

Mobilizing Communities

IMPROVING NORTHWEST EDUCATION
THROUGH COLLECTIVE IMPACT



Photos courtesy of Road Map Project

Over the past decade, Northwest communities from Anchorage, Alaska, to Central Oregon, and from Seattle, Washington, to Idaho’s Treasure Valley have embarked on an exciting new journey to revitalize their economic and civic fortunes by improving the educational outcomes and long-term success of students and families. These communities are embracing an approach known as collective impact, an innovative way to comprehensively address complex challenges in public health, economic development, environmental issues, and education. Through collective impact, communities are prioritizing resources, engaging new stakeholders, and developing collaborative solutions to educational and social concerns.

Collective impact holds tremendous potential for advancing educational and community outcomes. As collective impact efforts gain traction across the region, Education Northwest is capturing lessons learned and identifying ongoing areas of need, so that we and other partners can best support these initiatives and their work with students, families, and communities.

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Defining Collective Impact

Collective impact gained recognition as an approach to solving complex social issues in the late 1990s with a number of efforts to address environmental and public health challenges across America. These challenges demanded the involvement of multiple stakeholders—government, businesses, community-based organizations, researchers—in building effective, long-term solutions.*

Groups such as the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati started applying a collective impact approach to improve educational and career outcomes. Since then, Strive Together has expanded its Cradle to Career Network to include more than 90 communities in the U.S. and abroad, including several in the Pacific Northwest. Other frameworks for implementing collective impact, such as the investment model promoted by Say Yes to Education, have also flourished in recent years.

So, what defines collective impact? What differentiates it from other forms of collaboration? Collective impact efforts stand out because they require high levels of coordination across partners and a strong emphasis on data-driven decisionmaking. The collective impact framework calls for constant communication and coordination as partners move from isolated actions to aligning their services and resources toward a shared goal. These efforts also rely on shared responsibility for tracking outcomes and reaching benchmarks. Leading collective impact consultants at FSG have identified five critical conditions that must be met if a collective impact effort is to be successful: 1) a common agenda, 2) shared measurement, 3) mutually reinforcing activities, 4) continuous communication, and 5) a backbone organization (see sidebar on page 3 for details).

Initiatives across the Northwest have adopted this collective impact framework, but beyond these common elements there is tremendous diversity in how their efforts have progressed and how they are meeting the unique challenges of their communities. Many are in the early stages, working to rally their communities or publish baseline data on their chosen metrics. Others are wrestling with the transition from planning and strategizing to implementation. Each of these groups has a story to tell.

Education Northwest reached out to eight collective impact efforts across the region to learn about this emerging field from the people closest to the work. Leaders spoke with us about their progress to date, the challenges they face,

**For more background, see the article “Collective Impact” by John Kania and Mark Kramer in the Winter 2011 issue of the Stanford Social Innovation Review, which offers several examples of this early collective impact work.*

and what most excites them about the work as they move forward. We share their stories here to inspire other communities facing similar challenges. We also describe key themes and insights from these conversations and then provide a collective impact resource list and at-a-glance initiative profiles for additional context.

Note: Many other groups across the Northwest are also using the collective impact approach for improving student outcomes. Other examples include an Alaska Native-focused effort in Anchorage (ARISE, Anchorage Realizing Indigenous Student Excellence) and the Oregon Education Investment Board's 12 Regional Achievement Collaborative sites, including the All Hands Raised and Better Together initiatives featured here.

Our Interest in Collective Impact

Education Northwest is a regional organization working directly with school districts, educators, and community organizations on a variety of efforts to improve outcomes for students and families. We believe in the importance of long-term, community-led solutions, especially to improve educational equity and engage a full range of stakeholder voices. The collective impact initiatives emerging in our region are doing work that intersects with core strengths of Education Northwest: developing meaningful indicators and using data, fostering school-community engagement, supporting programs that strengthen schools and communities, and evaluating performance and outcomes. We welcome opportunities to support collaborative initiatives in our region and beyond, providing services, skills, and expertise to improve outcomes for all children and youth. For more information, contact Nancy Henry (Nancy.Henry@educationnorthwest.org)

Recognizing Emerging Themes and Best Practices

As a collective impact initiative moves from rallying partners to implementing coordinated strategies and realizing system-level changes, the needs and challenges of the project will necessarily shift. Some components, however, are as crucial for a maturing initiative as they are for a beginning one. In conversations with leaders of new and established collective impact projects, three key themes emerged as critical elements:

- 1) Authentic, cross-sector engagement
- 2) Using data to drive the work
- 3) Learning and improvement

Engagement across sectors—creating buy-in at the beginning and maintaining relationships as the initiative matures—is a continual priority. Measurement issues are also critical, including choosing the right indicators to track progress toward stated goals and identifying or developing indicators for constructs that may be challenging to measure. Last, though certainly not least, is the importance of continuing to ask questions, learning from both an initiative's own experiences and the experiences of similar efforts in other communities, and using these lessons to refine the project strategies and implement emergent solutions. We will explore each theme—engagement, data, and learning—in turn.

The Five Conditions for Collective Impact

1. **Common Agenda:** 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
2. **Shared Measurement:** Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensure efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable
3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action
4. **Continuous Communication:** Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, ensure mutual objectives, and appreciate common motivation
5. **Backbone Organization:** Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies

Source: FSG, <http://www.fsg.org/OurApproach/WhatsCollectiveImpact.aspx>

Engaging Diverse Partners

The core of collective impact is authentic engagement of a broad range of community partners and constituencies—from youth and family members to the teachers, out-of-school-time providers, and nonprofits who support them, to the institutional leaders who create education and youth policy and practice. Authentic engagement means that all partners are at the table for shaping the vision and setting the agenda as the initiative first gets off the ground. But, it also means making sure that all partners have a voice as implementation progresses and plans evolve.

Initial Engagement

Once a fledging collective impact group has identified its main goal—such as kindergarten readiness, dropout prevention, or improved college access—a crucial early hurdle is convening diverse, cross-sector partners and encouraging broad buy-in for the work. The collaborative structures of collective impact demand that stakeholders really understand, share, and invest in the core goals of the effort. It can be a challenge to convey what the work is and to get people on board. As one collective impact leader noted, “Communication at this stage is such a challenge ... we are all working on our ‘elevator speech’ that can effectively communicate exactly what we are trying to do.”

Strong leadership is essential to building this early engagement. Often this leadership is provided by, or facilitated through, a “backbone organization” that ensures the right stakeholders are involved and builds consensus. In some cases, a *new* entity or organization is created to fill this role. For example, the Community Center for Education Results (CCER) in Seattle, WA, was created in 2010 to be the backbone organization for the emerging Road Map Project. But, a new organization is not always needed—it is important not to overlook the capacity and strong relationships that may already exist in the community. An established organization may be uniquely positioned to take on this convening role by building on its deep relationships and experience to bring the right stakeholders to the table. In many communities, local United Way affiliates are drawing on their preexisting relationships and capacity to fill the backbone role or to lead key pieces of the work within collective impact projects. For instance, United Way of Pierce County (WA) coleads the early learning action team, along with the backbone Foundation for Tacoma Students, for Graduate Tacoma!

In addition to their ability to leverage local relationships, some United Way affiliate sites also have access to a peer network that provides additional support for leading the work in their communities. Leaders of the 90% by 2020 initiative

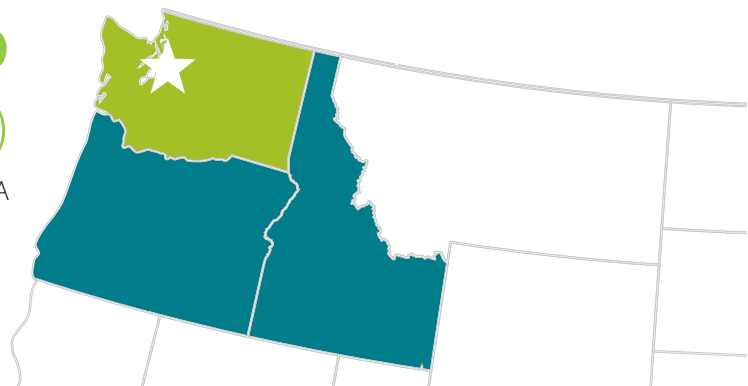
(United Way of Anchorage) and the Spokane County Cradle to Career Network (Spokane County United Way) participate in a national learning cohort of United Way backbone organizations. This group receives additional technical assistance from StriveTogether, financial support from Target, and peer coaching support from sites such as the United Way of Treasure Valley, which leads the Treasure Valley Education Partnership based in Boise, ID. Because of their local connections and access to national peer support, United Ways can be uniquely positioned to take the lead on this work in many communities.

The Next Phase

As a project transitions from early consensus building and planning to implementation, engagement strategies need to shift to focus on clarifying roles and maintaining relationships with partners with varying levels of involvement. Keeping a broad group of stakeholders engaged through the phases of the work

Road Map Project (RMP)

South King County and South Seattle, WA



Goal “The Road Map Project Goal is to double the number of students in South King County and South Seattle who are on track to graduate from college or earn a career credential by 2020. We are committed to nothing less than closing the unacceptable achievement gaps for low-income students and children of color, and increasing achievement for all students from cradle to college and career.”

Backbone organization Community Center for Education Results (CCER)

History Began in January 2010 with the founding of CCER; a year of convening stakeholders to form work groups and endorse the RMP goal culminated in a kickoff conference in December 2010.

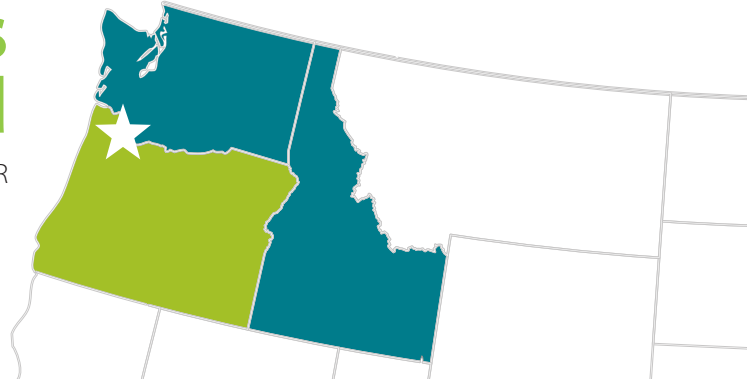
Key partners Seven school districts (Auburn, Federal Way, Highline, Kent, Renton, Tukwila, and the South Seattle schools from Seattle Public Schools), plus local colleges, mayors, private funders, CBOs, early learning providers, and noneducation government agencies.

Latest milestone Published its second annual Results Report in December 2013

More information <http://www.roadmapproject.org>

All Hands Raised

Portland, OR



Goal The All Hands Raised Partnership brings together local business, government, nonprofit organizations, the faith community, parents, students, and community stakeholders to ensure the sustained success of every child in Portland and Multnomah County from cradle to career. This broad goal is facilitated through four main collaboratives that focus on specific areas of impact: Communities Supporting Youth, Eliminating Disparities in Child & Youth Success, Ninth Grade Counts, and Ready for Kindergarten.

Backbone organization All Hands Raised

History Started in 2007 as part of the former Portland School Foundation's "Connected by 25" work, the effort evolved into the current collective impact model in 2010 through formal endorsement by community leadership.

Key partners Six Multnomah County (Portland-area) school districts, county and city governments, local youth-serving nonprofits and community based organizations, corporate partners and sponsors, the faith community, parents and families, and local research and educational support organizations (including Education Northwest).

Latest milestones

- Recently selected by the Governor to serve as a mentor Regional Achievement Collaborative for the pilot sites selected by the Oregon Education Investment Board
- Achieved an on-time graduation rate of 66.6 percent for the class of 2013 in Multnomah County school districts, meeting the interim goal set collectively by the six partner districts through the All Hands Raised Partnership

More information <http://allhandsraised.org>
See also *Chapter 01*, which highlights the dynamic work happening throughout the Partnership, sharing progress and early results.

is a challenge. As one interviewee explained, “First and foremost the work must benefit kids and families, but it also needs to benefit the partner organizations or they will stop participating.”

The leaders we spoke with all talked about the benefits and challenges of engaging various key players, both in initial planning and throughout their project’s evolution.

Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are key partners in education-focused collective impact initiatives—providing critical supports that scaffold a student’s experience. It can be challenging, however, to continually engage them as the work evolves. Once the project identifies specific goals and transitions to implementing targeted programming or strategies, conversations can shift away from the broader youth or community issues that initially brought everyone together. This evolution can make it difficult to maintain close relationships with partners who may feel excluded by an initiative’s narrowed focus, since not everyone at the table will have a direct role in implementing the chosen strategies.

CBOs involved in education efforts are a prime example of this challenge, especially if the project focuses closely on needs and services *within* schools and districts. It can be difficult for outside partners to find a role in school-based interventions and, thus, the project may risk isolating or losing these groups. For example, the Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative of the All Hands Raised Partnership (Portland, OR) identified improving school attendance as a focal point and is piloting a new intervention strategy within several local schools. This shift to a school-centered issue could have marginalized the involvement of CBOs, but the Collaborative is working hard to find ways for CBOs to contribute in meaningful ways to support school attendance. The Collaborative is examining the data they can use to identify students who are at risk for struggling with attendance, looking for ways that CBOs can provide the needed supports for these students, and exploring social-emotional indicators that demonstrate how students are progressing and supported by these CBO programs.

One common strategy for engaging CBOs is to be intentional about creating entry points for their involvement, even when the goals of an initiative focus on academic outcomes. For example, leadership from Graduate Tacoma! and the Road Map Project has used summer programming as a key way for CBOs to contribute to the effort. Leaders of these initiatives explain that summer programming is something that “the community can really own” and because “so much innovation is possible” for summer learning activities, there are more opportunities for CBO engagement. Regardless of the entry point, it is important that educational collective impact initiatives find ways for all members to contribute and feel part of the larger effort.

Funders/Philanthropy

Long-term funding—for backbone support, for coordination, and for direct service—is a primary concern for collective impact initiatives. To address this challenge, Graduate Tacoma! convened a series of “funder forums” to inform potential donors about the key strategies and leverage points identified by community partners and to encourage them to pool their resources to make these strategies possible. The series comprised an initial forum and three follow-up meetings, one for each of the project’s action areas. These meetings have been critical in creating aligned funding opportunities for the project’s implementation.

Collective impact efforts differ widely in who contributes funds, where and how these funds are allocated, and the extent to which partners’ activities would be sustainable without support. Organizations doing similar work already or including it as part of a larger portfolio of services may find it hard to explain why additional funds are necessary. For these organizations, there may be tension around how much of current spending is (or should be) invested in the collective impact efforts. Additionally, there may be concerns regarding whether local funds are being diverted from other good work that is not included in the collective impact action plan.

Collective impact initiatives may also face “initiative fatigue” among funders who have made prior investments in education reform. As one initiative leader noted, “When we first started, many of the funders we approached had just finished investing in a few previous [education reform] efforts that had not gone as hoped. We had to overcome that reluctance and their ‘burn out’ on funding yet another new idea related to education.” If their past investments in education have not achieved the desired results, funders may be particularly reluctant to invest in long-term initiatives such as collective impact efforts. Since it may take years for these projects to demonstrate system-level changes, it is important for collective impact groups to help funders understand the long-term nature of the work and to demonstrate short-term changes or quick wins along the way.

These funder engagement challenges can be particularly acute in rural settings, where there may be fewer local philanthropies and more limited resources. As a Better Together (Central Oregon) representative explained, “Many of the collective impact models come from urban situations where there are more corporate resources,” so it is important to think about how sustainability would look in a rural area. Better Together addressed initiative fatigue and resource limitations by taking time to build relationships instead of moving straight to action, building trust and support so that the initiative can quickly mobilize when the right opportunity arises.

Business Sector

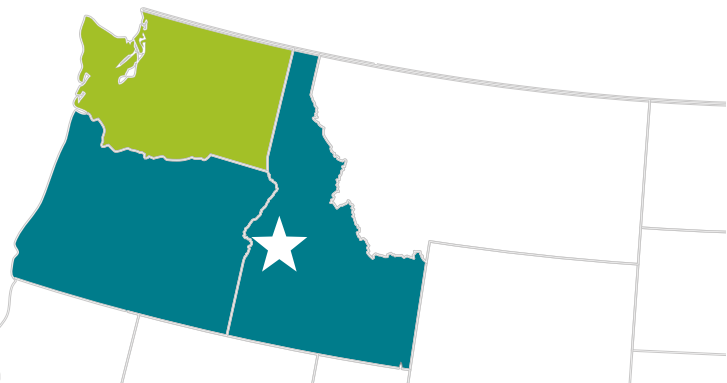
With the business sector especially, there may be unrealistic expectations about the pace of the work. Business representatives may become frustrated with the slow process of systems change. Leadership from Better Together stressed how important it is to distinguish between technical and adaptive change. Technical

change is discrete and mechanical, with program-specific strategies that are relatively easy to identify and have mechanisms and expected outcomes that are well understood. A Better Together team member notes, “People are used to dealing with technical problems they can check off,” rather than complex problems that require long-term commitments. Adaptive change, such as systems building, takes long-term dedication to finding new, creative solutions to complex problems that are not easily defined or understood. By making sure the business sector understands the challenges and pace of adaptive change, collective impact leaders can strengthen and maintain their relationships with business sector partners.

Also, business leaders may not see the value in the deliberative, collaborative process of collective impact; for example, they might offer to contribute funds, rather than the time to participate as a true thought partner. As one collective impact leader explained, “When we talk to [the business community], they first say ‘tell us what you need.’ I understand that response and their time

Treasure Valley Education Partnership (TVEP)

Boise, ID, and the surrounding area



Goal To coordinate the area’s resources and institutions to support youth along the education continuum and ensure at least 80 percent of Treasure Valley students go on to posthigh school education by 2016 and beyond.

Backbone organization United Way of Treasure Valley

History Started in 2010, the TVEP formally joined the Strive Network in 2011.

Key partners The nine Southern Idaho Conference school districts and Bishop Kelly High School, five local universities and colleges, the City of Boise, Treasure Valley YMCA, business leaders from Idaho Business for Education, nonprofits, and foundations.

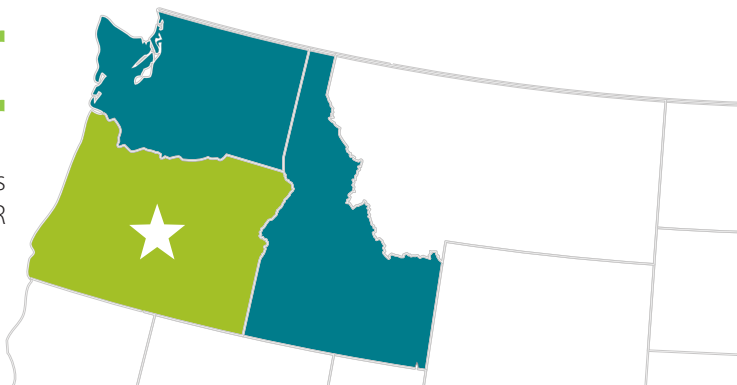
Latest milestones

- Published its Baseline Report Card in 2013
- Chosen to be a peer coaching site to advise the other United Way sites in the StriveTogether, United Way Worldwide, and Target pilot learning cohort

More information <http://www.idahotvep.org>

Better Together

Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties and the Warm Springs Reservation, OR



- Goal**
- The broad goal is to “create a culture of higher education and training in Central Oregon,” with targets that include:
 - More students graduating from high school
 - More students beginning and finishing a 2- or 4-year college degree, trade school, technical or vocational training, and beginning work in a career they find meaningful

Backbone organization High Desert Education Service District (ESD)

History The Oregon Community Foundation provided initial funding in 2012, with the ESD becoming one of the Oregon Education Investment Board Regional Achievement Collaboratives in 2013.

Key partners Six school districts in Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook counties, along with Oregon State University, Cascades and a broad cross-section of community organizations and businesses.

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- Latest milestones**
- Created four work groups focused on key points in the cradle-to-career pipeline:
 - Bridge Program, grades 8 and 9
 - Education and Training to Career, transitions to career
 - Supporting Families, family engagement and empowerment
 - Early Childhood Education, supporting families and youth from birth to eight
 - Selected as a pilot Regional Achievement Collaborative by the Oregon Education Investment Board

More information <http://www.hdesd.org>

See also the project brochure, which highlights the goals and strategies of the initiative.

limits. But, time is what we need for them to engage, understand issues, participate, be a voice at the table—not necessarily give what we need and then back out.” It is important for collective impact efforts to make clear that business leaders can also provide needed perspectives. Industry insight can be especially valuable, for instance, in discussions about the skills students must have to be career ready and for advice on related strategies or programs. In Anchorage, the 90% by 2020 initiative is convening a “business engagement committee” and trying to align its career readiness work with the education efforts of the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation’s Live Work Play initiative.

Youth and Families

Collective impact leaders across the region also stressed the importance, and often the difficulty, of authentically engaging the subjects of this work: youth and their families. An unfortunate reality of collective impact is that the emphasis on engaging community leaders can often make it easy to overlook less “powerful” voices in the conversation, especially those whom the project is designed to support.

Some initiatives, however, have made a concerted effort to change this. One example is provided by the All Hands Raised Partnership, which involves youth in efforts to reduce absenteeism by collaborating with the Multnomah Youth Commission’s Education/Youth Voice Committee. The partnership’s Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative is working with youth commissioners to hold focus groups in local schools. These meetings elicit students’ thoughts about what causes attendance problems and what they would like to see emerge from the Collaborative’s work. So far, this information has highlighted several challenges to student attendance that may have been missed by the adults driving the conversation and All Hands Raised partners are using this feedback to inform the strategies they will pursue.

The Road Map Project serves as a leading model in engaging parents and families. One highlight from 2013 was the widely publicized Parent Forum, which offered transportation, childcare, translators, and multicultural food to enable families to attend. Through workshops and discussion sessions, the forum created an entry point for families to engage with each other, with community organizations, and with school district leadership as key partners in fostering student success. The Road Map Project also developed parent engagement indicators in collaboration with research faculty from the University of Washington and fielded a pilot survey to begin gathering baseline data on these indicators. The Road Map Project’s next steps include hosting a series of events (including “results roundtable” discussions and a speaker series) to continue building relationships with parents across the South Seattle and South King County region.

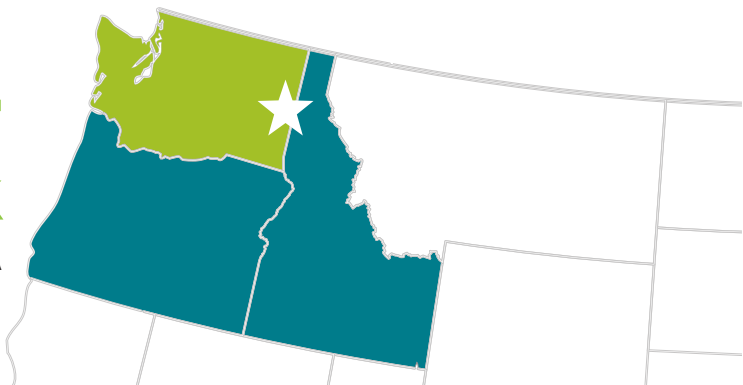
Other Key Stakeholders

Collective impact leaders also mentioned that other diverse stakeholders can be crucial partners for meeting the project goals, but these sectors can be difficult to engage. For example, one leader noted that the health sector could be a

strong partner because pediatricians and other providers play such an important role in supporting and providing information to parents and families. The health sector has been difficult to engage, however. Even though individual medical staff members may be eager to help, they have such limited time with families during office visits and so much information to cover that it is often not feasible to deliver education information, too. Other examples of groups that can be difficult to engage include law enforcement, juvenile and family courts, and higher education institutions. Collective impact leaders' ability to engage such groups will depend on the community's political environment and history of prior collaboration.

Spokane Cradle to Career Network

Spokane, WA



Goal Vision statement is “every child, cared for, confident and competent—from cradle to career.” Mission is “to eliminate the opportunity gap so that all young people develop to their potential, regardless of income level, race, ethnicity or special needs.”

Backbone organization Spokane County United Way

History The current efforts led by the United Way began in earnest in 2013 with the investment from StriveTogether and Target, with additional planning funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Key partners Spokane Public Schools, higher education (Gonzaga University and local community colleges), local government (including utilities and police), the Workforce Development Council, faith-based and community-based organizations, and the local medical system.

Latest milestone Chosen to participate in the United Way Worldwide pilot learning cohort for additional technical assistance supported by StriveTogether and Target

More information <http://www.unitedwayspokane.org/partnerships/fundingpartnerships.html>

Using Data To Drive the Work

Measurement issues also shift as projects evolve. Partners can establish big goals and decide to narrow in on particular points of the cradle to career spectrum, but how will they know whether they have reached the goal or are even moving in the right direction? A key first step is to determine how to measure progress. This means choosing meaningful constructs that characterize the areas where the group hopes to affect change and, then, identifying the right indicators to track progress in these areas accurately and regularly.

Measurement Considerations

Once indicators are set, it is important to collect baseline data as the reference point against which to measure changes and track progress. A major early milestone for many collective impact initiatives is the publication of a baseline report. In our conversations with collective impact leaders, Eastside Pathways (Bellevue, WA) and Graduate Tacoma! staff expressed tremendous excitement about publishing their baseline reports in December 2013 and January 2014, respectively.

As the work evolves, it is important to update the data at regular intervals to identify progress and areas where additional support or new tactics may be needed. The Road Map Project, for example, issues an annual Results Report to highlight progress and areas for improvement. This document builds on the project's 2011 Baseline Report by showing the current values of the project's key indicators and illustrating how these compare to the baseline data and targets.

Measurement Challenges

Measurement of academic outcomes is relatively straightforward: project goals often identify academic indicators directly (e.g., percentage of grade 3 students who are proficient in reading, high school graduation rates) and there are already systems in place to collect these data at regular intervals. Nonacademic indicators, on the other hand, often present a measurement challenge. The collective impact approach draws attention to other factors and services that influence school success and the important role of student supports from outside the K–12 system. Often, there is less clarity around how to measure and collect reliable outcome data on the social-emotional learning, career readiness, and other non-academic success factors that CBOs and other providers support.

One example, provided by 90% by 2020 staff, is developing an accurate measure of career readiness. Staff explained that the primary source of career readiness data in Anchorage is the WorkKeys assessment, which students are required to take in high school. However, since companies seldom use these data for hiring

purposes, students have little incentive to take the assessment seriously. The difficulty with WorkKeys is compounded by the fact that the assessment fails to measure the soft skills (e.g., work ethic, showing up to work on time) that 90% by 2020 leadership and its business partners would like to track.

The 90% by 2020 project is not alone in its challenge to include social-emotional indicators of student success; the larger collective impact field has also identified this as an important area for future work. In fact, the StriveTogether Network has spent considerable time and energy researching, identifying, and creating recommendations around valid measures of social-emotional progress. This work culminated in the recent publication of *Beyond Content: Incorporating Social and Emotional Learning Into the StriveTogether Framework*, a three-part resource that identifies core social-emotional competencies, maps them to the cradle to career framework, and recommends specific assessment instruments for collecting data in these areas.

Progress on Measurement

Despite these measurement challenges, some Northwest groups are making progress toward creating nonacademic metrics and collecting these data. The Road Map Project recently developed and piloted a customized survey designed to capture student engagement and motivation. The All Hands Raised Partnership's Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative is considering how to measure these data, as well. A work group of the collaborative is currently exploring how community-based programs can align practice and data collection in the area of socio-emotional development and school engagement. Education Northwest staff supports the work of the initiative by providing research-based information and assistance in developing theories of change for the overall collaborative and specific work groups.

“There is great potential for ambitious and well-meaning collective impact initiatives to fall short of their goals when initial funding dwindles and early excitement wanes in the face of the hard and complex work required. Efforts that focus from the outset on two key priorities may have a better shot at sustainability over the long term. These foundational activities are creating cross-government, cross-sector collaborative governance structures, and committing to achieve sustainable funding through combining and realigning existing resources.”

—Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey, President, Say Yes to Education, Inc.

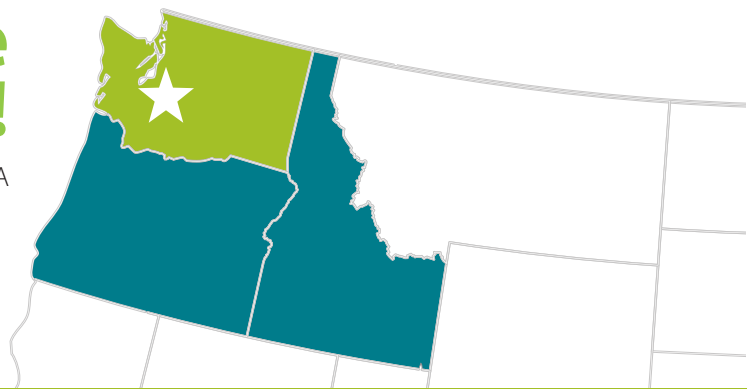
For more information on Say Yes to Education's community-integrated education reform initiatives in Syracuse and Buffalo, New York, visit www.sayyestoeducation.org

Learning and Sharing Leads to Improvement

A final key theme that emerged from conversations with collective impact leaders was about continuous learning: how groups learn from each other and the strategies they employ to keep working smarter as their initiatives mature. A continuous improvement mindset drives these groups to learn from their peers, reflect on their own experience, and refine their strategies as the work evolves. These steps are critical in facilitating the adaptive change mentioned previously.

Graduate Tacoma!

Tacoma, WA



Goal By the class of 2020, the group will increase by 50 percent both the graduation rate of Tacoma Public School students and those who complete a college degree or technical certificate.

Backbone organization Foundation for Tacoma Students

History The Foundation for Tacoma Students was formed in 2010 and the communitywide movement launched as Graduate Tacoma! with publication of the baseline report in January 2014.

Key partners Tacoma Public Schools, United Way of Pierce County (colead for early learning action team), Greater Tacoma Community Foundation (colead for expanded learning), Tacoma College Support Network, City of Tacoma, Tacoma Community College, University of Washington Tacoma, and many nonprofits from across the community.

Latest milestone Published their first annual Community Impact Report in January 2014

More information <http://www.graduatetacoma.org>

The Value of Peer Learning

An emphasis on learning begins with the relationships that have emerged among collective impact organizations in the Northwest. Several established initiatives are providing coaching and guidance to communities in initial planning stages. As noted earlier, staff from the Treasure Valley Education Partnership in Boise are providing peer learning opportunities and consultation to the 90% by 2020 initiative in Anchorage—a partnership made easier because United Way agencies serve as the backbone organization for both initiatives. And, as noted earlier, Strive and United Way have put together a seven-site

90% by 2020

Anchorage, AK



Goal As the name implies, the goal is to increase the high school graduation rate in Anchorage to 90 percent by the year 2020. Initial areas of focus include ready for kindergarten, grade 8 math proficiency, and high school graduation.

Backbone organization United Way of Anchorage

History Started in 2007 as “Anchorage United for Youth,” the effort evolved into the more rigorous collective impact model in 2013 when StriveTogether, Target, and United Way Worldwide became partners, and the local leadership team was reset and strengthened.

Key partners A broad coalition of business, civic, and education leaders, including the Anchorage School Board, the University of Alaska, and representatives of Alaska Native organizations.

Latest milestones

- Hosting several community conversations to engage stakeholders
- Posting strategies that businesses, faith organizations, and citizens can employ to support the cause

More information <http://www.90by2020.org>

learning cohort of United Way agencies doing collective impact work that includes both the Spokane Cradle to Career Network and 90% by 2020.

All Hands Raised has played a similar role with the development of Better Together, especially in the formative stages of the initiative. In addition to helping Better Together with early planning and design, All Hands Raised has also shared information about innovative programming, specifically around supporting youth during the transition to high school. “We’ve just started a new program focused on the transition to 9th grade, inspired by their Ninth Grade Counts Collaborative,” explains one leader of the Better Together work. “Ours is named the 8+9 Project and it aims to increase the number of 9th-graders who end the school year on track for graduation. Through a partnership with local schools, nonprofit organizations and community partners throughout Central Oregon, 8+9 will provide free engagement programs for students in the summers before and after 8th grade and systematically match them with an adult mentor at the beginning of 9th grade. The staff members at All Hands Raised have been key to our success in defining and planning for implementation of 8+9. They have graciously shared how and what works in their context, time and time again. In fact, Better Together, as a whole, owes an incredible amount to All Hands Raised for their willingness to mentor us in this work.”

Similarly, leaders from Graduate Tacoma! noted that they attend as many Road Map Project meetings as they can. “Those quarterly meetings present a wonderful overview of what’s going on with the Road Map work They are very informative and provide insights into where we could be going,” said one leader.

Relationships across these Northwest organizations have been facilitated by several convenings, coordinated by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which bring together the collective impact initiatives that the foundation is funding. These events have enabled participants to share best practices and new ideas across the region, especially on the data-driven aspects of this work.

In addition to the tightknit collective impact community taking shape in the Northwest, all these initiatives spoke about the support they receive from their peers nationally. For example, Strive Network meetings and other peer learning opportunities connect practitioners to a national network of similar cities tackling similar issues using familiar terminology and language. One initiative leader remarked, “Strive has been a really nice go-to place for me. I’ve shot off quick questions and they’ve responded. [They have been] very helpful when I’m trying to wrap my head around the process of this work.”

Another individual noted that her peers have been instrumental in providing technical implementation support: “We needed help and it was great to get help . . . about the logistics of data-sharing agreements.”

Through local, regional, and national peer learning opportunities, Northwest collective impact initiatives are accessing needed supports. Groups that are just forming can learn from their predecessors about how to get started, while those that are maturing can share ideas for innovative solutions to common challenges.

Reflecting on the Work To Clarify the Path Forward

Collective impact can move at a rapid pace, since stakeholders want action and leaders want to make sure early momentum doesn't dissipate during the transition to implementation. But, amid the urge to forge ahead, it can be challenging to find time to reflect on the process of collective impact, to determine how well the strategies have aligned with the partners' intentions, and to ascertain how participants feel about the direction of the work. As one leader noted, "We tend to be rushing all the time It can be hard to find the time to stop and reflect on what we need."

Education Northwest has seen first-hand the value of reflecting on collective impact work through our *formative evaluation* of the Road Map Project. We have collected and analyzed feedback from partners across the project to highlight the successes and needed areas for improvement or clarification as the initiative is implemented. Staff members from Education Northwest and the Community Center for Education Results (CCER), the initiative's backbone organization, have presented evaluation results to various project groups and work group leaders are starting to make changes based on this feedback. The High School to College Completion (HSCC) work group, for instance, is temporarily reorganizing into two committees: an advisory committee to monitor and support the overall HSCC action plan and a postsecondary success subcommittee to focus on developing postsecondary strategies. One CCER staff member noted the value of having this process-focused data available: "The project is going to continuously evolve at a really rapid pace, which is exciting. But, I think we have to be thinking about what our role is as a backbone organization and stay pretty clear on that. I'll be interested to see how your survey data moves over the next year Are we building the capacity of organizations in the region to do the work? How can we take this new information into consideration when thinking about that?"

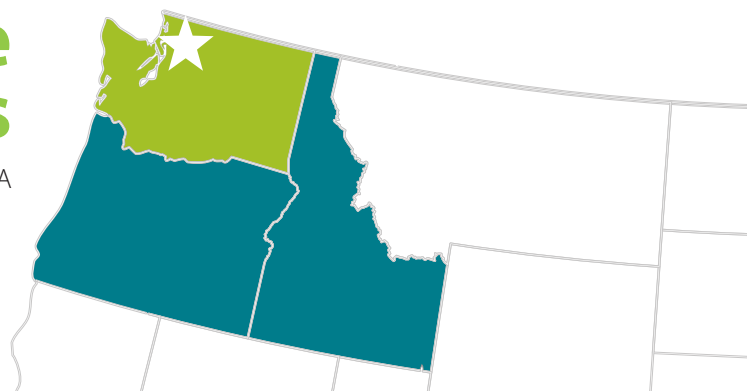
Other initiatives spoke about the need for *outcome evaluation* of the program models or interventions that are implemented under their collective impact umbrella. Because collective impact initiatives are inherently long term, it can be important to see some "quick wins" along the way. It is also important to demonstrate that these programs are actually making a difference for the student outcomes they were designed to address, or if the initiative needs to refine the program or identify a new approach. Leaders from All Hands Raised noted how important it was for the Ninth Grade Counts Collaborative to show results early on: "Evaluation done by Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) has been critical to this work and having the ability to show the real results for students validates our biggest achievements for the initiative to date." Staff at All Hands Raised indicates that participating students are meeting crucial "on track to graduate" thresholds, including students of color and English language learners, which supports the initiative's broader equity goals. This early evidence is also one of the reasons that Better Together was inspired to implement a program like Ninth Grade Counts in Central Oregon.

Evidence of impact, both for individual programs or interventions and for the broad work of these initiatives, remains a critical aspect. Most of the

collective impact initiatives in the Northwest are less than five years old, so strong evidence of impact may still be a long way off. But, as one leader from Better Together emphasized, outcome evaluations will be important as these initiatives evolve: “The initial effort goes into making the [strategic] plans, but long-term implementation can get disrupted by new leadership, new plans, new goals If that happens, you might never really find out if some of these initiatives are working or not.”

Eastside Pathways

Bellevue, WA



- Goal** The initiative works to eliminate the gaps in educational performance between low-income students and the rest of the student population. To accomplish this, the initiative works toward six goals:
1. Every child has a healthy start
 2. Parents and significant adults are supported in their efforts to help their child succeed
 3. Every child attains optimal physical and mental health and safety
 4. Every child develops social and emotional skills for life effectiveness
 5. Every child is prepared for academic and work success
 6. The community plays an active role in the success of Bellevue’s children

Backbone organization Eastside Pathways

History Core team of community leaders was founded in 2011.

Key partners The Bellevue School District, Bellevue Schools Foundation, and City of Bellevue, along with a host of local leaders and community organizations in various workgroups.

Latest milestone Published their first baseline scorecard showing current status of indicators and progress they hope to make

More information <http://eastsidepathways.org>

Determining What's Next

Collective impact is gaining ground across the region, through communities starting new projects with this framework and grantmakers emphasizing (or even requiring) collective impact approaches. As collective impact continues to gain momentum in our region, Education Northwest will continue to support these efforts through our expertise in facilitation, data use, evaluation, and professional development. We look forward to opportunities to collaborate with collective impact programs on data collection and use, the transition from initial indicator development to on-the-ground program implementation, and the hard realities of trying to fund this work and sustain momentum over what, in some communities, will be a full *generation* of participants and stakeholders.



Collective impact resources

Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2012. This article offers a deeper look at examples of collective impact in action and analysis of implementation steps. http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work

Collective Impact, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011. This piece by Kania and Kramer is the best starting point for developing an understanding of collective impact. http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

Collective Impact Case Study: The Road Map Project, FSG, 2013. This resource provides an overview of the Road Map work and stakeholders with an emphasis on lessons learned. <http://www.fsg.org/tabid/191/ArticleId/983/Default.aspx?srpush=true>

Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth, FSG, 2012. This publication examines why collective impact is a good fit to solving the issues of disconnected youth, while providing tips for launching new initiatives. <http://www.fsg.org/tabid/191/ArticleId/735/Default.aspx?srpush=true>

Community Collaboration on Education Reform, American Institutes for Research, 2014. This paper describes the design, challenges, and lessons learned from the implementation of the Say Yes Syracuse collective impact effort. <http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Community-Collaboration-on-Education-Reform-Say-Yes.pdf>

Rebuilding Communities: Education's Central Role in Mobilizing Community Reform, Say Yes to Education. This piece, by education journalist Gene Maeroff, highlights the development of the multiyear effort to revitalize Syracuse, NY, through a comprehensive education reform effort. http://sayyestoeducation.org/sites/default/files/mkt-materials/SYTE_RebuildingCommunities05.pdf

Striving for Student Success: A Model of Shared Accountability, *Education Sector*, 2011. An in-depth look at the relationship between education reform and the principles of collective impact, this resource focuses on the notion of shared accountability and mutually reinforced activities championed by the Strive model. <http://www.educationsector.org/publications/striving-student-success-model-shared-accountability>

Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2012. This four-part series has additional information about how backbone organizations support the work of collective impact initiatives. http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_1

General collaboration and community engagement resources

The Best of Two Worlds: Lessons from a Community College-Community Organization Collaboration to Increase Student Success, Youth Development Institute, Jobs for the Future, 2012. This brief details the ways youth development organizations, colleges, and others can collaborate to improve student success. http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/BestOfTwoWorlds_032112.pdf

An Invitation to the Big Picture: Implementing a Local Collaboration for Youth (LCY) in Your Community, National Collaboration for Youth, 2011. This guide offers practical advice and tips for engaging community members and organizations in collaborative efforts to support youth. <http://nationalassembly.org/uploads/documents/lcyguide.pdf>

Supporting the Education Pipeline: A Business Engagement Toolkit for Community-Based Organizations, Corporate Voice for Working Families, Ready by 21, United Way Worldwide, and Workforce Strategy Center, 2012. This toolkit provides strategies for engaging local business leaders in efforts to strengthen educational and youth development systems. <http://gradnation.org/sites/default/files/CVWF-%20Supporting%20the%20Ed%20Pipeline.pdf>

Websites and tools for collective impact practitioners

Beyond Content: Incorporating Social and Emotional Learning into the StriveTogether Framework, Strive, 2013. This three-part report identifies core social-emotional competencies, maps them to the Strive cradle-to-career framework, and recommends specific assessment instruments that can gather data in these areas. <http://www.strivetogether.org/resources/introduction-social-and-emotional-learning-competencies>

Communities Collaborating Institute Online. This online forum offers resources and podcasts, and the opportunity to connect with other collective impact practitioners. <http://tamarackcci.ca/learn>

FSG's Collective Impact Blog. This frequently updated blog focuses on many aspects of collective impact. <http://www.fsg.org/KnowledgeExchange/Blogs/CollectiveImpact.aspx>

StriveTogether Website. This site offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and implementing collective impact projects, as well as downloadable and interactive tools and a listing of Network members. <http://www.strivetogether.org>

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Education Northwest works to transform teaching and learning in the Pacific Northwest and across the nation. Our services to states, districts, schools, community-based organizations, and foundations include rigorous research and evaluation of new and existing programs; research-based technical assistance in areas such as equity, school improvement, and distance learning; widely acclaimed professional development in the fields of literacy and mathematics education; and strategic communications that maximize impact.