

- **What's an example of a 'grasstop' organization?**

"Grasstops" are elected officials, policymakers, funders, and influential leaders. The term was coined as a complement to "grassroots" which refers to citizens, youth, families and volunteers. Both bring a perspective and power to a collective impact approach.

- **How did this community decide its rallying hubs? Once you have identified groups aligned with you what are the next steps to building a shared agenda? What are some tools or resources that help us begin alignment process?**

Good questions! It is important to state grounding principles about a) the desired outcomes for children, youth and families; b) the quality and reach of supports; and c) the accountability of local leaders. Partnerships should agree on a set of concise, public-ready statements that have communications value for their key audiences. Common statements help break down barriers and build bridges, giving actors focused on different outcomes and representing different institutions (e.g. schools, health, business, etc.) a reason to work together. All of this helps establish a common framework and common terms so groups can talk across traditional 'silos.' Articulating the 'bigger picture' helps keep the full range of stakeholders at the table.

Frameworks like the [readiness target](#) and the [insulated education pipeline](#) can help a community think through the different priorities and supports needed for children, youth and families.

- **Could you address the issue of geographic scope/level in collective impact efforts? Are they typically "city wide" or could they also be more restricted in scope? In C.I., is it important to acknowledge organizing difference between urban, rural, and suburban work? Region-wide vs neighborhood, etc.?**

We do not have a position on the 'best' geographic scope in collective impact efforts, but we do advocate that a community decides clearly and early on in their efforts in order to be on the same page and transparent with all stakeholders about the geographic considerations. A collective impact approach can be implemented at a neighborhood, city-wide, or regional level. Who is involved and how it is implemented can be greatly impacted by whether the area is urban, rural, or suburban or a mix.

Bottom-line, an effective community partnership, within in any geographic scope, needs a definition of the community, an ongoing understanding of the community's needs and concerns and their resources and strengths, and an understanding of relevant community history for the area.

- **Ideal number of backbone org? Are there some typical backbone agencies or groups that take on the survey?**

Similar to geographic scope, our recommendation is that a community does a thorough assessment of the likely and unlikely suspects to assist with the backbone work for collective impact. One community may have an organization that is clearly able to carry the work, while other communities will want to consider a partnership between two, three or four entities. Again, the challenge is to be intentional and transparent about roles and expectations. Another important consideration is 'start-up flexibility.' One organization or a set of organizations may step in to get effort off the ground, but the long-term infrastructure may take a different shape.

Backbone organizations can include United Ways, local commissions or intermediaries, existing or new independent non-profits and educational entities. See [this article](#) from FSG for further reading about different types of backbone organizations.

- **It is difficult to know who may have gathered some of this information in your community. Is there a typical place where this info can be cataloged or stored for sharing surveys (w/confidentiality respected)?**

Yes! It is difficult to know who may have gathered information already in a community. Part of the process of Mapping Moving Trains is to 'snowball' your outreach in order to fully understand the range of data that is current. For example, ask one of your respondents who else you should be asking. The work of collective impact centers around getting out of the traditional silos and that takes communication. The Moving Trains survey asks whether the coalition is collect, using and sharing data.

Local data leaders can be government staff, universities and non-profits with a focus on child, youth and family data. Some organizations already serve as a convener of data partnerships and their role may expand as backbone roles are developed.

- **Are there any resources on how to check for alignment in a work plan for a collective impact approach? When a community has multiple coalitions trying to come together, how do you work together so that neither coalition's agenda overshadows the other?**

This is a foundational issue in a collective impact approach. As Kania and Kramer state in their [article](#), “Each organization often has a slightly different definition of the problem and the ultimate goal. These differences are easily ignored when organizations work independently on isolated initiatives, yet these differences splinter the efforts and undermine the impact of the field as a whole. Collective impact requires that these differences be discussed and resolved. Every participant need not agree with every other participant on all dimensions of the problem. In fact, disagreements continue to divide participants in all of our examples of collective impact. All participants must agree, however, on the primary goals for the collective impact initiative as a whole.”

In order to discuss and address this, in one community, we brought together all of the major strategic plans and asked the work group to identify common themes, using a [dashboard](#). It is important to note where there are already cross-sector collaboration and strategies in place.

This is especially important in action planning. Action planning is a step that assures that the partnership's work is distributed across the members and that the full potential of the membership is being realized.

- **Can you talk about "a call to action" and its importance to building public will?**

Building public will is critically important. Each community is perfectly engineered to produce the results that they are currently seeing. The function of the partnership is to identify and change those features of community life that are contributing to the concerns—to create a different community that produces a different result. Building public will is an essential part of community change. See [here](#) for more resources.

- **Other than the webinars, how is the Forum planning to support CI efforts? Especially for youth development agencies who may not be included on leadership teams (since we provide direct service)?**

An effective community partnership infrastructure connects multiple levels of leadership from top-level to frontline, including policymakers, professionals, community members, families and young people. This helps to ensure that those that need to deliver on the strategies are informing and invested in the goals and solutions from the outset.

The Forum provides webinars, tools, trainings, peer learning opportunities and individualized coaching and technical assistance to help communities reach their goals. If you'd like to discuss how your community can better connect youth development agencies and leadership teams, please don't hesitate to contact Ian Faigley at [ian@forumfyi.org](mailto:ian@forumfyi.org).

- **How would you distinguish a backbone organization and an intermediary?**

According to the Intermediary Network, an intermediary *“brings local programs, initiatives, and institutions together to eliminate the duplication of services, maximize the impacts of multiple funding sources, and implement long-range plans to improve outcomes...”*

This work is essential in the work of collective impact. As our founder Karen Pittman says, “Intermediary organizations, including but by no means limited to United Ways, are often looked to first to play the backbone support role because they have many if not all of the desired characteristics. They don't run usually programs, they can administer grants, they have broad respect and connections and staff with "boundary spanning" skills needed to do the work. They also frequently have a deeper appreciation of the value and effort involved in being a true "intermediary" – a skill that, as you note, is critical to the success of collective impact efforts. In our experience, the "home base" of the backbone support organization is much less important than its ability to satisfy these criteria.”

- **If we have one backbone org, when we fundraiser, do we need to segregate funds for the other regular services and one account for the collective impact initiative?**

We recommend you discuss this with your Board. As we outline in the Backbone Assessment, a backbone organization should, *“be sustained by a solid fiscal home that has an engaged and supportive board and CEO.”* This question would prompt a dialogue on how to best promote fund development both for the collective impact effort while maintain fund development for the organization as a whole.