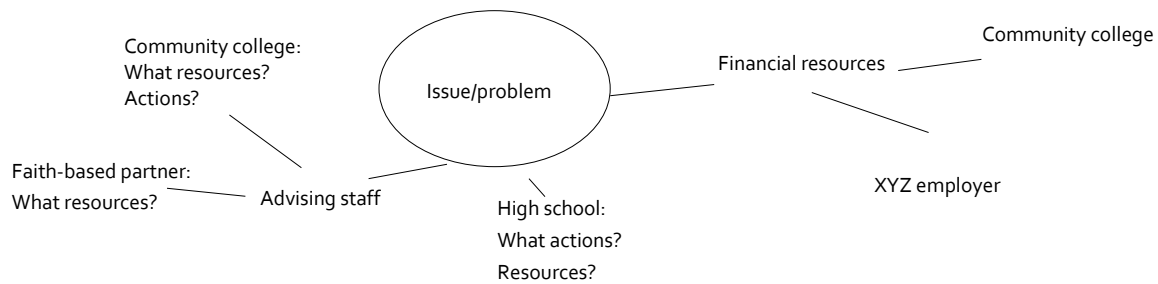
**What is the problem?**

**What are the strengths of the college in the prospective partnership?**

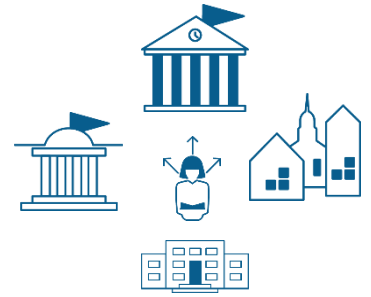
**What are the limitations of the college?**

Who are potential partners whose interests, actions, and resources could be utilized to complement the community college's work and fortify collective strategies to reach results?

Then, create an asset map to identify what the community college and potential partnering organizations could bring to the joint pursuit of student success goals in different contexts. An asset map is a visual representation that puts the problem or issue in the center and shows the interconnecting and reinforcing resources and actions of potential partner organizations. Consider K-12 districts, local organizations, four-year colleges, and employers.



# THE FUNDAMENTALS OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT



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## COMMON AGENDA AND GOAL

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### KEY LEARNING

A common agenda is an agreement about the complex problem, need, or challenge, resulting in joint ownership of the specific goal or outcome that the group is seeking to achieve. This identification of a common challenge and goal can be a starting point for working across institutional silos to propel effective collective action.

**Example:** In the year 2000, Walla Walla Community College began conferring with local business leaders to develop a new vision for the regional economy. At first, the common goal was expanded health care jobs as well as sustainable agriculture and tourism surrounding a then-nascent winemaking industry. After establishing strong collective impact partnerships, the college engaged existing and new partners around a vision of renewable energy and water management. These partnerships resulted in the largest nursing program in the state, as well as the expansion of the region's vineyards from 7 in 2000 to over 200 today. The multiple collective partnerships created new sustained and scaled community college programs that fuel economic growth and job opportunities for students.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion, see Wyner, J.S. (2014). *What excellent community colleges do* (pp. 108-111), Harvard Education Press: Cambridge, MA. Also, view the following video: *PBS NewsHour*. (2012, September 10). School of wine: training students for jobs in Washington State's wine industry. Retrieved from [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education-july-dec12-wine\\_09-10/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education-july-dec12-wine_09-10/)

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## GROUP DISCUSSION: CASE STUDY.....25 MINUTES

1. Focusing on the case study *Pathway to the Baccalaureate: How One Community College is Helping Underprepared Students Succeed*,<sup>2</sup> participants will discuss the questions on Handout 4, and below, in small groups:

- What was the unique role of the community college president? How did the president go about building a common agenda with two very different partners?
- What risks were involved when the Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) president acted to transcend his college's self-interests to catalyze this initiative?
- What was most the important element—meeting, event, concern, activity—that allowed the partners to act on the common goals?
- What enabled the partnership to move to a large-scale program rather than remaining a pilot?
- What might threaten the partnership in the future? What structures are in place to support sustainability?
- What new financial resources might NOVA be able to obtain as a result of these new partnerships?
- Consider a time when you tried (successfully or unsuccessfully) to build a common agenda with one or more partner organizations. Would you do something differently next time?

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<sup>2</sup> Esch, C., & Whitmire, R. (April 2010). *Pathway to the baccalaureate: How one community college is helping underprepared students succeed*. New America Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/pathway-to-the-baccalaureate/>



# CASE STUDY

Focusing on the Pathway to the Baccalaureate case study from the pre-reading, discuss the following questions in small groups.

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What was the unique role of the community college president? How did the president go about building a common agenda with two very different partners?

What risks were involved when the Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) president acted to transcend his college's self-interests to catalyze this initiative?

What was most the important element—meeting, event, concern, activity—that allowed the partners to act on the common goals?

What enabled the partnership to move to a large-scale program rather than remaining a pilot?

What might threaten the partnership in the future? What structures are in place to support sustainability?

What new financial resources might NOVA be able to obtain as a result of these new partnerships?

Consider a time when you tried (successfully or unsuccessfully) to build a common agenda with one or more partner organizations. Would you do something differently next time?



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## GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: COMMON AGENDA.....20 MINUTES

1. Using the scenario each group explored in the first exercise, participants will take 20 minutes to strategize how they would reach a common agenda in that scenario. Assign each group member one of the partner organizations from the asset map to represent in the conversation. By the end of the conversation, each group should write the common agenda in one inspiring sentence that reflects the goal(s) that all partner organizations can jointly embrace.
2. Participants should consider the following questions:
  - What differentiates this agenda from the individual goals of the partner organizations?
  - How does this common agenda play to the strengths and mission of each partner organization?
  - How does the sentence wording communicate the common agenda in a way that will inspire all partner organizations?
  - How could you, as the president, communicate the common agenda to motivate stakeholders throughout the college?
3. Bring the whole group back together for a debrief. What strategies for communicating this common agenda to the rest of the college do you think will hold the most promise? What is the president's role in this communication?

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# SHARED MEASUREMENT

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## KEY LEARNING

Once the common agenda is defined, the next task is to agree on and operationalize a set of common measures that collective impact partners will use to assess whether they are achieving their goals. Partners need to go beyond agreeing on metrics to entering into an agreement to collect and share data across organizations.

### Principles to keep in mind about shared measurement:

- **Keep students' end goals in mind:** Partnering institutions often have a wide range of measurable goals. Community colleges, for instance, usually measure overall enrollment and completion outcomes, participation of under-represented minorities, and annual revenue. Select measures tied to student goals that are at the center of the partnership.
- **Choose data that can be both collected and shared:** Partnering organizations should evaluate what data are readily available and what data are the most useful. Are there agreements in place between public entities that would allow them to share otherwise confidential information?
- **Create time and space to jointly review the data:** Ensure that the data can be displayed in clear and compelling ways. Determine the timeframe and specific meetings needed for senior leadership and project leads, internally and across participating organizations, to review data in order to ensure shared understanding and to improve and adapt strategies.

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## GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: DATA BRAINSTORM.....20 MINUTES

1. In small groups, participants will go back to their assigned scenario and list the types of data that each partner organization should collect, using Handout 5.
2. For each data point, challenge the group to specify the following:
  - What would be learned?
  - Is there agreement on how progress will be measured and tracked?
  - Do the data chosen map to your common agenda?
  - Do you have the right data to monitor your progress toward achieving your goal?
  - Is this too much data to foster common understanding of progress, and if so, which data elements can be eliminated?
  - Have you identified data that are feasible to collect and monitor on a regular basis?
3. Bring the group back together for a quick debrief focused on the strategies they used to select data for shared measurement. To what extent would the college president be involved in this aspect of the work?

# DATA BRAINSTORM



Consider your group’s assigned scenario. What types of data should each partner organization be collecting?

Partner Organization	Data Point	What Would Be Learned?	Feasible to Measure and Track?	Feasible to Monitor on a Regular Basis?	Map to Common Agenda?	Will These Data Show Progress Toward Your Goal?

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# MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

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## KEY LEARNING

Collective impact models allow institutions to fulfill their independent missions while coordinating the efforts of multiple partners to improve outcomes. Mutually reinforcing activities apply what each organization is strongest at doing to achieve common goals. In a collective impact partnership, it is often necessary to redesign policies or processes with the student in mind, thinking about that student's experience *across* organizations to consider what activities might be missing across the *whole* experience.

### Principles to keep in mind when designing mutually reinforcing activities:

- Leverage shared resources to have the greatest impact.
- Consider the relative strengths of each organization in serving student needs, and align responsibilities and activities accordingly.
- Look for where there are gaps in pipelines or processes, and decide who will be responsible for filling those gaps.

Consider the process of student transfer from a community college to a four-year university. When leaders look only at the policies put in place at the community college, they might miss gaps in the system: for example, that students spend too much time in community colleges taking courses that don't meet requirements. It is only when leaders look at the whole system that they can notice this gap and design processes and policies to close it, such as advising systems that are regularly informed by requirements of different four-year university partners.

**Example:** At NOVA, faculty noticed that ESL students were having difficulty in English composition, particularly in writing research papers. When the college partnered with local high schools, they discovered that 12th grade English—the course in which students focused on writing research papers—was waived for English language learners. The college and high schools had to design something *together* in order to fill that gap.

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## GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: ROLE PLAY.....30 MINUTES

1. Working in small groups, participants will assign each person in the group to represent one of the partner organizations from their assigned scenario from the earlier activities.
2. Each person should list all of the possible activities that his or her organization would be implementing related to the issue presented in the scenario, using Handout 6.
3. Then, as a group, participants should role-play a conversation, convened by the community college president, about identifying and designing mutually reinforcing activities. Discuss how partners could align activities to be mutually reinforcing and leverage shared resources.

# ROLE PLAY



Assign each person in your group one of the partner organizations from the scenario you’ve been working on throughout the module. Then, each person should list all of the possible activities that his or her organization would be implementing related to the issue presented in the scenario. Then, as a group, role-play a conversation, convened by the community college president, about identifying and designing mutually reinforcing activities. How could you align activities to be mutually reinforcing and leverage shared resources?

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What organization are you representing?
Activities Your Organization Is Implementing

How could you align activities to be mutually reinforcing and leverage shared resources?

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## INDEPENDENT REFLECTION: CONSIDERING PARTNERSHIPS.....10 MINUTES

1. Invite participants to independently consider a partnership initiative on their campus.
2. Participants should list each partner organization's activities, using Handout 7. How could the activities be enhanced or streamlined so that they better align with and will move all organizations more quickly toward the common goal?

# CONSIDERING PARTNERSHIPS



Consider a partnership initiative on your campus. List each partner organization’s activities below. How could the activities be enhanced or streamlined so that they better align with and will move all organizations more quickly toward the common goal?

Partner Organization	Activity	How Could It Be Enhanced or Streamlined?

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# CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

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## KEY LEARNING

Frequent, structured, open communication is critical to building and sustaining successful collective impact projects. Transparent and authentic feedback from all partners, at all levels of engagement, builds trust and ensures that all parties continue to work toward a common agenda. Continuous communication maintains the connection between partners as the program evolves, establishes the conditions for authentic program review and modification, and promotes project sustainability.

By participating in partnerships meetings, the community college president and partner organizations' CEOs communicate the importance of the collective impact partnership. Executive-level engagement sets the tone for joint problem solving, strategic planning, and commitment, and increases the potential to leverage resources. Within the community college, data-informed communication between administration, faculty, and other stakeholders about the goals and successes of the partnership is equally critical to create buy-in from the individuals who are ultimately responsible for implementation.

**Example:** Harper College's partnership with nearby K-12 school districts exemplifies the operational importance of continuous communication grounded in shared measurement. After reviewing high school transcripts, Harper and the K-12 school districts realized that the least successful students were those who failed to take math in the senior year of high school. In response, the partners worked together to enroll as many seniors in math as possible. These efforts paid off, with larger numbers of seniors enrolling in and passing math during their senior year, but many of these high school seniors who passed high school math were not passing the community college math placement exam.

Probing this issue, the partners realized that each organization had a different measure of "college readiness," which resulted in a lack of alignment between the high school math curriculum and Harper's college-level math classes. To align standards and solidify this partnership, Harper and the K-12 school districts established a new "backbone" organization (Northwest Educational Council for Student Success, or NECSS) and agreed to combine and share data. With regularly scheduled times to meet to review and discuss results, the partners were able to improve high school graduates' college-level math readiness. After working together to align standards, math readiness levels for incoming Harper freshmen rose from 46 percent in 2010 to 58 percent in 2012.

This entire process—from first intervention to the 12 percent increase in student success—took three years. In the end, it was the structured, regular conversations between partners—informed by data—and timely iterations of interventions that led to significant increases in student outcomes.

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## GROUP DISCUSSION: REFLECTION ON COMMUNICATION.....15 MINUTES

1. Allow participants 15 minutes in small groups to reflect on the following questions, based on the scenario that they have been working on throughout the module:
  - How would you structure your first collective impact partnership meeting to build trust and connection between organizations?
  - Continuous communication must happen at the CEO level. Why is it critical that presidents and CEOs be present at collective impact meetings?



- What examples come to mind of effective internal communications from the office of the president to the rest of the college campus? Consider activities to listen and gather input, plus activities to share updates and information.

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## GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN.....35 MINUTES

1. In small groups, participants will take 20 minutes using Handout 8 to create a communications plan for the first year of the collective impact partnership for the scenario they have been assigned. Encourage participants to keep in mind internal communications within the community college and continuous communications across partner organizations. Who are the audiences/participants for each communication activity? What is the purpose of each activity? They should be sure to include communications that inspire, inform, inquire, and celebrate.
2. Pair up groups to present their communications plans to one another and provide feedback. Discuss: Is there a mix of communication strategies beyond in-person meetings? Are the “right” people receiving communications at the right times in the right ways? Does the plan allow for two-way communication—messaging out and gathering input? What is the president’s role in this communications plan?

# COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



Working in small groups, take 20 minutes to create a communications plan for the first year of the collective impact partnership for your assigned scenario, using the template below. Be sure to include communications that inspire, inform, inquire, and celebrate.

Audience (Internal? External?)	Communications Activity	Purpose

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# BACKBONE SUPPORT

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## KEY LEARNING

The backbone organization is the team that is dedicated to orchestrating the logistics of the collective, ensuring alignment, coordinating implementation, monitoring progress in meeting the initiative's goals, and communicating the partnership's goals to external audiences—to build support with the public and mobilize resources.

Whether the backbone organization is housed with one or more of the partner organizations or is set up as a separate entity depends on the partnership goals and available resources. However, the backbone organization must have a reputation for being neutral, the ability to convene actors and entities from diverse sectors, and prior experience engaging in similar collaborative work. In addition, backbone organizations should have strong experience performing certain functions such as fundraising, data collection, and evaluation of the collective impact efforts. The backbone organization or individual ensures that:

- Agreed-upon goals and partner participation are periodically reviewed.
- Milestones and outcome metrics are regularly gathered and shared.
- Mutually reinforcing activities are supported.
- Structures for communication are put in place (meetings, electronic communications, etc.).
- Logistics are coordinated.
- Obstacles are defined early and addressed.
- Fiscal operations are maintained.

**Example:** In the case of the Harper College/K-12 example, the partner organizations chose to create an entirely new backbone organization: NECSS. NECSS is responsible for monitoring outcomes and tracking progress, but all partner organizations remain closely involved. All three K-12 superintendents and the president of Harper College serve on the NECSS board, which meets three to four times annually. The full-time executive director of NECSS and the organization's operational costs are funded by contributions from the partners and outside grants.

**Example:** El Paso Community College (EPCC) worked with several K-12 systems, the University of Texas at El Paso, and various community organizations to provide El Paso's growing Latino population with access to education and programs that foster achievement. To give structure to education reform efforts, the partners formed the backbone organization El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, a model national partnership to get students ready for and ensure their progression through college. Since it was founded in 1991, the Collaborative has pursued three clear goals to foster change: (1) ensuring academic success for all students, K-16; (2) ensuring that all students graduate from high school prepared to enter and succeed in a four-year college or university; and (3) closing achievement gaps among groups of students. Initiatives stemming from the Collaborative have supported professional development for teachers and administrators, rigorous K-12 curricula aligned to the expectations of partner colleges, new and continued K-16 partnerships, and an emphasis on college readiness and completion. EPCC's primary contributions to this ecosystem are an expansive dual enrollment program, seven early college high schools (where students earn an associate degree along with their diploma), and the construction of seamless pathways between the two-year college and the university.

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## GROUP DISCUSSION: CASE STUDIES.....15 MINUTES

1. Invite participants to compare the two collective impact partnerships in the pre-reading case studies, The Roadmap Project and NOVA's Pathway to the Baccalaureate program<sup>3</sup> with regards to backbone organization structure. Consider how these organizations ensured the long-term success of their partnerships. In particular, discuss the following:
  - Why did each partnership choose the backbone structure reflected in the case study?
  - What are the strengths and weaknesses of each backbone support approach (i.e., using an existing organization versus creating a new backbone organization)?
  - In each of the case studies, how did leaders ensure sustainability for the backbone organization?
  - Reflecting on your own campus partnerships, how would you incorporate/fortify a backbone organization to pursue the goals of these two case study partnerships?

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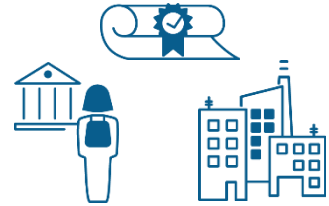
## GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: STRUCTURING THE BACKBONE.....20 MINUTES

1. Participants will consider the scenario that they have been working on throughout the module. In their small groups, participants will—again acting in their assigned roles representing partner organizations—discuss a structure for their backbone organization. Will it be hosted in one of the partner organizations? Be its own organization? Be a new organization made up of employees from across the partner organizations?
2. Take 15 minutes to discuss in assigned roles, then have a quick debrief with the whole group.

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<sup>3</sup> Esch, C., & Whitmire, R. (April 2010). *Pathway to the baccalaureate: How one community college is helping underprepared students succeed*. New America Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/pathway-to-the-baccalaureate/>; FSG. (2013, September 10). *Collective Impact Study: The Road Map Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.fsg.org/publications/road-map-project>

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



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## INDIVIDUAL APPLICATION ACTIVITY: PLANNING FOR PARTNERSHIP.....30 MINUTES

1. In this activity, participants will plan a collective impact partnership that directly improves levels of student success in learning, completion, labor market, and equitable outcomes. If participants have already completed the module Defining Student Success, invite them to think back to the four-part definition of student success put forth by the Aspen Institute: learning, completion, labor market outcomes, and equity. If not, introduce them to the four-part definition using the material in that module.
2. Then, have participants take 30 minutes to consider the following questions and begin to plan a collective impact partnership, following the guidance below and on Handout 9. This can also be done as homework.
  - Considering the four domains of excellence (learning, completion, labor market, equity), what outcomes does your college achieve particularly well? For example, 52 percent of students graduate or transfer to a four-year university, well above the national average (40 percent). Or, of students who transfer to a four-year school, over 50 percent graduate, indicating strong learning outcomes aligned with four-year expectations. Who, internally and externally, is focused on this student success domain? What further progress could be made through a collective impact partnership?
  - Considering the four domains of excellence, in what area is your community college least successful? For example, graduates earn, on average, \$21,000 in the year after they graduate, \$8,000 less than other new hires in the region. Or, African American and Hispanic students graduate at a rate 14 percent below that of other students. Who, internally and externally, could be brought together through a collective impact partnership to improve outcomes in this student success domain?
  - Given your reflections on the four-part definition of community college excellence, determine a compelling problem/need that can be addressed through a collective impact partnership.
3. Participants will outline an initial design framework for a collective impact partnership to achieve measurable progress in meeting this challenge, using the chart on Handout 9.

# PLANNING FOR PARTNERSHIP



Take 30 minutes to consider the following questions and begin to plan a collective impact partnership, following the guidance below.

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Which of the four domains of excellence is where your community college is achieving the greatest success (learning, completion, labor market, equity)? Who, internally and externally, is focused on this student success domain? What further progress could be made through a collective impact partnership?

Which of the four domains of excellence is your community college least focused on? What effect does this reduced attention have on student success outcomes? Who, internally and externally, could be brought together through a collective impact partnership to improve outcomes in this student success domain?

Given your reflections on the four-part definition of community college excellence, determine a compelling problem/need that can be addressed through a collective impact partnership.

Outline an initial design framework for a collective impact partnership to achieve measurable progress in meeting this challenge.

**Framework for Collective Impact Partnership**

**Problem statement**

**Partners**

**Common agenda**

**Shared measurement**

**Mutually reinforcing activities**

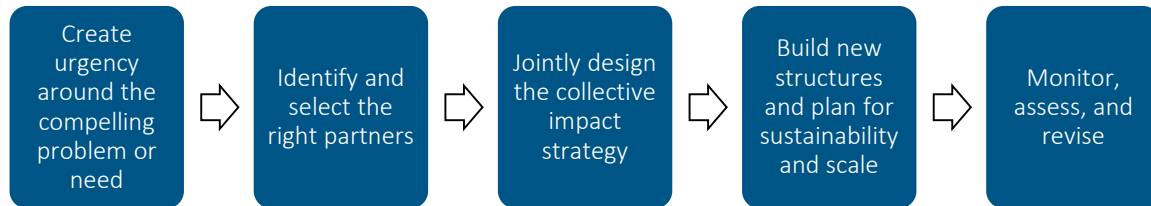
<b>Continuous communication</b>
<b>Backbone support</b>
<b>Next steps</b>



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## ON-CAMPUS ACTIVITY: INTERVIEW AND PRESENT

The effectiveness of a collective impact partnership depends on sound program development, implementation, and evaluation. While no two collective impact partnerships are exactly the same, successful partnerships often utilize similar implementation strategies. This extension activity prepares leaders to develop an implementation plan to build and sustain a collective impact partnership that meets a student success goal for their college.



1. Participants will build on the collective impact framework that they designed above, or identify a new problem/need for students at your college, and develop a comprehensive plan that weaves the collective impact elements into sound program design, using Handout 10 as a guide for planning.
2. Participants will interview three to six internal and external stakeholders (potential partners) that they envision could contribute to this collective impact partnership.
3. As a final product, participants will create a PowerPoint presentation, video, or written memo describing a clear and compelling collective impact partnership whose goal is to achieve significant student outcomes that their institution could not achieve alone. Participants should include references to each of the five elements and five steps involved in a collective impact initiative.

# ON-CAMPUS ACTIVITY: INTERVIEW AND PRESENT



Build on the collective impact framework that you designed earlier, or identify a new problem/need for students at your college, and develop a comprehensive plan that weaves the collective impact elements into sound program design. Use the questions below as a guide for your planning. Interview three to six internal and external stakeholders (potential partners) that you envision could contribute to this collective impact partnership. As a final product, create a PowerPoint presentation, video, or written memo describing a clear and compelling collective impact partnership whose goal is to achieve significant student outcomes that your institution could not achieve alone. Include references to each of the five elements and five steps involved in a collective impact initiative.

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Review the following five major strategy areas for developing a collective impact partnership. Under each strategy are listed action steps that you might take to implement your program. Add in your own significant actions.

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## STRATEGY: CREATE URGENCY AROUND THE COMPELLING PROBLEM OR NEED

- ☐ Define the problem you set out to address, using data to demonstrate the challenge. Consider the implications and consequences of not addressing the problem, and how that might be communicated to create urgency without laying blame.
- ☐ Show the size, scope, and projected duration of the problem and the expected benefits of solving the problem or improving the outcomes.
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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## STRATEGY: IDENTIFY AND SELECT THE RIGHT PARTNERS

- ☐ Select a college team of high performers that will work with you to guide the process through the remaining steps.
- ☐ Identify and recruit a leader (champion) within the community as an important political partner with the stature to focus attention upon the challenge or issue.
- ☐ Reach out to organizational leaders whose resources and influence are critical to addressing the problem you've outlined. Consider how to tap their interests as you engage them on the issue.
  - ☐ Include high-performing partners whose capability or expertise will complement and reinforce each other. What can these partner organizations do that is different from what your college can do? What unique resources can each organization bring to the partnership?
  - ☐ Don't assume that the reasons these partners might care about these issues is identical to the reasons you care. Do their organizations' leaders face pressures and have goals that relate to the compelling need you have identified?
- ☐ Plan how partner organizations will signal their immediate commitment to the work.
  - ☐ Identify the specific benefit that will accrue to the potential partner organizations.
  - ☐ Decide on next steps in public communications and recruiting additional partners.
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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## STRATEGY: JOINTLY DESIGN THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT STRATEGY

- ☐ Jointly develop a theory of change that states your common goal or shared problem (common agenda), defines the inputs and expected outcomes, and details how specific data elements will be used to measure progress.
- ☐ Determine each partner organization's strengths and align your responsibilities and activities to be mutually reinforcing.
- ☐ Identify the different phases of the work to be done, in which time frame, and with what milestones.
- ☐ Define the commitments needed from each organization in specific time frames.
- ☐ Negotiate or mutually agree upon what each leader/organization commits to during each stage of the collective impact partnership.
- ☐ Determine what resources will be needed to address the issue or problem and identify potential funding sources.
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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## STRATEGY: BUILD NEW STRUCTURES AND PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE

### Internal work:

- ☐ Build commitment across the campus by engaging internal champions early in the effort, sharing updates on their activities, and publicly celebrating “early wins.”
- ☐ Address internal opponents by voicing understanding for their concerns, sharing compelling data, using stories to convey the common agenda, and offering recognition and resources for activities making progress in solving the problem.
- ☐ Allocate sufficient institutional resources, move the program closer to core budget allocations, and ensure that personnel leading the initiative are protected from budget cuts and reallocations.
- ☐ Consider: What is the institution willing to give up in order to have the chance of achieving the mission/goals at a larger scale in the future?

### Work with partners:

- ☐ Create the backbone organization or incorporate backbone support within one of the partner organizations.
  - What specific resources are needed for a backbone (staff, office space, supplies)?
  - What are the costs associated with those resources, and who will provide them?
  - Is this funding model sustainable?
- ☐ Confirm that your strategy is scalable and sustainable by considering costs per student, sources for long-term funding, and the proportion of students served versus those in need.
- ☐ Develop a continuous communications plan to strategically share updates between collective impact partners, maintain ongoing leadership discussions on efforts to work toward a common agenda, and broadcast updates with key stakeholder audiences, both internally and externally.
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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## STRATEGY: MONITOR, ASSESS, AND REVISE

- ☐ Work with collective impact partners to determine how often partners will receive progress reports on milestones and outcome data about the initiative and its goals.
- ☐ Determine how you will present outcome data to internal staff and provide the time and space for staff to discuss implications.
- ☐ Based on your team’s data analysis, develop plans to revise activities, implement changes, and reallocate resources as necessary.
- ☐ Meet with collective impact partners to discuss the outcomes data for all mutually reinforcing activities organizations are implementing in pursuit of the common agenda. Ensure frequent and regular meetings among all collective impact partnership leaders.
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_