WHEN COLLECTIVE IMPACT HAS AN IMPACT

A CROSS-SITE STUDY OF 25 COLLECTIVE IMPACT INITIATIVES

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ORS Impact helps foundation, nonprofits, and government agencies clarify, measure, and align around their social impact outcomes, stay accountable to success, and learn along the way. By making social change measurable, we help clients make meaningful social change possible. For more information, visit orsimpact.com.

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SESSION GOALS

- Learn more about which aspects of the collective impact model are important for success
- Unpack how equity looks across a variety of collective impact initiatives
- Learn from peers about successes and challenges in implementing collective impact and equity
- Generate questions and new ideas

SESSION FORMAT

- Brief introduction to the study
- Brief presentation of results: impact & CI implementation
- Discussion: CI implementation
- Brief presentation: equity
- Discussion: equity
- Implications and final questions/discussion

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

COLLECTIVE IMPACT CONDITIONS

- **Common agenda:** coming together to collectively define the problem and create a shared vision to solve it.
- **Mutually reinforcing activities:** coordinating collective efforts to maximize the end result.
- **Continuous communication:** building trust and relationships among all participants
- **Shared measurement:** agreeing to track progress in the same way, which allows for continuous improvement.
- **Backbone:** having a team dedicated to orchestrating the work of the group

Reference: http://collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact

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STUDY PURPOSE & FOCUS

- Five primary questions around when and how collective impact approaches lead to systems and population change.

- Secondary questions: how collective impact was being deployed (conditions and principles) and the contexts, challenges, and barriers experienced by collective impact initiatives.

STUDY SAMPLE

STUDY SITES

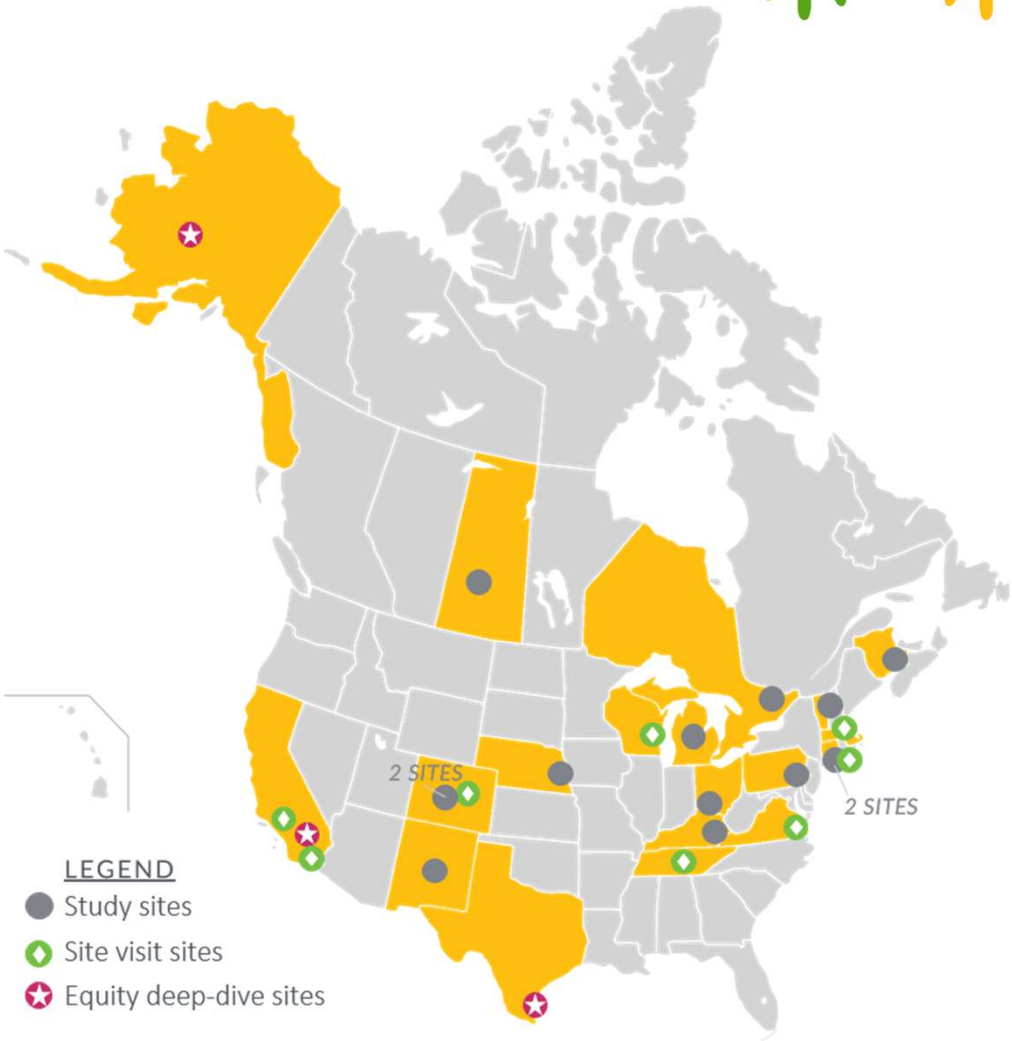
Colorado (2)
Connecticut (2)
Kentucky (1)
Michigan (1)
Nebraska (1)
New Brunswick, Canada (1)
New Mexico (1)
Ohio (1)
Ontario, Canada (1)
Pennsylvania (1)
Saskatchewan, Canada (1)
Vermont (1)

SITE VISIT SITES

California (2)
Colorado (1)
Connecticut (1)
Massachusetts (1)
Tennessee (1)
Virginia (1)
Wisconsin (1)

EQUITY DEEP-DIVE SITES

Alaska (1)
California (1)
Texas (1)



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STUDY METHODS

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

- Two in-depth interviews and document review *(25 sites)*
- Site visits that included three different stakeholder dialogues *(8 sites)*
- Focus group around equity practices and outcomes *(3 sites)*

ANALYTICAL METHODS

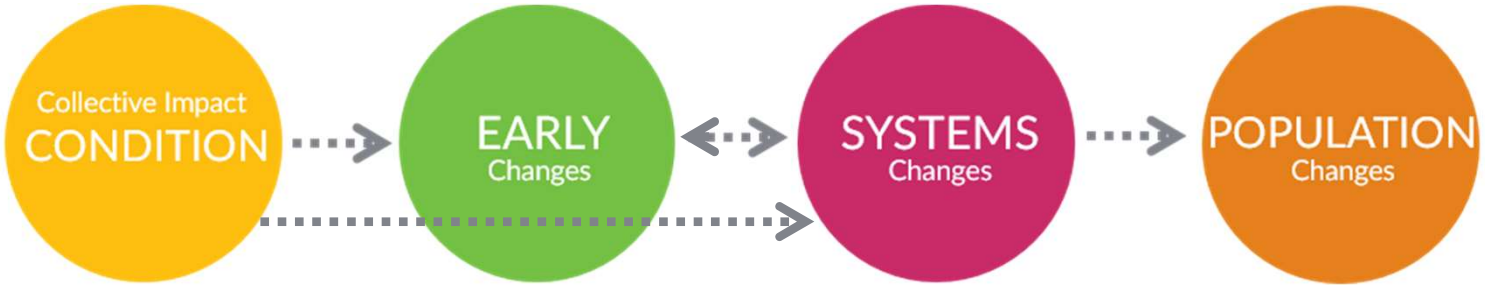
- Rubrics to assess collective impact implementation, equity actions and outcomes, systems changes, and population changes
- Process tracing to understand the extent to which collective impact contributed to change
- Thematic analysis

OVERSIGHT

- Advisory Committee informing sample, study design, presentation of findings
- Steering Committee informing detailed design decisions along the way

EXPLORING THE **STUDY FINDINGS**

TYPES OF CHANGES EXPLORED & IDENTIFIED



UNDERSTANDING CONTRIBUTION & OUTCOMES OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Population change occurred in 20 sites in a variety of focus areas

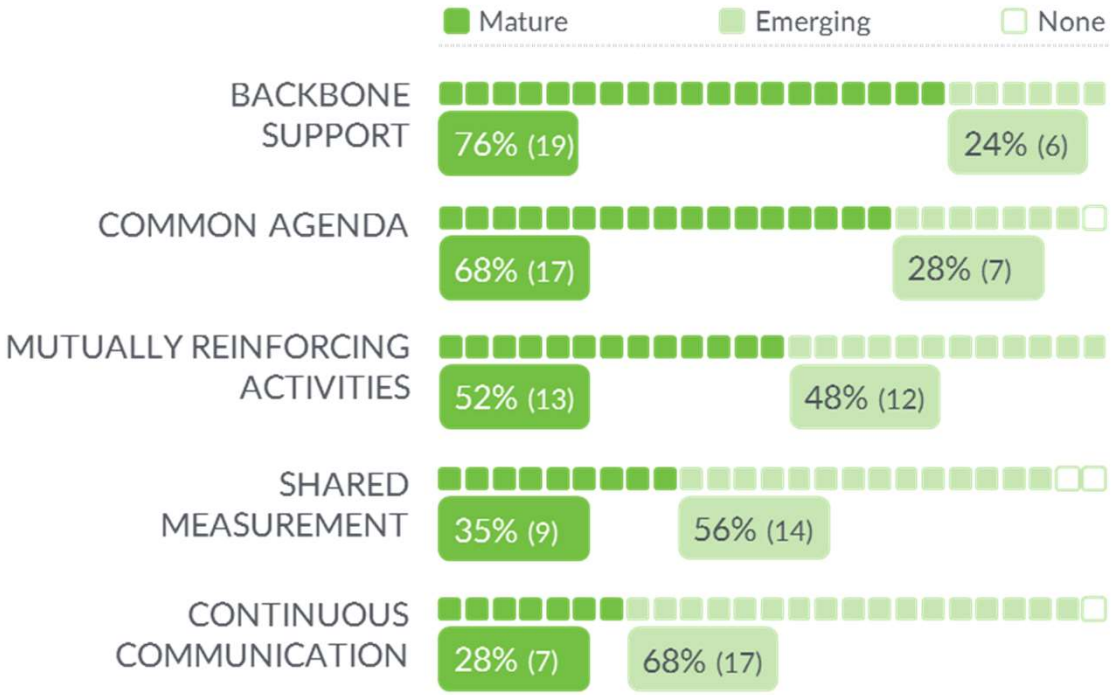
Issue Area	Example Changes
Education	High school graduation rates, college and career readiness, and enrollment in higher education
Health	Deaths from prescription opioids, childhood overweight and obesity, teen birth rates, and substance use and physical activity among young people
Homelessness	Declines in homelessness, including chronic homelessness and veteran homelessness
Economic	Local food purchasing, workforce readiness, number of jobs
Environmental	Greenspace acres, wetlands protected
Food	Food waste and access to local foods
Justice	Young people coming into contact with the justice system

UNDERSTANDING CONTRIBUTION & OUTCOMES OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

- For all eight site visit sites, collective impact undoubtedly contributed to the desired population change
  - Three sites: low plausibility of an alternative explanation
  - Five sites: collective impact was necessary, but not sufficient

THE DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Study sites generally evidenced stronger implementation of the Backbone support and Common Agenda conditions and emerging or no implementation of the Shared Measurement and Continuous Communication conditions.



THE DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Backbone: strong driver of systems and population change

- Important to start by defining the "what" (core functions)
- Then define the "who" and set up an effective leadership structure

What makes a strong backbone?

- One or more orgs with committed staff designated to perform backbone functions
- Well-functioning leadership structure established, responsible for governance & decision-making
- Backbone infrastructure coordinates & supports core initiative activities
- Backbone staff have appropriate skills & credibility to perform backbone functions

THE DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Common Agenda: strong driver of systems and population change

- Balance creating a common agenda and doing the work
- Not a "one-time" event
- Whose agenda?

What makes a strong common agenda?

- Identifiable overarching goals & vision for initiative within clearly defined, bounded/actionable problem space
- Partners have common understanding of problem
- Partners have clearly articulated approach/set of high-level strategies to solve problem
- Partners have high level of buy-in to shared vision for change, agreed-upon goals & approaches

THE DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

- Where the “rubber hits the road” on advancing the common agenda
- Sites with stronger implementation had stronger examples of leadership & cross-sector engagement

THE DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Shared Measurement

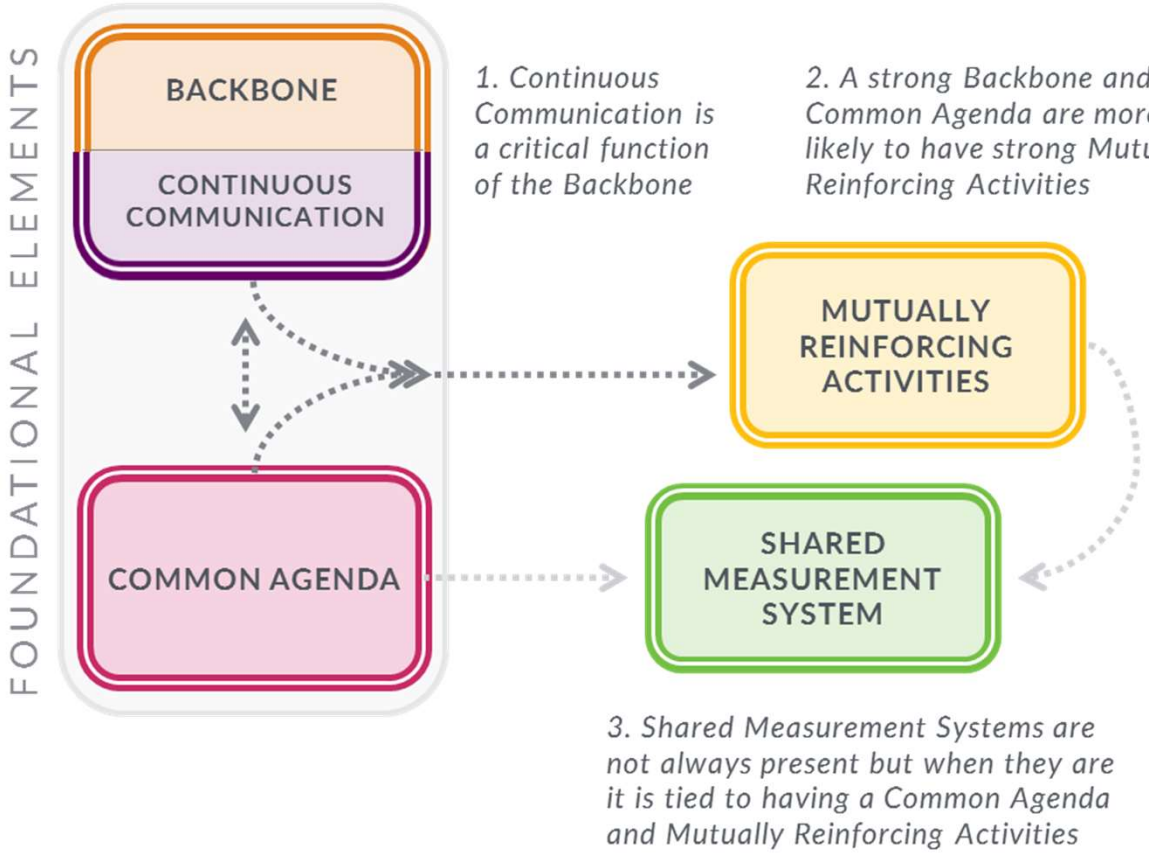
- Sites were challenged by data availability, types of indicators examined, and culture of data use
- When present, important resource for facilitating and measuring change
- Intersection with issues of equity

THE DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Continuous Communication

- Internal and external engagement and feedback
- Challenges center around finding effective opportunities for bi-directional communication

THE DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT



1. Continuous Communication is a critical function of the Backbone

2. A strong Backbone and Common Agenda are more likely to have strong Mutually Reinforcing Activities

3. Shared Measurement Systems are not always present but when they are it is tied to having a Common Agenda and Mutually Reinforcing Activities

TABLE DISCUSSION

- Reflect on:
  - How do these findings resonate with your own work?
  - What implications do these finding have for your work? The field?
- Note major take-aways

EQUITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Definition of Equity in this Study

> *Equity is fairness achieved through* ***systematically*** *assessing* ***disparities in opportunities and outcomes*** *caused by structures and systems and by addressing these disparities through* ***meaningful inclusion*** *and representation of affected communities and individuals, targeted actions, and* ***changes in institutional structures and systems*** *to remove barriers and increase pathways to success.*

EQUITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Ways in which equity was conceptualized: Equity Implementation

Domain	Indicators
Equity Implementation	
Capacity to engage in equity action	• Backbone has necessary skills and attitudes to engage communities, develop leaders, and shift power • Initiative partners demonstrate readiness to engage in equity work through openness to dialogue and willingness to examine systemic inequity • Initiative leaders and backbone have credibility with and are trusted by local communities
Equity-focused actions	• The initiative uses locally relevant and disaggregated data to identify priorities and areas for intervention • The initiative prioritizes strategies focused on addressing the disparities experienced by a focus population • Initiative solutions are shaped by community members and build on community assets and resources • Initiative partners engage in an ongoing analysis of structural inequities that drive disparities to identify systemic or root causes of inequity when developing interventions, making key decisions, or setting policies
Representation and inclusion	• Most leaders, implementers, and influencers are representative of the communities intended to benefit from the initiative • Resources are consistently provided to support participation of community members across multiple aspects of the initiative (e.g., meetings at convenient times/locations, bilingual translation of meetings, transportation/ child care, compensation for time and expertise) • Initiative makes effort to engage non-joiners and traditionally disenfranchised groups

EQUITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

When looking at how initiatives approach equity in their work, about a third had equity capacity/intent and focused actions, but many struggled with meaningful inclusion.

Capacity to engage in equity action	• 1/3 of sites have strong equity capacity • 1/3 of sites have emerging equity capacity
Equity-focused actions	• Often seen in a mix of data and communications strategies • Few sites focused on root causes of inequities
Representation and meaningful inclusion	• Two sites with strong grassroots organizing approaches • Most sites struggled with this

EQUITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Ways in which equity was conceptualized: Equity Outcomes

Domain	Indicators
Equity Outcomes	
Equity systems change	• Changes that remove structural barriers, increase access, or create new pathways through practices and policies designed to remove systemic factors causing inequality
Equity population change	• Changes in the target population of the initiative that close gaps in outcomes

EQUITY IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Initiatives with strong and emerging equity focus showed promise in their equity outcomes; those with no focus typically did not see results that advanced equity, with a few exceptions.

7 Sites: Stronger equity intent/action leading to systems changes and then to population change

10 sites: Emerging equity intent/action that has yet to lead to deep equity impact change

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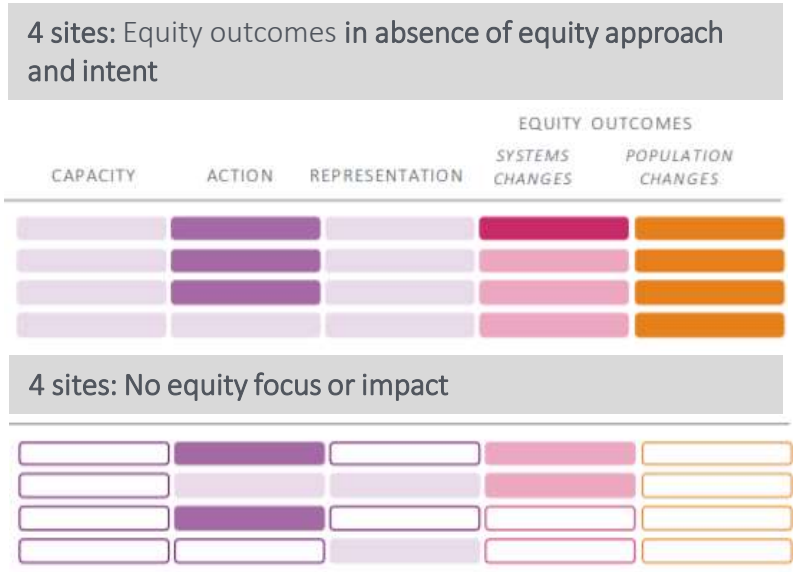

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IMPLICATIONS

1. Collective impact is a long-term proposition; take the time to lay a strong foundation

2. Consider what elements are needed to advance change; stay focused on what you are trying to achieve

3. Equity goes beyond achieving a set of outcomes; it requires intent, shifting power, and meaningful inclusion along with targeted problem definition and action.

4. Collective impact initiatives take on different roles in driving change; be open to different routes to making a difference

LEARN MORE!

Check out the full report:
http://sparkpolicy.com/collective-impact-impact-cross-site-study-25-collective-impact-initiatives/

and SSIR article:
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/does_collective_impact_really_make_an_impact

Additional product coming soon!

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