Collective Impact and Networks That Move the Needle: Strategies and Solutions for Community Change

Brint Milward
University of Arizona
What are Networks?

- The web of relationships connecting individuals or organizations, given certain boundaries.
- Ties based on many factors: trust, advice, resources, shared information, friendship, referrals, contracts, etc.
- Trust and reciprocity are the coins of the realm.
The Nested Doll Problem
Networks: Nodes and links that take many different forms

<table>
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<th>Less Centralized</th>
<th>More Centralized</th>
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![Diagram showing less centralized and more centralized networks.](attachment:image)
What can we learn from network analysis?

• Understanding the relationships between and among the individuals and organizations in an area of activity.
• Who is connected to whom?
• What is the extent of their interactions?
• What is the quality of their relationships?
• Through what types of activities are members connected (e.g. contracts or shared information)?
• How effective is one network is compared to another?
A network of contracts
Information Sharing in a network
Why networks?

• Problems are complex and multifaceted
• We need to bring the relevant organizations together in a collaboration to address the problem that no one organization can handle.
• This is the network “value proposition.”
What is Collective Impact?

- **Common Agenda:** All participating organizations have a shared vision for social change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed upon actions.
- **Shared Measurement System:** Agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported with a short list of key indicators across all participating organizations.
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Engagement of a diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinating a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
- **Continuous Communication:** Frequent communications over a long period of time among key players within and across organizations, to build trust and inform ongoing learning and adaptation of strategy.
- **Backbone Organization:** Ongoing support provided by an independent staff dedicated to the initiative.
Collective Impact: What does it Mean?

- After three years of extraordinary hype what does it really mean?
- Investors are wondering what it means when they receive proposals that replace the term ‘collaboration’ with ‘collective impact.’
- Researchers are perplexed that it looks very similar to what they have studied for years.
- Leaders in communities are confused about what it really means to put collective impact into action.”
Collective Impact and Network Research

• Collective Impact is a *normative* model of how networks can have a positive impact on social change in communities.

• Many researchers would agree that it is a promising model.
  – Three problems
    • The five conditions are a very high bar for a network to meet
    • How do you maintain “fidelity” to the model during implementation?
    • If they do meet these conditions, how do you know they work better than networks that don’t meet these conditions?
Recognize the Two Hats Problem
Possible Implications of the Two Hats Problem

- Varied commitment to network mission
- Organizational cultures clash
- Turf/power/autonomy issues
- High coordination costs
First Condition: Common Agenda

- How do you develop a common agenda?
- You can’t just assume everyone shares a common interest.
- You develop it through individuals and organizations developing enough trust in each others reciprocal behavior to cooperate.
- How does this occur? What is the mechanism?
Trust Creates Social Capital
Social Capital facilitates network performance

• Social capital is to networks as duct tape is to everyday life

1. Trust in actions
2. Trust in information
Social Capital creates a virtuous cycle

- Networks
- Reciprocity
- Trust

Social Capital creates a virtuous cycle.
How do you as leaders reinforce trust?

• What is the shared vision we are working toward?
• What is our starting point? What beliefs and assumptions do we hold?
• Who needs to be at the table?
• How do we set the table?
• Periodic checkup. Are we becoming more trusting with each other? If not, why not?
• Is our policy domain changing? Are we changing with it?
• What is the desired end state for our network?
Interorganizational Network Effectiveness

• Using coalitions, partnerships, and alliances can be an effective tool under certain conditions.
• We have some evidence
• Is it consistent with Collective Impact?
Interorganizational Networks: What Works?

• Centralized integration of vendors through a responsible agency so it is clear who is responsible for doing what. (consistent w/CI)

• Direct government funding and regulation of the providers so accountability is clear.

• A network of agencies that is stable performs better than one that is continually tinkered with through micromanaging or rebidding. (consistent w/CI)
Interorganizational Network Effectiveness: What Works

• Networks perform well when their employees believe in the importance of the work they are doing (internal legitimacy) and when they have clients, constituents and elected officials who believe in the worth of what the network does (external legitimacy).

• To be effective, networks must be reasonably well funded for the scale of the problem they are confronting.
Some form of governance necessary to sustain the network (see Milward and Provan, 2006). Self-governed for small networks; lead agency or NAO for larger networks – governing network processes.

Interorganizational Network Governance

Figure 2: Modes of Network Governance

Self-Governed Network  Lead Organization Network  Network Administrative Organization
• **Self-governed [most common]** Operated on basis of consensus; people are there because they want to be there; people are passionate. This is often the starting point for a new network. Consensus is very difficult to achieve if there are recalcitrant members of the network.

• **Lead agency** A self-governed network will often evolve into a lead agency network. There is often one agency in the community that is more responsible for this problem than others, and they often have more resources. Key challenge is that the lead agency may focus more on their organizational goals than the network goals which makes it critically important that all successes are shared by the network.

• **Network Administrative Organization (NAO)** Sometimes it is difficult or impossible to have a lead agency due to power imbalance issues and a decision is to make to develop a network administration organization. This generally involves having some form of a Governance Board and paid staff, including a CEO which makes it a **backbone organization**. A challenge here can be preventing the NAO from becoming more like a hierarchy or assuming it is the network.
Leading Networks, Managing Dilemmas

• “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function”

  – F. Scott Fitzgerald
Recognizing Network Tensions

Efficiency: Limiting partner involvement in the decision process to limit decision costs

Inclusiveness: Participation in decision process to ensure diversity of perspectives

Internal legitimacy: Ensuring that members perceive network activities as desirable

External legitimacy: Ensuring that the external stakeholders perceive network activities as desirable

Flexibility: Ensuring rapid network response to environmental threats and opportunities

Stability: Ensuring consistent responses to stakeholders and increasing efficiency
The Network Way of Working

- Create a narrative: “The network way of working” or “family centered care.”
- A passion for sharing the credit.
- Be comfortable with loyalty to your network and your organization. Own both hats.
- Soft governance. A team of network facilitators, terms of reference, incentives like paying for conferences, etc.
Network Leadership Skills

• Leadership in networks is about creating incentives to participate.
• Manage the agenda
• Keep the network stable. If change is necessary, make it incremental if possible.
• Invest your time wisely, have a relationship budget
“Thank God, Here Comes a Border Collie!”

“Henry! Our party’s total chaos! No one knows when to eat, where to stand, what to … Oh, thank God! Here comes a border collie!”
Manage Networks Like a Border Collie Herds Sheep