

A Guide on How to Use Collective Impact Approaches to Strengthen Access to Justice

INTRODUCTION

The Collective Impact (“CI”) Approach is a strategy created by the Foundations Strategy Group (“FSG”) which allows organizations to work together to address complex social challenges.

The 5 Conditions/Pillars of a CI Approach are:

- ❶ **Common Agenda** ~ agreeing to a common goal
- ❷ **Shared Measurement** ~ agreeing to shared ways of tracking progress
- ❸ **Mutually Reinforcing Activities** ~ focusing on strengths while collaborating together
- ❹ **Continuous Communication** ~ having consistent communication
- ❺ **Backbone Support** ~ having dedicated personnel in supporting ongoing efforts

SUCCESSFUL CI EXAMPLES

- **BC’s A2J Network** has adapted this CI approach, working to transform the family justice system, and the network has evolved to call itself a “Collective Impact Network”.
[<https://tinyurl.com/mu5yj3pj>]
- **Greg’s Wings Project** has adapted this CI approach to challenge the health care system, and the Co-Pilot Collective has been created as a result.
[<https://tinyurl.com/3htzrf2r> & <https://tinyurl.com/4jucbc6w>]

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Guide is to provide a structured framework incorporating the 5 pillars of the CI approach. The pages to follow offer guiding prompts and reflective questions designed to support collaboration, alignment, and coordinated action toward achieving a shared goal. Advancing continuous improvements in the family justice system through a CI framework is used as an example throughout the Guide, building on a Fall 2025 workshop of CREATE Justice - but the Guide can be used for any shared problem-solving.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Consider agreeing to at least 3 of the following 5 questions before continuing with the CI framework (adapted from the Tamarack Institute: Tool - Assessing Readiness):

1. Do we aim to affect a “needle moving” change (i.e. 10% or more) on a community-wide metric?
2. Do we believe a long-term (3-5+ year) investment is needed by diverse stakeholders to achieve success?
3. Do we believe cross-sector engagement is essential for community-wide change?
4. Are we committed to using measurable data to set the agenda and improve over time?
5. Are we committed to having community members as leaders, partners and producers of impact?

After answering the questions above and before diving into the 5 pillars of CI framework, we must identify who the influential champions are, the urgency of the issue at hand and whether we have adequate resources to tackle this issue.

Checklist: Step by Step Guide



PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS

Considering the preliminary conditions above, if it is determined that the CI approach is appropriate, a group can then move on to the following 5 Pillars.

FIRST PILLAR: COMMON AGENDA

Begin by ensuring that all participants gathered around the table have a **shared vision** for change, including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed-upon actions.

SECOND PILLAR: SHARED MEASUREMENT

Next, identify a common set of metrics that allow participants to collect data and measure results consistently to aid with tracking progress for decision making.

THIRD PILLAR: MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

To continue, we must create plans of action, weaving existing programs together in a supportive system, while centring on the issue at hand to advance progress.

FOURTH PILLAR: CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

As collaboration continues, we must create formal and informal processes to keep stakeholders engaged and encourage open communication to discuss and address issues as they surface.

FIFTH PILLAR: BACKBONE SUPPORT

Lastly, six core roles should be considered for different individual(s) and/or organization(s) to facilitate the CI initiative.

STEP 1

Common Agenda

1.0 - GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE SYSTEM INITIATIVE

Transform the Family Justice System Strategy Map

OUTCOME	STRATEGY			CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
Advance HOPE (Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences)	Transform the Family Justice System by Focusing on Achieving Family Well-Being A Family Well-being Paradigm Shift Well on Brain Science - Increase justice sector education in brain science & understanding about the impact of trauma - Promote a holistic perspective to address all family needs – social, relational, parental, financial & legal - Increase public awareness of the impact of toxic stress and resilience on family well-being - Take an integrated intersectoral approach to policy & action Justice Policy & Programs to Reduce Toxic Stress, Strengthen Skills & Support Families - Align justice sector policies & programs with the family well-being goal - Increase the use of non-adversarial processes in the family justice system - Develop more justice sector policies & programs to link families to supports they need to further family well-being - Integrate justice & community supports for families Innovations to Achieve Family Well-being - Innovate ways to encourage or require non-adversarial processes in the family justice system - Innovate ways to identify evolving family needs & make appropriate referrals - Innovate ways that empower families to improve conflict skills & reduce harms - Innovate ways to increase meaningful participation of children and youth in decision-making that affects them - Innovate & coordinate accessible cross-sector supports for families - Innovate justice system integration with community-level services for families			

Increased Intergenerational Health, Well-being and Resilience for Families	Reduce Toxic Stress	Strengthen Core Life Skills, including Capacity to Manage Conflict & Stress	Strengthen the Support for Families Experiencing Family Justice Issues	Maximize Holistic Approaches to Family Wellbeing	Reduce Personal, Justice Sector, Economic & Social Costs
Principles: Equitable · Child-Centered · Holistic · Strengths-Based · Emphasizing Relationship & Belonging · Supportive of Agency · Preventative · Trauma-Informed					
Expand participation & increase the collaboration capacity of those working on system transformation **Increase the integration of Indigenous perspectives & the role of Indigenous communities in system transformation** **Increase capacity for working at a systems level & creating the conditions for transformation** **Increase & diversify resources (human, funding & technology) for system transformation** **Increase capacity for developmental & transformational evaluation to inform system transformation**					

April 2023 | 2024 | with former content as 2024

☐ 1.1 - COMMON PROBLEM (UNDERSTANDING):

☐ **1.2.1 - GOALS AND SUBGOALS:**

The diagram illustrates a cyclical process with four stages, each represented by a quadrant of a circle, all leading to a central point labeled **GROWTH**.

- EXPLORATION** (Top Left):
 - Activities: Changing system culture, Changing cultures, Supported by technology.
 - Cluster of dots: Multi-Disciplinarity (red, yellow, green, blue).
- MATURITY** (Top Right):
 - Activities: Support including mentoring & training.
 - Cluster of dots: Navigating supports (blue, green, red, yellow).
- RELEASE** (Bottom Right):
 - Activities: Coming to decisions together, No judges, Decerning course.
 - Cluster of dots: Brain science education (red, green, blue, yellow).
- DEVELOPMENT** (Bottom Left):
 - Activities: Importance of role, Child-friendly child care, Accessibility (parent), Building community.
 - Cluster of dots: Hub in community (red, green, blue, yellow).

Arrows connect the stages in a clockwise cycle, and a central arrow points from the center of the cycle to the word **GROWTH**.

First Pillar: Common Agenda



☐ 1.2.2 - GOALS AND SUBGOALS (DESIRED OUTCOME):

Determine the desired outcome, results and outputs of the established goals and subgoals.

☐ 1.2.3 - GOALS AND SUBGOALS (BOUNDARIES):

Set boundaries around the established goals and subgoals. Consider geographic scope of work, population & demographic focus etc.

☐ 1.2.4 - GOALS AND SUBGOALS (POTENTIAL STRATEGIES):

Identify who is currently doing what, and how it relates to the established goals and subgoals, then determine additional actions that need to be taken to reach the established goals and subgoals.

☐ 1.3 - FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE:

Create a structure of how work is to be distributed. Note that working groups may need to be created and certain duties may need to be supported by backbone roles.

☐ 1.4 - PLAN FOR LEARNING:

Create a plan for learning. Consider what are we learning as a group? What is important to pay attention to right now? What trends are we seeing? How do we incorporate our learning into our current work?

☐ 1.5 - OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Determine other considerations needed to complete this pillar. [E.g. what are some challenges that might hinder your organization's ability to achieve the goals and sub goals established above?](#)

Second Pillar: Shared Measurement



The following questions will help clarify the focus of CI effort by identifying a common set of metrics in tracking progress to assist with decision making.

☐ **2.0 - EVALUATION:**

Set criteria for an evaluation and learning process. Consider what is already being measured and leverage it. How does your organization currently keep track of data?

☐ **2.1 - CREATING A SHARED MEASUREMENT SYSTEM:**

Identify relevant metrics/indicators needed to track progress of the established goals and subgoals; no more than 10 indicators to start with, to keep it manageable. Metrics must be available consistently over time. Consider whether the metrics will accurately measure the ultimate goal/subgoals and drive the needle moving change.

☐ **2.2 - DEVELOP WORKING GROUPS**

Allocate tasks of a shared measurement system based on the groups created above, under Pillar 1.3 - Framework for Change.

☐ **2.3 - OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

Determine other considerations needed to complete this pillar.

Third Pillar: Mutually Reinforcing Activities



The following questions will help align existing efforts and resources to achieve the common agenda.

☐ **3.0 - AGREEMENT ON KEY OUTCOMES:**

Reflecting on the desired outcomes created above, under Pillar 1.2.2, unanimously agree on the key outcomes to focus on.

☐ **3.1 - FOCUSING ON ORCHESTRATION AND SPECIALIZATION:**

Identify who is doing what in the community? Who can do what together? How do these activities fit within a larger strategy? Note that if the organizations' programs and services are used to working independently, reinforcing activities require them to come together in understanding who is delivering what to achieve the desired outcome.

☐ **3.2.1 - ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

What additional resources or supports are required for organizations to successfully achieve the desired goals/subgoals?

☐ **3.2.2 - ALIGNMENT OF EXISTING PROGRAMS:**

What existing programs delivered by different stakeholders can be better linked or aligned? Consider any gaps in current programs and the service delivery continuum that could be altered to achieve the desired outcome.

☐ **3.2.3 - REFINEMENT IN EXISTING PROGRAMS:**

What refinements in the design of existing programs and services could better support the achievement of our desired outcome?

☐ **3.3 - OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

Determine other considerations needed to complete this pillar.

Fourth Pillar: Continuous Communication



The following questions will help identify expectations and set standards to promote trust, transparency and engagement to achieve continuous communication.

☐ **4.0 - FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS:**

Determine how early and often groups need to meet to report, discuss and communicate on progress? Consider frequency based on the timeline of progress and different working groups. *E.g. meet weekly at the outset to build momentum, then transition to monthly or quarterly check-ins.*

☐ **4.1.1 - MEETING CONSIDERATIONS (WHO):**

As progress continues, determine who needs to receive what information? Consider the information being presented during meetings and identify the individuals that need to receive the information.

☐ **4.1.2 - MEETING CONSIDERATIONS (HOW):**

How should the information be packaged? Consider the limitations and capacity of each of the individuals, and identify efficient ways to present information. *E.g. using a one page report.*

☐ **4.1.3 - MEETING CONSIDERATIONS (WHY):**

Determine what the stakeholder should do with the information being presented? Consider the purpose of the information, and what decisions need to be made in light of it.

☐ **4.2 - ADDRESSING DIFFICULT ISSUES:**

What can we do to ensure difficult issues are being addressed without compromising the trust between each stakeholder? Consider ways to provide understanding if deadlines are not being met.

☐ **4.3 - OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

Determine other considerations needed to complete this pillar.

Fifth Pillar: Backbone Support



The following exercises are designed to help identify who and what the role of backbone support will be.

☐ 5.0 - ROLE IDENTIFICATION:

Looking at the chart below, consider the number of individual(s) or organization(s) needed and who would be suitable to take on each role (adapted from FSG: Backbone Starter Guide). *E.g. SK Health Authority's systems change department utilizes 13 staff members for backbone support.*

Data Manager Facilitator Executive Director	
Roles	Tasks
Guide Vision and Strategy	· Build a common understanding of the problem · Serve as a thought leader/ standard bearer for the initiative · Ensure common agenda is updated as needed as strategy unfolds
Advance Policy	· Advocate for an aligned policy agenda · Stay on top of policy developments that impact the effort
Mobilize Resources	· Mobilize and align public and private resources to support initiative's goals (and the backbone itself)
Build Community Engagement	· Create a sense of urgency and articulate a call to action · Support community member engagement activities · Produce and manage communications (e.g., news releases, reports)
Support Aligned Activities	· Coordinate and facilitate partners' continuous communication and collaboration (e.g., run taskforce meetings) · Recruit and convene partners and key external stakeholders · Seek out opportunities for alignment with other efforts · Ensure taskforces are being data driven
Establish Shared Measurement Practices	· Collect, analyze, interpret, and report data · Catalyze or develop shared measurement systems · Provide technical assistance for building partners data capacity

☐ 5.1 - OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Determine other considerations needed to complete this pillar.

Terminology

Adequate Resources: Adequate financial resources to last at least two to three years and generally involving at least one anchor funder to support needed infrastructure and planning.

Collective Impact: Disciplined, cross-sector approach to solving complex social and environmental issues at scale.

Evaluation: Refers to a range of activities that involve the planned, purposeful, and systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of a CI initiative.

Influential Champions: An individual or small group who command the respect necessary to bring CEO level cross-sector leaders together and keep them actively engaged over time.

Needle Moving Change: Making a change in the community of +/- 10% or more.

Urgency of the Issue: A new opportunity or crisis that convinces people that a particular issue must be acted upon now and/or that a new approach is needed.

Shared Measurement Systems (SMS): Use a common set of indicators to monitor an initiative's performance and track its progress towards goals.

Theory of Change: A comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context.

Strategy Map: A condensed graphic that shows a logical, cause-and-effect connection between strategic objectives.

Systems Change: Shifting component parts of a system, and the pattern of interactions between these parts, to ultimately form a new system that behaves in a qualitatively different way.

System Transformation: Having multiple theories of change, which are all needed to get to a specific outcome.

Definitions of terms informed by the Tamarack Institute, the Balanced Scorecard Institute and the World Resources Institute.