

Towards Collective Impact: An impact framework to improve culture and creative outcomes for and young people in London

“Collective impact leads to increased cross-sector alignment and learning, with the corporate and government sectors included as essential partners. Progress depends on building relationships and trust while working toward the same goal and measuring the same things.”¹

By Karen Birch

This paper learns from and adapts approaches from the [Collective Impact Forum and FSG](#). Adaptations have been made to reflect the national call to action – [The Cultural Education Challenge](#) – the London context and local cultural education partnerships who are setting up and implementing plans collectively, with a goal to build the foundations for collective impact and sustain action and impact.

Collective impact is an approach to solving societal problems based on the idea that no organization acting alone can solve complex issues.² A collective impact approach requires the commitment of a group of organisations – including local authorities, schools, cultural and creative industries, business, health and community services – to coordinate their efforts around a clearly defined goal. All collective impact initiatives share five key components: a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support.

Using the five key components, we have adapted the model to relate to improving arts, cultural and creative outcomes for children and young people through cross-sector working and collaboration, adding key actions to help accelerate progress. A collective impact approach needs commitment, time and resources. We recognise that for some partnerships, this may need to be developed, or alternative partnership models or programmatic solutions might be a better fit to achieve success. The following links provide tools to help partnerships to determine if collective impact is the right approach:

- [Collective Impact Readiness Assessment](#)
- [Collective Impact Feasibility Framework](#)

¹ Corcoran, M., Hanleybrown, F., Steinberg, A. and Tallant, K. (2012), “Collective Impact for Youth Opportunity”, FSG

² Kania, J. and Kramer, M. (2011), “Collective Impact”, Stanford Social Innovation Review.

Five Components of Collective Impact

1. **Common Agenda:** All partners have a shared vision for change, including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions
 - A vision and common goal for change
 - A data-informed definition of the problem
 - Principles that guide how partners work together
 - Objectives and strategies that are adopted by the partnership
2. **Shared Measurement:** Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all partners ensures efforts remain aligned, partners hold each other accountable, and strategies are stopped or changed if they are not working
 - A small set of measures or indicators that track progress toward the ultimate goal
 - Definitions of each measure or indicator shared by the partnership
3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Partner activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action
 - Strategies and activities that create systems change and contribute to outcomes
 - At least one quick win (within a year) and longer-term actions
 - Driven by content and context expertise
4. **Continuous Communication:** Consistent and open communication is needed across active partners, building relationships and trust, assuring mutual objectives and creating motivation
 - Strategies and activities to listen to stakeholders and keep them informed of activities, progress, impacts, contextual updates
 - Plan communications across the steering group, youth advisory board and working groups
 - Plan communications for stakeholders such as cultural networks, education networks, young people, families and investors
5. **Backbone Support:** Creating and managing collective impact requires a 'team dedicated to orchestrating the work'³; staff and skills to provide coordination and administration
 - Staff and skills to equip, enable and empower partners to engage
 - Capacity across 6 backbone support roles: guides strategy, supports aligned activities, manages shared measurement, builds community engagement, advances policy, mobilises resources⁴

³ <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact>

⁴ Backbone organisations need six core functions to support cross-sector collaboration. These are: Guiding vision and strategy, Supporting aligned activities, Establishing shared measurement practices, Cultivating community engagement and ownership, Advancing policy, Mobilising resources, <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/sites/default/files/Backbone%20Starter%20Guide.pdf>, accessed 31 May 2019.

Four Key Steps of Collective Impact

1. **Identifying influential champions and forming a cross-sector partnership:** one or more influential champions convene a cross-sector steering group and set up governance structures that involve young people and stakeholders
2. **Scoping and segmenting the population to define the problem:** high-level initial data analysis to scope geography, the size and composition of the population and cultural education capacities
3. **Creating urgency and making the case for change:** in-depth data analysis to make the case make the case for targeting this population. Including: community-specific data that highlights the severity of the local problem; findings from national reports that make an education/social/economic case for targeting the identified population; evidence from successful programmes that effectively serve this population
4. **Establishing financial resources to launch the effort:** initial financial commitment or available resource to build a partnership structure, do scoping, get support and provide coordination. Followed by better alignment and leverage of existing resources and advocacy at local levels that increase funding available for cultural learning

Resources and tools to help build partnership capacity and effectiveness and accelerate progress

The table below shows what resources and tools are available via the external links provided and in A New Direction's [Powerful Partnerships Resource Library](#). Independent facilitation is also available, with examples included in the list below:

- Partnership diagnostic
- Youth voice, agency and co-creation
- Theory of change planning
- Evaluation planning
- Service and product development
- Marketing and audience development planning

Key component	Action	Resources
Common Agenda ✓ Strong steering committee ✓ Shared vision and common goal ✓ Partnership agreement	➤ Set up a governance structure for strategy development and implementation, e.g. a steering group, working groups and stakeholder roundtables ➤ Set up a structure for youth voice, e.g. youth advisory board, focus groups or an annual survey ➤ Share mission, principles and theory of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership diagnostic (AND) • Cultural Education Partnerships Governance Structures (AND) • Stakeholder Mapping (AND) • Partnership toolkit (NESTA) • Youth Voice in Partnerships (AND) • Theory of change (NESTA) • Partnership self-reflection activities (AND) • Cultural Education Partnerships self-reflection questions (AND)

<p>Shared Measurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Shared indicators ✓ Shared data ✓ Progress and outcomes tracked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Analyse data to prioritise and strategize ➤ Agree measures or indicators ➤ Track progress and outcomes: education or social outcomes, cultural education capacity, partnership effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Education Data Portal (ACE) • The Cultural Learning Evidence Champions Handbook (RSA)
<p>Mutually Reinforcing Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Build from existing programmes and initiatives ✓ Avoid duplication ✓ Use design thinking and integrate co-creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create an action planning including quick wins and long-term outcomes ➤ Include aligned local programmes ➤ Design new activities responding to demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy Roadmap (AND) • Business Model Canvas (NESTA) • Steps to Engaging Users and Communities (AND) • Developing an Innovation Ecosystem for Education (Innovation Unit)
<p>Continuous Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Effective internal communications ✓ Transparency and strong external communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create an internal communications plan ➤ Create an audience development and marketing plan ➤ Post blogs, case studies, testimony, impact data, research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Communications Guide (AND) • Creating an Effective Audience Development Plan (The Audience Agency)
<p>Backbone Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dedicated support for core functions and collective impact ✓ Resources aligned ✓ New investments secured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undertake initial funding and capacity building for core functions ➤ Align available resources ➤ Create a fundraising and investment plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Partnerships Programme support (e.g. A New Direction's Connected Network and Connected Lab) • https://artsfundraising.org.uk • https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/funding • https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding