**Collective Impact**

In the face of limited resources and persistent, big social issues (hunger, poverty, violence, education, health, public safety, the environment) organizations from different sectors are adopting common agendas to combat issues within their communities.

**How It’s Developing**

Complex social issues – hunger, poverty, violence, education, health, public safety, the environment – involve many different factors and responses to these issues include many different community organizations. [[1](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)] Organizations working in isolation and/or individual projects have not significantly addressed or changed many of these issues. Collective impact was first introduced in a 2011 article in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, authored by John Kania and Mark Kramer. In the article, the authors defined collective impact as “the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.” [[2](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)] The authors propose that projects utilizing a collective impact model experience large-scale social change from better cross-sector coordination as opposed to traditional models that leveraged isolated intervention by individual organizations. [[3](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)]

The economic recession has limited government and some foundation funding, forcing government departments, nonprofits, and educational and community organizations to do more with less. [[4](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)] Even with limited resources, organizations are still determined to address the big problems faced by communities, including through collaborations that create more effective models for change and make the most of available resources. [[5](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)]

For individuals affected by these complex social issues, navigating a complex network of support agencies and special programs can add to the difficulties they may be experiencing. A collective impact approach might allow for greater coordination of services and programs with the affected individuals simplifying their access to services and improving opportunities for change. [[6](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)]

In order to bring organizations together, collective impact initiatives need an influential champion, adequate financial and personnel resources, and a sense of urgency for change within the community. [[7](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)] The collective impact model also identifies backbone organizations that guide vision and strategy, support aligned activities, establish shared evaluation practices, build public will, advance policy, and advocate funding. [[8](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)]

Collective impact distinguishes itself from traditional concepts of collaboration or partnership in that it encourages centralized infrastructure, often provided by the backbone organizations, with dedicated staff that drive the collaborative work. [[9](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)]

**Why It Matters**

Libraries and librarians are frequently considered key collaborators for projects that address big social issues – literacy, educational attainment, economic resurgence, health – and may increasingly be approached to participate in projects that utilize a collective impact model. Additionally, should the collective impact model prove popular with governments or funders, libraries and librarians may seek to reframe library issues and priorities to align with the big social issues with which society struggles.

Funders, frustrated by a lack of progress in traditional models of giving, may become interested in the collective impact model and may prioritize projects that address large social issues, that demonstrate commitment from multiple organizations, or that model collective impact strategies over projects proposed by individuals organizations or that address very specific and niche issues. [[10](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)]

Participation in collective impact projects may require more time and commitment, developing shared interests and strategies, managing across staffs and priorities, convincing stakeholders and boards, evaluating a diverse range of activities, resolving disputes, and sharing successes and failures. [[11](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/collectiveimpact#Notes and Resources)] The collaborative relationship will need to be managed in addition to the organization’s regular duties, mission, and priorities and within the organization's regular budget.

**Notes and Resources**

[1] “Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity.” John Kania and Mark Kramer. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. January 21, 2013. Available from[http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/embracing\_emergence\_how\_collective\_i...](http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/embracing_emergence_how_collective_impact_addresses_complexity)

[2] “Collective Impact.” John Kania & Mark Kramer. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Winter 2011. Available from:<http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact>

[3] “Collective Impact.” John Kania & Mark Kramer. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Winter 2011. Available from:<http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact>

[4] “Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work.” Fay Hanleybrown, John Kania, and Mark Kramer. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. January 26, 2012. Available from[http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/channeling\_change\_making\_collective\_...](http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work)

[5] “Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 1.” Shiloh Turner, Kathy Merchant, John Kania, and Ellen Martin. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. July 17, 2012. Available from[http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding\_the\_value\_of\_backbone\_...](http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_1)

[6] "Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth." Fay Hanleybrown, Kate Tallant, Adria Steinberg, Mimi Corcoran. *FSG*. 2012. Available from <http://www.fsg.org/tabid/191/ArticleId/735/Default.aspx?srpush=true>.

[7] “Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work.” Fay Hanleybrown, John Kania, and Mark Kramer. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. January 26, 2012. Available at[http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/channeling\_change\_making\_collective\_...](http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work)

[8] “Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 2.” Shiloh Turner, Kathy Merchant, John Kania, and Ellen Martin. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. July 18, 2012. Available from[http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding\_the\_value\_of\_backbone\_...](http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_2)

[9] “The Collective Impact Framework.” Collaboration for Impact. Available from<http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/>.

[10] “Collective Impact.” John Kania & Mark Kramer. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Winter 2011. Available from:<http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact>

[11] “Rethinking Collective Impact.” Emmett D. Carson. *The Huffington Post*. August 31, 2012. Available from[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/emmett-d-carson/rethinking-collective-imp\_...](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/emmett-d-carson/rethinking-collective-imp_b_1847839.html)